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Course Handouts

Contemporary World Literature

Pedagogical Handouts

for Second-year Master's Students

Specializing in Language and Culture

Semestre Three

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Preface

Module Description

Contemporary World Literature invites students to immerse themselves in the rich and diverse narratives that illuminate the complexities of our globalized era, where voices from varied cultural, historical, and political contexts converge to explore universal themes of identity, belonging, resistance, and transformation. This pedagogical book, crafted for Second Year Master students at the University of 8 May 1945 – Guelma, Department of Letters & English Language, serves as a comprehensive guide for Semester I of the 2025-2026 academic year, under the guidance of Dr. Khawla BENDJEMIL.

Building on students' foundational knowledge of British, American, and postmodern literatures, the course offers a comparative exploration of Anglophone literatures from the Arab world, Canada, Asia, Australia, and Africa, emphasizing their distinct contributions to global literary discourse. Through close readings of seminal texts—Leila Aboulela's *Minaret*, Alice Munro's "Passion", Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason*, Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*, and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat*—students will engage with the interplay of postcolonialism, diaspora, trauma, and narrative innovation, uncovering how literature reflects and shapes the socio-political and cultural dynamics of our time.

The scope of contemporary Anglophone literature is vast and dynamic, characterized by its fluidity, diversity, and resistance to singular definitions. The course begins with a foundational exploration of key concepts—literature, world literature, and contemporary literature—highlighting their thematic concerns (disillusionment, uncertainty, and the questioning of truth) and formal innovations (irony, genre-blending, and the dissolution of high/low culture divides). It then delves into specific literary traditions, each offering unique perspectives on global and local tensions:

- Anglophone Arab literature traces its evolution from early 20th-century roots to contemporary diasporic narratives, addressing themes of exile, hybridity, and cultural translation. Aboulela's Minaret anchors this study, examining Islamic spirituality and post-secularism through the journey of a Sudanese woman navigating identity in London, challenging Western stereotypes and gendered Islamophobia.
- Canadian literature explores a multicultural mosaic shaped by Indigenous, settler, and immigrant voices, evolving from colonial beginnings to a modern canon that interrogates memory and space. Munro's Passion offers a nuanced lens into personal and existential reflection, revealing the complexities of human experience within Canada's diverse socio-historical context.
- Asian literature encompasses the vibrant traditions of South and East Asia, grappling with colonial legacies, modernity, and globalization. Ghosh's The Circle of Reason critiques postcolonial rationality and global economic systems, blending genres and languages to foreground subaltern agency and cultural hybridity.
- Australian literature navigates the tensions of colonial dispossession, national identity, and multicultural reconciliation, from early poetry to contemporary fiction. Zusak's The Book Thief, set in Nazi Germany, transcends national boundaries to probe universal questions of guilt, memory, and the power of storytelling, resonating with Australia's own ethical dilemmas.
- African literature draws on deep oral traditions and postcolonial realities, redefining identity and history across West, East, and Southern Africa. Ngũgĩ's A Grain of

Wheat interrogates the paradoxes of Kenyan independence, exposing neocolonial betrayals and the fractured nature of collective narratives in a postcolonial world.

This portfolio is structured to foster critical inquiry and comparative analysis, weaving together detailed lecture notes, scholarly insights, and theoretical frameworks—postcolonialism, trauma theory, spatial theory, narrative studies, and Alltagsgeschichte—to equip students with the tools to interrogate texts and their contexts. Each chapter progresses from regional overviews to in-depth case studies, encouraging students to draw connections across cultures and histories. The general conclusion synthesizes these threads, highlighting shared themes—postcolonialism, diaspora, linguistic resistance, trauma, memory, gender, and power-that unite Anglophone literatures in their commitment to challenging dominant narratives and amplifying marginalized voices. Multimedia resources, including Dr. Bendjemil's lecture materials and the accompanying video lectures available on YouTube https://shorturl.at/NeQg6, enhance the learning experience by bridging textual analysis with cultural and historical discussions.

By engaging with this material, students will develop a nuanced understanding of how Anglophone literatures contribute to global literary discourse, navigating ethical and aesthetic complexities through rigorous analysis. This book is both a roadmap and an invitation to explore the stories that connect us across continents, histories, and imaginations, empowering students to contribute thoughtfully to ongoing literary and cultural dialogues. It illuminates how contemporary world literature serves as a dynamic space for resistance, adaptation, and transformation, reshaping our understanding of the world in profound and lasting ways.

Course Objectives

The objectives of the course are as follows:

1. Become acquainted with different trends, techniques, terms, poets and writers in contemporary Anglophone literatures.
2. Learn strategies for reading and understanding literature.
3. Develop critical skills for discussing and analysing literary texts.

Recommended Prior Knowledge

Students are expected to have a minimum knowledge about Anglophone literature in general. Building on students' foundational knowledge of British, American, and postmodern literatures.

Duration

16 weeks

Course Schedule

This course spans a total of 16 weeks. The following schedule serves as a guideline, and adjustments may be made as we progress, taking into account our learning pace, teaching style, and specific learning objectives for each topic.

- **Week 1 / 2:** General Introduction – What is Contemporary Literature? What is World Literature? What is Anglophone Literature?
- **Week 3:** An Overview of Anglophone African Literature
- **Week 4:** Case Study: A Grain of Wheat by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o
- **Week 5:** An Overview of Anglophone Canadian Literature
- **Week 6:** Case Study: Alice Munro's "Passion"
- **Week 7:** An Overview of Anglophone Arab Literature
- **Week 8:** Case Study: Minaret by Leila Aboulela
- **Week 9:** An Overview of Anglophone Asian Literature
- **Week 10:** Case Study: The Circle of Reason by Amitav Ghosh
- **Week 11:** An Overview of Anglophone Australian Literature
- **Week 12:** Marcus Zusak's The Book Thief
- **Week 13:** Marcus Zusak's The Book Thief
- **Week 14 & 15:** Winter Break
- **Week 16:** Revision

Evaluation Criteria

Your mark in this course will be based on regular class attendance, successful completion of the assignments, and participation in class discussions. Absences in excess of 4 classes will lead to a failing grade; no exceptions. If you are ill or if there is an emergency, please contact me.

Formative evaluation: Your TD mark (that is on 20 marks, too) is weighted as follows:

- Attendance: 12 pts (Class Evaluation)
- Participation in class: 18 pts (Class Evaluation)
- Online Activities: 10 pts (Home Evaluation)

Summative evaluation: Written exam (50% of the final mark). You will have one final exam (on 20 marks) during the exam week.

Course Policies

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a form of academic cheating and is subject to a number of penalties, including a failing grade for a plagiarized essay that may lead to a failing grade for the whole module. Here are some definitions of forms of plagiarism:

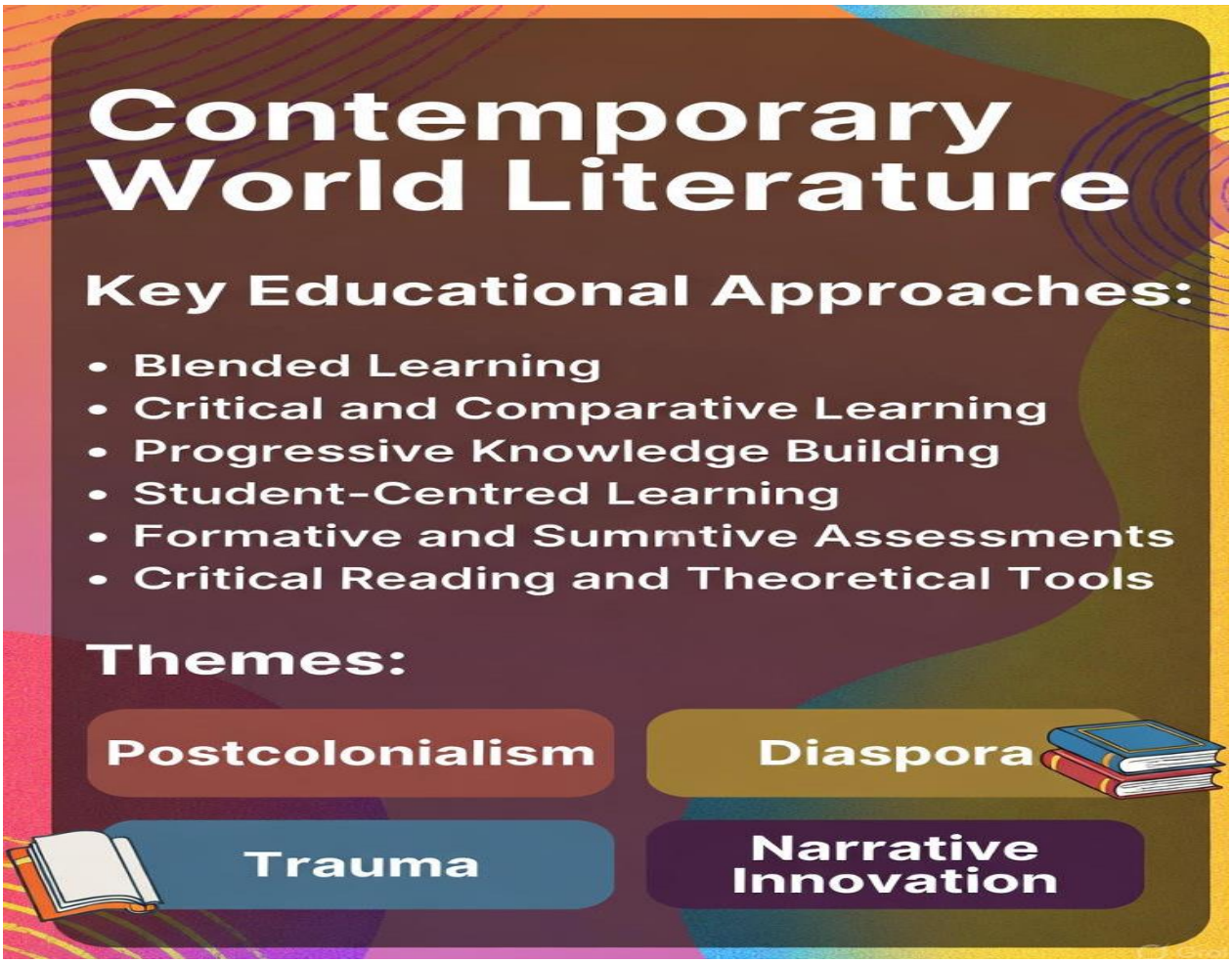
- Using another person's ideas, words, or sentence structures without using quotation marks or a standard form of documentation is plagiarizing.
- Using sentences, texts, or images from the Internet or World Wide Web without acknowledging the source is plagiarizing.
- Handing in essays, reports, or research papers not written solely by you is plagiarism.

References

- Suman Gupta, Contemporary literature the Basics, 2012, Routledge.

- Anastasia Valassopoulos, Contemporary Arab Women Writers: Cultural expression in Context, Routledge, 2007.
- Pieter Vermeulen, Contemporary Literature and the End of the Novel, Palgrave, 2015.

Educational Approach



The educational approach for the module Contemporary World Literature offered to second-year Master's students in the Department of Letters and English Language is designed to combine rigorous theoretical grounding with critical engagement and analytical skill development, in a blended learning environment. The key components of this approach are as follows:

1. **Blended Learning** The course integrates face-to-face classroom interaction with online resources. Lectures are supplemented by detailed written materials and recommended video summaries (e.g., the introductory lecture includes a linked YouTube video). In-person sessions focus on discussion, textual analysis, and collaborative interpretation, while online components allow students to revisit content at their own pace and engage with supplementary readings.
2. **Critical and Comparative Learning** The module strongly emphasises the application of literary and postcolonial theory to real texts from diverse Anglophone traditions. Students are encouraged to compare themes, narrative techniques, and cultural contexts across regions (Arab, Canadian, Asian, Australian, African), fostering an

understanding of both regional specificity and global interconnections in contemporary world literature.

3. **Progressive Knowledge Building** The course follows a structured progression that begins with foundational definitions of contemporary, world, and Anglophone literature and moves toward region-specific overviews and in-depth case studies of representative texts. Each lecture builds on previous ones, reinforcing concepts such as postcolonialism, diaspora, trauma, and narrative innovation through repeated engagement with key critical frameworks.
4. **Student-Centred and Participatory Learning** Students are actively involved through comprehension and review exercises, analytical questions, and discussions that promote self-reflection on issues of identity, power, memory, and cultural representation. Participation in interpreting complex texts and debating controversial themes (e.g., collective guilt, neocolonialism, gendered spirituality) forms a central part of the learning experience and evaluation.
5. **Formative and Summative Assessments** Continuous assessment is achieved through activities that include multiple-choice questions, fill-in-the-gaps exercises, and extended analytical questions that require close textual reference and engagement with secondary criticism. These formative tools help track understanding throughout the semester, while a final summative evaluation (typically a written exam or research essay) ensures holistic assessment of critical thinking and mastery of the module's core concepts.
6. **Emphasis on Critical Reading and Theoretical Tools** The course prioritises not only literary appreciation but also the acquisition of analytical tools drawn from postcolonial theory, trauma studies, narrative theory, and cultural criticism. Students learn to interrogate how Anglophone writers repurpose the English language to resist imperial legacies, reclaim silenced voices, and articulate hybrid, diasporic, or marginalised experiences in the contemporary era.

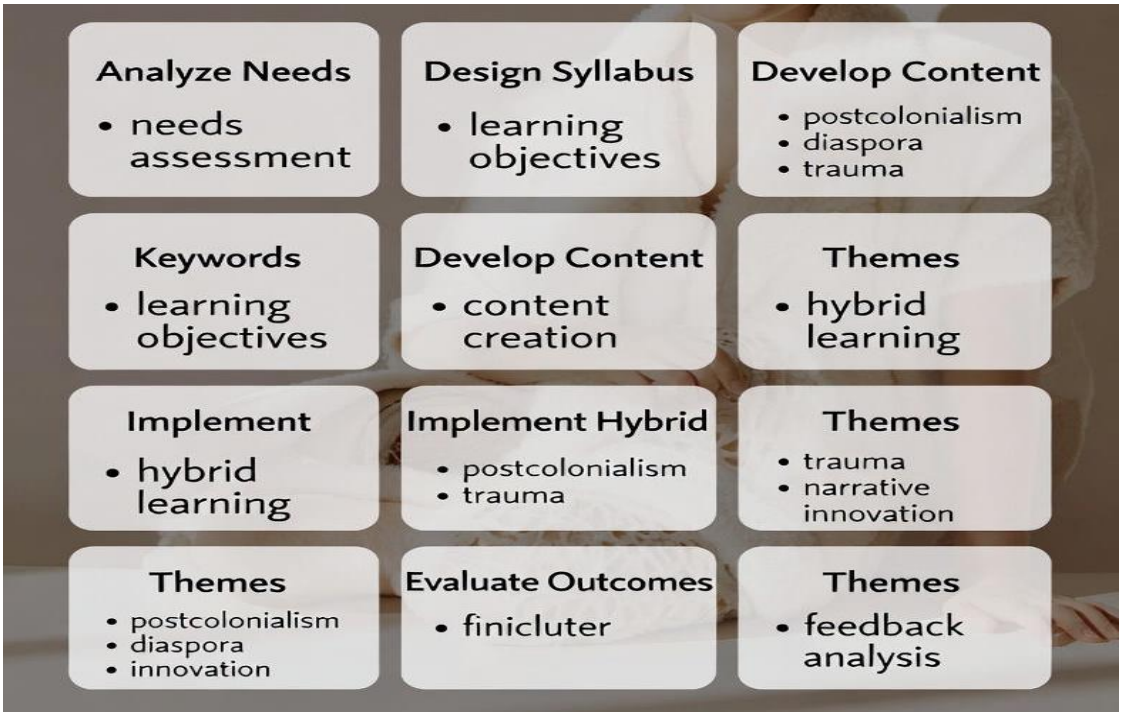
This approach aims to produce graduates who are theoretically informed, critically astute, and capable of engaging with the complexities of global Anglophone literature in academic, professional, and intercultural contexts.

Instructional Design Model

The instructional design of the **Contemporary World Literature** module is based on the **ADDIE model**, a systematic framework widely used in educational planning to ensure effective teaching and meaningful learning outcomes. The model is applied as follows:

1. **Analyze** The design process begins by identifying the specific needs of second-year Master's students in English Literature: advanced critical reading skills, familiarity with postcolonial and world-literature theories, and the ability to analyse diverse Anglophone texts from non-Western traditions. The hybrid environment and the students' prior knowledge of British, American, and postmodern literatures are also taken into account.
2. **Design** The syllabus is structured regionally while maintaining thematic coherence (postcolonialism, diaspora, trauma, narrative innovation). Clear learning objectives are set for each lecture: mastering definitions, understanding historical contexts, and applying critical frameworks to primary texts. Timelines, required readings, and assessment types are explicitly outlined.

3. **Develop** Content is carefully curated, including detailed lecture notes, excerpts from primary texts, critical summaries, and tailored comprehension exercises. Multimedia resources (e.g., video links) and a comprehensive bibliography are provided to accommodate different learning styles and encourage independent research.
4. **Implement** Delivery combines asynchronous access to written lectures and resources with synchronous in-person or online sessions focused on discussion, clarification, and collaborative analysis. Activities are integrated to promote active engagement with both primary texts and secondary criticism.
5. **Evaluate** Ongoing formative evaluation is conducted through comprehension exercises and analytical questions that provide immediate feedback on understanding. Summative evaluation (final exam or essay) assesses the ability to synthesise regional insights into broader arguments about contemporary Anglophone world literature. Student performance and feedback also inform future iterations of the course.



By grounding the module in the ADDIE model, the instructional design ensures a coherent, progressive, and student-focused learning experience that equips participants with the analytical tools needed to navigate the richness and complexity of contemporary Anglophone literatures from around the world.

University of 8 May 1945 – Guelma
Department of Letters & English Language
Contemporary World Literature
Second Year Master
Semester I /2025-2026
Dr. Khawla BENDJEMIL

Lecture One: General Introduction

What is Contemporary Literature?

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I. Introduction
II. Definitions:
1. **What is Literature?**
2. **What is World Literature?**
3. **What is Contemporary Literature?**

III. Characteristics of Contemporary Literature
1. **Beliefs and Concepts**
2. **Literary Techniques & Style**

IV. Conclusion
V. Works Cited

I. Introduction:

Master II students of the department of English have been acquainted with different kinds of literatures throughout your academic career at the department. Most importantly, you have followed the literary eras of both British and American literatures from the early ages of their beginnings till the modern times (modernism). In your Master I year, you have been introduced to the literary and artistic movement of postmodernism. In this last year, you are going to study the contemporary literary era of different world literatures. This lecture is an introductory one that provides you with definitions of literature, world literature, and contemporary literature. Moreover, it both reminds and informs you about the characteristics of

contemporary literature. Check out the video I prepared for you that summarizes this lecture: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ppp3CnaPV3c

II. Definitions:

1. What is Literature?

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, Literature is defined as: "pieces of writing that are valued as works of art, especially novels, plays and poems (in contrast to technical books and newspapers, magazines, etc.)." literature is, thus, an art form. It can also be a module/course at the university as it can have other meanings. A more technical definition of literature as an art can be as follows: It is the collection of any written/oral works that imitate life & which necessarily have the following characteristics:

- Imagination (it should include an amount of imagination or fiction in it)
- Figurative Language (Utilized in its expression)
- Creativity/ Artistic (literary works are artistic)
- Value (they should express a value) (Mays 15-20).

Literary works can be classified into two categories: fiction and non-fiction (Fowler 7). Fiction includes prose, poetry, drama, and hybrid forms. Each of which has its own sub-category. While non-fiction includes literary essays, biographies, and others.

2. What is World Literature?

World Literature has been defined by many scholars differently. However, a common definition can be as follows:

World Literature is the circulation of national literatures beyond their national borders. It is the field of study that comparative literature investigates. This definition makes it clear that World Literature and Comparative Literature are very close in nature. While

Comparative Literature is about the differences, World Literature is about the commonalities between all national literatures. It is concerned with that which is universal and common to all literatures (McInturff 225-7).

2. What is Contemporary Literature?

Contemporary literature encompasses a wide range of written works created from a specific period in history to the present day. This literary era not only refers to a time period, but also to a specific style and quality of writing. This period, according to some scholars, begins at the end of World War II, and this is where the era's association with postmodern literature comes into play. The postmodern era began in the 1940s, following WWII, and lasted until the 1960s. The contemporary period extends to the present day (Damrosch 11). Western authors produce a large portion of contemporary literature; however, the term is not synonymous with English or American literature. In fact, globalization opened the door to include contemporary works from the Middle East, Africa, and Asia.

III. Characteristics of Contemporary Literature

Contemporary literature is difficult to categorize due to the rapid changes. It reflects contemporary life and culture, which is fast-paced and full of contradictions. However, there are certain trends that stand out. The latter can be divided into two groups: one that is related to the content of contemporary literary works, and the other that is related to their form and the way they are written:

1. Beliefs and Concepts:

- In the **early twentieth century**, writers and artists, followed by the general public, began to ponder the meaning of life, eventually concluding that **if there is no God**,

life is inherently **meaningless**. The death of God had become a popular concept by the **end of World War II** (“What is Contemporary Literature?”).

- People's main attitude was **disillusionment**, even in the middle of their delight and relief that the war was finished. ***However***, postwar writers were more concerned with **how to cope** with a world in which the only constant was change, **rather than lamenting** the loss of God.
- Also, there is the way in which **truth is viewed**. Everything we know is dependent on our perspective. There is only my truth and your truth, and those can change at any moment with the addition of more facts.
- The notion of **uncertainty** is crucial in contemporary literature. Contemporary writers and critics call into question facts themselves, and claiming that **"facts" are unreliable**, influenced by culture, historical perspective, language games, and other undiscovered or deliberately omitted facts.

2. Literary Techniques & Style:

As far as literary techniques and style are concerned, many critics believe that contemporary literature can only recast the old in new ways, rather than bringing newness. The following is a number of properties that characterize the form of contemporary literary works:

- One of the main trends of Contemporary literature is related to the fact that it is **ironic**. It reflects our political, social, and personal disillusionment through **playfulness** and **irony**.
- Another trend in contemporary literature is the **disappearance of the line** that divides **high and low culture**.

- In addition, l**iterary genres** of all varieties have been widespread in this era. For example, poets have worked, like the short story writers, to make their work more accessible and relevant in order to promote social and environmental justice, and this has resulted in a rise in popularity in the modern age (Moser and West 6).
- Moreover, typical characteristics of the contemporary period include **reality-based stories** with **strong characters** and **a believable story**. Characters are **Well-defined**, **realistic**, & **highly developed**.
- Finally, **contemporary literature** features a **somewhat modern narrative**, but it also contains **a harsher reality** ("What is Contemporary Literature?").

IV. Conclusion:

Contemporary literature, thus, refers to a wide spectrum of literary works produced between a given historical time and the current day. This literary era encompasses not just a chronological period, but also a certain writing style and quality. According to some researchers, this period began at the conclusion of World War II, and it is at this point that the era's relationship with postmodern literature emerges. Following WWII, the postmodern period began in the 1940s and continued through the 1960s. The modern era encompasses everything from the 1960s to the current day. Although Western writers generate much of today's literature, the phrase is not synonymous with English or American literature. Globalization, in reality, allowed for the inclusion of modern works from the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Therefore, the following lectures are about contemporary literatures originally written in English from different world literary works namely: Canadian, African, Arab, Asia, and Australian.

V. Works Cited:

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Moser, Linda Trinh and Kathryn West. *Contemporary Literature, 1970 to Present*: *Research Guide to American Literature*. Facts on File: 2010.

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Lecture Two: An Overview on Anglophone Arab Literature

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III. Historical literary Overview of Anglophone Arab Literature:
1. **Beginning of the 20th century - 1950**
2. **1950–1970**
3. **1970 – Present: Exile or Diaspora?**

IV. Conclusion
V. Works Cited

I. Introduction:

> I left this place by running all the way to California. An exile which lasted for years. I came back on a stretcher, and felt here a stranger, exiled from my former exile. I am always away from something and somewhere. My senses left me one by one to have a life of their own. If you meet me in the street, don't be sure it's me. My center is not in the solar system.
>
> Etel Adnan, "In the Heart of the Heart of Another Country," (1977): 23.

This quotation is actually indicative of the situation of so many hyphenated Arabs around the world.

Anglophone Arab Literature addresses a previously neglected corpus of literary work that is now attracting increased attention not only from university

departments with Middle Eastern interests, but also from intellectuals worldwide who are interested in postcolonial studies, the New Literatures, and the larger domain of World Literature in English. Although scores of books have looked at Anglophone literature around the globe, they tend to make scant reference to the contribution of Arab writers in comparison to the literature of the Caribbean, the West Africans, the Indians (Maleh, Preface iv).

II. Anglophone Arab Literature:

1. Definition

Anglophone Arab Literature comprises a growing number of an important body of creative writing in English by either Arab authors or by authors of Arab descent (Maleh, Preface iv).

Since the turn of the century, Arabs have used English as a medium of literary expression. However; the decision of writers of Arab heritage to write in English, while less contentious than that of Maghrebi writers who opt to write in French, sparks debate (Nash 17). In the recent several decades, there has been a substantial renaissance of Anglophone Arab literature. It is now understandably awaiting complete acknowledgment. With inventiveness and boldness, hyphenated Arab-American, Arab-British, and Arab-Australian authors have been making their views known. While labels like 'emigrant,' 'ethnic,' and 'postcolonial' might readily accommodate their views, the word 'Anglophone,' established following the model of 'francophone,' has been deemed to be sufficient to place them within the greater multicultural family (Maleh, Preface iv-x). However, nowadays, Universities in the United States, Europe, and the Middle East have begun to integrate Anglophone Arab writing courses in their curricula.

2. Characteristics:

The term 'Anglophone' implies more than just a linguistic 'shelter' for the Arab writer in English. The title also provides a much broader framework within which certain issues and problems might be discussed. Anglo-Arab literature, born outside of the motherland, is plagued by the same 'hybrid,' 'exilic,' and 'diasporic' concerns that have plagued fellow postcolonialists (Maleh, Preface x).

The conflict between the center and the periphery, the 'homeland' and the 'host land,' evokes classic questions of belonging, allegiance, and affinity again and time again. These works are concerned with issues of cultural and relational identification, and the struggle between assimilation and preservation is also present. Migration and hybridity, according to some analysts, are enriching and energizing factors. Others try to imagine a 'third place,' or in-betweenness, as Homi Bhabha put it. The issues range from double-consciousness, hybridity, in-between-ness, transcultural unique experiences, through stereotyping, ethnic depiction, and reception (Maleh, Preface x).

Apart from literary ideals, cultural connections, and subject concerns, Anglophone Arab literature has recently attracted the interest of readers all over the world as a means of learning more about Arabs' intellectual and spiritual makeup. Much more than journalism, historical reports, or political memoirs, literary works accessible in a familiar language may give reasonable interpretation and humanization of Arabs. Works by Fadia Faqir, Ahdaf Soueif, Leila Aboulela, Hisham Matar, Rabih Alameddine, Suheir Hamad, or Mohja Kahf, to mention a few, function as cultural mediators because they are written in English. These authors present the Arab via themes and kinds that cross cultural boundaries. They portray the understandable and accepted rather than the weird or foreign (Maleh, Preface x).

III. Historical literary Overview of Anglophone Arab Literature:

The irony of Anglophone Arab Literature is that it did not gain attention or attain recognition until the world woke up one day to the horror of the infamous 9/11 and asked itself who those 'Arabs' really were.

1. Beginning of the 20th century - 1950

Anglophone Arab literature stems from the turn of the century, when the first Arabs to move to the United States had to contend with the host country's language and culture. As Wail Hassan that it was in America that: "the first Anglophone Arab poetry collection, Myrtle and Myrrh (1905), the first play, Wajdah (1909), the first novel, *The Book of Khalid* (1911), and the first Arab-English autobiography, Abraham Mitrie Rihbany's A Far Journey (1914)". With the exception of Gibran, Few other Anglophone Arab writers were as well-known as Khalil Gibran (1883–1931), who smashed sales records with his Prophet and experienced extraordinary popularity for an Anglophone Arab writer (Maleh, Anglophone Arab Literature 2).

Gibran's and his Arab contemporaries' writings were a mix of messianic speech and Sufi thinking. The authors viewed themselves as visionaries with cosmic purposes for their life, a technique that isn't entirely at odds with the traditional role of poets in Arab culture. However, it is precisely this function of poet–prophet that has recently 'engendered' so much debate about their writings and 'endangered' their literary status (Maleh, Anglophone Arab Literature 3).

2. 1950–1970

While Arab immigrants to the United States in the 1930s and 1940s were busy settling down and blending, if not completely disappearing, into mainstream

American culture, Anglophone Arab writing was shifting its focus elsewhere. Arab students began seeping into British colleges or seeking jobs on British land, largely as a result of missionary and international institutions blossoming in the Middle East. Many were the victims of cultural colonialism; they were instilled with a love of the language of their education, intrigued by the English lifestyle depicted in their textbooks, and raised in and shaped by Western standards and ideals. Layla Maleh asserts in her "Anglophone Arab Literature: An Overview" that:

> [Arab students] yearned to express themselves creatively in the language of the 'superior' Other and to internalize the 'Other' in every possible way. In 1946, Edward Atiyah, a British citizen of Lebanese origin and author of *The Arabs* (1958), *An Arab Tells His Story* (1946), *The Thin Line* (1951) (a history, an autobiography and a novel successively), and several other novels, boasted, of his acquired 'Englishness', "I have made English my language, in which I can speak and write as well as most educated Englishmen." (6)

These authors' work was distinct from that of their predecessors (Rihani, Gibran, and Naimy) in that it seemed to emerge from a European tradition rather than the American literary landscape of the period. Their writings primarily mirrored their British educational and intellectual backgrounds, preventing the emergence of a unique Arab-English style or register (Maleh, Anglophone Arab Literature 7).

3. 1970 – Present: Exile or Diaspora?

Three trends can be identified over the course of a century of Anglophone Arab writing: the Mahjar (early twentieth-century émigrés in the United States); the mid-1950s Europeanized aspirants; and the more recent hybrids, hyphenated,

transcultural, exilic/diasporic writers of the last four decades or so who have been scattered all over the world.

The early Arab immigrants came from poor and even illiterate backgrounds and worked their way up to elitist literary circles; furthermore, they were able to maintain a happy balance between East and West, home/host country. As a result, some themes recur in the lives of Rihani, Gibran, Naimy, and the other Mahjar authors. The desperate need to escape the mundane materialism of the peddler lifestyle; the importance of missionary school education in Lebanon; the impact of French, British, and/or Russian culture on the individual immigrant; the desire to transcend sectarian religious conflict; admiration for American vitality and hatred of American materialism; a desire for Arab reform; acute concern about international politics and the political surge The Mahjar authors saw themselves as cultural intermediaries, bridging the East-West divide (Ludescher 97).

In contrast, the subsequent generation of the 1950s, came from elite backgrounds and worked assiduously to embrace the identity of the European 'Other,' thus typifying the traumas and excruciating pains of the Holocaust. They had little option but to accept their own isolation and estrangement, since they were doomed to be rejected by metropolitan authority yet had cut their ties to their homeland. Thus, despite the diversity of cultural and personal perspectives that these authors bring to the page, there may be more commonalities than differences among these unique voices than first appears (Layton 8).

Those who began writing after the 1970s make up the third group, which is the least homogenous. There were some who were born and nurtured on the no longer alien soil of their immigrant forefathers — second-, third-, and even fourth-generation hyphenated Arabs – and those who were new immigrants working out of a

transcultural experience. The latter came from a variety of intellectual and social backgrounds, beliefs, occupations, and political tendencies, and had a diversified or diverging relationship to their country after arriving in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia (Maleh, Anglophone Arab Literature 11). Their topics are as various as they are. In fact, Markus Schmitz in his *Transgressive Truths and Flattering Lies* asserts that contemporary Anglophone Arab works mainly discuss topics such as:

> [N]arratives of emigration, immigration, and forced assimilation; dreams of tolerance, conviviality, and cultural fusion as well as of ignorance, discrimination, failed integration, and remigration; stories of coerced identification and resistive selving caught between the claim of individual freedom and the struggle for collective liberation; movements of emancipation and unfinished revolutions, narratives of split belongings and multiplied affiliations, as well as strategic assertions of Oriental originality; issues of race and racialization and Orientalized relations of gender and sexual desire; nocturnal voyages into the powers of narrative counter-truth and illuminated experiments in revealing reality's uncanny magic; representations that manipulate and subvert normative conceptions of time, space, location, and belonging… (258)

Thus, the topics that contemporary Anglophone literature covers are as various as its writers.

IV. Conclusion

In terms of language and culture, Anglophone Arab writers have a lot in common. They come from a long line of illustrious ancestors who share a common past, a rich literary heritage, and a revered language. They may have their own

religious beliefs, social habits, and political views, but they all have a common conviction in Arab culture. Even when they were second- or third-generation authors, Anglophone Arab writers were driven, more out of need than choice, to negotiate identities from a vantage point with clear linkages to Arab history in their diasporic abodes. Despite the authors' geographical remoteness from the country, most of what they wrote nevertheless revealed a close affinity with it.

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Lecture on: Leila Aboulela's *Minaret*
As a Case Study for Anglophone Arab Literature

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I. Introduction:

Leila Aboulela's *Minaret* (2005) is a compelling narrative that delves into the themes of identity, migration, Islamic spirituality, and the tension between secular and religious worldviews. Set against the backdrop of Sudan's political turmoil and the multicultural landscape of London, the novel tells the story of Najwa, a woman who falls from wealth and privilege to a life of humility, ultimately rediscovering herself through her faith. Aboulela's work offers a nuanced critique of secular individualism while providing a complex portrayal of Islamic spirituality as a source of personal empowerment. Rachael Gilmour's analysis frames *Minaret* as an example of "translational writing," which "bear[s] the traces of multiple languages, foregrounding and dramatizing the processes of translation" (207), emphasizing Najwa's navigation of linguistic and cultural boundaries in London's polyglot setting (210). Peter Morey

argues that *Minaret* disrupts secular expectations of the novel form by centering spiritual redemption over individualist or romantic resolutions, challenging the market demand for "authentically representative" Muslim texts (Morey 1). The novel also engages with the visual politics of identity, as Seda Canpolat notes, portraying Najwa as a Muslim woman navigating the intersecting racist and sexist gazes that shape her diasporic experience (1). Eva Hunter similarly situates Aboulela's work within broader discussions of Islamophobia, feminism, and cultural representation, noting that her fiction emerges in a context where Islam is often equated with "irrationality and violence" by Western media, yet critiques the gendered limitations in her portrayal of Muslim piety (1). Ileana Dimitriu further frames *Minaret* within a "cultural turn" in postcolonial studies, emphasizing alternative forms of belonging through spiritual identity, drawing on Bill Ashcroft's concept of the "transnation" to argue that diasporic individuals like Najwa find rootedness in faith, transcending home/exile binaries (119–120).

1. Biography of Leila Aboulela:

Leila Aboulela was born in 1964 in Cairo, Egypt, to an Egyptian mother and a Sudanese father. She grew up in Khartoum, Sudan, where she attended English-speaking schools and later earned a degree in Economics from the University of Khartoum in 1985. In 1990, she moved to Aberdeen, Scotland, with her family. This move inspired her literary career, and her first novel, *The Translator* (1999), was widely praised for its focus on Islamic faith. Her second novel, *Minaret* (2005), further cemented her reputation as a writer for whom the imperatives of belief are central, portraying Muslim women's experiences with faith, migration, and identity. Gilmour highlights Aboulela's aim to "contest western stereotypes and mistranslations of Islam" in *Minaret*, presenting London as a space where Islamic

identity can be recast through multilingual communities (210). Aboulela's work is often framed as "halal fiction," a term coined by *The Muslim News* for *The Translator*, though this label risks reducing her writing to anthropological "insights into the mind of the 'other'" (Morey 2). Hunter praises Aboulela's lyrical prose and her challenge to Islamophobic stereotypes but critiques her tendency to reinforce certain gendered constraints, particularly in *Minaret*'s depiction of female withdrawal from public life (10). Dimitriu underscores Aboulela's contribution to postcolonial literature, noting her exploration of spiritual rootedness as a counter-narrative to traditional migration stories of loss (120).

2. Plot Overview of *Minaret*:

Minaret follows the life of Najwa, a young woman who experiences a dramatic fall from her affluent lifestyle in Sudan. After her father's execution during the Second Sudanese Civil War, she and her family flee to London. Stripped of her previous social status, Najwa faces the harsh realities of exile, working as a nanny for a wealthy Muslim family. Throughout the novel, Najwa deals with personal losses, including her mother's death, her brother Omar's descent into drug abuse, and a failed romantic relationship with Anwar, a Marxist activist. Gilmour notes that Najwa's narrative blends English and Arabic, grappling with the untranslatability of concepts like *bahdala*—a word expressing a "frightening dissolution" tied to migrant women's experiences (208). Hunter notes that Najwa "increasingly turns to the emotional and psychological security that she gains from her faith and her visits to a mosque," a process reflected in the novel's cyclical structure that mirrors her spiritual journey (4). Dimitriu highlights Najwa's transition from a secular, privileged life in Khartoum to a humble existence in London, where she finds solace in Islam, contrasting her past decadence with her present faith-driven "home-making" (123–4). However, amidst

these challenges, she gradually finds solace in her Islamic faith, guided by women at the mosque and her growing spiritual conviction. Najwa's adoption of the *hijab* becomes a pivotal act, shielding her from objectifying gazes while exposing her to new forms of scrutiny, as when she is verbally attacked as "Muslim scum" on a bus (Canpolat 16, quoting Aboulela 81). Though her romance with Tamer, the son of her employer, offers a glimpse of hope, it ultimately ends, symbolizing her acceptance of faith and detachment from worldly desires. Hunter critiques this resolution, arguing that Najwa's acceptance of a diminished social role—"Slowly, surely I was settling at the bottom. It felt oddly comfortable, painless" (7)—reflects a problematic quietism that limits her agency.

3. Islamic Spirituality and Post-Secularism:

One of the central themes in *Minaret* is the novel's post-secular stance, which critiques secular individualism while advocating for the empowerment found in religious faith, specifically Islam. Morey introduces *Minaret* as a novel that "communicates a life of Islamic faith" while facing criticism for its perceived "endorsement of submissiveness" and silence on political issues, critiques that stem from a secular bias in literary expectations (1). Najwa's journey from privilege to hardship parallels her internal transformation, where she turns away from the superficial values of her former life and embraces Islamic spirituality. The novel's opening with the untranslated Qur'anic Arabic phrase *"Bism Allahi, Ar-rahman, Ar-raheem"* signals the limits of translation and the sanctity of Islamic concepts (Gilmour 211).The novel's opening line—"I've come down in the world"—sets the tone for Najwa's journey, mirroring Qur'anic and Biblical motifs of fall and redemption (Morey 11). Hunter elaborates that Najwa's faith becomes a refuge from personal and political upheavals, but her "quietist 'solution'" of withdrawing from

public life raises concerns about reinforcing stereotypes of Muslim women's passivity (7). Dimitriu aligns this with a "spiritual turn" in postcolonial studies, citing Thomas Tweed's view of religion as "making homes and crossing boundaries," central to Najwa's journey (122). Her Ramadan epiphany—"I felt a kind of peace ... it was like starting afresh, wanting to be clean, crying for it" (125)—marks purification, with mosque visits and hijab adoption symbolizing agency: "I was another version of myself ... the skill of concealing, rather than emphasizing" (126). Through her experiences, Aboulela challenges the assumption that religious belief is incompatible with modern life or that it is somehow aberrant. Postsecularism, defined as a critique of secular norms, encompasses thinkers like Talal Asad and Saba Mahmood, who challenge the "secularization thesis" that religion recedes in modernity (Morey 3). Hunter draws on Mahmood to highlight the tension between feminism and Islamic piety, noting that secular feminists often view religious traditions as oppressive, a perspective that struggles to accommodate Najwa's spiritual empowerment (1-2). Dimitriu notes critics like Ball praising Aboulela's "Islamic humanism," though debates persist on its apolitical nature (127).

Aboulela presents Islamic faith as a viable path to personal fulfillment, contrasting Najwa's spiritual awakening with the moral ambiguity and emotional emptiness of secularism. Canpolat highlights how Najwa's choice to wear the *hijab* renders her "invisible" to male objectification—"The builders who had leered down at me from the scaffoldings couldn't see me any more" (Canpolat 13, quoting Aboulela 247)—yet this act of agency simultaneously exposes her to Islamophobic hostility, illustrating the complex interplay of gendered and religious identities (16). Najwa's toxic relationship with Anwar, a staunch Marxist, represents the failure of secular ideologies to offer deep, meaningful connections. Gilmour observes that Najwa finds

solace in *tajweed* (Qur'anic recitation), where "all is calm and peaceful" (216), contrasting with the "playful hybridity" of her failed relationship with Anwar, which reflects her "shattered self" (213). In contrast, her religious community, especially the women at the mosque, provides her with a sense of belonging and peace. This highlights Aboulela's subtle critique of Western secularism, suggesting that faith can offer a more profound sense of identity and purpose. Morey highlights Mahmood's *Politics of Piety*, which redefines agency as "performance of pious behaviour" rather than liberal autonomy, aligning with Najwa's embrace of submission as empowerment (6).

4. Critique of Secularist Individualism:

Minaret challenges the notion of secularist individualism, which often dismisses or marginalizes religious belief. Through Najwa's character, Aboulela critiques this worldview, showing how secularism, while dominant in Western society, lacks the moral and spiritual depth that religion offers. Critics like Sadia Abbas and Wail Hassan dismiss Najwa's submission as "fundamentalist," but Morey attributes their discomfort to *Minaret*'s rejection of secular genre conventions, such as the *Bildungsroman*'s focus on self-realization (Morey 3–4). Hunter similarly critiques Najwa's passivity, arguing that her nostalgia for an idealized past—"I would like to be [Tamer's] family's concubine, like something out of *The Arabian Nights*" (6)—reflects a rejection of modern agency, contrasting sharply with the active, intellectual piety of male characters in Aboulela's *Lyrics Alley* (7). Dimitriu emphasizes Anwar's dismissal of Najwa's spiritual growth as exposing secular modernity's hypocrisy, with his outdated communism contrasting her faith-driven clarity (125). Canpolat argues that Najwa's downcast gaze and veiled body resist Western scopic regimes, yet her refusal to reciprocate the gaze does not fully subvert power imbalances, reflecting the

limitations of resisting intersecting oppressions (15). Gilmour underscores that Aboulela emphasizes “fidelity” to Islamic truth, with the Qur’an’s untranslatability anchoring Najwa’s identity against the instability of secular influences (216). Najwa’s spiritual transformation stands in stark contrast to the shallow, self-centered pursuits of other characters in the novel, particularly Anwar. Through Islam, Najwa finds clarity, strength, and a deeper sense of self, demonstrating the novel’s advocacy for a spiritual worldview in a world dominated by secular ideologies. The ending, where Najwa accepts money to abandon her romance with Tamer for pilgrimage, subverts secular expectations, aligning with Mahmood’s "politics of piety" and emphasizing communalist over individualist values (Morey 12). Dimitriu underscores faith as Najwa’s path to rootedness, challenging secular reductionism (127).

5. Aboulela’s Reputation and the Role of Religious Faith in Fiction:

Leila Aboulela has garnered a reputation as a writer who places religious faith at the center of her work. Her first novel, *The Translator*, is often hailed as the first “Halal novel” in English literature, focusing on the role of Islamic faith in shaping the choices of its protagonists. Morey notes that while critics like Nash praise Aboulela’s “subtle transgressive discourse,” her “representative status” is constrained by “discursive frames” shaped by power dynamics that demand authentic Muslim voices (Morey 2). In *Minaret*, faith is not portrayed as a passive or restrictive force but as an active source of empowerment for Najwa. Gilmour highlights that the Regent’s Park mosque in the novel symbolizes a polyglot, feminized space where linguistic diversity coexists with the “untouchable” Arabic of the Qur’an, reinforcing faith’s role in community-building (214). Hunter acknowledges this strength but argues that Aboulela’s focus on universal Islamic identity risks reinforcing Western stereotypes of Muslims as a homogeneous group, noting that “Aboulela does not counter—but

instead reinforces—what Poole notes as a consistent feature of the British press: 'the main significance and focus on Islam is global'" (9). Dimitriu highlights Aboulela's challenge to secular/spiritual binaries, with Najwa's pilgrimage to Mecca symbolizing a transnational Muslim community over fixed geography, per Aboulela's words: "I can carry religion with me wherever I go" (127). The novel invites readers to reconsider the rigid division between secular and spiritual, suggesting that both spheres can coexist and even enrich one another. This is part of a broader critique of the secular/spiritual dichotomy, as Aboulela explores how faith can offer healing and resilience in the face of life's challenges. Canpolat underscores that Aboulela's portrayal of Najwa engages with the visibility of Muslim women in post-9/11 literature, framing their representation as a site of intervention against reductive stereotypes (1). Morey suggests that the novel's spiritual agenda creates a "mismatch between form and putative message," as its unvarnished realism clashes with its dogmatic tone, excluding dissenting voices (8–9).

6. Post-Colonial and Diasporic Themes:

In addition to its religious themes, *Minaret* also addresses post-colonial concerns, particularly the experience of diasporic individuals navigating their identities across borders. Najwa's life is marked by a transnational existence, moving from Sudan to London and adapting to her new reality as an immigrant. This movement is not just physical but also cultural and spiritual. Gilmour describes London as a "node in a deterritorialized transnational linguistic order," where Najwa's multilingual experience reflects the city's role as a space of translation (210). Canpolat's analysis enriches this perspective by examining how Najwa navigates the "scopic dilemmas" of being a Muslim woman in a Western context, where her *hijab* both protects her from sexist objectification and exposes her to gendered

Islamophobia, such as being called “Muslim scum” (Canpolat 16, quoting Aboulela 81). Canpolat argues that this reflects the “gendered nature of Islamophobia,” where visible Muslim identity makes women uniquely vulnerable to hate crimes (16). Hunter extends this critique, arguing that Aboulela’s universalist portrayal of Islam neglects local nuances and the political struggles of Muslim women, particularly in the context of the Arab uprisings, thus limiting the novel’s engagement with active feminist resistance (9). Her journey reflects the broader experience of diaspora, where concepts of home and exile, secularism and spirituality, are constantly negotiated. Dimitriu frames Najwa’s journey through Ashcroft’s “transnation,” a fluid space beyond national identities, aligning with Deleuze and Guattari’s “smooth space” to emphasize non-binary belonging (121). Najwa “rehooks” to Islam to navigate dislocation, per James Clifford’s articulation theory, finding rootedness in a transnational Muslim community (Dimitriu 122, 127). Morey argues that *Minaret* questions postsecularism’s binary view of the “West/East divide,” proposing instead a focus on shared narrative structures that transcend cultural boundaries (1–2). Najwa’s return to faith in London, far from her homeland, symbolizes the possibility of finding a sense of rootedness and identity through religion, even in a foreign land.

7. Bildungsroman and Spiritual Growth:

Minaret fits into the Bildungsroman genre, as it charts the psychological and moral growth of Najwa from youth to adulthood. Her transformation is not just about adapting to external circumstances, such as her fall from privilege, but also about a profound internal shift in values and beliefs. Morey turns to Northrop Frye’s archetypal criticism to argue that Najwa’s “descent and ascent” echo cross-cultural mythic structures, such as those found in Qur’anic and Biblical narratives, challenging Said’s critique of Frye’s Eurocentrism (11–2). Hunter describes this arc as

culminating in Najwa's acceptance of a diminished role, quoting her reflection: "The ceiling has caved in the floor is gutted and the crumbling walls are smeared with guilt" (7), which underscores her spiritual purification but also her retreat from public agency. Dimitriu highlights Najwa's Ramadan turning point and hijab adoption as agency, with critics like Ball noting empowerment, though Hunter questions its quietism (125–7). Canpolat's reading complements this by suggesting that Najwa's spiritual growth involves resisting the Western gaze, though her veiled resistance remains partial, unable to fully dismantle the power dynamics of racial and gendered oppression (15). Gilmour emphasizes that Najwa's mistrust of linguistic instability, seen in her rejection of Anwar's hybridity, aligns with her spiritual growth, finding stability in the untranslatable sanctity of the Qur'an (213). Najwa's spiritual awakening, symbolized by the refrain "wash my sins with ice," represents her process of purification, as she moves away from the materialistic values of her past and embraces a life of humility and faith. The novel's focus on her moral and spiritual development makes it a classic example of a coming-of-age story, but one that centers on the rediscovery of faith as the key to personal growth.

8. **Translingual Identity and the Politics of Cultural Translation in *Minaret***

Aboulela defines herself as a "translator," working between Britain and Sudan, and Najwa's narrative reflects this duality. As Najwa moves from Khartoum to London, her identity is translated from one cultural context to another, yet this translation is not seamless. Gilmour's concept of "translational writing" is central here, as *Minaret* "dramatiz[es] the processes of translation" through Najwa's blend of English and Arabic, challenging the assumed link between language and national identity (207). The novel highlights the untranslatability of Islamic concepts, such as

bahdala, which encapsulates the "frightening dissolution" of migrant women's experiences, resisting Western linguistic dominance (208). Najwa must find a balance between her Sudanese heritage and the realities of life in Britain, often facing misrepresentations and stereotyping that distort her identity. Canpolat notes that Najwa's visible Muslim identity, marked by the *hijab*, positions her within a "binarized model of seeing" that oscillates between racist and sexist gazes, complicating her cultural translation in a Western context (17). Dimitriu aligns this with the "transnation," where Najwa's faith transcends fixed identities, navigating dislocation through spiritual reorientation (121–2). Hunter critiques Aboulela's universalist approach, suggesting that it reinforces Western media's portrayal of Islam as predominantly foreign, quoting Elizabeth Poole: "Images of Islam ... in people's minds [are] predominantly 'foreign'" (2). Her experience reflects Aboulela's desire to counter stereotypical portrayals of Sudan and Muslim women, offering instead a nuanced, authentic perspective. Morey notes that the novel's first-person narration reinforces its spiritual focus but risks a "dogmatic" tone by excluding alternative perspectives, a stylistic choice that shapes its cultural translation (9).

The concept of *bahdala*, as Gilmour explains, is pivotal, representing a "frightening dissolution" that captures the emotional and physical toll of Najwa's migration (208). This untranslatable term encapsulates her struggles with dignity and belonging, yet it also catalyzes her spiritual awakening, acting as a form of "spiritual medicine" toward wisdom and humility (208). As an immigrant and a woman, Najwa experiences *bahdala* through her challenges, but this process leads to empowerment through faith. Gilmour further notes that English dominates as the language of global capital in the novel, while Arabic, particularly Qur'anic Arabic, represents spiritual stability, creating an "asymmetric language power" that Najwa navigates (213).

In *Minaret*, Leila Aboulela engages deeply with the politics of language, translation, and identity from a translingual perspective, reflecting the complex intersections of postcolonial identity. Najwa's narrative operates within two linguistic and cultural frameworks—Arabic and English—mirroring her movement between identities as she navigates life in London as a Sudanese Muslim woman. Gilmour emphasizes that London, as a "space of translation," becomes a crucible where Najwa negotiates linguistic and cultural identities, with the Regent's Park mosque symbolizing a feminized, multilingual community (214, 222). Canpolat's critique of the novel's "binarized model" suggests that Najwa's identity negotiation is constrained by the inability to fully capture the overlapping effects of racialized and gendered oppression, such as gendered Islamophobia (17). This interplay between languages highlights both empowerment and struggle, as language becomes a site where Najwa's postcolonial identity is negotiated and redefined. Morey's use of Frye's "mythological universe" theory helps reconcile *Minaret*'s Islamic themes with Western literary traditions, framing Najwa's journey as a universal narrative of redemption (11).

Aboulela uses English to convey the emotional and spiritual lives of her Muslim women protagonists while resisting the distortions imposed by Western misrepresentations. Gilmour argues that Aboulela's fidelity to Islamic values contrasts with the linguistic hybridity embraced in other works, anchoring Najwa's identity in the untranslatable Qur'an (216). Najwa's life in London symbolizes the tensions between her Sudanese past and her present in a secular, multicultural city. London, as depicted in *Minaret*, is not merely a backdrop but a crucible of linguistic and cultural translation. It becomes a space where immigrants like Najwa constantly negotiate between languages, cultures, and identities, exemplifying the translingualism that

defines many postcolonial narratives. The city itself serves as a metaphor for the ongoing process of translation, where identities are fluid and always in a state of becoming.

II. Conclusion:

Leila Aboulela's *Minaret* offers a rich and nuanced exploration of identity, migration, and spirituality in the modern world. Through Najwa's journey, the novel critiques the limitations of secularist individualism while presenting Islamic faith as a source of strength, clarity, and personal fulfillment. Gilmour concludes that *Minaret* reimagines London as a "space of translation," where Najwa's fidelity to Islamic truth navigates the complexities of linguistic and cultural displacement (222). Canpolat argues that the novel's portrayal of Najwa's negotiation of racist and sexist gazes calls for a more integrated paradigm to understand Muslim women's oppression, drawing on black feminism's concept of "double jeopardy" (17). Hunter concludes that while Aboulela challenges Islamophobia, her gendered portrayals—Najwa's retreat versus the intellectual authority of male figures in *Lyrics Alley*—fall short of addressing the "anger and suffering" of Muslim women active in emancipation, echoing Amina Wadud's call for a "gender jihad" beyond the mosque (10). Morey concludes that *Minaret*'s "narrative tropes" reveal enduring spiritual patterns in literature, complicating postsecular binaries and affirming the novel's place as a potential postsecular text (12). Dimitriu advocates for postcolonial studies to embrace spiritual dimensions, with Najwa's faith-driven rootedness exemplifying "home as a state of mind," challenging secular biases and fundamentalism per Ashcroft's vision of the "sacral" (131–2). Aboulela's exploration of post-secularism, the diasporic experience, and the tension between secular and spiritual values positions *Minaret* as a powerful narrative of transformation and resilience. At its core, the novel calls for a

reconsideration of the place of faith in contemporary life, offering a balanced and empathetic portrayal of the complexities of belief in a secular age.

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Comprehension and Review Exercises 2

Activity 1: Overview on Anglophone Arab Literature

This activity tests your understanding of the key concepts, definitions, characteristics, and historical overview from the lecture on Anglophone Arab Literature. It includes multiple-choice questions (MCQs) and fill-in-the-gaps questions.

Multiple-Choice Questions:

1. What does Anglophone Arab Literature primarily comprise?

   a) Creative writing in Arabic by European authors

   b) Creative writing in English by Arab authors or authors of Arab descent

   c) Translations of Arab folklore into English

   d) Political memoirs by Arab leaders in English

2. According to the lecture, what event significantly increased attention to Anglophone Arab Literature?

   a) The Arab Spring

   b) The publication of Khalil Gibran's The Prophet

   c) The events of 9/11

   d) The establishment of missionary schools in the Middle East

3. Which of the following is NOT listed as a characteristic of Anglophone Arab Literature?

   a) Concerns with hybridity and in-betweenness

   b) Issues of cultural and relational identification

   c) Focus on purely historical events without personal themes

   d) Struggle between assimilation and preservation

4. In the historical overview, which period is associated with the Mahjar authors like Rihani, Gibran, and Naimy?

   a) 1950–1970

   b) Beginning of the 20th century - 1950

c) 1970 – Present

d) Post-9/11 era

5. What term does Homi Bhabha use to describe a 'third place' in the context of migration and hybridity?

   a) Diaspora

   b) Exile

   c) In-betweenness

   d) Transculturalism

Fill-in-the-Gaps Questions:

6. The quotation from Etel Adnan in the introduction describes a situation of being always away from something and somewhere, indicative of the _____ of many hyphenated Arabs.
7. Anglophone Arab Literature has recently attracted interest as a means of learning more about Arabs' intellectual and spiritual makeup, functioning as _____ mediators through works by authors like Fadia Faqir and Ahdaf Soueif.
8. The first Anglophone Arab poetry collection, titled _____, was published in 1905 in America.
9. During the 1950–1970 period, Arab students in British colleges were often victims of cultural _____, yearning to express themselves in the language of the 'superior' Other.
10. Contemporary Anglophone Arab works discuss topics such as narratives of emigration, immigration, and forced assimilation, as well as issues of race, _____, and Orientalized relations of gender and sexual desire.

Activity 2: Leila Aboulela's Minaret as a Case Study

This activity tests your understanding of the biography, plot, themes, and critical analyses from the lecture on Leila Aboulela's Minaret. It includes multiple-choice questions (MCQs) and fill-in-the-gaps questions.

Multiple-Choice Questions:

1. Where was Leila Aboulela born, and what inspired her literary career?

   a) Khartoum, Sudan; Her university studies in Economics

   b) Cairo, Egypt; Her move to Aberdeen, Scotland

   c) London, England; Political turmoil in Sudan

   d) Aberdeen, Scotland; Missionary schools in the Middle East

2. In the plot of Minaret, what pivotal act symbolizes Najwa's spiritual transformation and agency?

   a) Her relationship with Anwar

   b) Her adoption of the hijab

   c) Her work as a nanny

   d) Her brother's descent into drug abuse

Fill-in-the-Gaps Questions:

3. Leila Aboulela's first novel, The Translator, is often hailed as the first "_____ novel" in English literature, focusing on the role of Islamic faith.
4. In Minaret, Najwa's journey reflects a post-secular stance, critiquing _____ individualism while advocating for empowerment through religious faith.

Analytical Question:

Analyze how Leila Aboulela's Minaret portrays the protagonist Najwa's adoption of the hijab as both an act of empowerment and a site of vulnerability within the context of postcolonial diaspora and Islamophobia, drawing on specific examples from the novel and insights from critics such as Seda Canpolat and Eva Hunter as discussed in the lecture.

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Lecture Three: An Overview on Anglophone Canadian Literature

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I. Introduction:

Together with three territories, Canada has one francophone province (Quebec), one bilingual province (New Brunswick), and eight Anglophone provinces (Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, and Saskatchewan). In terms of spoken language, the situation is even more complicated: Aboriginal languages are many, and the population of Canada includes many other linguistic communities as a result of immigration from Asia, Scandinavia, and other places. All of these groups' histories are entwined, and students of Canadian literature should have a basic understanding of the country's complicated linguistic position.

II. Definition of Canadian Literature:

Canadian literature, the body of literary works produced by Canadians and/or about Canada. It is written in English, French, and in the Aboriginal or

diasporic languages, as well as English translations of literary texts (Hammill 4). It is also important to note that Canadian literature: “begins before written texts existed: with the oral stories of Canada's First Peoples” (Lane 1). Indeed, Canadian literature represents the variety that this country beholds. Actually, the “Canadian voice” is not uniform since Canadian culture continues to be shaped by the use of a variety of languages, as well as considerable variances in geography, social experience, Indigenous cultures, immigration patterns, and closeness to Europe, Asia, and the United States (The Canadian encyclopedia). In fact, Sugars asserts in the introduction of *The Oxford Handbook of Canadian Literature* that in many of the early histories and anthologies of Canadian literature, critics posed such questions as: “What is distinctive about Canadian literature? Is there such a thing as a “Canadian” mentality or mode of expression? What is the connection between literature and nation?”. Such questions are usually asked because of Canada’s historical ties to its British, French, and Indigenous antecedents (3).

III. Definition of Canadian Anglophone Literature:

Canadian Anglophone literature can be also called: ‘Canadian literature in English’ refers to all Canadian literature that is originally produced in English. However, Faye Hammill in his book of *Canadian Literature* asserts that this literature must be carefully defined. He, thus, defines it as follows: “It generally refers to all Anglophone literary writing produced in what is now Canada, including the work of immigrant writers and certain temporary residents, as well as literature from regions which in the past were politically separate from Canada, such as Newfoundland” (4).

IV. A Socio-Historical Background of Canada:

The English and French literatures of Canada are largely believed to have grown along rather distinct paths, while mutual impact is undeniable. However,

whereas national literature might be split by language, national history cannot. The following is a brief summary of the main historical and political events that characterize Canada and which have a direct influence on its literature:

- France was Canada's first colonial power, with Jacques Cartier claiming the land along the Saint Lawrence River in the sixteenth century.
- Exploration in the Great Lakes and Mississippi basins was fueled by expansionism, which was often met with fierce hostility by Indian nations who kept a careful eye on French outposts.
- At the beginning of the eighteenth century, New France extended from Newfoundland and Acadia.
- However, as mentioned above, the vast majority of them were still European, and Canadian literature remained dominated by these roots throughout the 1970s and 1980s, despite the fact that the population of Canada was changing dramatically. Teachers who wanted their students to learn more about their ethnic roots through literature may point them to works by and about Scandinavian, German, Austrian, Italian, Ukrainian, and Hungarian immigrants. Even so, it took almost another decade for the explosive appearance of internationally acclaimed works from a wide range of cultural backgrounds to provide Canadian literature with its current diversity.
- Multicultural demographics and the international success of Canadian culture have both been connected to legislation enacted by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau (1968–79, 1980–4), and the two are inextricably intertwined. The Immigration Act of 1978, which established a broad political, cultural, and humanitarian purpose and stated nondiscrimination as one of its key principles, was a signpost for the former.

- The Multiculturalism Act of 1988, which ensures new Canadians' rights to "preserve, improve, and share their cultural heritage," can be considered as a follow-up to the Immigration Act (Thacker 3-7).

V. Canadian Literary Periods:

Canadian literature from all periods is shaped by Canada's particular social and physical landscapes, and by its history, and the following literary periods (as Hammill divides them) assists in showing what makes this body of literature distinctive since there is: "at present no critical overview of Anglophone Canadian literature in print" (4).

Most literary historical narratives require a rough separation into periods, and in the case of Canada, it is useful to consider in terms of the country's political growth, because its key shifts coincide with some noticeable advances in the national literary canon's broad patterns. As a result, the following study examines the major literary forms in each of four periods.

The first period concentrates on the previous colonial era, when France and Britain struggled for dominance over the regions that would form Canada, while the second section focuses on the nineteenth century, when Canada was ruled by Britain and flooded with European emigrants. In their attempts to interact with North American subject matter, writers in these two periods were mostly reliant on European aesthetic traditions, but some began to experiment with form and genre (Hammil 5).

1. Earlier Colonial Era: to 1815

The early seventeenth-century memoirs of explorers, missionaries, and fur-traders provide the foundation of Canadian literary history; the majority of this work is in French. It wasn't until the 1780s that important Anglophone exploration

accounts, documenting the journeys of explorers like George Vancouver, James Cook, and Alexander Mackenzie, began to appear. English Canada's earliest imaginative writing was written by English, Scottish, and Irish colonists and colonial officials in mid-eighteenth-century Nova Scotia, and their essays, journals, and Augustan verse demonstrate a desire to uphold British traditions while also valuing local culture. In 1751, the first printing press in Canada was brought to Halifax, and several presses followed in: Quebec (1764), Saint John (1783), Montreal (1785), Charlottetown (1787) and Niagara (1793), as literary production became established in those areas (Hammil 5-6).

The History of Emily Montague (1769) is the first novel published in and about Canada. It was written by Frances Brooke, an Englishwoman who lived five years in the town of Quebec following the British conquest of New France. Brooke employs an imported form of feeling novel, but she was the first author to capitalize on the novelty, exoticism, and topicality of New World subject matter for a British audience. *Bogle Corbet*; or, *The Emigrants* (1831), Frederick Marryat's *The Settlers in Canada* (1844), and R. M. Ballantyne's *Snowflakes and Sunbeams*; or, *The Young Fur Traders* (1844) were later books by visiting British authors (1856) (Hammil 6).

Thousands of United Empire Loyalists traveled north to what was left of British North America during the American Revolution in the 1770s and 1780s. Although Dutch, German, and Iroquois peoples joined the northward movement, it was the English Loyalists who had the largest intellectual and cultural influence. With the founding of the Nova Scotia Magazine and Comprehensive Review of Literature, Politics, and News in 1789, the educated population enabled the establishment of periodicals; while the new magazines initially relied primarily on reprints from foreign journals, they also published some locally produced fiction and poetry.

Several Canadian citizens published volumes of poetry at this time, either in London or through the fledgling colonial printers (Hammil 6).

The colonial ambition to be a part of a worldwide cultural reality is revealed in the poetry of the 1780s and 1790s, which was thought to be best conveyed in European – and especially English – literature. Some poets described British North American life and environment, but only within the confines of inherited literary conventions and beliefs (Hammil 6-7).

2. **Emigration and Settlement: 1815- 1867**

Following the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the United Empire Loyalists were joined by additional settlers of English heritage, many of whom were former officers who were either unemployed or on half-pay. While English parishes frequently sent paupers over the Atlantic, the sons of impoverished genteel families also traveled to Canada, either in official roles or to take up land concessions. Scottish families and towns had been freely emigrating to Upper Canada since the 1750s, and many more were forced to emigrate by famines and Highland clearances in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The largest influx of immigrants, however, came from Ireland, as a result of the late-1840s potato famine (Hammil 7).

Poets in Canada were becoming more concerned in the uniqueness of the colonial experience, and literary subjects included local mythology and history, Native Canadian culture, and the exodus and settlement experience. This increased focus on the immediate area, on the other hand, had no effect on the emotional and cultural attachment to the United Kingdom. The anti-American sentiment shared by these diverse groups bolstered Britain's relationship with its remaining North American colonies, as evidenced by much of the literature written in Canada (Hammil 7).

Oliver Goldsmith, the great-nephew of the author of The Vicar of Wakefield (1766), was the first Canadian-born poet to publish a volume of verse, The Rising Village, an epic of settlement (1825). Julia Beckwith Hart's St Ursula's Convent (1824) and Richardson's Wacousta were the first novels written by Canadian authors (1832) (Hammil 7).

As authors resorted to more constrained places in the nineteenth century, a school of nature writing purportedly distinct from the adventure narratives with their emphasis on immense landscapes and personal courage began to emerge. Even if downsized to the size of a writer's home garden, the core philosophical concerns remained the same (Irmscher 100).

3. Confederation and the Earlier Twentieth Century: 1867- 1950

Following Canada's confederation as a dominion (i.e., a self-governing province within the British Empire), the imperialist movement advocated for a stronger empire to oppose America's dominance. 'Canada First,' a political, intellectual, and literary organization founded by the poet Charles Mair, shared similar ideas. He and his contemporaries, such as Isabella Valancy Crawford and the Confederation Poets (Charles G. D. Roberts, Archibald Lampman, Bliss Carman, and Duncan Campbell Scott), attempted to treat the universal human themes of western literature while adding a uniquely Canadian dimension through the use of local settings and history. They advocated for the formation of a Canadian authors' society and a national literary journal in the 1890s, but it would be more than that (Hammil 8-9).

The poet E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake), Canada's most famous Native writer, emerged in the 1890s, revealing a dynamic between the oral culture she

inherited from her Mohawk father and the English literary legacy bequeathed by her White mother in her work.

The majority of Canadian novelists and readers preferred idealistic, often didactic writing and despised realism and naturalism's influence. *Anne of Green Gables* (1908), by L. M. Montgomery, was a far more emblematic work for this period than *The Imperialist* (1904). The latter is also particularly notable for its focus on the character and quality of life in a Canadian community, a focus that her successors such as Robertson Davies, Margaret Laurence, and Alice Munro would endorse (Thacker 16). Idealistic romances, family sagas, and animal stories were popular throughout the 1920s, with authors such as Montgomery, Nellie McClung, Marshall Saunders, and Mazo de la Roche among the most well-known literary names. Following the war years of the 1940s and the drab 1950s, Canada began to demonstrate fresh interest in its own cultural activities. In 1965, the Canada Council began actively sponsoring writers. In Québec, the Quiet Revolution had generated an outburst of literary activity; in the rest of Canada, many poets had emerged through coffee houses and public readings, more novelists and short-story writers were becoming known, and Expo 67, the Montreal world's fair, had created a fresh national self-confidence (17).

Canadian fiction was largely unaffected by literary modernism, which favored an internationalist style (although there were a few exceptions, notably Morley Callaghan, who was intermittently attracted to modernist forms). Modernism, on the other hand, had a significant – if relatively late – influence on poetry (Hammil 9).

4. Cultural Nationalism and Multiculturalism: 1951to Present

In 1951, the Massey Commission, formally known as the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters, and Sciences, issued a report. It looked

at how the arts, research, broadcasting, and conservation could be used to develop a sense of national identity, and came to the conclusion that the United States posed a cultural threat to Canada. The report proposed that government-sponsored institutions and financial agencies be established, and as a result, the National Library of Canada and the Canada Council for the Arts were established in 1953 and 1957, respectively. The Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Ontario, McClelland and Stewart's New Canadian Library series of classic titles, and the academic journal *Canadian Literature* are all literary organizations that stretch back to the 1950s (Hammil 10-1).

In the decades that followed, the amount of new work in all genres increased dramatically. Davies, Richler, Margaret Laurence, Mavis Gallant, Alice Munro, Margaret Atwood, and Norman Levine were among the first Canadian novelists to attain international acclaim. The literary concerns of these authors and their peers are numerous and diverse, but it is worth noting that the traditional Canadian preoccupation with wilderness was beginning to evolve into a concern with environmental issues; that gender politics were becoming increasingly prominent; and that interest in the relationship with Britain had largely been superseded by concerns about the US's economic and cultural power (Hammill 11).

Cultural nationalism and Canadian ideals were prominent in the 1960s and 1970s. The approach known as thematic criticism was used by literary critics to conduct surveys of the national literature and highlighted works that they believed exhibited typically Canadian preoccupations. Indeed, there are different ways in which Anglophone Canadian literature addresses citizenship issues (Sarkowsky 181). The government supported Canadian culture by awarding prizes and fellowships to artists and authors, as well as encouraging Canadian study abroad.

Canada became increasingly autonomous in practically all policy areas during the course of the twentieth century, but it was not until 1982 that the constitution was patriated (transferred from Westminster to Ottawa). Even though Queen Elizabeth II remained as head of state, this meant that Canada had finally terminated its practical political subordination to Britain. Politicians and intellectuals in Canada were suddenly less worried.

In 1971, Canada had become the first country to implement an official policy of multiculturalism, largely in response to tensions between Anglophone and francophone citizens, and in 1988a fresh piece of legislation emphasised the multiracial, multilingual nature of Canadian society and sought to foster appreciation of minority cultures (Sugars 28-Sarkowsky 184). Educators, critics and canon-makers increasingly recognised the significance of ethnic minority and Native Canadian writers, although there was still a danger that such writers would be exoticised, or interpreted according to White paradigms (Hammill 11).The enthusiasm for Highway's plays, for instance, which are today among the most extensively produced Aboriginal creations in the world, reflects the positive response to a new generation of Aboriginal theater in English in Canada (Lane 166).

A significant proportion of late twentieth- and twenty-first-century Canadian literature, particularly in the prominent genre of life writing, deals with migration, exile, and diasporic experience. The rise of the postmodern historical fiction is also noteworthy, and in many of these works, a love with Canadian history coexists with skepticism about the entire endeavor of creating national histories (Sugars 24). Frank Davey believes that: “postmodernism [in Canada, at least] had emerged among various 1960sdiscourses of alternativity and multiplicity” (34).Many of today's most well-known novelists are also poets (Anne Michaels, Robert Kroetsch, Dionne Brand,

and a slew of others), while a slew of experimental writers blur the lines between poetry and fiction, history, and autobiography (Daphne Marlatt, George Elliott Clarke, Michael Ondaatje and others).Timothy Findley, Tomson Highway, Ann-Marie Macdonald, John Mighton, and Richard Greenblatt are only a few of the most accomplished playwrights in Canada(Hammill 12).Canadian literature is thus, as Robert Thacker asserts: “not American literature. It is no longer English literature [either]” (2).

VI. Conclusion

The different literary periods in Canadian literature prove its diversity and the richness. Indeed, this literature has always been influenced by the country's unique social and physical settings, as well as its history. Three connected trends have had a significant impact on the production and reception of modern writing in Canada: the rise of literary stardom, the proliferation of book prizes, and the emergence of mass reading events. Atwood, Ondaatje, Alice Munro, and Yann Martel, for example, have become international celebrities and are now at the center of heated arguments about literary worth, popularity, and the economics of culture.

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Lecture on: Alice Munro's "Passion"

As a Case Study for Anglophone Canadian Literature

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1. Introduction to Alice Munro

Alice Munro, born on July 10, 1931, is a renowned Canadian short story writer. She was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2013 for her mastery of the short story form. Munro's works are celebrated for their deep exploration of human complexity, often focusing on ordinary lives with surprising depth and complexity. Her stories delve into the ethical and emotional intricacies of human relationships, as seen in "Passion," where characters navigate conflicting desires and societal expectations (Liu and Dai 1). Michael Trussler notes Munro's "fascination with connectedness," where her stories interweave themes and motifs across collections, akin to Proust's narrative technique of remembering, forgetting, and recasting components (184). Ginseppina Botta emphasizes Munro's ability to merge "external geographies and interior spaces," framing "Passion" as a narrative where remembered

spaces drive self-reflection and identity formation (2). Charles E. May argues that Munro's work exemplifies the short story's unique capacity to explore the ineffable and unfathomable, aligning her storytelling with the genre's inherent traits rather than novelistic techniques (172).

2. Overview of Passion

"Passion" tells the story of Grace, a woman in her later years reflecting on a pivotal period in her youth when she visited the family of her boyfriend, Maury Travers. During this visit, Grace became enchanted by the Travers family, especially Maury's mother, Mrs. Travers, and half-brother Neil.

The story touches on themes of unfulfilled expectations, life's unpredictability, and disillusionment. Grace's relationship with Maury fades as she becomes more entangled with Neil. Grace's ethical dilemmas are central, as she navigates multiple identities—abandoned daughter, fiancée, and craftswoman—ultimately abandoning Maury for Neil, a decision driven by desire and existential loneliness (Liu and Dai 1). Botta highlights Grace's dual journeys: the older Grace's methodical revisiting of the Ottawa Valley and the younger Grace's impulsive travels with Neil, which shape her self-perception and life choices (2–4). Ultimately, Grace's life is marked by loss—Neil dies in a car accident, and she is left reflecting on her decisions and how they shaped her life. Botta notes that Neil's death crystallizes Grace's transformation, enabling her to use Mr. Travers's gift of "$1,000... to insure her a start in life" (10). Neil's suicide, which mirrors Anna Karenina's death in Tolstoy's novel, underscores a nihilistic undertone, leaving Grace with unresolved guilt and a confrontation with existential emptiness (Trussler 188; Liu and Dai 1).

The story explores the moment when life takes an unexpected turn, emphasizing how these moments can shape us. Grace's acceptance of financial compensation from the Travers family after Neil's death reflects a pragmatic resolution, highlighting the complexity of her moral choices (Liu and Dai 7). Trussler describes Grace's realization of Neil's "metaphysical solitude" as a profound moment where she faces "a flat dark body of water that stretched on and on," echoing Levinas's concept of the *il y a*, a terrifying awareness of the void (187). The *il y a*, a term coined by philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, refers to the impersonal, anonymous existence that persists beneath all being—a kind of eerie, undifferentiated "there is" that evokes the dread of pure, meaningless presence. In the story, Grace's confrontation with Neil's "metaphysical solitude" mirrors this existential horror, as she faces the vast, unchanging void symbolized by the "flat dark body of water." This moment underscores her realization of life's inherent instability and the unsettling absence of meaning in the wake of loss, reinforcing how Levinas's concept illuminates her psychological and moral disorientation. The *il y a* thus becomes a lens through which Grace's crisis—caught between pragmatism and existential despair—is deepened, revealing how the story intertwines ethical choices with the haunting awareness of the void.

3. Critical Reception and Narrative Style

Munro's short stories have often been described as novelistic in scope due to their complexity. Tricia Springstubb notes this in her review, describing Passion as having a "lateral or metonymic complexity"—it moves through layers of emotion and experience, giving the impression of a much larger narrative packed into a short form. However, May rejects this novelistic label, arguing that Munro's complexity stems

from the short story's generic traits, which prioritize moments of mystery and mythic resonance over linear realism (172–73).

Merilyn Simonds, argues that Munro's stories can feel "haphazard and random," like life itself. However, Munro counters this in her essay That Is Real, asserting that her stories are structured like houses where every room connects and every detail is intentional, revealing new perspectives on the external world. Trussler reinforces this, citing Munro's metaphor of a story as a "house" where "you go inside and stay there for a while ... discovering how the room and corridors relate to each other" (192). This intentionality is evident in "Passion," where Munro weaves Grace's ethical conflicts and nihilistic reflections into a cohesive narrative, as noted by Liu and Dai, who draw on ethical literary criticism to analyze the story's moral depth (Liu and Dai 1). Botta situates "Passion" within the "spatial turn" in postmodern literature, using Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization to analyze how Grace's physical and emotional journeys intertwine (2). Trussler further highlights Munro's use of irony and intertextuality, such as references to *Anna Karenina*, to underscore the fragility of meaning, positioning her work within broader literary traditions like Absurdism and existential philosophy (188).

4. Themes and Stylistic Devices

4. 1. Complexity and Simplicity in Short Stories

While short stories are often distinguished from novels by their brevity and focus on a single episode, Munro's "Passion" challenges this notion. It condenses a lifetime of emotional development into a single narrative arc, showcasing how short stories can reflect the largeness of life in their smallness. Trussler argues that Munro's

later work incorporates novelistic techniques like “repetition, delay, and heteroglossia,” blurring the lines between short story and novel (195).

George Lukas claims that while a novel presents the totality of life, a short story zooms in on a critical moment that reveals the hero’s journey. Munro masterfully does this by focusing on Grace’s pivotal encounter with Neil, highlighting how that single moment has the power to define her future. Liu and Dai emphasize this through the lens of the “Sphinx factor,” where Grace’s desire-driven decision to pursue Neil over Maury encapsulates a transformative ethical conflict (Liu and Dai 5). May underscores that *“Passion”* derives its complexity from the short story’s inherent focus on moments “fraught with background,” contrasting the novel’s linear, social realism (173–74). He cites Richard Ford’s paradox: “Short stories want to give us something big but want to do it in precious little time and space” (181).

5. 2. Realism and the Immaterial World

In Munro’s works, characters may not behave according to the logical or social norms we expect. Instead, her characters often grapple with deep internal conflicts that are not always visible on the surface. This allows Munro to explore how people’s inner lives—their emotions, desires, and memories—shape their actions in ways that defy logic but resonate deeply with readers. Grace’s attraction to Neil, described in non-rational, almost animalistic terms, contrasts with her platonic view of Maury, illustrating this tension between desire and societal expectation (Liu and Dai 5).

Trussler draws parallels between Munro and Albert Camus, noting that both view art as a “self-conscious response to death” (185). He cites Munro’s interview with Graeme Gibson: “Writing is a way of convincing yourself perhaps that you’re doing something about [death]. You’re not really” (185–6). Liu and Dai further argue that

Neil's suicide reflects a nihilistic rejection of ethical responsibility, deepening the story's exploration of the immaterial world (1). May aligns "Passion" with the short story's "Hebraic" style, per Auerbach, which leaves much undefined and calls for interpretation, focusing on the immaterial through Grace's epiphany about Neil's despair as "final" and "everlasting" (173–4, 179). This suggests that Munro's storytelling, like biblical narratives, avoids excessive detail, instead inviting readers to engage deeply with the emotional and spiritual undercurrents of the characters' experiences. He connects this to Flannery O'Connor's view of the short story capturing the "mystery of personality," evident in Grace's inexplicable decision to accompany Neil (175). Here, May highlights how Munro, like O'Connor, is less concerned with logical motivations than with the enigmatic depths of human behavior, which resist easy explanation. Trussler emphasizes that Grace's epiphany about Neil's solitude—"Cold, level water. Looking out at such dark, cold, level water, and knowing it was all there is"—reveals the story's confrontation with existential nothingness (187). In this reading, Grace's moment of realization underscores the bleak, isolating nature of existence, where meaning is elusive and despair is profound.

4. 3. Time, Space, and Memory

"Passion" uses spatiotemporality to blend Grace's past and present. Older Grace revisits the places that were crucial in her youth, reflecting on how they shaped her. This dual journey through time (memory) and space (physical return) mirrors Grace's inner journey toward self-realization. Botta employs Deleuze and Guattari's concepts to describe this process: the older Grace's "re-territorialization" involves a methodical pilgrimage to "loci memoriae" like the Traverses' house, while the younger Grace's "nomadic" wanderings lack fixed points, exemplified by her driving along roads with "no signs" (3, 7–8). Memory proves unreliable, as Grace admits:

"her memory of this day remained clear and detailed, though there was a variation in the parts of it she dwelt on. And even in some of those details she must have been wrong" (6).

Munro emphasizes the way space and memory interact to create meaning. For example, Grace's return to the Travers family home triggers memories that recontextualize her past decisions, particularly her connection with Neil and the life-altering choices she made. Botta cites Yi-Fu Tuan to argue that revisiting places helps Grace "acquire a sense of self and identity" (6), while Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire* frames her journey as an attempt to reconcile past and present (7). This interplay is compounded by Grace's unresolved guilt over Neil's death, which Liu and Dai describe as a "sense of nothingness" tied to nihilistic themes (Liu and Dai 6). Trussler connects this to Munro's broader preoccupation with temporality, quoting the narrator of "Walker Brothers Cowboy": "The tiny share we have of time appalls me" (185).

4. 4. The Romantic and the Real

Grace's character arc contrasts her romantic notions of life and passion with the harsh realities she faces. Maury represents stability and predictability, while Neil embodies the unpredictable and destabilizing forces of life. Liu and Dai note that Grace's shift from Maury to Neil is driven by the "Sphinx factor," a clash between rationality and desire, with Neil representing the latter (5). Botta describes young Grace's journey with Neil as a Deleuzian "line of flight" from societal expectations, with her realization that marrying Maury would be "a treachery to herself" marking her rejection of convention (9–10). Neil's suicide, while unexpected, feels inevitable in the story's dreamlike logic—O'Connor argues that in short stories, some events are

meant to happen "despite everything," as part of the mythic structure of the narrative. Trussler reinforces this by comparing Neil's death to Anna Karenina's, noting that both illustrate how "human activity ... is only a 'distraction' from the presence of emptiness" (188).

Passion, as the title suggests, is not just about romantic love but also about the transfiguring force of events—those brief moments that change everything. This is reinforced by Munro's portrayal of Grace's pragmatic acceptance of the Travers family's money, a choice that Liu and Dai interpret as embodying "pragmatist ethics" while underscoring the fragility of human nature (7). Trussler concludes by reflecting on the shared existential despair in Munro and Tolstoy, quoting *Anna Karenina*: "The candle ... lit up for her all that had once been in darkness ... and went out for ever" (196).

6. The Role of Space in the Story

Space plays a crucial role in Grace's self-discovery. The places she revisits, such as the Travers home and the roads she traveled with Neil, are more than just settings; they are sites of memory. These spaces are deeply intertwined with her past and become symbols of her emotional journey. Botta's analysis underscores this, noting that Grace's older self engages in "re-territorialization," methodically revisiting familiar places to them new meaning, while her younger self's "nomadic" travels with Neil represent a "leap toward infinity" (7–8). For instance, older Grace notes changes in landmarks, such as the Woodses' house having only four doors instead of the eight she remembered, highlighting the unreliability of memory (7). Grace's longing for connection, particularly with Mrs. Travers, is tied to these spaces, though Mrs.

Travers's manipulative urging to "help stop Neil's alcohol abuse" complicates this bond (Liu and Dai 3).

Botta draws on Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire* to argue that Grace's return to these spaces is an attempt to reconcile her past with her present, helping her confront "the woman she would like to be and the one she is expected to become" (4, 7). The Travers home, in particular, becomes a site of both enchantment and trauma, reflecting Grace's fractured identity as an abandoned daughter and her unresolved ethical dilemmas (Liu and Dai 2). Botta concludes that Munro uses space as a catalyst for internal change, allowing Grace to "throw a new light on the process of her subjectification," ultimately leading to an independent future, possibly in Australia (11). Trussler's analysis of Munro's narrative style as akin to Adorno's "late style," with an "overabundance of material" reflecting mortality, suggests that these spaces also embody the weight of existential awareness (190).

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, Alice Munro's "Passion" demonstrates the power of short stories to encapsulate profound human experiences. Through Grace's journey, Munro explores the tension between expectation and reality, the ways in which memories shape identity, and how brief encounters can leave lasting marks on a person's life. Liu and Dai argue that the story reveals "the humility, fragility, and complexity of human nature" through Grace's struggles with passion, responsibility, and existential meaning, particularly in the wake of Neil's nihilistic act (8). Botta reinforces this, suggesting that Grace's spatial and emotional travels enable her to redefine her identity, merging external geographies with internal transformation (11). Trussler positions "Passion" as a meditation on metaphysical solitude, where art serves as a

fleeting rebellion against the absurdity of existence, yet ultimately acknowledges its limits (185–6).

Alice Munro's artistry lies in her ability to capture these transformative moments, making even the most fleeting experiences feel meaningful and significant. "Passion" is a testament to her skill as a writer, blending the romantic, the real, and the reflective in a narrative that lingers long after the final page.

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Comprehension and Review Exercises 3

Activity 1: Overview on Anglophone Canadian Literature

1. According to the lecture, Canadian literature begins before written texts with:
   A) The oral stories of Canada's First Peoples
   B) French colonial memoirs
   C) British exploration accounts
   D) Immigrant diaries from Asia

2. Faye Hammill defines Anglophone Canadian literature as all Anglophone literary writing produced in what is now Canada, including the work of _____ writers and certain temporary residents.
3. Which event marked the first colonial claim on Canada by France?

   A) The American Revolution
   B) Jacques Cartier claiming land along the Saint Lawrence River
   C) The Confederation of Canada in 1867
   D) The Immigration Act of 1978

4. The Multiculturalism Act of 1988 ensures new Canadians' rights to "preserve, improve, and share their _____ heritage."
5. In the literary period from 1815-1867 (Emigration and Settlement), poets in Canada became more concerned with:

   A) Upholding British traditions exclusively
   B) The uniqueness of the colonial experience, including local mythology and Native Canadian culture
   C) Modernist international styles
   D) Environmental issues and gender politics

6. The first novel published in and about Canada, "The History of Emily Montague" (1769), was written by _____, an Englishwoman who lived in Quebec.
7. Which of the following is NOT one of the Confederation Poets mentioned in the lecture?

   A) Charles G. D. Roberts
   B) Archibald Lampman
   C) Bliss Carman
   D) E. Pauline Johnson

8. In the period of Cultural Nationalism and Multiculturalism (1951 to Present), the Massey Commission concluded that the United States posed a _____ threat to Canada.
9. The lecture states that Canada became the first country to implement an official policy of multiculturalism in:

   A) 1867
   B) 1951
   C) 1971
   D) 1988

10. Robert Thacker asserts that Canadian literature is not American literature and is no longer _____ literature either.

Activity 2: Lecture on Alice Munro's "Passion"

1. Alice Munro was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2013 for:

   A) Her novels exploring Canadian history

   B) Her mastery of the short story form

   C) Her poetry on multiculturalism

   D) Her essays on ethical dilemmas

2. In "Passion," Grace becomes enchanted by the Travers family, especially Maury's mother, Mrs. Travers, and half-brother _____.
3. According to Charles E. May, Munro's complexity in "Passion" stems from:

   A) Novelistic techniques like linear realism

   B) The short story's generic traits, prioritizing moments of mystery and mythic resonance

   C) Haphazard and random structures

   D) Excessive detail in social norms

4. Trussler describes Grace's realization of Neil's "metaphysical solitude" as facing a flat dark body of water, echoing Levinas's concept of the _____.

Analytical Question:

Analyze how the role of space in Alice Munro's "Passion" intertwines with themes of memory and self-identity, as discussed in the lecture. Explain how Grace's physical revisiting of places from her past influences her emotional and existential transformation, drawing on at least one critical perspective from the lecture (e.g., Botta's use of Deleuze and Guattari or Pierre Nora's lieux de mémoire).

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Lecture Four:
An Overview on Contemporary Anglophone Asian Literature

Table of Contents:

I. Introduction
II. Definition of Anglophone Asian Literature
III. Types of Anglophone Asian Literature
1. Contemporary Anglophone South Asian Literature
2. Contemporary Anglophone East Asian Literature
IV. Conclusion
V. Works Cited

I. Introduction:

Asian literature refers to works written by Asian authors in Asia or elsewhere. It can be divided into two main fields: East Asian literature and South Asian literature. The field of modern East Asian literature is of course a vast one. This diversity is mirrored in South Asian literature, which draws from a rich tapestry of cultural, historical, and linguistic traditions. Recently, there has been a profound and ever-growing international appetite for fiction by South Asian authors. Names like Rushdie, Mukherjee, and Roy are familiar to anyone with a passing interest in contemporary writing, appearing frequently as they do on bestseller lists and winning prestigious awards. The following overview focuses on Contemporary Asian literature written in English and its two main types.

II. Definition of Anglophone Asian Literature:

Anglophone Asian Literature is becoming increasingly important as a body of creative literature in English by either Asian writers or those of Asian origin.

III. Contemporary Anglophone South Asian Literature

1. Contemporary Anglophone South Asian Literature

"South Asia" is a term that includes several nations like those of Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and India. India. These are the countries that have produced the internationally famed works under discussion. The authors discussed also became internationally famous writing in English (Brians 4). The great majority of the authors discussed here are Indian in origin (Brians 3). This is to some degree a paradox, for—to give just one example—perhaps three percent of India's population can read English with enough fluency to enjoy these works in their original form, and relatively few of these books are translated into the national languages of India. They are more likely to be translated into German, French, or Spanish. The result is that such writing has a much larger audience abroad than at home. South Asian literary works refer to those that are set at least partly in South Asia, excluding works depicting only immigrant life, which fall more properly into the category of Asian American or Asian British literature (Adams 12).

Many South Asians are proud of the international renown of their region's writers, but they are also jealous that excellent authors working in Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Malayalam, Sinhala, and other regional languages remain mostly untranslated and unheard beyond the region. South Asian critics sometimes criticize English-language authors of "pandering to the West" by creating generally exotic places and storylines or over-explaining simple phrases through footnotes, glossaries, and other means. The debate about the function of English in South Asia is continuous and sometimes acrimonious. When the English brought their language to India and Sri Lanka, it was intended to make it simpler to manage the people. To in still respect for the imperial power, English language literature was taught in Indian

schools before it was taught in British ones. People in South Asia who speak predominantly English have been chastised for being rootless, inauthentic, and inadequate to represent their traditions. However, there is no agreement on what India's national language should be. In India, Hindi is the most frequently spoken language, however it is not spoken in the south. In Sri Lanka, decades of civil strife have exacerbated the animosity between Sinhala and Tamil speakers. The fact that English is politically neutral is a huge plus. Even if the English occupiers are long gone, their language remains a useful tool for authors who seek to reach a vast and varied audience in South Asia, even if that audience is small (Brians 6-8).

The reality is that South Asia has generated a large number of really gifted authors who profit from a large worldwide readership for their work. In the long run, their novels sell not merely because foreign readers are interested in South Asia; those readers frequently got interested in South Asia because of the works its writers wrote in the first place (Brians 9).

South Asia, of course, has a long tradition of great literary achievement that dates back millennia. When most Europeans lacked a written language, Indians were creating marvels. However, modern fictional genres such as the short story and novel were introduced to South Asia by the British during the colonial era, and as a result, they are sometimes seen as the products of an international rather than a national culture (Brians 11).

Apart from speaking and writing successfully in the alien language of English, the writers profiled here have several characteristics that make them unrepresentative of the communities from whence they sprang. In a location where large people are poor, they tend to be highly educated and from middle-class or well-to-do families (Brians 5). They reside in cities, but the majority of people still live in rural areas, and

the bulk of them live in Canada, the United Kingdom, or the United States. And, in terms of interests and talents, authors all over the world are pretty unlike regular people. Learning about their works isn't the same as learning about their civilizations.

One of the indisputable pleasures of South Asian English-language fiction is the access it provides Western readers to worlds considerably different from their own. However, the views provided by these works via the windows are not extensive. Fiction usually focuses on a few themes: family life, love, marriage, death, and conflict, to name a few. Readers interested in Indian trade policy, environmental disputes, agriculture's green revolution, or the country's expanding computer programming sector will have to search elsewhere. Novels and short tales are a great method to get to know a place, even if they can't compete with nonfictional sources for accurate knowledge (Brians 11-5).

2. Contemporary Anglophone East Asian Literature

The East Asian world order had vanished by the second decade of the twentieth century. However, still, the literary traditions of China, Japan, and India have been identified as the dominant literatures of Asia due to their longevity and influence (Miller xxviii). While the destinies of China, Japan, and Korea would differ dramatically during the twentieth century, their starting places were basically the same, which is one of the reasons for certain similarities in their contemporary literatures. Each new dynasty or administration in East Asia has a significant tradition of making writing a history of its immediate predecessor one of their top responsibilities (Mostow, General Introduction 6).

The first commonality is that all three countries were "diglossic," meaning they operated in a multilingual environment to some extent. The two languages, on the other hand, were not two current vernacular languages, as English and French are

in Canada. Rather, despite the fact that each country had one (or more) contemporary spoken languages, all significant written communication was done in classical Chinese, which no one spoke. The usage of written classical Chinese was tied to Confucianism, which served as the intellectual underpinning for all three cultures. Confucianism advocated for highly stratified society, with scholars and bureaucrats at the top and merchants at the bottom. Women had minimal access to education, political or economic power, and family arrangements were overwhelmingly patriarchal (Mostow, Modern Literature 9).

In Confucian cultures, literary styles were similarly highly stratified, with their relative worth or prestige defined by their employment by scholars and officials. Educated men studied and authored history, poetry, philosophy, essays, and commentaries, to name a few canonical genres. Vernacular fiction existed in all three civilizations, but it was seen as unimportant by the authorities. Wen/bun/mun (in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, respectively) referred to valuable writing, which comprised a variety of genres such as event-based historical tales, lyrical poetry, and explanatory monuments to the king or head of government (Mostow, Modern Literature 9).

Five trends emerged in East Asian literature in the second half of the twentieth century: the preponderance of female writers; the insistent exploration of sexuality and eroticism—often of the most transgressive kind; formal experimentation in metafiction and postmodern narrative techniques such as magical realism; and a general blurring of the distinction between literature and pop culture, fueled by the internet; and, finally, an emphasis on the diasporic experience, which leads to continuous questions about national identity on the one hand, and significant cross-fertilization and mutation on the other, as writers compose "national" literature in both

their native tongue and international vernaculars like English (Mostow, Modern Literature 17).

IV. Conclusion

Asian Anglophone literature became part of Commonwealth literature after World War II, when the British Empire was reorganized into a Commonwealth of Nations. Approaching Anglophone Asian writing via global Englishes study serves to put pressure on Commonwealth literary studies and postcolonial studies' essentially geographical and temporal bent. Many Southeast Asian writers' histories are entangled in multiple imperial encounters (American, Chinese, Dutch, French, Japanese, Spanish), and many Anglophone writers refuse to see the postcolonial nation-state as a viable alternative to colonization because it frequently reproduces the same hierarchies and forms of dominance.

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Lecture on: Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason* As a Case Study for Anglophone Canadian Literature

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1. Introduction to Amitav Ghosh
2. Summary of *The Circle of Reason*
3. The Ambivalence of Postcolonial Modernity in *The Circle of Reason*
4. Exploring Themes in Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason*
- **4.1 Postcolonial Modernity and the Double Bind**
- **4.2 The Journey of Alu and Genre Blending**
- **4.3 Engaging with the Oil Encounter**
- **4.4 Navigating Subaltern Identities**

5. Conclusion
6. Works Cited

1. Introduction to Amitav Ghosh

Amitav Ghosh, an acclaimed Indian author, is known for his distinctive storytelling that weaves together history, culture, and the complexities of identity in postcolonial contexts. His literary career, marked by awards like the Sahitya Akademi and Jnanpith, reflects a deep engagement with migration, environmental crises, and the legacies of colonialism. Sujala Singh positions Ghosh within postcolonial Indian literature, distinguishing him from contemporaries like Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy, who face accusations of "strategic exoticism" (45). Ghosh's "keen understanding of political, historical, sociological, and cultural nuances" sets him apart, evident in his refusal of the Commonwealth Writer's Prize to critique linguistic elitism and advocate for non-English literary voices (Singh 46). Stephanie Jones further highlights Ghosh's rejection of the "Commonwealth literature" label, quoting his 2001 letter: "Of the many reasons why a book's merits may be recognised these

seem to me to be the least persuasive" (1). His debut novel, *The Circle of Reason* (1986), sets the stage for these explorations through a multifaceted narrative that transcends traditional boundaries, employing polylingualism and magical realism to challenge fixed notions of language, history, and identity (Jones 2).

2. Summary of *The Circle of Reason*

The Circle of Reason follows the journey of Alu, a Bengali orphan, who embarks on a quest that takes him from rural Lalpukur to urban Calcutta, the Middle East, and Algeria. The novel blends various genres—picaresque, magic realism, and detective fiction—creating a non-linear, cyclical narrative that reflects the complexities of globalized societies. As Yumna Siddiqi notes, Ghosh subverts the conventions of police fiction to critique the coercive logic of state surveillance and control, positioning the novel as a challenge to repressive state mechanisms (177). Singh highlights how the novel follows Alu's entanglement in global migrations and bureaucratic persecution, with historical displacements like the 1947 Partition and the 1971 Bangladesh war shaping subaltern journeys (47–50). Jones argues that the novel's structure—divided into *Satwa* (Reason), *Rajas* (Passion), and *Tamas* (Death)—mirrors its thematic focus on the interplay of these forces, destabilizing moral distinctions (6). For instance, Balaram's "passion for reason" leads to violence, illustrating how "extreme passion for reason circles into death" (Jones 7).

Divided into three distinct sections, the novel showcases different settings and characters, with Alu and his pursuer, Assistant Superintendent of Police Jyoti Das, serving as the narrative constants. Singh critiques bureaucratic fetishism through Das's pursuit of Alu, based on dubious "intelligence information" (50–1), contrasting Das's privileged mobility with the forced uprooting of laborers (52). The "Rajas"

section, set in the fictional Gulf state of al-Ghazira, is particularly significant for its critique of neo-colonialism and capitalist exploitation, as Claire Chambers notes in her analysis of the novel's engagement with migrant labor and oil economies (33). Jones contrasts Ghosh's "apparent awkwardness" with Rushdie's "slick pace," noting that Ghosh's "sober challenge" avoids glossing colonial patterns under globalization, emphasizing fragmented, diasporic experiences (3). The second section, "Rajas," particularly exemplifies Ghosh's eclectic use of genre, critiquing neo-colonial dynamics and the reliance on Western technology in a fictionalized Middle Eastern state, al-Ghazira.

Ghosh's essay "Petrofiction" articulates the challenges of representing the oil economy and globalization within traditional literary forms, suggesting that a reimagined narrative structure is necessary to convey the complexities of contemporary socio-economic landscapes. Jones emphasizes Ghosh's use of polylingualism, drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "minor literature" to frame the novel as a politically charged text that deterritorializes language and deconstructs colonial binaries (3).

3. The Ambivalence of Postcolonial Modernity in *The Circle of Reason*

To be a postcolonial subject is akin to being an uninvited guest at the table of modernity, where the appealing offerings of technological advancement, economic growth, and political freedom come with a sense of discomfort. Siddiqi articulates this tension as the "postcolonial double bind" (175), a condition in which the desire for modernity remains haunted by the history of colonial domination. Ghosh's novel critically engages with this paradox, interrogating how Enlightenment rationality—once a tool of colonial control—shapes the postcolonial state's governance. Singh

examines how discourses of nationalism, bureaucracy, and science attempt to construct subaltern identities, often undermining their agency (47–53). Jones critiques postcolonial theory's universalizing tendencies, engaging with Aijaz Ahmad's rejection of Homi Bhabha's view of magical realism as "the literary language of the emergent postcolonial world" (4). She argues that Ghosh's discomfort with such frameworks reflects a focus on marginalized, diasporic experiences rather than "complacent playfulness" (Jones 4).

Ghosh critiques the fraught interplay between Enlightenment reason and police power, illustrating how postcolonial regimes inherit and perpetuate colonial anxieties about order and control. *The Circle of Reason* exposes how state responses to insurgency and migration oscillate between coercion and emancipation, revealing rationality's dual potential—as both an instrument of oppression and a tool for liberation. Siddiqi argues that the novel interrogates "the repressive aspects of colonial rationality that linger in the structures of postcolonial government", raising two pivotal questions: first, how Enlightenment reason becomes entangled with police power, and second, whether a non-repressive form of reason can emerge in postcolonial societies (176). These tensions underscore the novel's broader critique of how postcolonial states replicate colonial mechanisms of control under the guise of progress.

Ghosh subverts the conventions of police fiction, a genre traditionally employed to legitimize state authority. As Siddiqi observes, he "turns the generic conventions of police fiction upside down ... to challenge its coercive logic" (177). This inversion is epitomized in the destruction of Balaram's School of Reason, which the police falsely brand as insurgent—an act that demonstrates the postcolonial state's reliance on colonial "apparatuses of police" (179, 189) to suppress dissent. Singh

highlights Balaram's Pasteurian idealism, which frames science as a vehicle for social reform: "If all these things we talk about—reason, science and all the rest—are to mean anything, they must have the power to move people" (53). However, she juxtaposes this idealism with Bruno Latour's critique of Pasteur's colonial entanglements, exposing how scientific rationality has historically been weaponized to justify oppression (56). This duality reflects the novel's central tension: the struggle to reclaim reason from its institutionalized violence while preserving its emancipatory potential.

The term "police" originally referred to broad societal regulations for public welfare, but in colonial and postcolonial contexts, it becomes synonymous with the suppression of dissent. Alu's fugitive status embodies resistance to state surveillance, reinforcing the novel's critique of coercive governance. Set against India's tumultuous post-independence history, his journey underscores the contradictions of postcolonial modernity—where the promise of liberation clashes with the persistence of repressive systems.

The Circle of Reason compels readers to reconsider the legacies of colonial rationality and the fraught dynamics of policing in newly independent nations. By disrupting traditional police fiction, Ghosh not only exposes the violence embedded in state power but also questions whether reason—once a beacon of Enlightenment progress—can ever be disentangled from its oppressive past.

4. Exploring Themes in Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason*

4.1 Postcolonial Modernity and the Double Bind

Ghosh portrays postcolonial identity as akin to being an uninvited guest at modernity's table, grappling with the allure of progress and the weight of historical

subjugation. Siddiqi notes that “the postcolonial state is heir to the anxieties about order and control that are characteristic of colonial regimes” (176), emphasizing the belated and often inauthentic perception of postcolonial modernity. The novel interrogates the legacy of Enlightenment rationality, exposing its complicity with state violence while affirming its utopian potential (203). Characters like Balaram, whose campaigns for hygiene and phrenology reflect a “belated temporality” of colonial modernity, embody this ambivalence (183). Balaram’s campaigns for hygiene and phrenology, as Singh notes, reflect this ambivalence, embodying a “romance” with science that both empowers and dominates subaltern communities (53–7). Jones highlights how Ghosh’s polylingualism deconstructs colonial and national binaries, creating a “transverse history” that challenges linear narratives of progress (2).

4.2 The Journey of Alu and Genre Blending

Ghosh’s narrative weaves together multiple genres, creating a multi-voiced, cyclical structure that reflects globalized societies. Siddiqi highlights how Balaram’s School of Reason represents “Reason Militant,” blending abstract and practical knowledge in a doomed utopian project (186). Singh emphasizes Alu’s entanglement in global migrations, driven by historical upheavals, with refugees longing for idealized homelands: “a longing for a land where the green was greener, the rice whiter, the fish bigger than boats” (49). Yet, their reality is grim: “the tin roofs were black with flies; in the lanes rats wouldn’t yield to human feet” (Singh 50). Alu’s journey critiques neo-colonial reliance on Western technology, particularly in al-Ghazira, echoing colonial dynamics where science facilitated subjugation. Chambers emphasizes the novel’s picaresque elements, noting Alu’s orphanhood, criminal status, and perpetual travel as hallmarks of the genre, yet his increasing marginalization subverts the picaresque’s upward mobility trope (36–7). Jones

underscores the weaving motif as a metaphor for interconnectedness, with the etymology of "cotton" (*karpasia, kirpas, carbasos*) exemplifying polylingualism and "the migrant language of cloth" (8). The oral storytelling of Zindi, a migrant matriarch, disrupts "homogeneous, empty time," creating a "mythic temporality" akin to *One Thousand and One Nights* (Jones 10). The novel's fragmented narrative and weaving motif—symbolizing interconnectedness—challenge linear, oppressive notions of progress (Chambers 188).

4.3 Engaging with the Oil Encounter

Ghosh critiques the limited literary engagement with the "Oil Encounter," arguing that traditional forms struggle to capture the oil economy's displaced, heterogeneous nature. In her article, Claire Chambers examines the "Rajas" section, which critiques neo-colonialism and capitalist exploitation in al-Ghazira through migrant labor and oil economies (33). Ghosh employs picaresque and social realist modes to depict workers' displacement and suffering, described as "ghosts" and "tools—helpless, picked for their poverty" (38). The Ras shantytown, with "roofs of corrugated iron and halved oil-drums," contrasts with Ghaziri's "concrete-and-glass cliff of hotels," symbolizing exclusion (41–2). The Star mall's collapse literalizes the fragility of oil-dependent economies (42–3). Singh notes Alu's critique of capitalist exploitation, reframing Pasteur's germ theory: "The answer is money" (54), highlighting science's entanglement with economic power (54–6).

Chambers cites Ghosh's "Petrofiction" essay, where he laments oil's "slipperiness" that "tends to trip fiction into incoherence" (35), comparing it to historical commodities like pepper for their shared colonial legacies (35). The novel's fragmented structure mirrors this elusiveness, a challenge Ghosh later refines in *In an*

Antique Land (34–35). Chambers also notes the role of technology in neo-colonialism, with "Olimen" using "computers and helicopters" to suppress dissent (43–44), and consumerism as colonization, where "the same lights have shone […] wherever money and its attendant arms have chosen to descend" (45). The narrative offers an innovative structure to transcend conventional boundaries, reflecting contemporary socio-economic landscapes.

4.4 Navigating Subaltern Identities

The novel examines the tension between knowledge production and local communities, portraying subaltern identities as fluid amidst socio-political discourses. Singh critiques how nationalism, bureaucracy, and science construct subaltern identities, often at the expense of their agency (47–53). She highlights the precarious mobility of laborers compared to bourgeois migrants like Jyoti Das, noting that "mobility is more often the result of forced uprooting rather than voluntary movement" (Singh 52). Siddiqi contrasts bourgeois migrants like Jyoti Das with subaltern figures like Alu and Zindi, whose precarious mobility underscores the vulnerability of their communities (194–5). Subaltern migrants create "interstitial alternatives to civil society," but these utopian projects are disrupted by state violence and global capital (197, 203). Singh questions the authority of Ghosh's researcher figures, whose "romance" with interdisciplinary knowledge risks mediating subaltern voices through elite narratives (57–8). Chambers highlights the migrants' harsh realities in al-Ghazira, facing "dangerous working conditions, long hours, and hostility from locals" (41), with their complicity in consumerism—exemplified by the fatal "Japanese Miracle" umbrella—underscoring exploitation's complexity (45). Alu's migrations highlight the longing for home and the challenges faced by displaced individuals, set against historical and contemporary contexts.

5. Conclusion

The Circle of Reason offers a profound exploration of postcolonial identity, modernity, and globalization. Through Alu's odyssey and innovative genre blending, Ghosh challenges colonial rationality's legacy and the postcolonial state's repressive mechanisms. Singh urges scrutiny of how subaltern voices are mediated, questioning the redemptive potential of science and knowledge production in empowering marginalized communities (57–8). Chambers concludes that the novel's "multifarious layering of literary forms" anticipates post-9/11 oil and globalization conflicts, providing a template for representing oil economies' "slipperiness" (47). Siddiqi notes its interrogation of Enlightenment rationality's dual role in state violence and utopian possibility (203). Jones emphasizes Ghosh's resistance to universalizing narratives, using polylingualism and magical realism to foreground fragmented, diasporic experiences, making the novel a revolutionary text in Deleuze and Guattari's sense of "minor literature" (3, 12). By addressing the oil economy and subaltern experiences, Ghosh invites reconsideration of a liberatory reason, making *The Circle of Reason* a timeless reflection on our globalized world.

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Comprehension and Review Exercises 4

Activity 1: Overview on Contemporary Anglophone Asian Literature
This activity tests your understanding of the key concepts, definitions, and characteristics from the lecture on Contemporary Anglophone Asian Literature. It includes multiple-choice questions (MCQs) and fill-in-the-gaps questions.

Multiple-Choice Questions:

1. What does the term "Anglophone Asian Literature" primarily refer to?

    a) Literature written in Asian languages by Western authors
    b) Creative literature in English by Asian writers or those of Asian origin
    c) Translations of ancient Asian texts into English
    d) Literature focused solely on immigrant experiences in the West

2. According to the lecture, which region is NOT included in the term "South Asia"?

    a) India
    b) Pakistan
    c) China
    d) Sri Lanka

3. What is one major criticism faced by English-language South Asian authors, as mentioned in the lecture?

    a) They are accused of pandering to the West by creating exotic storylines
    b) They focus too much on regional languages like Hindi and Urdu
    c) They avoid discussing colonial history
    d) They primarily write for local audiences in South Asia

4. In the context of East Asian literature, what does "diglossic" mean?

    a) Operating in a multilingual environment with classical Chinese for writing and vernacular languages for speaking
    b) Focusing only on modern spoken languages without historical influences
    c) Blurring the lines between literature and pop culture
    d) Emphasizing female writers exclusively

5. Which of the following is NOT listed as a trend in East Asian literature in the second half of the twentieth century?

    a) Preponderance of female writers
    b) Exploration of sexuality and eroticism
    c) Emphasis on diasporic experiences
    d) Strict adherence to classical Confucian genres

Fill-in-the-Gaps Questions:

6. Asian literature can be divided into two main fields: East Asian literature and _____ Asian literature.
7. Names like Rushdie, Mukherjee, and Roy are familiar due to their presence on bestseller lists and winning _____ awards.
8. In South Asia, English is politically _____ because it does not favor any regional language amid linguistic tensions.
9. The lecture notes that modern fictional genres like the short story and novel were introduced to South Asia by the _____ during the colonial era.
10. One of the five trends in East Asian literature is the blurring of the distinction between literature and pop culture, fueled by the _____.

Activity 2: Case Study on Amitav Ghosh's The Circle of Reason

This activity assesses your knowledge of the themes, summary, and critical analyses from the lecture on Amitav Ghosh's The Circle of Reason. It includes multiple-choice questions (MCQs) and fill-in-the-gaps questions.

1. What literary award did Amitav Ghosh refuse, as mentioned in the lecture, to critique linguistic elitism?

    a) Nobel Prize
    b) Booker Prize
    c) Commonwealth Writer’s Prize
    d) Pulitzer Prize

2. The novel The Circle of Reason is divided into three sections based on which concepts?

    a) Birth, Life, Death
    b) Satwa (Reason), Rajas (Passion), Tamas (Death)
    c) Past, Present, Future
    d) Love, War, Peace

3. Amitav Ghosh is distinguished from contemporaries like Salman Rushdie for his refusal of “strategic _____” in his writing.
4. The novel follows Alu’s journey from rural Lalpukur to urban Calcutta, the Middle East, and _____.

Analytical Question:
Analyze how Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason* subverts the conventions of police fiction to critique the interplay between Enlightenment rationality and state power in postcolonial societies, drawing on specific examples from the novel's structure and characters as discussed in the lecture.

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Lecture Five: An Overview on Anglophone Australian Literature

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I. Introduction:

Australian literature has long been intertwined with the nation's identity, shaped by its unique history, vast landscapes, and distance from Britain. The 1890s, particularly through publications like the *Bulletin*, saw the rise of key literary figures such as Henry Lawson and Banjo Paterson, who helped define a nationalist vision of Australia (Pierce 137). This era focused on crafting a distinct cultural identity through literature, often framed as a "new beginning" for a young nation free from “old world errors.”

However, Australian literature has also been shaped by tensions between local identity and international influence, particularly from Britain (Dixon 223). Odette

Kelada's analysis of Kate Grenville's *The Secret River* (2005) offers a contemporary lens, posing a question that echoes our inquiry: "How do you perceive the influence of colonialism in contemporary Australian literature?" She views Grenville's text as revealing "strategies and performance of whiteness in Australian contemporary literature, particularly in relation to the idea of the 'reconciliation' between white Australians and Indigenous peoples" (Kelada 1). Writers have thus struggled with themes of exile, belonging, and cultural distance, while more recent histories of Australian literature focus on the balance between national identity and broader, cosmopolitan connections. Despite ongoing challenges, Australian literature continues to evolve, reflecting the complexities of place, history, and global engagement.

II. Overview of Australian Literary Eras

1. Colonial Poetry (1788-1888)

Australian colonial poetry emerged alongside the country's settlement, reflecting the complex dynamics of colonial life. Early poets often expressed themes of nostalgia for the untouched landscape and the harsh realities of colonial existence. Poets such as Charles Harpur and Adam Lindsay Gordon blended Romanticism with emotional engagement with nature, aiming to claim a future while restoring the past (Smith 73). Their works set the stage for the development of a distinctly Australian poetic voice. However, this poetic voice was also shaped by the overarching influence of Britishness, which cast a long shadow over Australian identity, highlighting the tension between cultural inferiority and the quest for national identity (Stewart 7). Kelada extends this into the modern era, noting how *The Secret River* revisits these dynamics through William Thornhill's possessive desire for land, suggesting a continuity of colonial themes.

2. **Fiction in the Colonial Context (Up to 1890)**

Fiction during this era served as a mirror to society, reflecting the harshness of colonial life. Writers like Henry Lawson and Steele Rudd tackled themes of social distinction and morality, influenced by the colonial experience and Indigenous perspectives (Dalziell 93). Influenced by the gold rushes' cosmopolitanism, these narratives negotiated British traditions and local nationalisms (Dixon 223). The narratives often contained moral complexities surrounding law enforcement and the lives of outlaws, showcasing the tension between civilization and brutality in the Australian landscape. This fiction was also shaped by the growing cosmopolitan forces of the gold rushes, as writers negotiated between British literary traditions and emerging local nationalisms. The representation of women in literature evolved during this time, reflecting broader societal changes as well.

3. **Romantic Pessimism vs. American Optimism**

Richard Lansdown contrasts Australian Romanticism's pessimism with American optimism, noting Australia's colonial context fostered a focus on nature's destructiveness and human limits, yielding a tradition of emotional depth and landscape engagement (Lansdown 118). This divergence influenced literary expressions, where Australian poets and writers grappled with themes of nature and human destructiveness. The lack of early Romanticism's expansive ideals in Australia led to a unique literary tradition that highlighted emotional depth and landscape engagement. This struggle for identity, tied to colonial legacy, parallels Kelada's critique of Grenville's landscape-Indigenous conflation, which risks objectifying Aboriginal presence without deeper understanding (Kelada 8).

4. Post-War Literature and Identity (Post-WWI)

World War I profoundly affected Australian literature and identity. It reshaped Australian literature, with writers like Katharine Susannah Prichard redefining narratives beyond rural romanticization to reflect conflict's impact (Pierce 137). Female writers increasingly contributed, navigating colonial legacies and British influences (Morton 255). Kelada ties this to *The Secret River*'s reconciliatory context, noting its dedication—"This novel is dedicated to the Aboriginal people of Australia: past present and future"—as a performative apology (Kelada 5). Yet, she critiques its potential non-performativity, quoting Sara Ahmed: "Declaring that one is anti-racist does not make one anti-racist" (qtd. in Kelada 5), questioning whether such narratives advance Indigenous sovereignty or reinforce white virtue. Writers like Katharine Susannah Prichard sought to redefine their narratives in light of war's harsh realities. The romanticization of rural life persisted, but the landscape was forever altered by the experiences of conflict. This period saw an increase in female writers who navigated personal and societal challenges while contributing to the national narrative. The legacies of colonialism continued to shape their works, as they sought to establish a distinct Australian voice amid ongoing influences from British literary traditions.

5. Short Stories (1890s-1950)

The short story genre flourished during this time, heavily reliant on publications in newspapers and magazines. Writers like Lawson and female authors such as Tasma made significant contributions, with themes balancing national identity and international influences. The 1890s, often romanticized, were pivotal for Australian cultural identity despite economic and social challenges. This flourishing of short fiction was also marked by a growing literacy rate and the emergence of

literary societies, which supported the colonists' desire for education and moral improvement (Bennett 156).

6. **Theatre and Drama (1850-1950)**

The evolution of Australian drama revealed conflicting perspectives on cultural productivity. Australian drama evolved from a perceived cultural barrenness to a vibrant scene of diverse genres and touring productions, blending high art and popular culture with emerging Indigenous and European influences (Fitzpatrick 180). While early 20th-century views painted the landscape as barren, modern scholarship highlights a vibrant theatre scene that included various genres and significant touring productions. Playwrights sought to carve out a national identity, often juxtaposing high art with popular culture. The interplay of Indigenous narratives and European influences also began to emerge, reflecting the complexities of cultural identity in a colonized context.

7. **Modern Poetry and Cultural Shifts**

Post-1950, Australian poetry has experienced a decline in public engagement and sales, often attributed to modernism, which rendered poetry less accessible. While many Australians continue to write, the isolation of Australian poetry from other English-speaking poetries has been notable. This sense of separateness, influenced by the unique relationship with Australia's landscape and the dispossession of Indigenous peoples, leads to what John Kinsella calls "international regionalism," where poets engage globally while maintaining regional integrity (473). Notable voices like Ouyang Yu challenge this isolation, particularly regarding the marginalization of migrant experiences.

8. Evolving Fiction (Post-1950)

Since 1950, Australian fiction has evolved alongside the nation's embrace of modernity, shaped by secular democratic foundations and Enlightenment ideals. Events like world wars and economic depressions led to a questioning of technological progress. Modernism in Australian novels reflects this ambivalence, particularly in the works of Patrick White, who revolutionized literature by exploring deeper psychological and spiritual themes (Lever 498). By the mid-1970s, a new generation of writers emerged, influenced by European and American experimentalists, leading to a significant intellectual commentary within fiction. In the late 20th century, novelists began challenging benign accounts of white settlement, acknowledging the violence inflicted on Indigenous peoples and reshaping Australia's literary identity (Nile and Ensor 517). Kelada exemplifies this with *The Secret River*'s massacre depiction, yet notes Thornhill's empathetic portrayal—"a good, though flawed, character" (6)—may soften culpability, risking a "self-innocenting" focus on whiteness (Kelada 12), per Toni Morrison's critique (Morrison 52-3).

9. Global Influences and Expatriatism (1890-1950)

Australian literature's formation was significantly shaped by global networks and expatriate experiences. Writers engaged with international dynamics, and figures like Clive James challenged the negative perceptions of expatriatism, framing it as integral to the development of Australian literature (Dixon 223). This perspective emphasized the interconnectedness of national and global literary landscapes and highlighted how Australian writers navigated the cultural prestige of England, often facing disillusionment and grappling with their identities amid colonial influences (Morton 255).

10. Expatriate Experiences (1880-1950)

Peter Morton examines how Australian writers like Henry Lawson and others navigated the cultural prestige of England, often facing disillusionment despite their ambitions, while Indigenous writing adapted to European conventions (Morton 255; Van Toorn 52). This exploration of "home" and belonging highlighted the complexities of identity for expatriate writers, reflecting their ongoing struggle for recognition within colonial and global contexts. The emergence of Indigenous writing during this period, adapted to European literary conventions, illustrates the rich tapestry of Australian literature shaped by both colonial legacies and a quest for identity.

11. Landscape and Indigenous Representation:

Landscape defines Australian literature, from colonial poetry's Romanticism to modern fiction's postcolonial reckonings. Grenville humanizes it to link Indigenous people and land—"I began to realize that the Aboriginal people were emerging … through descriptions of landscape" (qtd. in Kelada 8)—but Kelada warns this risks objectification: "To conflate Aboriginal bodies and presence with landscape without 'understanding' is to risk textually harking back to legislation under which Indigenous peoples were categorised as flora and fauna" (8). This tension underscores dispossession's legacy. Specifically, it highlights how the colonial act of dispossessing Indigenous peoples of their land continues to echo in modern narratives, where well-intentioned efforts to represent them can still diminish their agency by merging them with the natural environment. This reflects a broader historical pattern in which settler stories overwrite Indigenous sovereignty, perpetuating a legacy of erasure that began with physical displacement and persists in literary representation. Thus, the conflict between Grenville's approach and Kelada's critique reveals the

ongoing challenge of addressing Australia's colonial past without fully escaping its representational frameworks.

III. Conclusion

Australian literature from the colonial period through the mid-20th century illustrates a dynamic interplay of genres, reflecting the evolving cultural identity shaped by historical, social, and global influences. Each literary form—poetry, fiction, drama, and short stories—interconnected to explore the themes of landscape, identity, and the enduring impact of colonialism. The legacy of colonialism continues to influence contemporary literary voices, demonstrating the ongoing quest for a distinct Australian identity amidst a complex cultural heritage. The evolution of poetry and fiction post-1950 reflects the broader tensions within Australian society, grappling with its postcolonial identity while navigating the challenges of global literary engagement.

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Lecture on: Marcus Zusak's *The Book Thief*

As a Case Study for Anglophone Australian Literature

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I. Introduction

Markus Zusak, an Australian writer, published *The Book Thief* in 2005, and it quickly became a bestseller, known for its innovative narrative style and poignant reflection on life in Nazi Germany. The novel is unique because it is narrated by Death, who provides a compassionate yet detached view of humanity during one of history's darkest periods.

The story follows Liesel Meminger, a young German girl, who finds solace in stealing books and learning to read during the height of World War II. The novel explores the moral complexities of life under the Nazi regime, the impact of trauma, and the power of words to both oppress and liberate. Kirril Shields argues that the novel portrays ordinary Germans as victims, potentially exculpating them from

collective guilt for Nazi crimes, thus contributing to debates about Holocaust memory (1).

Why is this novel significant?

- It offers a new perspective on World War II by focusing on ordinary Germans and their experiences.
- The novel humanizes its characters, even Death, and emphasizes the profound impact that literature and storytelling can have on individual lives during times of oppression.
- *The Book Thief* invites us to think about memory, responsibility, and the role of history in shaping our understanding of guilt and suffering.

II. Historical Context: Nazi Germany and Everyday Life

To understand *The Book Thief*, it's important to grasp the historical backdrop of Nazi Germany (1933-1945). Under Adolf Hitler's totalitarian regime, Germany became a militarized, dictatorial state that pursued genocidal policies, particularly against Jewish people, culminating in the Holocaust.

However, the novel presents a perspective that focuses less on Nazi leaders and more on the daily lives of ordinary Germans, some of whom were not directly involved in atrocities but lived under and suffered from the consequences of war. Shields notes that this aligns with historian Martin Broszat's concept of *Alltagsgeschichte,* which examines the everyday experiences of Germans to "normalize" the period, though critics argue this risks relativizing Nazi crimes (2–3). Domínguez-Rué highlights how the novel blurs fiction and history, giving voice to the "grey zones" of German complicity and resistance, where moral and psychological

complexities coexist (8). The book examines how people navigated their lives under such a regime, revealing the complexity of guilt and responsibility.

Key Historical Concepts to Remember:

- **Collective Guilt**: The idea that all Germans should share some responsibility for the crimes committed by the Nazi regime.
- **Alltagsgeschichte**: A German term for "history of everyday life," which looks at how ordinary people lived during historical events.

III. Plot Summary and Key Characters

Plot Overview:

The novel is set in a fictional town called Molching, near Munich, and is narrated by Death, who becomes fascinated by Liesel. The story follows Liesel as she navigates life in a foster home with Hans and Rosa Hubermann during World War II. She befriends Max Vandenburg, a Jewish man hiding in their basement, and Rudy Steiner, a neighbor boy. Liesel's love for books grows as she starts stealing them, finding comfort in words during the war's chaos. Liesel's theft of *The Gravedigger's Handbook* marks her first act of resistance, linking her to the oppressed, while her reading during air raids becomes a communal act of defiance, "saving herself by saving others" (Domínguez-Rué 5, 7). Shields highlights that the working-class residents of Himmel Street, like the Hubermanns, are depicted sympathetically, suffering from Allied bombings and Nazi oppression, which frames them as victims (7).

Key Characters:

- **Liesel Meminger**: The protagonist, a young girl who finds refuge in books. Her trauma begins with her brother's death, manifesting in PTSD symptoms like bedwetting and compulsive book theft, with her literacy journey symbolizing "acting out" her trauma (Buráková 7).
- **Hans Hubermann**: Liesel's kind-hearted foster father, who opposes Nazi ideology.
- **Rosa Hubermann**: Liesel's strict but caring foster mother.
- **Max Vandenburg**: A Jewish fugitive hiding with the Hubermanns. Max rewrites Hitler's *Mein Kampf* into subversive stories like *The Standover Man* and *The Word Shaker*, reclaiming his identity and symbolically destroying Hitler's ideology (Domínguez-Rué 9–10).
- **Death**: The novel's narrator, who offers a detached yet sympathetic view of humanity.

IV. Themes in *The Book Thief*

1. Collective Guilt and Ordinary Germans

One of the central debates in German historiography is whether ordinary Germans should bear responsibility for the Holocaust and other Nazi atrocities. *The Book Thief* leans toward depicting ordinary Germans as victims of war, rather than active participants in the regime's crimes.

- **Ordinary Germans as Victims**: The novel shows how German civilians suffered under the war, particularly through Allied bombings. Shields argues this portrayal allows for the "personal and collective exculpation" of ordinary

Germans, suggesting Nazis were a peripheral minority and Hitler's rise was unpopular (1). For example, Liesel's foster parents hide Max, showcasing their moral integrity (Shields 7). Domínguez-Rué notes that the novel explores the "grey zones" of moral ambiguity, citing historian Amos Goldberg to emphasize the spectrum of complicity and resistance among Germans (8). This portrayal reflects a historiographical shift, where figures like historian Martin Broszat have emphasized that many Germans lived relatively ordinary lives during the war, without direct involvement in Nazi policies.

- **Historiographical Debate**: Scholars like Bill Niven have questioned whether this focus on victimhood risks ignoring the complicity of ordinary Germans. Shields critiques the novel's "equation of sufferance," noting that depicting Allied bombings as equally traumatic to Nazi crimes risks equating German suffering with Holocaust victims' experiences (12). Buráková similarly notes the moral resistance to perpetrator narratives, as they risk "normalizing" the Nazi past, yet argues that engaging with them is necessary for collective healing, particularly for descendants of perpetrators (2–3). The novel invites readers to question the balance between understanding the suffering of civilians and recognizing their potential complicity.

2. Alltagsgeschichte: Everyday Life under the Third Reich

The novel's focus on the everyday lives of Germans during the Nazi era aligns with the historical concept of **Alltagsgeschichte**. This approach looks beyond the major political and military events of history to understand how ordinary people lived.

- **Life in Nazi Germany**: The Hubermanns' household offers a glimpse into the struggles of maintaining normalcy under a totalitarian regime. Shields

connects this to Broszat's "Bavaria Project," which studied daily life to reveal the "blurred" realities of the Third Reich, though critics like Saul Friedländer argue it may exclude victims' perspectives (4–5). Scenes of children playing soccer or stealing books evoke innocence, contrasting with the war's extraordinary circumstances (Shields 10). Liesel's memoirs, written in a basement reminiscent of Anne Frank's attic, underscore the tension between everyday survival and resistance, literally saving her life during a bombing (Domínguez-Rué 11). Despite the omnipresent influence of Nazi ideology, the characters in *The Book Thief* carry on with their daily lives, emphasizing the tension between survival and moral resistance.

3. The Power of Words: Rewriting History Through Death's Narrative

Words are central to *The Book Thief*—they are both weapons and tools of liberation.

- **Nazi Propaganda vs. Liesel's Books**: While Nazi propaganda uses language to manipulate and dehumanize, Liesel steals books to preserve knowledge and defy the regime. Her theft of books like *The Shoulder Shrug* symbolizes her growing recognition of words' power, as "beneath her shirt, a book was eating her up" (Domínguez-Rué 6). Domínguez-Rué argues that Liesel's memoirs, alongside Max's rewritten narratives, "symbolically recover the stories of those who were silenced," challenging Nazi attempts to erase Jewish voices (2). Her memoirs represent a reclaiming of history from the perspective of those who were silenced or oppressed.

- **Death's Narrative**: The choice of Death as narrator emphasizes the power of stories to transcend time and convey complex emotional truths. Shields notes that Death's narration distances readers from moral judgment, framing Germans as "pitiable" rather than complicit, which reinforces the novel's sympathetic portrayal of ordinary citizens (13). Domínguez-Rué describes Death's narration as "sympathetic and intensely thoughtful," subverting traditional cruel depictions and offering a "multiplicity of stories" that challenge Nazi discourse (3–4). Death offers a perspective that encompasses both the suffering of victims and the moral struggles of ordinary Germans.

4. Perpetrator Trauma and Postmemory

Trauma is a recurring theme in *The Book Thief*. The novel touches on both victim and perpetrator trauma, exploring how these experiences are passed down to later generations.

- **Perpetrator Trauma**: Characters like Hans Hubermann show how ordinary Germans carried the burden of guilt, even if they were not directly involved in Nazi crimes. Shields suggests the novel's focus on German suffering, such as through Allied bombings, evokes perpetrator trauma but risks prioritizing it over the Holocaust's victims (12). The novel's depiction of acts of kindness amidst cruelty, such as the Hubermanns hiding Max, reflects the complex interplay of guilt and humanity (Domínguez-Rué 12). Buráková argues that *The Book Thief* offers a nuanced perspective on perpetrator trauma, challenging the binary distinctions between victims and perpetrators. For instance, Alex Steiner, a Nazi Party member, rationalizes his compliance as survival for his family, yet his internal conflict is evident: "Somewhere, far down, there was an itch in his heart, but he made it a point not to scratch it"

(Buráková 9). Drawing on trauma theory, particularly Cathy Caruth's work, Buráková notes that the novel revisits overlooked aspects of perpetrator trauma, advocating for a holistic understanding that integrates victim and perpetrator memories (Buráková 4). This perspective is crucial for addressing the unresolved grief and guilt inherited by descendants, as described by Vamik Volkan's concept of "shared tasks" (Buráková 3). The novel reflects on how trauma from such historical events affects individuals long after the events have passed.

- **Postmemory**: The novel also hints at the way trauma is transmitted across generations. Liesel's memories, as recorded in her stolen books, become part of the collective memory of war and its consequences. Buráková emphasizes the novel's use of postmemory, where second- and third-generation descendants grapple with inherited trauma. Through Liesel's story, Zusak contributes to "breaking the cycle" of unresolved trauma, offering a framework for collective healing (Buráková 13).

V. Narrative Techniques: The Role of Death as Narrator

One of the most striking aspects of *The Book Thief* is its use of Death as the narrator. Death's omniscient and compassionate voice adds layers of complexity to the story, offering insight into human suffering and resilience.

- **Focalization**: Death's role as the focalizer allows readers to see the war through both a distant and deeply personal lens. Focalization, defined as "the relationship between the 'vision,' the agent that sees, and that which is seen" (Bal qtd. in Oliveira and Maggio 1), shapes how narrative elements are presented in the novel. Death serves as the primary narrator-focalizer, shifting

between internal perspectives, such as Liesel's thoughts, and external omniscient views, creating an impression of reliability (Oliveira and Maggio 2). For instance, Death vividly captures Liesel's grief over her brother's death: "She was dying for it—the safety of it, the home of it—but she could not move" (Zusak qtd. in Oliveira and Maggio 3). This technique allows Death to convey characters' inner emotions while maintaining a broader perspective on the war's devastation. Shields argues that this narrative choice enables an emotional appeal, portraying Germans as victims and aligning with trends in German media that emphasize suffering over perpetration (14–5). Moreover, Death employs embedded focalization, temporarily adopting characters' perspectives, as seen in Liesel's dream about Hitler: "Prior to waking up, the book thief was dreaming about the *Führer*" (Zusak qtd. in Oliveira and Maggio 4), or Max's vision of boxing Hitler, a metaphor for Jewish resistance (Oliveira and Maggio 5). Perceptual focalization further enhances the narrative by engaging multiple senses, such as sight and taste, particularly in Liesel's focus on food like Rosa's pea soup amidst wartime starvation (Oliveira and Maggio 8). These techniques deepen the emotional impact, encouraging empathy for characters like Liesel and Max (Oliveira and Maggio 8). Domínguez-Rué emphasizes that Death's empathetic narration, such as "I picked up each soul that day as if it were newly born," humanizes the narrative and exorcises fear, encompassing diverse perspectives (4). Buráková highlights Death's role as an objective witness to trauma, uniting victim and perpetrator experiences. Death's fragmented narration reflects the unspeakability of trauma, as seen in the "abridged roll call" of WWII casualties (11). However, Death himself becomes traumatized, stating, "I am

haunted by humans," undermining the possibility of trauma resolution, even through death (Buráková 12–3). This technique helps humanize the story, making the characters' experiences more relatable and emotional for readers.

- **Empathy and Distance**: Death's ability to understand human emotions while maintaining distance from them allows readers to engage with difficult themes like guilt, trauma, and survival without being overwhelmed. Death's poetic descriptions, such as the panoramic view of a plane crash—"The horizon was beginning to charcoal. What was left of the blackness above was nothing now but a scribble" (Zusak qtd. in Oliveira and Maggio 7)—soften the novel's darker themes while highlighting his supernatural perception (Oliveira and Maggio 7). For instance, Death's descriptions, such as "the children I carried in my arms," amplify the novel's focus on universal suffering (Shields 12). Death's final reflection—"I am haunted by humans"—encapsulates the novel's exploration of humanity's capacity for both evil and beauty (Domínguez-Rué 12).

VI. Conclusion: Memory, Responsibility, and the Power of Storytelling

The Book Thief offers readers a rich exploration of life in Nazi Germany, focusing on the moral and emotional complexities faced by ordinary people. Through Death's narrative, the novel emphasizes the enduring power of words and stories to resist oppression, preserve memory, and confront difficult histories. Death's selective focalization, which highlights characters like Liesel and Max in detailed and empathetic ways, guides readers to sympathize with their struggles, reinforcing the novel's humanistic perspective (Oliveira and Maggio 8).

Shields concludes that *The Book Thief* "emotively enables a means of eliciting personal exculpation" for ordinary Germans by prioritizing their resilience and suffering, aligning with contemporary German memory trends that may overshadow perpetration (14–5). Domínguez-Rué views the novel as a "palimpsest" of layered narratives, where Liesel and Max's stories reclaim silenced voices, offering a nuanced perspective on the Holocaust that humanizes both victims and perpetrators (12). Buráková argues that the novel challenges trauma theory by insisting on the perpetrator's perspective, contributing to new approaches that break the cycle of unresolved trauma, as Allan Gibbs suggests: "If trauma genre criticism is acting out, then new approaches are required to break this cycle" (13). By portraying both the suffering and complicity of ordinary Germans, Zusak invites us to reflect on the complexities of guilt, memory, and responsibility. The novel reminds us that storytelling is a vital tool in preserving the past and ensuring that the voices of the oppressed are not forgotten.

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Comprehension and Review Exercises 5

Activity 1: Overview on Anglophone Australian Literature

This activity tests your understanding of the key eras, themes, and influences in Australian literature as discussed in the lecture. It includes multiple-choice questions (MCQs) and fill-in-the-gaps questions.

Multiple-Choice Questions:

1. Which publication in the 1890s played a key role in defining a nationalist vision of Australia through figures like Henry Lawson and Banjo Paterson?
   a) The Cambridge History of Australian Literature
   b) The Bulletin
   c) The Secret River
   d) Mein Kampf

2. According to Odette Kelada's analysis, Kate Grenville's The Secret River reveals strategies related to:
   a) American optimism in literature
   b) The performance of whiteness and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples
   c) The gold rushes' cosmopolitanism
   d) Post-WWI female writers' contributions
3. In the section on Romantic Pessimism vs. American Optimism, Richard Lansdown contrasts Australian Romanticism with American literature by noting Australia's focus on:
   a) Human limits and nature's destructiveness
   b) Expansive ideals and optimism
   c) Indigenous sovereignty
   d) Global expatriatism
4. Post-1950 Australian fiction, as discussed, was revolutionized by Patrick White through exploration of:
   a) Colonial poetry and nostalgia
   b) Deeper psychological and spiritual themes
   c) Theatre genres and touring productions
   d) Short stories in newspapers
5. The concept of "international regionalism" in modern Australian poetry is attributed to:
   a) John Kinsella
   b) Toni Morrison
   c) Peter Morton
   d) Vivian Smith

Fill-in-the-Gaps Questions:

Complete the following sentences with the appropriate words or phrases from the lecture (use exact terms where possible).

6. Early colonial poets like Charles Harpur and Adam Lindsay Gordon blended _____ with emotional engagement with nature, aiming to claim a future while restoring the past.
7. In the colonial fiction era (up to 1890), writers like Henry Lawson tackled themes of social distinction and morality, influenced by the _____ and Indigenous perspectives.
8. World War I reshaped Australian literature, with writers like Katharine Susannah Prichard redefining narratives beyond rural romanticization to reflect the impact of _____.
9. The short story genre from the 1890s-1950 flourished due to publications in newspapers and magazines, and was marked by growing _____ and the emergence of literary societies.
10. In discussing landscape and Indigenous representation, Kelada warns that conflating Aboriginal bodies with landscape risks harking back to legislation categorizing Indigenous peoples as _____.

Activity 2: Marcus Zusak's The Book Thief as a Case Study

This activity tests your knowledge of the novel's plot, themes, historical context, and narrative techniques as presented in the lecture. It includes multiple-choice questions (MCQs) and fill-in-the-gaps questions.

1. The novel The Book Thief is narrated by:
   a) Liesel Meminger
   b) Max Vandenburg
   c) Death
   d) Hans Hubermann
2. According to Kirril Shields, the novel's portrayal of ordinary Germans primarily frames them as:
   a) Active perpetrators of Nazi crimes
   b) Victims of war and Allied bombings
   c) Leaders in the Nazi regime
   d) Jewish fugitives
3. The story is set in the fictional town of _____, near Munich, and follows Liesel as she navigates life in a foster home during World War II.
4. Max Vandenburg rewrites Hitler's Mein Kampf into subversive stories like The Standover Man and _____, reclaiming his identity.

Analytical Question:

Analyze how Marcus Zusak's *The Book Thief* utilizes the narrative perspective of Death to humanize the experiences of ordinary Germans during Nazi Germany, and discuss the implications for themes of guilt, trauma, and resistance as explored through key characters like Liesel Meminger and Max Vandenburg, drawing on insights from critics such as Kirril Shields and Emma Domínguez-Rué in the lecture.

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Lecture Six: An Overview on Anglophone African Literature

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I. Introduction

Anglophone African literature has emerged as a powerful voice in global literary discourse, with works such as Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Ngugi wa Thiongo's *Weep Not Child*, and Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* standing as iconic representations. The 1986 Nobel Prize awarded to Wole Soyinka marked a pinnacle of recognition for African literary achievement. While modern African literature encompasses works in both indigenous African languages and European languages introduced through colonial influence, its written form is relatively young compared to the continent’s rich oral traditions, which have thrived for centuries and continue to flourish (Peters 9). This lecture explores the scope, diversity, and evolution of Anglophone African literature, with a particular focus on West Africa, alongside comparative insights from East and Southern Africa.

II. African Literature : Definition and Scope

African literature is any literature written by an African author or about African societies, cultures, and civilisations. It is written in many native African languages, Afro-Asiatic languages, Arabic in addition to other European languages of ex-colonizers. Anglophone African Literature refers to African literature that is written in English.

The term 'African Literature' refers to three diverse disciplines of creativity and research, each with its own astonishing complexity. Albert Gérard identifies three key strands within African literature: oral literature, precolonial written literature, and postcolonial written literature (Gérard 67, 74). Oral literature, or “orature,” remains a vibrant tradition, leveraging modern audiovisual media despite low literacy rates across much of the continent. It thrives in hundreds of languages and dialects, offering a rich field for folklorists and linguists (Peters 9). Precolonial written literature emerged in two phases: first in Ethiopia at the dawn of the Common Era, producing a significant corpus studied in Europe since the seventeenth century, and later with the spread of Islam across North, West, and East Africa, introducing Arabic script and literary traditions (Gérard 67). The postcolonial phase, which includes Anglophone literature, began to flourish after the independence of African nations, blending indigenous themes with European linguistic frameworks (Gérard 74).

III. Types of African Literature

1. English-Language Literatures of West Africa

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country and home to the University of Ibadan, has long been a major center for English-language writing. *Things Fall Apart*, by Chinua Achebe, was released in 1958 and has since become the most widely read

African novel. From the perspective of the colonized, Achebe retells the first moments of colonialism, the interaction between the Igbo and the British. He develops an African voice and subject, denied by the literature of empire and colonialism, in this novel and in *Arrow of God* (1964), which deals with a later phase in the colonial period. *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Man of the People* (1966), and the more contemporary *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) all deal with the corruption and paradoxes of post-independence society (Peters 16-9).

In West Africa, the literary evolution is deeply tied to the interplay between oral and written forms. As Jonathan A. Peters notes, the region's rich traditional lore, preserved by griots—traditional bards—includes celebrated epics like that of Sunjata, the founder of the Mali Empire. While oral traditions predate colonial contact, written fiction in English emerged prominently in the twentieth century, influenced by European languages and education systems (Peters 9-10).

Wole Soyinka, the 1986 Nobel Laureate for Literature from Nigeria, is best recognized for his work as a playwright and poet, though he has also written several books. *(The Interpreters, 1965; Season of Anomy,* 1973), memoirs (*The Man Died,* 1972; *Ake,* 1981; *Isara,* 1989), and essays (*Myth, Literature, and the African World,* 1976; *Art, Dialogue, and Outrage,* 1988). His plays range from the popular *The Lion and the Jewel* (1963) and *Trials of BrotherJero*(1963) to the dense and sophisticated A *Dance ofthe Forests* (1963), *The Road* (1965), *Madmen and Specialists* (1971), to *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975). His collections of poetry include *Idanre* (1967), *Shuttle in the Crypt* (1971), *Ogun Abibiman* (1976), and *Mandela's Earth and Other Poems* (1988). Soyinka's work is informed by Yoruba mythology and aesthetics, as well as present and historical Nigerian history. It delves into a variety of

situations and is written in a creative, poetic style that reveals a mastery of both English and global literature (Peters 23).

With works that purposefully introduce feminist viewpoints, Buchi Emecheta and Flora Nwapa have challenged and changed our perception of Nigerian history and society. *Efuru* (1966) by Nwapa was the first novel published in Nigeria by a woman author. In fact, Nwapa has recently been called "the mother" of a fictional African feminine tradition (Stratton 80). Emecheta has written several novels and currently has her own publishing firm in London, where she lives. Her most well-known novel is *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), which looks at marriage and family life in the village and colonial metropolis through the eyes of a woman (Peters 32-33).

Ayi Kwei Armah is Ghana's best-known author. *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), his first novel, is set during Nkrumah's final days. A railway clerk, "the man," finds his way through a selfish and corrupt world in this story of disillusionment and alienation. Armah's literature shifts from personal experience of disillusionment to historical and allegorical assessments of African inability to resist Arab and European conquerors in later books such as *Fragments* (1970), *Why Are We So Blest?* (1972), *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973), and *The Healers* (1978) (Peters 41). Other distinguished Ghanaian writers include the poets Kofi Awoonor and Kofi Anyidoho and playwright Ama Ata Aidoo.

Peters delineates three “waves” of West African fiction in English, primarily centered on Nigeria due to its dominant literary output. The first wave (pre-1964) includes pioneers like Amos Tutuola, whose *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952) drew on oral traditions, and Achebe’s early works (Peters 13-9). The second wave (1965-1976) reflects disillusionment with independence, exemplified by Soyinka’s *The*

Interpreters and Armah's novels, alongside war literature from the Nigeria-Biafra conflict (Peters 23-35). The third wave (post-1976) shifts toward populist themes, with writers like Emecheta addressing the common person's struggles (Peters 36-9).

2. English-Language Literatures of East Africa

East Africa has produced a number of outstanding English-language authors. Nuruddin Farah of Somalia has just recently gained international recognition for his talent and vision. His female protagonists in a succession of remarkable books (*From a Crooked Rib,* 1970; A *Naked Needle,* 1976; *Sweet and Sour Milk,* 1979; *Sardines,* 1981; and *Maps,* 1986) bring questions of gender and nationalism into sharp focus (Elder.

Kenyan author NgugiwaThiong'o has a distinguished literary career. His first three lyrical books (*Weep Not, Child,* 1964; *The River Between,* 1965; and A *Grain of Wheat,* 1967) are set during the Emergency, the Mau Mau, and the years leading up to Kenya's independence in 1963. Ngugi tackles the ethical, theological, and societal challenges of the time through a depiction of interconnected, individual lives. He confronts the neocolonialist elites' brutal avarice in his later works, such as *Petals of Blood* (1977), *Devil on the Cross* (1982), and *Matigari* (1987) (Elder 67).

Okot p' Bitek of Uganda adopts the character of a rejected wife to criticise indiscriminate absorption of Western methods in his satiric poem *Song of Lawino* (1966), which was translated from Acoli and modeled on songs from the oral tradition. Okotp'Bitek's husbandly response is *Song of Oeal* (1970) (Knipp120).

3. English-Language Literatures of Southern Africa

Zimbabwe has recently risen to prominence as a literary hotspot. A group of gifted young novelists has achieved international acclaim. The literary testimonials of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle are Chenjerai Hove's *Bones* (1988), winner of the 1989 NOMA prize, and Shimmer Chindoya's *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) (Julien 307). Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988) tells the story of women's resistance and resignation in the face of settler colonialism and patriarchy, while Dambudzo Marechera's collection of short fiction *The House of Hunger* (1978), winner of the 1979 Guardian Fiction Prize, tells the story of black life in a Zimbabwean township in near-verbal delirium (Povey 382).

For more than a century, South Africa, like Zimbabwe and Kenya, has generated considerable English-language literature due to their histories of settler communities. Between 1948 and 1994, English-language literature in South Africa was created by both white South Africans of British and Afrikaner origin, as well as black South Africans and those of mixed descent, under the setting of legalized apartheid. South African literature is one of the continent's richest and most complicated (Julien 308).

Alan Paton's emotional and paternalistic *Cry, the Beloved Country* brought liberal, white South African writing to international attention in 1948. Breyten Breytenbach, a poet and novelist from South Africa, is one of the most prominent white South African writers of recent years. Other names include J. M. Coetzee and Andre Brink (Povey 86).

Nadine Gordimer, the 1991 Nobel Laureate in Literature, is also a fiction writer. She has eleven books and nearly as many collections of short tales to her

credit. Gordimer's fiction is notable for its prolonged exploration of racial and gender identities through situations, objects, and her characters' own voices. She deconstructs whiteness and masculinity (and their polar opposites) as natural traits in particular (Julien 308).

While most liberal white South Africans have voiced shame, anxiety, alienation, and general melancholy among the white minority living under apartheid, black and black-identified South African writers have written about the deprivation, injustices, brutality, and fury experienced by the black majority. Their stories are frequently set in cities and townships (Julien 308).

Autobiographical books set in urban South Africa, *Mine Boy* (1946) and *Tell Freedom* (1954) by Peter Abrahams, and *Down Second Avenue* (1959) by Ezekiel Mphalele, are among the earliest narratives of black life under apartheid. *A Walk in the Night* (1967) and *In the Fog of the Season's End* (1968), both naturalist fictions by Alex LaGuma, explore the alienation of living in *apartheid* slums (1972) (Povey 87).

South Africans, such as Richard Rive, James Matthews, and Miriam Tlall, have made special use of and developed special talents for the short story in the area of fiction. The short narrative has been used by several novelists, including LaGuma, Head, and Mzamane. For black South Africans living in townships, poetry has been a particularly vital medium (Julien 308).

IV. Conclusion

While there are literary works in Yoruba, Hausa, Zulu, and Sotho, among other African indigenous languages, this literature is mostly unknown outside of its linguistic borders. Writers like Mazisi Kunene, Ngugi wa Thiongo, and the late Okot p'Bitek began writing in African languages before translating them into English. The

majority of African authors, on the other hand, write in English, French, and Portuguese. In fact, many African writers have no choice but to write in English, but in doing so, they decolonize and modify the language to fit their socio-cultural and political needs in Africa. For example, Chinua Achebe, a prominent Nigerian novelist, has stated that an African writer who uses English as a medium of literary innovation has certain limitations. The writer is frequently required to depict events and processes of thought that have no obvious English counterpart.

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Lecture on: Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat* As a Case Study for Anglophone African Literature

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I. Introduction to Ngugi wa Thiong'o
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3. The We-Narrative in Postcolonial Literature
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IV. Conclusion
V. Works Cited

I. Introduction to Ngugi wa Thiong'o

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, originally James Thiong'o Ngũgĩ, is a prominent Kenyan novelist, playwright, and critic whose works interrogate the African experience under colonial rule and the complexities of postcolonial independence. Known for novels such as *Weep Not, Child*, *Devil on the Cross*, and *A Grain of Wheat*, Ngũgĩ explores themes of colonialism, cultural identity, and social justice. His work is deeply influenced by Frantz Fanon's critique of colonialism, particularly the concept of "arrested decolonization," where national consciousness risks becoming an "empty shell" ("Representing Decolonization" 98). Ngũgĩ's deliberate engagement with political and cultural issues in Kenya sets him apart, as he cannot separate art from reality due to the nation's colonial history (Hamilton 137). Over time, Ngũgĩ shifted

from cultural nationalism to a socialist perspective, advocating for literature in African languages to resist neocolonial influences. This shift aligns with his belief, articulated in *Decolonising the Mind*, that language is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture, shaping identities in profound ways (Hamilton 138). Byron Caminero-Santangelo highlights Ngũgĩ's complex engagement with Western literary traditions, particularly his reworking of Joseph Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* in *A Grain of Wheat* to critique neocolonialism, showing how Ngũgĩ transforms Western forms for African resistance (139-40).

II. Historical Context of *A Grain of Wheat*

A Grain of Wheat is set against the backdrop of Kenya's struggle for independence from British rule. The novel takes place in the village of Thabai, where villagers are haunted by the colonial past while anxiously anticipating the future. The narrative oscillates between celebrating nationalist ideals and exposing the failures of postcolonial independence, reflecting Fanon's idea of decolonization as a compromised process ("Representing Decolonization" 98). Hamilton notes that Ngũgĩ uses language to reveal the complexities of this historical moment, showing how colonial languages dominate the "mental universe of the colonized," undermining indigenous identities (138). The two main crises explored are the failure of decolonization and the fear of the postcolonial future.

Ngũgĩ examines the disillusionment of cultural nationalists who expected a violent revolution but saw independence come through peaceful negotiations. This perceived failure led to a collapse in cultural nationalism, with many feeling that Kenya's independence was handed to them, undermining the sacrifices of those who fought for freedom. Caminero-Santangelo argues that Ngũgĩ reworks Conrad's

betrayal plot from *Under Western Eyes* to warn against neocolonial betrayal, emphasizing Kenya's struggle to forge a dynamic identity through collective resistance rather than replicating colonial hierarchies (141–4).

III. Themes of Colonialism and Independence

The novel's central theme revolves around colonialism's psychological and social effects on Kenya. The village of Thabai is torn between memories of colonial oppression and the uncertainty of postcolonial life. Ngugi presents a post-independence Kenya filled with fear, chaos, and dissatisfaction. Hamilton argues that *A Grain of Wheat* deconstructs simplistic notions of national identity, using terms like "concentration camps" and "holocaust" to link Kenya's struggle to global histories of oppression (144).

Through characters like Mugo, the novel highlights the ongoing tension between the past and future. The villagers' fears reflect broader concerns about whether postcolonial life will offer true freedom or simply replicate colonial structures in a different form.

1. The Concept of Alienation and the Individual

Ngũgĩ portrays alienation as a central experience in postcolonial Kenya, focusing on individuals caught between personal desires and collective expectations. The protagonist, Mugo, embodies this alienation, estranged from both himself and the Thabai community. His attempt to assert individuality is marred by his betrayal of Kihika, a local hero, which leaves him trapped in guilt. Fasselt notes that Mugo's "nervous condition" underscores his isolation, contrasting sharply with the communal "we" of the village (Fasselt 168). Hamilton emphasizes that Mugo's unreliable

narration mirrors the broader challenge of constructing a cohesive national identity, as his internal conflict reflects the contamination of language by colonial influences (139–41). Caminero-Santangelo underscores Mugo's alienation as a mirror of neocolonial mentalities, noting his desire for power—"What's power? A judge is powerful: he can send a man to death, without anyone questioning his authority" (Ngũgĩ qtd. in Caminero-Santangelo 145)—which echoes colonial hierarchies rather than revolutionary ideals (145). This betrayal symbolizes the broader failure of individuals to find agency in postcolonial Kenya, as Mugo's internal conflict mirrors the nation's struggle to reconcile its past with its future ("Representing Decolonization" 110). His isolation reflects the challenges of forging a cohesive identity in a society fractured by colonial legacies.

2. Allegory and Irony in Postcolonial Kenya

Ngũgĩ employs allegory and irony to critique the contradictions of postcolonial Kenya. The novel uses allegory to uphold nationalist ideals while irony exposes their fragility, particularly through Mugo's duality as a false hero ("Representing Decolonization" 107). The villagers revere Mugo as a symbol of resistance, unaware he betrayed Kihika, with the narrator noting: "Mugo's name was whispered . . . Independence Day without him would be stale; he is Kihika born again" (Ngũgĩ 110). Kihika's Christ-like role as a martyr is undermined by this betrayal, highlighting the vulnerability of nationalist narratives ("Representing Decolonization" 110). Hamilton points out that Ngũgĩ's use of untranslated Gikuyu and Swahili words, such as "Uhuru," enriches the text but also underscores the tension between indigenous and colonial languages, complicating the narrative for non-Kenyan readers (148). Symbols like the "iron snake" (railway) and "bamboo poles" (guns) further mock colonial power, while the ironic celebration of

independence—marked by unease rather than triumph—underscores a hollow victory: “Everybody waited for something to happen . . . a taut cord beneath the screams and the shouts and the laughter” (Ngũgĩ 99).

3. The We-Narrative in Postcolonial Literature

The use of the “we voice” in *A Grain of Wheat* highlights a collective narrative rather than individualistic stories. This technique allows Ngũgĩ to reflect on the collective Kenyan experience and challenge the Western narrative of individualism. Fasselt argues that Ngũgĩ’s novel employs what Amit Marcus terms a “disorienting ‘we’” narrative, where the collective voice is fractured by betrayal and distrust, rather than a triumphant communal voice as some scholars like Brian Richardson suggest (158, 167). Hamilton observes that the narrator in *A Grain of Wheat* shifts from an omniscient perspective to a communal voice, using phrases like “it is said” to ground the story in collective memory, yet this voice is destabilized by internal conflicts (Hamilton 139). For example, the villagers’ speeches, such as Warui’s call for unity—“We of Thabai Village must also dance our part” (Fasselt 169)—idealize solidarity but are undercut by internal dissent. Kihika’s Mau Mau “we,” asserting “We don’t kill just anybody... We are not murderers” (Fasselt 171), clashes with Gikonyo’s confession of cowardice: “I would have sold Kenya to the whiteman to buy my own freedom” (Fasselt 172). This exposes a “we” of collaboration, destabilizing nationalist heroism (Fasselt 172). Fasselt further notes that the Independence Day “we” is haunted by traitors, with voices proclaiming, “We whom you called traitors and collaborators will never die!” (175), reflecting Ngũgĩ’s skepticism toward postcolonial mythmaking. The disappearance of the “we” in later chapters signals unresolved tensions, emphasizing the fragmented nature of the collective (Fasselt 175). Hamilton adds that this fractured narrative reflects the

broader challenge of writing in a colonial language, which both constructs and deconstructs national identity (Hamilton 145). The narrative's shifting perspectives, blending omniscient narration with free indirect discourse, reflect the contested nature of history, as seen in Mumbi's conflicted thoughts: "Could she bear to bring more misery to Mugo, whose eyes and face seemed so distorted with pain?" ("Representing Decolonization" 123). Mugo's betrayal of the community represents this rupture, showing that the collective "we" is not always united.

4. Neocolonialism in *A Grain of Wheat*

Ngũgĩ critiques neocolonialism, where former colonies remain subject to external control through economic, political, and cultural means. The novel portrays independence as a compromised moment, echoing Fanon's warning of national consciousness becoming an "empty shell" ("Representing Decolonization", 98). The postcolonial Kenyan government is depicted as replicating colonial structures, with true autonomy elusive. Characters like Gikonyo grapple with the colonial past, unable to forget their suffering: "I can't forget… I will never forget" (Ngũgĩ 120). The past returns as a specter, whether as trauma for settlers like Thompson or unfulfilled dreams for villagers ("Representing Decolonization", 118). Fasselt aligns this with Ngũgĩ's rejection of simplistic "writing back" narratives, arguing that the novel moves beyond opposing colonialism to expose internal contradictions within the postcolonial nation (175-6). Caminero-Santangelo argues that Ngũgĩ reworks Conrad's betrayal plot to critique neocolonial self-interest, with Mugo's betrayal and Gikonyo's capitalist ethos—"he treated the rich and poor alike" (145)—embodying colonial mentalities among Kenya's elite (142–5). Ngũgĩ's novel, by engaging Conrad, refutes nativist critiques, showing cultural hybridity: "Far from allowing his novel to become colonized ... Ngũgĩ appropriated Conrad for an African cultural

tradition" (142). This aligns with Kwame Appiah's view that African literature thrives through global dialogue (Appiah qtd. in Caminero-Santangelo 142). Ngũgĩ suggests that political independence does not equate to liberation, as neocolonial forces continue to shape Kenya's future.

IV. Conclusion

A Grain of Wheat is a profound meditation on the paradoxes of decolonization, capturing a moment of hope overshadowed by historical betrayals. Fasselt emphasizes that Ngũgĩ's use of the "we" narrative challenges romanticized views of independence by highlighting internal fragmentation, aligning with Evan Mwangi's critique of reducing African literature to "a rant against colonialism" (176). Hamilton contrasts Ngũgĩ's vision with that of Joseph Conrad, noting that while Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* sees language as a labyrinth of repetition, Ngũgĩ finds potential for rebirth, offering a more optimistic, though cautious, perspective on postcolonial identity (151). Caminero-Santangelo concludes that Ngũgĩ's "critical appropriation" of *Under Western Eyes* serves Kenya's anti-colonial struggle, akin to Kihika's reinterpretation of Christianity (150). By "deforming the received Western novelistic pattern" (Sackey qtd. in Caminero-Santangelo 150), Ngũgĩ reclaims agency, echoing Edward Said's idea of postcolonial writers "redeploying" Western texts for resistance (150). Ngũgĩ's use of allegory, irony, and fragmented narratives reflects the ambivalence of independence, with the novel's anticlimactic ending—Mugo's execution casting a shadow over celebrations—symbolizing unresolved colonial burdens ("Representing Decolonization" 126). Through the "we-narrative" and critiques of neocolonialism, Ngũgĩ challenges romanticized views of independence, offering a sobering vision of postcolonial Kenya. His later works

continue to interrogate why independence failed to fully liberate Kenya, solidifying his role as a critical voice in African literature (“Representing Decolonization” 127).

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Comprehension and Review Exercises 6

Activity 1: Overview on Anglophone African Literature

This activity tests your understanding of the key concepts, definitions, types, and authors in Anglophone African literature as discussed in the lecture. It includes multiple-choice questions (MCQs) and fill-in-the-gaps questions.

Multiple-Choice Questions:

1. What is the primary definition of Anglophone African Literature according to the lecture?

    a) Literature written in indigenous African languages only
    b) African literature written in English
    c) Literature about European colonizers in Africa
    d) Oral traditions from West Africa

2. Which of the following is NOT one of the three key strands of African literature identified by Albert Gérard?

    a) Oral literature
    b) Precolonial written literature
    c) Postcolonial written literature
    d) Digital literature in modern media

3. In West African literature, who is described as the 1986 Nobel Laureate known for works like Death and the King's Horseman and informed by Yoruba mythology?

    a) Chinua Achebe
    b) Wole Soyinka
    c) Ayi Kwei Armah
    d) Ngugi wa Thiong'o

4. Which region in Africa is highlighted for producing literature tied to settler communities and apartheid, including authors like Nadine Gordimer and Alan Paton?

    a) West Africa
    b) East Africa
    c) Southern Africa
    d) North Africa

5. What is the title of the first novel published in Nigeria by a woman author, as mentioned in the lecture?
    a) The Joys of Motherhood
    b) Efuru
    c) Things Fall Apart
    d) The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born

Fill-in-the-Gaps Questions:

6. The lecture divides West African fiction in English into three “waves”: the first wave (pre-1964) includes pioneers like Amos Tutuola and Chinua Achebe’s early works; the second wave (1965-1976) reflects disillusionment with independence; and the third wave (post-1976) shifts toward _____ themes, with writers like Buchi Emecheta.
7. In East African literature, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's early novels like Weep Not, Child and A Grain of Wheat are set during the _____, the Mau Mau, and the years leading up to Kenya's independence.
8. Oral literature, or “_____,” remains a vibrant tradition in Africa, leveraging modern audiovisual media despite low literacy rates.
9. The epic of Sunjata, the founder of the Mali Empire, is preserved by traditional bards known as _____.
10. In Southern African literature, Nadine Gordimer, the 1991 Nobel Laureate, is noted for her exploration of racial and gender identities in works that deconstruct _____ and masculinity as natural traits.

Activity 2: Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat* as a Case Study

This activity focuses on the introduction to Ngugi wa Thiong’o, the historical context, and the key themes in *A Grain of Wheat*. It includes multiple-choice questions (MCQs) and fill-in-the-gaps questions.

1. According to the lecture, what major influence shaped Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s works, particularly his critique of colonialism?

    a) William Shakespeare’s plays
    b) Frantz Fanon’s ideas on decolonization
    c) European Romantic poetry
    d) American modernist literature

2. In *A Grain of Wheat*, which character embodies alienation and betrays the local hero Kihika, reflecting internal conflicts in postcolonial Kenya?

    a) Gikonyo
    b) Mugo
    c) Warui
    d) Mumbi

3. The novel A Grain of Wheat is set in the village of _____, where villagers are haunted by the colonial past while anticipating independence.

4. Ngũgĩ shifted from cultural nationalism to a _____ perspective, advocating for literature in African languages to resist neocolonial influences.

Analytical Question:

Analyse how Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o employs the "we-narrative" in *A Grain of Wheat* to challenge simplistic notions of collective identity in postcolonial Kenya, drawing on specific examples from the novel and insights from critics such as Rebecca Fasselt and Alissa Hamilton as discussed in the lecture.

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General Conclusion
Contemporary Anglophone World Literature

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I. Introduction

Over the course of these lectures, we have explored the rich and diverse landscape of contemporary Anglophone literature, examining its manifestations across different regions—Arab, Canadian, Asian, Australian, and African literatures—each with its unique historical, cultural, and political contexts. Through close readings of seminal texts such as Leila Aboulela's *Minaret*, Alice Munro's *Passion*, Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason*, Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*, and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat*, we have engaged with the complexities of postcolonial identity, migration, trauma, and the enduring legacies of colonialism.

II. Key Themes and Intersections:

1. Postcolonialism and Decolonization

- Many of the texts we studied grapple with the aftermath of colonialism, interrogating the ways in which colonial histories continue to shape contemporary societies.

- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat* critiques the failures of post-independence Kenya, exposing how neocolonial structures replicate colonial oppression. The novel's focus on betrayal—both personal and political—underscores the fragility of national unity after liberation.

- Similarly, Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason* challenges Eurocentric narratives by reclaiming subaltern histories, particularly through the character of Alu, whose migrations mirror the displacements caused by colonialism and globalization.

- Leila Aboulela's *Minaret* explores Islamic identity in a diasporic context, resisting Western secularist assumptions and presenting faith as a source of empowerment rather than oppression.

2. Diaspora, Migration, and Hybrid Identities

- Anglophone literature frequently reflects the experiences of displacement, whether through forced migration (e.g., *The Book Thief*) or voluntary exile (e.g., *The Circle of Reason*).

- The tension between assimilation and cultural preservation is evident in *Minaret*, where Najwa negotiates her Sudanese-Muslim identity in London, and in *A Grain of Wheat*, where characters struggle with the psychological scars of colonial violence.

- Marcus Zusak's *The Book Thief* complicates notions of national guilt by portraying ordinary Germans as both victims and bystanders, raising ethical questions about collective memory and complicity.

3. Narrative Innovation and Linguistic Resistance

- Many of these works experiment with form, challenging Western literary conventions.

- Ngũgĩ's use of the "we-narrative" disrupts individualism, emphasizing communal memory and collective trauma.

- Ghosh blends genres (historical fiction, magical realism) to critique globalization and the oil economy.

- Zusak's *The Book Thief* employs Death as a narrator, offering a fragmented yet deeply human perspective on war.

- Language itself becomes a site of resistance: Ngũgĩ's later rejection of English in favor of Gikuyu, Aboulela's untranslated Qur'anic Arabic, and Ghosh's polylingualism all assert linguistic sovereignty.

4. Trauma, Memory, and Historical Reckoning

- Trauma theory helps unpack narratives like *The Book Thief*, where German suffering is juxtaposed with Holocaust guilt, and *A Grain of Wheat*, where betrayal haunts postcolonial Kenya.

- Alice Munro's "Passion" and Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason* explore how personal and collective histories are reconstructed through storytelling, often revealing suppressed truths.

5. Gender, Religion, and Power

- Aboulela's *Minaret* presents Islamic spirituality as a source of agency for Muslim women, countering Western feminist stereotypes.

- Munro's "Passion" examines female desire and ethical ambiguity, while *A Grain of Wheat* critiques patriarchal nationalism.

III. The Role of Contemporary Anglophone Literature

These texts demonstrate that Anglophone literature is not merely a product of colonial imposition but a dynamic space of resistance, adaptation, and innovation. Writers repurpose the English language to articulate local realities, often subverting its imperial roots. Whether through Ghosh's critique of petro-capitalism, Zusak's reimagining of German wartime trauma, or Ngũgĩ's indictment of neocolonial elites, these works challenge dominant historical narratives and offer alternative epistemologies.

IV. Conclusion and Final Reflections

Contemporary Anglophone literature is not monolithic; it is a constellation of voices that reflect the tensions of globalization, migration, and cultural exchange. By engaging with these texts, we not only expand our understanding of world literatures but also confront pressing ethical questions: Who gets to tell history? How do we reconcile guilt and victimhood? Can literature serve as a tool for justice and reconciliation?

As we conclude this course, it is clear that these works do more than represent their cultures—they actively reshape global literary discourse, insisting on the relevance of marginalized perspectives in an interconnected world. The study of contemporary Anglophone literature, therefore, is not just an academic exercise but a vital engagement with the forces that continue to shape our present and future.

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Answer Key

Comprehension and Review Exercises 2

Key Answers for Activity 1

Multiple-Choice Questions:

1. b) Creative writing in English by Arab authors or authors of Arab descent
2. c) The events of 9/11
3. c) Focus on purely historical events without personal themes
4. b) Beginning of the 20th century - 1950
5. c) In-betweenness

Fill-in-the-Gaps Questions:

6. situation
7. cultural
8. Myrtle and Myrrh
9. colonialism
10. racialization

Key Answers for Activity 2

Multiple-Choice Questions:

1. b) Cairo, Egypt; Her move to Aberdeen, Scotland
2. b) Her adoption of the hijab

Fill-in-the-Gaps Questions:

3. Halal

4. secularist (or secular)

Analytical Question / Sample Answer:

In Leila Aboulela's Minaret, Najwa's adoption of the hijab serves as a pivotal act of empowerment, shielding her from objectifying male gazes and symbolizing her spiritual agency, as she reflects, "The builders who had leered down at me from the scaffoldings couldn’t see me any more" (Canpolat 13, quoting Aboulela 247). This choice aligns with her broader spiritual awakening, providing a sense of invisibility that allows her to reclaim control over her body in a Western context dominated by sexist scrutiny, as Seda Canpolat argues, framing it as resistance to intersecting racist and sexist gazes that complicate Muslim women's diasporic experiences (15-16). However, the hijab also exposes Najwa to vulnerability, rendering her visible to Islamophobic hostility, exemplified by the verbal attack calling her "Muslim scum" on a bus (Canpolat 16, quoting Aboulela 81), which highlights the gendered nature of Islamophobia and the limitations of her resistance. Eva Hunter critiques this portrayal for reinforcing stereotypes of Muslim women's passivity, suggesting that Najwa's withdrawal from public life reflects a quietist solution that limits her agency compared to more active feminist engagements (7-10). Overall, the lecture positions the hijab as embodying the postcolonial double bind, where spiritual empowerment coexists with the perils of cultural and religious visibility in a secular, multicultural London.

Comprehension and Review Exercises 3

Key Answers for Activity 1

1. A) The oral stories of Canada's First Peoples
2. immigrant
3. B) Jacques Cartier claiming land along the Saint Lawrence River
4. cultural
5. B) The uniqueness of the colonial experience, including local mythology and Native Canadian culture
6. Frances Brooke
7. D) E. Pauline Johnson
8. cultural
9. C) 1971
10. English

Key Answers for Activity 2

1. B) Her mastery of the short story form
2. Neil
3. B) The short story’s generic traits, prioritizing moments of mystery and mythic resonance
4. il y a

Analytical Question/ Sample Answer:

In Alice Munro's "Passion," space serves as a pivotal element that intertwines with memory to facilitate Grace's self-identity and transformation, as highlighted in the lecture through critical lenses like those of Ginseppina Botta and Pierre Nora. The older Grace's methodical revisiting of the Ottawa Valley and the Travers family home acts as a "re-territorialization," a concept from Deleuze and Guattari that Botta employs to describe how Grace reclaims and reinterprets these "loci memoriae" to merge her past and present selves. This physical journey triggers memories that reveal the unreliability of recollection, such as her noting discrepancies in landmarks like the Woodses' house, which underscores the lecture's point on memory's variability and its role in shaping identity. Furthermore, drawing on Pierre Nora's lieux de mémoire, these spaces become sites of reconciliation where Grace confronts her fractured identity as an abandoned daughter and fiancée, ultimately leading to her empowerment and independent future, possibly in Australia. Through this interplay, Munro illustrates how external geographies drive internal change, transforming Grace's existential loneliness into a pragmatic self-realization, as evidenced by her acceptance of the Travers family's financial gift after Neil's death. This demonstrates Munro's mastery in blending spatial elements with emotional depth, reinforcing the story's exploration of human fragility and the void.

Comprehension and Review Exercises 4

Key Answers for Activity 1

Multiple-Choice Questions:

1. b) Creative literature in English by Asian writers or those of Asian origin
2. c) China
3. a) They are accused of pandering to the West by creating exotic storylines
4. a) Operating in a multilingual environment with classical Chinese for writing and vernacular languages for speaking
5. d) Strict adherence to classical Confucian genres

Fill-in-the-Gaps Questions:

6. South
7. prestigious
8. neutral
9. British
10. internet

Key Answers for Activity 2

1. c) Commonwealth Writer's Prize
2. b) Satwa (Reason), Rajas (Passion), Tamas (Death)
3. exoticism

4. Algeria

Analytical Question/ Sample Answer:

In *The Circle of Reason*, Amitav Ghosh subverts the conventions of police fiction by inverting its traditional role in legitimizing state authority, instead using it to expose the repressive legacy of colonial rationality in postcolonial governance. As Yumna Siddiqi notes in the lecture, Ghosh "turns the generic conventions of police fiction upside down ... to challenge its coercive logic" (177), evident in the narrative's portrayal of Jyoti Das's pursuit of Alu, which is based on dubious intelligence and highlights bureaucratic fetishism rather than genuine justice. The novel's structure, divided into Satwa (Reason), Rajas (Passion), and Tamas (Death), mirrors this critique by destabilizing moral distinctions; for instance, Balaram's "passion for reason" leads to violence, illustrating how extreme rationality "circles into death" (Jones 7). This blending of genres—combining police fiction with picaresque and magical realism—underscores the postcolonial double bind, where Enlightenment reason, once a tool of colonial control, persists in state surveillance and suppression of dissent, as seen in the false branding of Balaram's School of Reason as insurgent. Through characters like Alu, whose fugitive journey resists coercive state mechanisms, Ghosh interrogates whether a non-repressive form of reason can emerge, ultimately revealing postcolonial states' replication of colonial anxieties about order under the guise of progress.

Comprehension and Review Exercises 5

Key Answers for Activity 1

MCQs:

1. b) The Bulletin
2. b) The performance of whiteness and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples
3. a) Human limits and nature's destructiveness
4. b) Deeper psychological and spiritual themes
5. a) John Kinsella

Fill-in-the-Gaps:

6. Romanticism
7. gold rushes' cosmopolitanism
8. conflict (or war/conflict's impact)
9. literacy rate
10. flora and fauna

Key Answers for Activity 2

1. c) Death
2. b) Victims of war and Allied bombings
3. Molching
4. The Word Shaker

Analytical Question/Sample Answer:

In Marcus Zusak's *The Book Thief*, the narrative perspective of Death serves as a compassionate yet detached lens that humanizes the everyday struggles of ordinary Germans in Nazi Germany, transforming the abstract horrors of war into intimate, personal stories while challenging simplistic notions of guilt and victimhood. Death's fascination with Liesel Meminger, a young girl who steals books as a form of resistance, underscores the profound impact of trauma on individuals, as her PTSD symptoms—such as bedwetting and compulsive theft—symbolize "acting out" her unresolved grief over her brother's death (Buráková 7), positioning her literacy journey as a defiant act that links her to the oppressed. Similarly, Max Vandenburg's rewriting of Hitler's Mein Kampf into subversive tales like The Standover Man and The Word Shaker illustrates the power of words to resist propaganda, blending fiction and history to highlight "grey zones" of complicity and resistance where moral complexities coexist (Domínguez-Rué 8). Kirril Shields critiques this approach for portraying working-class characters like the Hubermanns as sympathetic victims of Allied bombings and Nazi oppression, potentially exculpating ordinary Germans from collective guilt and contributing to debates on Holocaust memory by "normalizing" the era through Alltagsgeschichte (1-3, 7). Emma Domínguez-

Rué complements this by noting how Liesel's reading during air raids becomes a communal act of defiance, "saving herself by saving others" (5, 7), which emphasizes resistance through storytelling. Overall, Death's narration invites reflection on perpetrator trauma and postmemory, revealing how ordinary lives under the regime navigate guilt, suffering, and subtle rebellion, ultimately affirming the liberating potential of words amid oppression.

Comprehension and Review Exercises 6

Key Answers for Activity 1

1. b) African literature written in English
2. d) Digital literature in modern media
3. b) Wole Soyinka
4. c) Southern Africa
5. b) Efuru
6. populist
7. Emergency
8. orature
9. griots
10. whiteness

Key Answers for Activity 2

1. b) Frantz Fanon’s ideas on decolonization
2. b) Mugo
3. Thabai
4. socialist

Analytical Question/Sample Answer:

In *A Grain of Wheat*, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o utilizes the "we-narrative" to deconstruct the idealized collective identity in postcolonial Kenya, revealing its fractures through betrayal and internal conflict rather than portraying it as a unified force of resistance. As Rebecca Fasselt argues in the lecture, the novel's "disorienting 'we'" narrative, drawing on Amit Marcus's concept, destabilizes communal solidarity by exposing collaboration and distrust, such as in Kihika's assertive Mau Mau "we"—"We don’t kill just anybody... We are not murderers" (Fasselt 171)—which contrasts with Gikonyo’s confession of cowardice, "I would have sold Kenya to the whiteman to buy my own freedom" (Fasselt 172), highlighting a fragmented "we" of collaboration that undermines nationalist heroism. Alissa Hamilton complements this by noting that the shifting narrative voice, from omniscient to communal phrases like "it is said," grounds the story in collective memory while reflecting the contamination of language by colonial influences, complicating national identity construction (Hamilton 139). This technique aligns with Ngũgĩ’s broader critique of decolonization as a compromised process, influenced by Fanon, where the Independence Day "we"—haunted by traitors proclaiming "We whom you called traitors and collaborators will never die!" (Fasselt 175)—signals unresolved tensions, emphasizing that postcolonial unity is illusory and contested rather than triumphant. Ultimately, the disappearance of the "we" in later chapters underscores the novel's sobering view of a society struggling to reconcile personal alienation with collective aspirations.