

Tuesday 7 June 2022: 12pm

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Wednesday 8 June 2022: 12pm

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**Part II Paper 12**

**CONTEMPORARY WRITING IN ENGLISH**

Answer **Section A** and **two** questions from **Section B**.

*In questions where a quotation is attributed to an author you are not obliged to refer to that author in your answer unless specifically required to do so.*

*Do **not** use the same material twice, **either** in this paper **or** in the examination as a whole.*

*Irrelevant answers, or answers only tenuously related to the question, will be penalised.*

*Illegible handwriting may place candidates at a disadvantage.*

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There will be a word-count range of 800-1200 per essay, which is intended to approximate to the amount that can be written by hand under normal examination conditions. For papers which include a 'Section A' made up of multiple parts, the word-count for a candidate's responses to Section A as a whole must be within the range of 800–1200 words.

Examination responses should conform to the following presentation requirements: they should be in minimum 12pt type; should use a sans serif typeface (eg Arial or Calibri); should be 1.5 or double-spaced; and should be submitted as a word-processed document (in .docx or .rtf format).

The prescribed start date for this paper is 2005.

SECTION A

1. Comment in detail on **any two** of the following passages in the light of your knowledge of the period. You may answer on the passages separately, or in the form of one continuous answer.

*(a) is a complete work; (b) to (e) are all extracts from longer works; (f) is a complete work.*

(a)

‘The Hill We Climb’

*Mr. President and Dr. Biden  
Madam Vice President and Mr. Emhoff,  
Americans, and the World:*

When day comes, we ask ourselves:  
Where can we find light  
In this never-ending shade?  
The loss we carry, a sea we must wade.

We’ve braved the belly of the beast. 5  
We’ve learned that quiet isn’t always peace,  
And the norms and notions of what “just is”  
Isn’t always justice.

And yet the dawn is ours before we knew it,  
Somehow, we do it. 10  
Somehow, we’ve weathered and witnessed  
A nation that isn’t broken, but simply  
unfinished.

We, the successors of a country and a time  
Where a skinny Black girl, 15  
Descended from slaves and raised by a  
single mother,  
Can dream of becoming president,  
Only to find herself reciting for one.

And yes, we are far from polished, 20  
far from pristine,  
But this doesn’t mean we’re striving to  
form a union that is perfect.

We are striving to forge our union with  
purpose, 25

To compose a country committed  
 To all cultures, colors, characters,  
 And conditions of man.  
 And so we lift our gazes not  
 To what stands between us, 30  
 But what stands before us.  
 We close the divide,  
 Because we know to put  
 Our future first, we must first  
 Put our differences aside. 35

We lay down our arms  
 So that we can reach our arms out to one  
 another.  
 We seek harm to none, and harmony for all.

Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true: 40  
 That even as we grieved, we grew,  
 That even as we hurt, we hoped,  
 That even as we tired, we tried.  
 That we'll forever be tied together.  
 Victorious, 45  
 Not because we will never again know  
 defeat,  
 But because we will never again sow  
 division.

Scripture tells us to envision that: 50  
 "Everyone shall sit under their own vine  
 and fig tree,  
 And no one shall make them afraid."  
 If we're to live up to our own time, then  
 victory 55  
 Won't lie in the blade, but in all the bridges  
 we've made.  
*That* is the promised glade,  
 The hill we climb, if only we dare it:  
 Because being American is more than a 60  
 pride we inherit—  
 It's the past we step into, and how we  
 repair it.

We've seen a force that would shatter our nation rather than share it,	65
Would destroy our country if it meant delaying democracy.	
And this effort very nearly succeeded.	
But while democracy can be periodically delayed,	70
It can never be permanently defeated.	
In this truth, in this faith, we trust.	
For while we have our eyes on the future,	
History has its eyes on us.	
This is the era of just redemption.	75
We feared it at its inception.	
We did not feel prepared to be the heirs Of such a terrifying hour.	
But within it we've found the power	
To author a new chapter,	80
To offer hope and laughter to ourselves.	
So while once we asked: How could we possibly prevail over catastrophe?	
Now we assert: How could catastrophe possibly prevail over us?'	85
We will not march back to what was,	
But move to what shall be:	
A country that is bruised but whole,	
Benevolent but bold,	
Fierce and free.	90
We will not be turned around	
Or interrupted by intimidation,	
Because we know our inaction and inertia Will be the inheritance of the next generation.	95
Our blunders become their burdens.	
But one thing is certain:	
If we merge mercy with might, and might with right,	
Then love becomes our legacy,	100
And change, our children's birthright.	

So let us leave behind a country better  
than the one we were left.  
With every breath from our bronze-  
pounded chests, 105  
We will raise this wounded world into  
a wondrous one.

We will rise from the gold-limned hills  
of the West!  
We will rise from the windswept 110  
Northeast, where our forefathers first  
realized revolution!  
We will rise from the lake-rimmed cities  
of the Midwestern states!  
We will rise from the sunbaked South! 115

We will rebuild, reconcile, and recover,  
In every known nook of our nation  
In every corner called our country,  
Our people, diverse and dutiful.  
We'll emerge, battered but beautiful. 120

When day comes, we step out of the  
shade,  
Aflame and unafraid.  
The new dawn blooms as we free it,  
For there is always light, 125  
If only we're brave enough to see it,  
If only we're brave enough to be it.

'The Hill We Climb', by AMANDA GORMAN, commissioned for the Inauguration of President  
Joe Biden of the USA (2021)

(b)

*'I only am escaped alone to tell thee.'*

***Book of Job. Moby Dick.***

**Characters**

SALLY

VI

LENA

MRS JARRETT

5

*They are all at least seventy.*

**Place**

*Sally's backyard.*

10

*Several unmatching chairs. Maybe one's a kitchen chair.*

**Time**

*Summer afternoon.*

*A number of afternoons but the action is continuous.*

**1.**

15

Mrs J            I'm walking down the street and there's a door in the fence open and  
inside are three women I've seen before.

Vi                Don't look now but there's someone watching us.

Lena            Is it that woman?

Sally            Is that you, Mrs Jarrett?

20

Mrs J            So I go in

Sally            Rosie locked out in the rain

Vi                forgot her key

Sally            climbed over

Lena            lucky to have neighbours who

25

Sally	such a high wall	
Vi	this is Rosie her granddaughter	
Mrs J	I've a son, Frank	
Vi	I've a son	
Mrs J	suffers from insomnia	30
Vi	doesn't come very often. But Thomas	
Lena	that's her nephew	
Sally	he'd knock up the shelves in no time	
Vi	a big table	
Sally	grain of the wood	35
Vi	a table like that would last a lifetime	
Sally	an heirloom	
Lena	except we all eat off our laps	
Mrs J	nothing like a table	
Lena	I like a table	40
Vi	all have each other's keys because there's no way round and anyway I couldn't climb	
Mrs J	unless you lose them	
Vi	no I hang them all on a nail	
Sally	in a teapot	45
Vi	teapot?	
Sally	Elsie puts them in and takes them out	
Lena	down the floorboards	
Vi	only use bags in mugs	
Sally	holds your finger and then takes one step and down she goes.	50

Lena	Barney never out of his phone	
Vi	I'd have been the same	
Lena	looking pale	
Vi	whole worlds in your pocket	
Lena	little bit worried about Kevin and Mary, never hear an endearment	55
Sally	but nobody ever knows	
Mrs J	you'd be surprised what goes on	
Lena	twenty years in June	
Vi	we had to wear hats	
Sally	a pink one and I didn't	60
Vi	so you gave it to Angela	
Sally	I'd forgotten Angela	
Lena	shadows under her eyes	
Vi	ended up with a green one and it didn't suit you	
Lena	I could never say a word of course.	65
Vi	And Maisie, never so happy	
Lena	that's her niece	
Sally	quantum	
Vi	I can't really follow	
Sally	I can't even add up	70
Lena	they don't add up any more	
Vi	particles and waves I can manage but after that	
Sally	always good at sums as a child, she'd say two big numbers	
Vi	and while we were carrying things in our head	



Lena	I needed a pencil	75
Sally	she'd say the answer and it was always right	
Mrs J	I could always make change quick with the shillings and pence	
Vi	we'd be the ones got it wrong	
Lena	easier now it's decimal	
Sally	always right.	80
Lena	And Vera	
Mrs J	Four hundred thousand tons of rock paid for by senior executives split off the hillside to smash through the roofs, each fragment onto the designated child's head. Villages were buried and new communities of survivors underground developed skills of feeding off the dead where possible and communicating with taps and groans. Instant celebrities rose on ropes to the light of flashes. Time passed. Rats were eaten by those who still had digestive systems, and mushrooms were traded for urine. Babies were born and quickly became blind. Some groups lost their sexuality while others developed a new morality of constant	85
	fucking with any proximate body. A young woman crawling from one society to the other became wedged, only her head reaching her new companions. Stories of those above ground were told and retold till there were myths of the husband who cooked feasts, the wife who swam the ocean, the gay lover who could fly, the child who read minds,	90
	the talking dog. Prayers were said to them and various sects developed with tolerance and bitter hatred. Songs were sung until dry throats caused the end of speech. Torrential rain leaked through cracks and flooded the tunnels enabling screams at last before drownings.	95
	Survivors were now solitary and went insane at different rates.	100

*Escaped Alone*, CARYL CHURCHILL (2016)

(c)

### The St Georges Cross

THE SUBURBS DREAM of violence. Asleep in their drowsy villas, sheltered by benevolent shopping malls, they wait patiently for the nightmares that will wake them into a more passionate world ...

Wishful thinking, I told myself as Heathrow airport shrank into the rear-view mirror, and more than a little foolish, an advertising man's ingrained habit of tasting the wrapper rather than the biscuit. But they were thoughts that were difficult to push aside. I steered the Jensen into the slow lane of the M4, and began to read the route signs welcoming me to the outer London suburbs. Ashford, Staines, Hillingdon - impossible destinations that featured only on the mental maps of desperate marketing men. Beyond Heathrow lay the empires of consumerism, and the mystery that obsessed me until the day I walked out of my agency for the last time. How to rouse a dormant people who had everything, who had bought the dreams that money can buy and knew they had found a bargain? 5 10

The indicator ticked at the dashboard, a nagging arrow that I was certain I had never selected. But a hundred yards ahead was a slip road that I had somehow known was waiting for me. I slowed and left the motorway, entering a green-banked culvert that curved in on itself, past a sign urging me to visit a new business park and conference centre. I braked sharply, thought of reversing back to the motorway, then gave up. Always let the road decide ... 15

Like many central Londoners, I felt vaguely uneasy whenever I left the inner city and approached the suburban outlands. But in fact I had spent my advertising career in an eager courtship of the suburbs. Far from the jittery, synapse-testing metropolis, the perimeter towns dozing against the protective shoulder of the M25 were virtually an invention of the advertising industry, or so account executives like myself liked to think. The suburbs, we would all believe to our last gasp, were defined by the products we sold them, by the brands and trademarks and logos that alone defined their lives. 20 25

Yet somehow they resisted us, growing sleek and confident, the real centre of the nation, forever holding us at arm's length. Gazing out at the placid sea of bricky gables, at the pleasant parks and school playgrounds, I felt a pang of resentment, the same pain I remembered when my wife kissed me fondly, waved a little shyly from the door of our Chelsea apartment, and walked out on me for good. Affection could reveal itself in the most heartless moments. 30

But I had a special reason for feeling uneasy — only a few weeks earlier, these amiable suburbs had sat up and snarled, then sprung forward to kill my father.

*Kingdom Come*, J. G. BALLARD (2006)

(d)

Most human relations—particularly ongoing ones, whether between longstanding friends or longstanding enemies—are extremely complicated, dense with history and meaning. Maintaining them requires a constant and often subtle work of imagination, of endlessly trying to see the world from others’ points of view. This is what I’ve already referred to as “interpretive labor.” Threatening others with physical harm allows the possibility of cutting through all this. It makes possible relations of a far more simple and schematic kind (“cross this line and I will shoot you,” “one more word out of any of you and you’re going to jail”). This is of course why violence is so often the preferred weapon of the stupid. One might even call it the trump card of the stupid, since (and this is surely one of the tragedies of human existence) it is the one form of stupidity to which it is most difficult to come up with an intelligent response. 5 10

I do need to introduce one crucial qualification here. Everything, here, depends on the balance of forces. If two parties are engaged in a relatively equal contest of violence—say, generals commanding opposing armies—they have good reason to try to get inside each other’s heads. It is only when one side has an overwhelming advantage in their capacity to cause physical harm that they no longer need to do so. But this has very profound effects, because it means that the most characteristic effect of violence, its ability to obviate the need for “interpretive labor,” becomes most salient when the violence itself is least visible—in fact, where acts of spectacular physical violence are least likely to occur. These are of course precisely what I have just defined as situations of structural violence, systematic inequalities ultimately backed up by the threat of force. For this reason, situations of structural violence invariably produce extreme lopsided structures of imaginative identification. 15 20

These effects are often most visible when the structures of inequality take the most deeply internalized forms. Gender is again a classic case in point. For example, in American situation comedies of the 1950s, there was a constant staple: jokes about the impossibility of understanding women. The jokes (told, of course, by men) always represented women’s logic as fundamentally alien and incomprehensible. “You have to love them,” the message always seemed to run, “but who can really understand how these creatures think?” One never had the impression the women in question had any trouble understanding men. The reason is obvious. Women had no choice but to understand men. In America, the fifties were the heyday of a certain ideal of the one-income patriarchal family, and among the more affluent, the ideal was often achieved. Women with no access to their own income or resources obviously had no choice but to spend a great deal of time and energy understanding what their menfolk thought was going on. 25 30 35

*The Utopia of Rules: On Technology, Stupidity, and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy,*  
DAVID GRAEBER (2015)

(e)

## HERMENEUTICS? SUSPICION?

I turn now to the key term of my argument. Paul Ricoeur is an exceptionally prolific philosopher who has written at length on narrative, metaphor, selfhood, time, evil, and many other topics. In what follows, I do not apply Ricoeur to literary studies or closely engage his version of hermeneutic phenomenology (for which I retain some sympathy). Rather, I appropriate his phrase as a stimulus to thought, pushing it in directions that are rather different from Ricoeur's own. It is somewhat ironic, in fact, that Ricoeur's name is so closely tied to a term that plays only a modest role in his thought. "The hermeneutics of suspicion" may well be his most inspired coinage, yet the phrase crops up only a few times in his own writing. Moreover, while widely credited to his 1952 book *Freud and Philosophy*, this attribution is a mistake; in reality, Ricoeur came up with the term at a later date while reflecting on the trajectory of his own work. What, then, does Ricoeur mean by "hermeneutics of suspicion," and how might this phrase offer a fresh slant on recent thinking in the humanities?

As we have seen, Ricoeur hails Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche as the creators of a new art of interpreting. They are, of course, hardly the first thinkers to hurl themselves against the barriers of doxa and dogmatism. The crucial difference: radicalism of thought now calls for intensive acts of *deciphering*, thanks to a heightened sense of the duplicity of language and the uncertain links between signs and meaning. Their aim is not just to underscore the unreliability of knowledge — a theme amply mined by previous generations of philosophers. Rather, these thinkers instantiate a new suspicion of *motives* — of the ubiquity of deception and self-deception. Rather than being conveyed in words, truth lies beneath, behind, or to the side of these words, encrypted in what cannot be said, in revelatory stutterings and recalcitrant silences. The task of the social critic is to reverse the falsifications of everyday thought, to "unconceal" what has been concealed, to bring into daylight what has languished in deep shadow. Meaning can be retrieved only after arduous effort; it must be wrested from the text, rather than gleaned from the text.

In this sense Ricoeur's triad of thinkers is engaged in a distinctively hermeneutic project: radical thought is now tied to painstaking acts of interpretation. "Henceforth," writes Ricoeur, "to seek meaning is no longer to spell out the consciousness of meaning, but to *decipher its expressions*." That meaning must be actively deciphered via the scrutiny of signs testifies to its newly fraught and equivocal status. Apparent meaning and actual meaning fail to coincide; words disguise rather than disclose; we are entangled and held fast in sticky webs of language whose purposes we barely perceive and dimly comprehend. The complacency of consciousness — our belief that we can look into our own souls and discern who we really are — is rudely shattered; we remain, it turns out, strangers to ourselves. As Ricoeur puts it, the science of meaning is now at odds with the everyday consciousness of meaning.

Moreover, Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche are at war not only with the commonplaces of their own time but also the oppressive weight of the past. Ricoeur hails their work as a radical break—a leave-taking from traditional theories of interpretation anchored in the study of religious texts. What unites them, in spite of their differences, is a spirit of ferocious and blistering disenchantment—a desire to puncture illusions, topple idols, and destroy divinities. In *Freud and Philosophy* Ricoeur contrasts this iconoclastic verve to the yearning of the reader who approaches a text in the hope of revelation. Here meaning is

disguised in a quite different sense. The reader luxuriates in the fullness of language rather than lamenting its poverty; the text's latent meaning “dwells” in its first meaning, rather than exposing, subverting, or canceling it out. To interpret in this way is to feel oneself addressed by the text as if by a message or a proclamation, to defer to a presence rather than diagnose an absence. The words on the page do not disguise truth but disclose it. Such a “hermeneutics of restoration” is infused with moments of wonder, reverence, exaltation, hope, epiphany, or joy. The difference between a hermeneutics of restoration and a hermeneutics of suspicion, we might say, lies in the difference between unveiling and unmasking.

*The Limits of Critique*, Rita Felski (2015)

(f)

How was it that till questioned, till displaced in the attempt to answer, I had scarcely thought of myself as having a country, or indeed as having left a country? The answer lies peripherally in looming, in hinterland; primarily in the tongueless, palpitating interiority. Trinidad was. Trinidad is. In the same way, some confident speakers do not think of themselves as having an accent. They will say so: 'I don't have an accent! You have an accent!' In those accentless voices compass points spin, ochre and ultramarine flagella fling themselves identifiably towards this that or the other region. It is a motile version of that luxury, solidity, non-reflectivity that is the assumption of *patria*. So different is the expat from the refugee, who has her country on her back, or the migrant, who has countries at his back. 5 10

What would I have called home, before I began creating home? Before I had to learn to ravel up longitude, latitude, population, oil rigs, mobile phone masts, prayer flags, legality of fireworks, likely use of firearms, density and disappearance of forests, scarlet ibis, other stripes of scarlet, into a by-listeners-unvisited, communicable, substantial image of 'Trinidad'? 15

Language is my home. It is alive other than in speech. It is beyond a thing to be carried with me. It is ineluctable, variegated and muscular. A flicker and drag emanates from the idea of it. Language seems capable of girding the oceanic earth, like the world-serpent of Norse legend. It is as if language places a shaping pressure upon our territories of habitation and voyage; thrashing, independent, threatening to rive our known world apart. 20

Yet thought is not bounded by language. At least, my experience of thinking does not appear so bound.

One day I lost the words *wall* and *floor*. There seemed no reason to conceive of a division. The skirting-board suddenly reduced itself to a nervous gentrification, a cover-up of some kind; nothing especially marked. The room was an inward-focused container. 'Wall', 'floor', even 'ceiling', 'doorway', shutters' started to flow smoothly, like a red ribbed tank top over a heaving ribcage. Room grew into quarter. Room became segment. Line yearned till it popped into curve. The imperfections of what had been built or installed: the ragged windowframe or peeling tile: had no power to reclaim human attention to 'floor' or 'wall' as such. Objects were tethered like astronauts and a timid fringe of disarrayed atmosphere was the immediate past that human activity kept restyling into present. The interiority of the room was in continuous flow. *Wall, floor* became usable words again in a sort of silence. 25 30

I had the sense to shut up about the languageless perception. Procedure for living. 35

Language is my home, I say; not one particular language.

'Going Nowhere, Getting Somewhere', VAHNI CAPILDEO (2016)

## SECTION B

2. 'These are stories of redemption, not restoration. These sites will never again return to the way they were.' (CAL FLYN)  
In what ways do contemporary writers explore the impossibility of return in writing that engages with environmental degradation?
3. 'The really scary thing about actual futurity, for me, is the newsfeed of the present day. It's something I could never have imagined. If it had been pitched to a Hollywood picture producer a decade ago they'd say: "Get outta here, never darken my door. This is *ridiculous!*"' (WILLIAM GIBSON)  
Write about futurity and its relationship to the present in contemporary writing.
4. 'Colonization works to decivilize the colonizer, to brutalize him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism.' (AIMÉ CÉSAIRE)  
Discuss in relation to contemporary writing.
5. 'Another value system had arrived.' (SARAH HALL)  
Write about the representation of value systems in contemporary writing.
6. 'I often feel I am trapped inside someone else's imagination, and I must engage my own imagination in order to break free.' (ADRIENNE MAREE BROWN)  
Write about formal ways in which contemporary writers have 'broken free'.
7. 'Heroism also consists of washing your hands and staying at home.'  
(PEDRO SÁNCHEZ)  
What place does the quotidian and quiet have in contemporary writing?
8. Does the representation of misogyny sometimes become a reenactment of misogyny in contemporary writing?
9. 'In postdramatic theatre, performance art, and dance, the traditional hierarchy of theatrical elements has almost vanished. As the text is no longer the central and superior factor, all the other elements like space, light, sound, music, movement and gesture tend to have an equal weight in the performance process.'  
(HANS THIES-LEHMANN) Discuss.

10. 'Another thing is living with the photographed images of suffering, which does not necessarily strengthen conscience and the ability to be compassionate.'  
(SUSAN SONTAG)  
Write about challenges to compassion in relation to contemporary writing.
11. 'Professional behaviour patterns are modelled on the efficiency of the machines replacing them; these machines carrying out tasks which once represented so many opportunities for exchanges, pleasure and squabbling'. (NICHOLAS BOURRIAUD)  
Write about the formal techniques contemporary writers use to explore automation, mechanisation **and/or** artificial intelligence in contemporary writing.
12. What kind of figure does the hero cut in contemporary writing?
13. 'Question 14: "are you living your secret desires?" Floored again. I finally didn't check Yes, Somewhat, or No, but wrote in "I have none, all my desires are flagrant."' (URSULA LE GUIN)  
Write about the use of surveys, forms, the internet, smart phones or any other bureaucratic technology in contemporary writing.
14. 'The past was no longer what allowed passage, but what was simply surpassed, outdated. To debate this choice, to hesitate, negotiate, take one's time, was to doubt the arrow of time, to be old-fashioned.' (BRUNO LATOUR)  
Discuss ways in which contemporary writing handles the idea of progress **and/or** notions of the past.
15. 'Though it often feels that progress is stalling, the revolution over the last half-century in notions of gender, sex and sexuality is real and massive; it lives in the fields and hills just as happily, and just as unhappily, as it does in the streets.'  
(MIKE PARKER)  
Write about place in relation to gender **and/or** sexuality in contemporary writing.
16. 'I suddenly had the strangest sensation – a spontaneous awareness of the unlikeliness of this life.' (SALLY ROONEY)  
Discuss the representation of 'unlikeliness', in any way, in contemporary writing.
17. 'Is it not our moral obligation to tell the stories of people not generally afforded the platform of our stages?' (EDWARD SOBEL)  
Write about the ethics of theatrical representation in contemporary writing.



18. 'The slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery.' (W. E. B. DU BOIS)  
Write about modern slavery in contemporary writing.
19. Write about the formal use of social media platforms such as Twitter in contemporary writing.
20. 'Cultures of domination cultivate fear as a way to ensure obedience. In our culture we make much of love but say little about fear. As a culture we are obsessed with the notion of safety. Yet we do not question why we live in states of extreme anxiety and dread.' (bell hooks)  
Write about ways in which fear is represented in contemporary writing.
21. 'Analysing petro-masculinity alerts us to those perilous moments when challenges to fossil-fuelled systems, and more broadly to fossil-soaked lifestyles, become interpreted as challenges to white patriarchal rule.' (CARA DAGGETT)  
How does contemporary writing reflect **and/or** resist white patriarchal rule?
22. 'When written, shit does not smell.' (ROLAND BARTHES)  
Discuss the representation of waste in contemporary writing.
23. 'It matters what thoughts think thoughts. It matters what knowledges know knowledges. It matters what relations relate relations. It matters what worlds world worlds. It matters what stories tell stories.' (DONNA J. HARAWAY)  
Discuss.
24. 'Black women have paid a heavy price for the strengths they have acquired and the relative independence they have enjoyed.' (ANGELA Y. DAVIS)  
How has this been represented in contemporary writing?
25. 'Civilisation is a function of boundaries.' (ANNE CARSON)  
Write an essay on boundaries in contemporary writing.

END OF PAPER