

Chapter 1

Exercise 1

Name the types of writing exemplified in Passages 1–4. Can you identify the distinct occasion or cultural situation which each serves? A cultural situation connects writers and intended readers, so begin by trying to identify the writer and reader for each passage. How does this situation shape the writer’s choices?

PASSAGE 1

Eugenics theory powerfully influenced late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century U.S. policies concerning the groups then known as “the dependent, defective, and delinquent classes” (Henderson 1901, U.S. Department of the Interior 1883). In essence, eugenicists held that the “fit” should be encouraged to reproduce (“positive” eugenics) and the “unfit” prevented from doing so (“negative” eugenics). Historians generally agree that between 1900 and 1920 this doctrine formed the basis for a full-fledged social movement with research centers, propaganda vehicles, and strong middle-class support (Haller 1963, Kevles 1985, Ludmerer 1972, Pickens 1968). Less commonly acknowledged is the fact that eugenics theory affected public policy for decades before becoming the social movement’s foundation and that eugenic ideas long outlived the movement itself, in ways that a new generation of historians is just starting to explore (Dann 1991, Noll 1990, Reilly 1991). Even today, eugenics arguments occasionally make their way into debates about such matters as population growth and crime control (e.g., Wattenberg 1987, Wilson 1989; for a recent analysis see Duster 1990).

Nicole H. Rafter 1992 “Claims-making and socio-cultural context in the first U.S. eugenics campaign.” *Social Problems* 39 (1): 17.

PASSAGE 2

Crescent Beach park bench - w4m

Reply to: pers-XXXXXXX@XXXXXX.org

Date: 2007-08-06, 4:16PM PDT

You: goatee, sunglasses, sitting on bench at the beach under a tree at the roundabout around 1:30 today.

Me: blonde, sunglasses driving by looking for parking...we exchanged smiles...

Interested in exchanging dialogue sometime?

PASSAGE 3

If the Tenant terminates this Tenancy Agreement as aforesaid the Tenant shall be liable to pay rent hereunder to the date that the Tenant vacates the premises, and where such date of termination does not coincide with the date upon which the Tenant is obligated to pay rent hereunder (rent payment date) the Tenant shall pay rent calculated by dividing the monthly rental payment hereunder by the number of days for the period commencing on and including the last rent payment date and ending on and including the day preceding the rent payment date following the termination date, and multiplying the result of such calculation by the number of days for the period commencing on and including the last rent payment date and ending on and including the termination date.

PASSAGE 4

The “human problem” in Michael Ondaatje’s *Anil’s Ghost* concerns the tidal waves of wounded affected by the political violence in Sri Lanka. The novel’s account of the disinterred, disappeared, assassinated, and injured reflects an archive of death. “We seem to have too many bodies around,” laments Sarath, one of the main figures in the book (274). The sheer magnitude of human loss signals the impossibility of properly recognizing the full humanity of all the actors in this conflict, much less grieving their loss. The usual ways of memorializing individual deaths that denote a singular, subjective life—through details such as place of belonging, linguistic and familial ties, ethnicity, name, age, and occupation—become insufficient

for explaining the losses that are incurred. Human rights, and human wrongs, the novel implies, can no longer be adduced on grounds that value the sentience and security of the individual, historically legible subject. Rather, *Anil's Ghost* presents us with a “human problem” of a different order, one that parlays collective death in generalizable terms and, by extension, our common vulnerability to violence into a new subjective experience.

Mrinalini Chakravorty 2013 “The dead that haunt ‘Anil’s Ghost’: Subaltern difference and postcolonial melancholia.” *PMLA* 128 (3): 542-58, 542.

Exercise 2

The styles of expression in Passages 1–4 above differ in many respects. First, and most broadly, what distinguishes 1 and 4 from the others? Second, and more narrowly, can you distinguish between the styles of 1 and 4? In approaching these tasks, you might take into account these features:

- ways the writers are represented in the text (most obviously, do they mention themselves?);
- words—their commonness (would they show up in, for example, conversation between neighbours?), their recurrence (to what degree do these writers repeat the same words?); and sentences—their length, completeness;
- capital letters, parentheses, names, dates.

How would you describe the relation between writer and reader in each of these passages?

From what you know (or can guess) about the ways of life surrounding each of these samples, estimate how each of the writers learned to write this way (on the job? in class? on a weekend seminar?).