

ASSESSED WORK COVER SHEET

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Student ID Number:

Year of Study:

Final Year?

Module Name & Code:

CATS (please select):

Module Tutor(s):

Word Count:

Assignment Title:

(Where relevant): I submitted my assignment in hard copy to IATL offices on (Date)

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*Failure to do your assessed work by the specified deadline will mean that your submission is LATE. Please remember that you **MUST** print out the electronic receipt you will receive for your online essay submission, and keep for reference.*

The video to my poem 'Us versus Them' may be found here:

<https://youtu.be/l1hWbVUJnTA>

I have chosen the medium of spoken word for my project because I think that it is a great form to explore the nature of interdisciplinarity. In this piece, I define interdisciplinarity as the seamless combination of two or more schools of knowledge or disciplines. Spoken word combines the literary skills required to write poetry, as well as the performance skills required to recite said poetry, ultimately fusing the two together to create a new interdisciplinary art form. I was also able to integrate my camera and editing skills to help my project come together. As a Liberal Arts student, I am constantly encouraged to interrogate different disciplines to create a more holistic view of the world, so I hope that I was able to use this poem to illustrate the different social, political, economic and geographic factors that are at play in the topic of migration.

I was largely inspired to use this medium after our exploration of the poem '*Rise: From One Island to Another*' by Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner and Aka Niviâna (2016) during week 2. Their ability to stitch different words and images together to illustrate their pain in such a seemingly effortless way was truly astonishing. Spoken word is a medium that I enjoyed when I was younger, and this week definitely helped reignite my love for it. I enjoyed revisiting this medium as an adult through a more educational lens as it allowed me to think of new ways to articulate the different theories and concepts that I have learnt within this module, in a way that still allowed me to maintain a child-like use of my imagination. My intended audience for this piece would be like minded people that also enjoy spoken word as I hope that they would be able to appreciate and more importantly, interrogate the use of metaphors within the poem to find a deeper meaning.

Ultimately, my aim for this poem is to humanise migrants to members of the Western world. The title of my poem, 'Us versus Them', alludes to Edward Said's exploration of the concept of 'othering' that the West often imparts on the rest of the world. Said suggested that the very framework of an 'Us-versus-Them' mentality 'pretend[s] that the principal consideration is epistemological and natural' (2001). As a result, I wanted to use this poem to highlight just how unnatural this process is. I did this by placing significant emphasis on pronouns like 'we', 'us', 'them', and 'you' to further reflect the separation that is caused when communities are thought of in these ways. This was also a way to illustrate Benedict Anderson's theory of 'imagined communities' (1983) which conceptualises the process of socially constructed communities. The gradual degradation from words like 'ours' to 'them' in the poem is reflective of the current breakdown of the connections between our global communities.

The use of pronouns such as ‘them’ also aimed to highlight the tendency for migrants to be perceived in a homogenous manner which often reduces them to numbers and dehumanises them. My use of the phrase ‘more commodity than companion’ was largely inspired by our exploration of the work of Attiyah Ahmad in week 5. Ahmad highlights the tendency for labour to be one of the principle analytical categories in which the stories of migrants are framed (2012). This suggests that migrants are often valued by the services that they may provide to a place or people. After completing this module, I heavily reject this notion because I see it as reductive. I too believe that there needs to be more complex ways to explore the experiences of migrants that go beyond the limitations of labour. I attempted to address this in my poem when talking about “stolen jobs’ that no one even desired’ in order to highlight the futility of such a mind frame, however I also acknowledge that my limitation of words and stanzas did not allow me to go truly in depth on this subject.

On the other hand, the beauty of the medium of poetry is that it does not aim to wholly encapsulate a topic in the same way that a traditional text does. Metaphors and similes are used as a way to creatively describe things, rather than aiming for complete accuracy. This gives the form the ability to reimagine the ways in which we see the world. This is particularly useful for the theme of Global Connections, as we all see things differently, so often have completely different interpretations of the same text. Poetry acknowledges this and allows more people to engage with its content as there are very few ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers. In order to maintain some universal level of understanding I opted to incorporate visual elements in my poem so that I could illustrate some of the ideas that I wanted to explore. For example, rather than presuming all viewers have knowledge of what Pangea is, I simply included an illustration. The visual aspect of my project also helped me to explore more complex metaphors. For example, the Sea and waves are a recurring image that illustrate how we as people and places are connected by different flows; whether that be through energy, cultures, or literally through the waves of the Sea. This was inspired by the concept of ‘Blue Humanities’ which is the ‘recognition of the close relationship between modern western culture and the sea’ (Gillis, 2013). I had never heard of this concept prior to this module, but it is one that truly encapsulates the concept of Global Connections for me so aligning clips of waves with clips of migrants at Sea was an opportunity to tie the concepts of culture and the Sea together in a metaphorical and creative way.

As a person born and raised in the Western world, I understand my limitations of the subject of migration. This is another reason why my creative exploration of this topic may be more useful than a more scholarly attempt. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh highlights the need to decenter global North knowledge in topics concerning migration as they

dominate the conversation and scholarly explorations too often. Upon reflection of this, I did not want to add to this issue, so I decided to use the creative medium of spoken words as it allowed me to explore this concept in a more abstract way. Film gave me the ability to incorporate clips of real migrants telling their own stories, rather than me attempting to articulate what they experience. I included clips of boat rescue missions as well as a voice note from my Mother, speaking in Yoruba. These sources influenced my research by showing a new and non-Western perspective to migration, albeit limited. Even though some of the images included in my poem may be deemed to be upsetting, I hope that they would instill a visceral feeling in an audience that would help to begin to illustrate the realities of migration and force them to interrogate their own thoughts.

Ultimately, this project has reiterated the fact that we need more ways to explore the concept of migration. Prior to this module I had quite a limited understanding of migration because I thought of it mostly in a political and economic sense. Now I appreciate all of the different factors that are at play and appreciate that each factor may also influence each other. Looking at a subject as complex as migration from a singular perspective will always be extremely limiting, so there needs to be a greater effort, particularly from members of the West, to broaden the horizon with which we look at this topic. Upon reflection I realised that differing perspectives are not only extremely beneficial, but essential in this context, so I hope that this school of knowledge moves towards a more inclusive and interdisciplinary way of thinking. I think this will only be achievable once there is more of an emphasis on giving migrants and non-Western scholars the opportunity to explore these concepts through initiatives like increased research funding.

Overall, I hope this piece can encourage people to think about and interrogate their misconceptions about migrants. Moving on from this module, I would like to further explore and amplify migrant stories. Documentaries have always been a passion of mine, so I would love to travel whilst helping people archive their stories and cultures. This module has encouraged me to explore different countries, cultures and ways of thinking, so I hope that I may be able to do so whilst strengthening the already existing global connections within the world.

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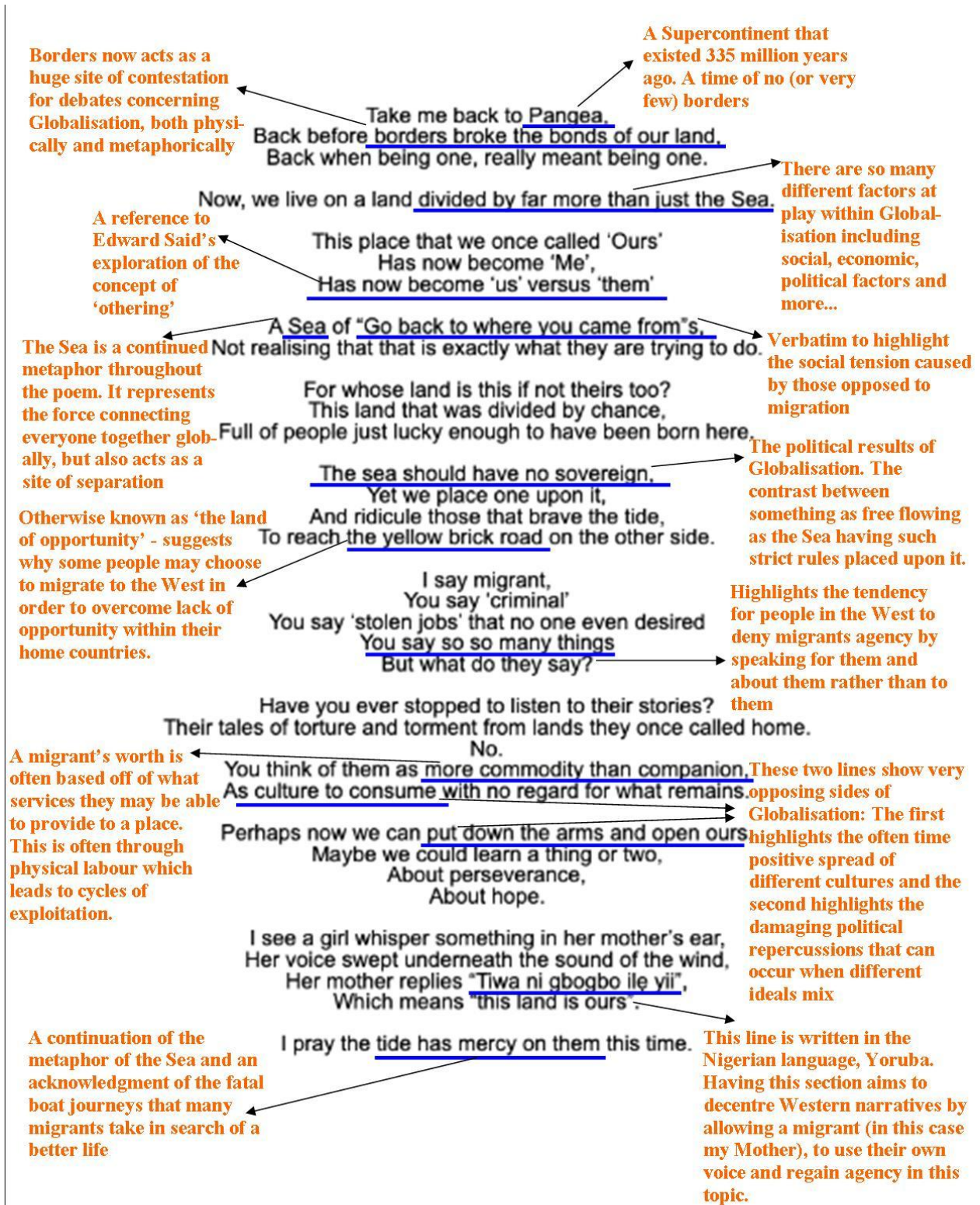
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Appendix



This is a transcript of my poem called 'Us versus Them', as well as some annotations to contextualise some of my linguistic choices.