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BA English Honours | Semester I | Calicut University

Introduction to the World of Literature

Course Code: ENG1CJ101 • Module 2 Notes

MODULE II: WAR & PEACE

1. The Dialectic of Conflict: Strategic Logic, Childhood Trauma, and Moral Resistance

War and peace constitute the defining dialectic of human civilization. Throughout recorded history, human societies have oscillated between the devastating impulses of organized mass violence and the noble pursuit of enduring peace, human dignity, and universal justice. Literature provides an irreplaceable mirror to this existential struggle. Where official state histories chronicle troop movements, territorial conquests, and political treaties, literature captures the profound human costs of warfare: the moral degradation of the combatant, the psychological obliteration of innocent civilians, the resilience of children amidst bombardment, and the heroic defiance of truth-tellers confronting tyrannical power.

This module brings into dialogue four monumental texts that span twenty-five centuries and four distinct cultures: Sun Tzu's ancient Chinese tactical treatise *The Art of War*, Tetsuko Kuroyanagi's poignant Japanese childhood memoir *Totto-Chan*, Mahatma Gandhi's radical anti-militarist manifesto *To Every Briton*, and Filipino journalist Maria Ressa's urgent 2021 Nobel Peace Prize lecture on digital authoritarianism. Together, these works examine warfare not merely as armed battlefield combat, but as an ideological, philosophical, and technological struggle for the soul of humanity.

2. Ancient Strategic Pragmatism: Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* (Chapter 4: Tactical Dispositions)

Composed during China's tumultuous Warring States period (c. 5th century BCE), Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* (*Sunzi Bingfa*) remains the world's most influential treatise on military strategy, statecraft, and conflict resolution. Chapter 4, titled "Tactical Dispositions" (*Xing*), articulates the core philosophical paradox of Sun Tzu's military thought: the ultimate victory is achieved not through bloody annihilation, but by creating strategic conditions that make defeat impossible and combat unnecessary.

CLASSICAL CHINESE MILITARY DOCTRINE **Sun Tzu: Chapter 4 — Tactical Dispositions**

> *"The good fighters of old first put themselves beyond the possibility of defeat, and then waited for an opportunity of defeating the enemy. To secure ourselves against defeat lies in our own hands, but the opportunity of defeating the enemy is provided by the enemy himself... Hence the skillful fighter puts himself into a position which makes defeat impossible, and does not miss the moment for defeating the enemy."*

Sun Tzu firmly subordinates military violence to political wisdom. War is an enormous drain on national resources, and protracted conflict inevitably destroys both victor and vanquished. Therefore, Sun Tzu asserts that true strategic mastery consists of winning without fighting (*bu zhan er qu ren zhi bing*). Chapter 4 focuses on defense, invulnerability, and meticulous psychological assessment. The wise commander secures their own position through discipline, resource preservation, and unshakeable positioning, waiting patiently until the adversary makes an unforced tactical error.

Crucially, Sun Tzu dismantles the heroic, glory-seeking myth of war. The best commanders do not win fame for spectacular, bloody counterattacks; their victories are so seamless, quiet, and psychologically inevitable

that the public scarcely notices them. In modern leadership, international diplomacy, and peace studies, Sun Tzu's doctrine is studied as a masterclass in deterrence, conflict de-escalation, and emotional self-control.

3. The Loss of Innocence in Wartime Japan: Tetsuko Kuroyanagi's *Totto-Chan* ("Sayonara, Sayonara")

Tetsuko Kuroyanagi's beloved autobiographical memoir *Totto-Chan: The Little Girl at the Window* (1981) offers a devastatingly poignant child's-eye perspective on Japan during the closing years of the Second World War. The book chronicles the author's unconventional childhood at Tomoe Gakuen, an extraordinarily progressive, nurturing elementary school in Tokyo founded by the visionary educator Sosaku Kobayashi, who utilized abandoned railroad cars as classrooms.

The chapter "Sayonara, Sayonara" marks the tragic intrusion of global totalitarian conflict into this idyllic educational paradise. As the Pacific War intensifies, food rationing starves the populace, and the Allied air forces begin their firebombing campaigns over Tokyo. Kuroyanagi portrays the grim normalization of militarism: young boys are drafted into suicide battalions, patriotic propaganda replaces music, and children are trained to chant military slogans.

The emotional climax of the narrative occurs with the sudden death of Yasuki-chan, Totto-chan's beloved classmate who suffered from polio. For Totto-chan, who had painstakingly hoisted Yasuki-chan up into her personal tree to show him the horizon, this loss represents the first shattering encounter with mortality. Soon after, Tomoe Gakuen itself is struck by incendiary bombs. As Mr. Kobayashi watches his beloved school burn to ashes in the night, he turns to his son and asks serenely: "What kind of school shall we build next?" Kuroyanagi's narrative is an unforgettable testament to childhood resilience and an indictment of military fanaticism that destroys humanity's most sacred institutions.

4. The Radical Ethics of Satyagraha: M. K. Gandhi's *To Every Briton* (1940)

On July 2, 1940, as Nazi Germany overran Western Europe and Adolf Hitler launched the aerial Blitzkrieg against Great Britain, Mahatma Gandhi published an audacious public appeal in his journal *Harijan* titled *To Every Briton*. In this historic document, composed at the darkest hour of the Second World War, Gandhi invited the British people to abandon conventional military defense and confront the Nazi onslaught through the revolutionary spiritual power of absolute non-violent non-cooperation (*Satyagraha*).

HISTORICAL DOCUMENT ANALYSIS **Gandhi's Appeal to Great Britain (July 1940)**

> *"I want you to fight Nazism without arms, or, if I am to retain the military terminology, with non-violent arms. I would like you to lay down the arms you have as being useless for saving you or humanity. You will invite Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini to take what they want of the countries you call your possessions. Let them take possession of your beautiful island, with your many beautiful buildings. You will give all these, but neither your souls, nor your minds."*

Gandhi's proposal startled contemporary political leaders, including Winston Churchill, who viewed it as unrealistic and defeatist. However, a rigorous critical reading reveals that Gandhi's appeal was rooted in a profound philosophical critique of militarism. Gandhi argued that by fighting Hitler with superior military violence, Britain was inevitably adopting the very totalitarian brutality it sought to defeat. Military violence,

Gandhi maintained, degrades the victor and vanquished alike; one cannot defeat fascism by becoming more proficient in industrialized murder.

Instead, Gandhi proposed radical, collective spiritual resistance. He urged Britons to refuse to cooperate with an occupying force: "You will refuse to obey their commands; you will allow yourself, man, woman and child, to be slaughtered, but you will not owe allegiance to them." Gandhi believed that even the most brutal dictator cannot rule over a population that refuses consent and does not fear death. While historically controversial, *To Every Briton* represents the uncompromising zenith of Gandhi's moral philosophy, asserting that the soul of a civilization can never be defended by spiritual suicide and weaponized hatred.

5. Defending Truth in the Algorithmic Age: Maria Ressa's Nobel Lecture (2021)

In December 2021, Filipino investigative journalist Maria Ressa was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize (alongside Russian journalist Dmitry Muratov) "for their efforts to safeguard freedom of expression, which is a precondition for democracy and lasting peace." Her Nobel Lecture delivered in Oslo represents one of the most urgent, foundational texts of the twenty-first century, linking the defense of independent journalism directly to the global struggle against authoritarianism and digital disinformation warfare.

Ressa, co-founder of the digital news platform *Rappler*, had endured relentless state-sponsored harassment, multiple arrest warrants, and systemic online misogynistic trolling under the authoritarian regime of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, whose brutal extrajudicial "drug war" Rappler courageously exposed. In her lecture, Ressa identifies a catastrophic transformation in the nature of modern warfare: the primary battlefield of the twenty-first century is no longer physical territory, but the cognitive ecosystem of human minds, waged via American social media algorithms.

Ressa exposes how surveillance capitalism platforms monetize outrage and division. Citing algorithmic research, she demonstrates that on social media networks, lies laced with anger and fear spread six times faster than factual, nuanced truth. Authoritarian regimes systematically exploit these algorithmic feedback loops to wage psychological warfare against their own citizens, micro-targeting vulnerable communities, fabricating alternative realities, and silencing dissenting journalists through manufactured outrage mobs. Ressa's core warning resonates globally:

> *"Without facts, you cannot have truth. Without truth, you cannot have trust. Without trust, we have no shared reality, no democracy, and it becomes impossible to deal with our world's existential problems: climate, coronavirus, the battle for truth."*

Ressa redefines the role of the modern writer and journalist: in an era of weaponized digital deceit, holding the line of factual reality is a heroic, dangerous act of peacebuilding. The defense of democracy requires individual courage, technological accountability, and systemic legal reforms to reclaim information as a public good.

Advanced Critical Theory & Hermeneutic Synthesis

In contemporary literary scholarship and critical humanities, examining *Introduction to the World of Literature* requires traversing diverse theoretical methodologies. Literature does not exist in an ideological vacuum; it actively produces, subverts, and interrogates the historical, material, and socio-political conditions of human society. Contemporary scholars engage with texts through multi-faceted critical frameworks, synthesizing formalist textual rigor with cultural materialism, feminist critique, decolonial methodologies, and media ecology.

1. Theoretical Debates & Hermeneutic Perspectives

Academic investigation into War Literature, Pacifist Ethics, and Information Warfare reveals fundamental dialectical tensions across critical traditions:

- **Formalist Autonomy versus Cultural Materialism:** New Criticism and Russian Formalism argue that literary works possess organic unity, accessible primarily through close reading of intrinsic devices (irony, paradox, defamiliarization, metre). Conversely, Marxist and cultural materialist theorists contend that literary forms are determined by historical modes of production, class struggle, and ideological state apparatuses. Analyzing War Literature, Pacifist Ethics, and Information Warfare requires balancing close aesthetic appreciation with rigorous ideological demystification.
- **The Postcolonial Imperative and Canon Revision:** Canonical Western literature historically established eurocentric aesthetic benchmarks that marginalized indigenous and colonized voices. Modern postcolonial hermeneutics, formulated by theorists like Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi Bhabha, re-reads canonical representations through the lens of orientalism, subaltern agency, and cultural hybridity, restoring voice to suppressed histories.
- **Affective Resonance and Reader-Response Hermeneutics:** Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish emphasize that literary meaning is realized in the interaction between the textual horizon of expectations and the reader's interpretive community. In the digital age, literature expands from a static artifact into an interactive, communal event where reception actively recreates narrative reality.

2. Comparative Analytical Framework

A structured comparative assessment delineates the aesthetic, structural, and political dimensions across conventional and contemporary paradigms in Introduction to the World of Literature:

Critical Dimension	Classical / Canonical Approach	Contemporary Critical Paradigm	Transformative Scholarly Impact
Authorial Agency	Biographical intentionalism prioritizing the author as the sole locus of meaning.	Post-structuralist critique (Barthes's "Death of the Author"; Foucault's "Author-Function") decentering origin.	Fosters democratic, pluralistic interpretations liberated from authoritarian single readings.
Genre Architecture	Rigid Aristotelian genre hierarchies separating high tragedy, epic, and low comedy.	Hybrid, border-crossing forms (docu-fiction, digital hypertext, graphic poetry, micro-memoir).	Deconstructs patriarchal and elitist aesthetic boundaries, admitting popular and vernacular forms.
Linguistic Medium	Standardized literary dialects conforming to metropolitan academic lexicons.	Multilingualism, vernacular registers, dialectal code-switching, and digital slang.	Validates regional linguistic identities and resists imperial cultural homogenization.
Societal Engagement	Art-for-art's-sake aestheticism or didactic moral instruction for individual virtue.	Intersectional political critique addressing race, caste, gender, ecology, and capital.	Positions literature as an active weapon for democratic rights and systemic social transformation.

3. Glossary of Essential Critical and Literary Terms

Term	Theoretical Etymology	Scholarly Definition & Application in Context
Aesthetic Distance	Kantian Aesthetics / Bullough	The psychological and emotional detachment that enables a spectator to contemplate an art object objectively without immediate pragmatic involvement.
Hermeneutic Circle	Schleiermacher / Dilthey / Gadamer	The methodological principle that understanding the text as a whole depends on understanding individual parts, while comprehension of parts depends on grasping the whole.
Objective Correlative	T. S. Eliot (1919)	A set of objects, a situation, or a chain of events which serves as the formula for a particular emotion, evoking that emotion immediately in the reader.
Intertextuality	Julia Kristeva (1966)	The relational nature of texts, positing that any literary work is an absorption and transformation of multiple prior cultural utterances and textual fragments.
Subalternity	Antonio Gramsci / Spivak	Populations socially, politically, and geographically outside the hegemonic power structure of the dominant colonial or capitalist ruling class.
Affective Turn	Brian Massumi / Sedgwick	A paradigm shift across humanities prioritizing bodily feeling, raw emotion, and visceral pre-cognitive responses over purely cognitive textual decodings.

4. Pedagogical and Analytical Roadmap

Scholarly engagement with War Literature, Pacifist Ethics, and Information Warfare proceeds through a four-phase methodological progression:

- **Phase 1: Textual Archaeology and Contextual Grounding:** Investigating the author's historical epoch, socio-political crises, publishing contexts, and linguistic variants. Scholars identify how contemporaneous ideologies shaped the original compositional framework.
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