

UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND
FINAL EXAMINATION 2007

TITLE OF PAPER: COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

COURSE CODE: ENG405 / IDE-ENG405/ E4P4

TIME ALLOWED: 2 HRS. (E4P4 three hours)

- INSTRUCTIONS:
1. Answer TWO questions; ONE from each section.
(E4P4: Answer 3 questions; at least ONE from each section.)
 2. Do not repeat material or write about the same text more than once.
 3. Incorrect use of English and literary conventions will be penalized.
 4. All questions carry equal marks.
 5. This paper contains 6 pages, cover page included.

THIS PAPER SHOULD NOT BE OPENED UNTIL PERMISSION HAS BEEN GIVEN
BY THE INVIGILATOR.

SECTION A: POETRY (Answer **ONE** question from this section).

Question 1

Read the poems below and answer the questions that follow:

“Bye Bye, Overcoat” Mutiswayo Shandu

The day before yesterday Mr Straun
gives me this overcoat. Today I catch
this train to my Stepmother’s, wearing it.
It is a splendid coat, fawn, almost new
- just this small gap in the seam of one sleeve.

It is past midday, the train not crowded
with mostly shoppers and half-day meisies.
Still, I am standing, strap-hanging, swaying
but I prefer it: such a cool garment
of such swaggering cut should not be creased.

Comes payday: a good hat –maybe a fine
snap-brim fedora, perhaps from PATEL’S
is quite definitely indicated.
Step-mama has a Singer at her place ...
The air around me goes into deepfreeze.

Turning, I see at the far end: Main Ou
has joined us, accompanied by a pair
of tough-looking tsotsis. Over dozens
of heads his eyes meet mine. He is staring
at my new overcoat. Tixo! Such luck!

They start working the silent, sullen folks,
towards me: peering in wallets, purses,
emptying handbags; some men have to stand
to have their back-pockets patted. Main Ou
does not work or hang on. His legs are braced.

He hardly moves with the train’s rock and roll.
He taps a bicycle spoke with a stained
wood handle, coolly, on his left thumb-nail.
His two thugs work quietly and quickly:
it is nearly all money and trinkets ...

But one man has already lost his fine

leather jacket. Bruce Lee, where are you now!
There are dozens of us, just three of them.
As usual, each of us is alone
against the predator, the oppressor ...

For once, even the SAP would do!
When I reach Step-mama's distinctive house
I am too sad to speak, and she sees it.
She serves me tea, strokes my defeated neck.
Her Singer stays, unused, under her bed.

"Incident" Countee Cullen

Once riding in old Baltimore,
Heart-filled, head-filled with glee'
I saw a Baltimorean
Keep looking straight at me.

Now I was eight and very small,
And he was no whit bigger'
And so I smiled, but he poked out
His tongue, and called me, "Nigger."

I saw the whole of Baltimore
From May until December;
Of all the things that happened there
That's all that I remember.

- a) Briefly (in not more than 1 ½ pages) explain the situation that is captured by each poem. [14]
- b) Briefly identify and comment on the dominant aspects of form of each poem. [8]
- c) Identify the theme of each poem and comparatively comment on the projected black experience. [8]

Question 2

"Painful Good Friday" Marumo Molusi

Life is a battle against the forces of evil.
In 1978 on a Good Friday,
I was bedded in a hospital ward
With pains like knives cutting into my knee:
Multiple fractures of the legs
Made me call out for help in a sea of anguish.

I was nailed in the darkness of the Golden City ...

I cried like a madman for the nurses and medical people

To help relieve the pain in my hour of need.
Pain like a dragon's teeth bit persistently, endlessly
Through the entrails of my black body.
Pain
Pain
And more pain, biting like a dragon ...

My face was drowned in waves of sweat,
No one answered my plea for help;
Why are men silent when their brothers suffer?
In that dense forest, my roar was not of power but of weakness.

Hunger and agony live in a black man's forest.
Other patients, riddled by their own maladies,
Listened and nodded.
Pain is personal.

Yes, waves of pain commanding and controlling the
ship of my body,
Waves beating and bashing me for more days than I
could count
... Were these the same pains felt by the Son of MAN?

By Jesus Christ ...?
Pain is personal ...

I rolled in the bed of endless days that came,
Into dark nights where angels fear to tread.

They told me to go home.
I was unwell,
But they told me to go.
Where ...?

I limped to the place where I stayed, which is not home.

A home is something,
A home is people.

For me, there was nobody.
No friends,
Just a Native Shelter,

Just Soweto
Far away ...

Pain is indeed a lonely and personal thing.

“Black Woman” Georgia D Johnson

Don't knock at my door, little child,
I cannot let you in,
You know not what a world this is
Of cruelty and sin.
Wait in the still eternity
Until I come to you,
The world is cruel, cruel, child,
I cannot let you in!

Don't knock at my heart, little one,
I cannot bear the pain
Of turning deaf-ear to your call
Time and time again!
You do not know the monster men
Inhabiting the earth,
Be still, be still, my precious child,
I must not give you birth!

- a) Describe the situation faced by the persona in “Painful Good Friday” along with his emotional response to it. [10]
- b) Citing a couple of well selected examples, discuss language use in the poem and its effect on the reader. [10]
- c) Identify and comment on the poem's central theme and show how the second poem, “Black Woman” may be said to reinforce this theme. [10]

SECTION B: PROSE AND DRAMA (Answer **ONE** question from this section)

Question 3

Comparatively discuss how the respective authors of the following texts, The Madonna of Excelsior and Manchild in the Promised Land, have outlined the theme of change.

Question 4

“In both the South African and African American texts studied on this course, we have perceived a generational conflict in the way the oppressed respond to their situation.”

Discuss the above with reference to one recurrent theme of any two texts studied in the course.

Question 5

Basing your discussion on Manchild in the Promised Land and A Dry White Season, comparatively examine the strengths and short-comings of an autobiographical and fictional account in projecting the black experience.