

UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND
FINAL EXAMINATION 2012

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COURSE NAME : COMPARATIVE LITERATURE
COURSE CODE : ENG 405 / IDE-ENG 405
DURATION : TWO HOURS

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Answer TWO questions, one from each section.
2. Good expression and adherence to literary conventions will count.
3. All the questions carry equal marks.
4. This paper is 8 pages long, cover page included.

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THE INVIGILATOR**

SECTION A – POETRY

Answer ONE question from this section

Question 1

Read the two poems below and answer the questions that follow:

“The New Negro” James Edward McCall

He scans the world with calm and fearless eyes,
 Conscious within of powers long since forgot;
 At every step, new man-made barriers rise
 To bar his progress – but he heeds them not.
 He stands erect, though tempests round him crash,
 Though thunder bursts and billows surge and roll;
 He laughs and forges on, while lightnings flash
 Along the rocky pathway to his goal.
 Impassive as a Sphinx, he stares ahead –
 Foresees new empires rise and old ones fall;
 While caste-mad nations lust for blood to shed,
 He sees God’s finger writing on the wall.
 With soul awakened, wise and strong he stands,
 Holding his destiny within his hands.

“Sympathy” Paul Laurence Dunbar

I know what the caged bird feels like, alas!
 When the sun is bright on the upland slopes;
 When the wind stirs soft through the springing grass,
 And the river flows like a stream of glass;
 When the first bird sings and the first bud opes,
 And the faint perfume from its chalice steals –
 I know what the caged bird feels!

I know why the caged bird beats his wing
 Till its blood is red on the cruel bars;
 For he must fly back to his perch and cling
 When he fain would be on the bough a-swing;
 And a pain still throbs on the old, old scars

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And they pulse again with a keener sting -
I know why he beats his wing!

I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,
When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore –
When he beats his bars and he would be free;
It is not a carol of joy or glee,
But a prayer that he sends from his heart's deep core,
But a plea, that upward to Heaven he flings –
I know why the caged bird sings!

- a) In not more than a page and with the aid of illustrations, comparatively highlight the respective thematic situations presented by the two poems. [10]
- b) In not more than a page, discuss how language use and the tone of each poem reinforce its meaning. [10]
- c) In not more than a page, comparatively discuss the implied social commentary advanced by the poems. [10]

Question 2

Drawing illustrations from the poems below -

- Comparatively discuss the portrayal of Christianity. [10]
- Highlight the implied social criticism as well as the suggested alternatives. [10]
- Discuss how the social context influences the choice of alternatives [10]:

“Back to the Bush” Oswald Mtshali

Tell me the truth,
I am tired of your lies.
I heard them when I was young
they still ring in my ears
like that rusty bell
from the Church of Queen of Angels
in the small township of Kwabhanya

I can still hear those tintinabulations
touch the tinned heart in my chest,
sending fears of hell fire
down the profligate souls from the village.

I can still hear the swipes of the reed cane
as the priest lashed the buttocks
of the young truants,

who had stayed away from Mass on Sunday,
because they had no decent clothes.

When Father Cockerel said Mass
every child had to attend,
every villager had to discard his tatters
and put on his Sunday best;
the converted "heathens" had to stop
wearing nothing,
or throw away their animal skins,
and then enter the temple of God properly dressed
in starched shirts and blue serge.

Those who did not obey this order
had the Gates of Heaven slammed in their faces,
because nakedness was a mortal sin in front of Father Cockerel
and of course in the eyes of the Lord.

I fling this gauntlet at your feet.
I hold my sword for a verbal duel
Because you put me in this miasma of conflicting beliefs
And left me utterly confused

You told me not to slaughter
the black ox for my ancestors
and not wear its hide
which I tanned into a beshu

Instead you taught me how to chop
and pluck a Christmas turkey
because all civilized people do that
You told me that people
who wear beshus are barbarians
and those who smear their faces
with ochre are savages.

I heeded your fatherly advice.
I exchanged my skins
for Saville Row suit.
I wiped the ochre from my wife's face
and gave her Helena Rubenstein's cosmetics,
then we went to where other civilized people go,
and there we were turned away.

I have gone back to where I came from,
 and then I heard you Father Cockerel
 telling your fellow priests
 that your sermons have been in vain:
 "These people have hardly come out of the bush,
 and they are reverting to barbarism."

That may be true, Father Cockerel,
 I have definitely gone back to the bush, Father Cockerel.
 What do you expect me to do, Father Cockerel?
 Where am I supposed to go, Father Cockerel?

There is "No Admittance" for me in the strip joints
 that proliferate in the "Red Light" districts of your cities,
 I am not wanted in your nudists colonies,
 I cannot even take a stroll on the "Euro-penis Only" Clifton Beach
 because I will see naked White women.

Where are you, Father Cockerel?
 Why don't' you chastise these decadent people, Father Cockerel?
 That is an absolute mystery to me, Father Cockerel,
 What happened to the reed cane you lashed us with,
 You took out all your brimstone wrath on
 our poor, innocent, Black bottoms, Father Cockerel,
 but you leave your fellow godless creatures
 to streak along the streets to great glee.

I accept your double standards, Father Cockerel.

So, goodbye, Father Cockerel,
 I will put on my dashiki or beshu,
 comb my hair in a bushy style;
 when you hear the black goat bleat,
 know that I have cut its throat,
 drunk its blood as a sacrifice,
 bathed myself with its bile
 so that I will forever stay
 proud, Black and beautiful.

"Goodbye, Christ" Langston Hughes

Listen, Christ,
 You did alright in your day, I reckon –

But that day's gone now.
They ghosted you up a swell story, too,
Called it Bible –
But it's dead now.
The popes and the preachers've
Made too much money from it.
They've sold you to too many

Kings, generals, robbers, and killers –
Even to the Tzar and the Cossacks,
Even to Rockefeller's Church,
Even to THE SATURDAY EVENING POST.
You ain't no good no more.
They've pawned you
Till you've done wore out.

Goodbye,
Christ Jesus Lord God Jehova,

Beat it on away from here now.
Make way for a new guy with no religion at all –
A real guy named
Marx Communist Lenin Peasant Stalin Worker ME –

I said, ME!

Go ahead on now,
You're getting in the way of things, Lord.
And please take Saint Ghandi with you when you go,
And Saint Pope Pius,
And Saint Aimee McPherson
And big black Saint Becton
Of the Consecrated Dime.
Move!

Don't be so slow about movin'!
The world is mine from now on –
And nobody's gonna sell ME
To a king, or a general,
Or a millionaire.

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SECTION B – PROSE AND DRAMA

Answer ONE question from this section

Question 3

Coconut Kopano Matlwa
Dog Eat Dog Niq Mhlongo

- a) Comparatively discuss how Fikile in Coconut and Dingamanzi in Dog Eat Dog respond to the prospects for advancement offered by the new South Africa. Your discussion should touch on the predicaments they wish to overcome and the means they hope to employ to overcome them, respectively. [20]
- b) Who of the two wins your sympathy? Briefly discuss your reasons. [10]

Question 4

In My Father's House Ernest Gaines
The Madonna of Excelsior Zakes Mda

Either:

- a) Focusing on Niki and Cornelia in The Madonna of Excelsior and Johanna and Alma in In My Father's House and taking into account the respective socio-political contexts of the texts, comparatively discuss the authors' intended indictment in the portrayal of these women characters. [30]

OR:

- b) i. Critically discuss the manner in which discourses on racial difference have impacted on the manner through which black female sexuality has been perceived by blacks and whites in the two novels. [15] (ii) How do Mda and Gaines destabilize as well as reinforce such discourses in the depiction of the female and male relationships in their novels? [15]

Question 5

Basing your discussion on any three of the texts studied in the course (including poems not reproduced in this paper), comparatively discuss the respective authors' use of the Bible to indict the South African and American situations. [30]

Question 6

A Raisin in the Sun Lorraine Hansberry
Coconut Matlwa

EITHER:

- a) Discuss how Lorraine Hansberry in A Raisin In the Sun used the poem below to vivify the struggles of the Younger family to achieve a comfortable footing in America. [30]

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up

Like a raisin in the sun?

Or fester like a sore –

And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?

Like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags

Like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

- **Langston Hughes**

OR:

- b) In your reading of Coconut, did you perceive any parallels between the story of the Younger family and that of Fikile Twala? Discuss. [30]