

UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

SUPPLEMENTARY EXAMINATION – JULY, 2014

**COURSE CODE:** ENG 405 / IDE-ENG 405

**COURSE NAME:** COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

**TIME ALLOWED:** TWO HOURS

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. Answer any TWO questions.
2. **Do not repeat material or write about the same text more than once.**
3. Make sure you proofread your work to eliminate grammatical and conventional errors.
4. All questions carry equal marks.
5. This paper is 6 pages long, cover page included.

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

### Question 1

*Read the poem below and answer the questions that follow it:*

**“Dignity Spills”** Makhosazana Xaba

There is a war going on, South Africa.  
Declare a state of emergency.

The war is undeclared.  
So, the other side is caught off guard, unarmed.

The war of sons on daughters,  
brothers on sisters,  
uncles on aunts,  
fathers on mothers,  
grandfathers on grandmothers.

It’s a war of men on women,  
of boys on girls.

The war is undeclared,  
so statistics cannot be collected properly.  
The war is denied by its perpetrators.  
Its soldiers do not wear uniforms.  
They parade in camouflage –  
as loving grandfathers, fathers, uncles, brothers and sons.

Grandmothers, mothers, aunts, sisters and daughters  
are caught in the intricate web of the camouflage.  
The camouflage of trust,  
of belief in the goodness of human nature.  
The camouflage of love.

Only to be reminded  
that our grandfathers, fathers, uncles, brothers and sons  
are none other than soldiers of war  
with hatred in their hearts,  
planning to pounce at any moment  
to attack, destroy, maim and kill.  
The commanders behave like agents.  
They wear different masks,  
saying one thing in public,  
joining the soldiers in secret.

The war zone is not demarcated  
so, the victims do not know where not to go.

The war is everywhere –  
 in private and public spaces,  
 in individual and communal places,  
 in sacred and unholy spaces,  
 in clean and dirty places.  
 It goes on relentlessly, unabated.  
 Like blood, dignity spills.  
 Unlike blood, dignity is unmeasured.  
 Wounds gape,  
 limbs break,  
 souls split.  
 As the war is undeclared,  
 the zone is not demarcated,  
 the anti-war volunteers – too few – know not where to go.

The latest victims: infants, children.  
 The “ordinary” victims: girls, women.  
 Even the elderly, our pensioners, do not escape.  
 Rape rips lives apart.  
 Incest rips lives apart.  
 Violence rips lives apart.

The war is on, South Africa.  
 Declare a state of emergency.  
 The war zone is you.

- a) Identify and discuss the two major themes found in the poem. [20]
- b) Briefly highlight the way(s) in which Xaba’s poem departs from the old apartheid protest themes. [10]

**Question 2**

*Comparatively respond to the content and form of the two poems below. [30]*

**“HILLBROW”** Sphiwe ka Ngwenya

hillbrow  
 hill  
 brow  
 i jostle in your streets  
 & raise my eye  
 brow  
 eyes always glancing at your tricksters  
 & pimps at the corner

hillbrow  
 i walk between thighs & bums  
 of your heartless angels  
 parading on pavements & brothels  
 & feel the syphilis inside my veins

hillbrow  
 you possess a spell that tempts  
 i have seen even the devils yielding  
 the mocking bird chirping to their morals  
 your sagging breasts heaving to bank notes

hillbrow  
 hill  
 brow  
 you lie awake day & night  
 even your captives worship you  
 for you hide the poor, the criminal & forsaken  
 it takes time to awaken  
 even the taxman grows fat  
 from your spoils  
 hillbrow  
 hill  
 brow.

**“Harlem Shadows”** Claude McKay

I hear the halting footsteps of a lass  
 In Negro Harlem when the night lets fall  
 Its veil. I see the shapes of girls who pass  
 To bend and barter at desire's call.  
 Ah, little dark girls who in slippered feet  
 Go prowling through the night from street to street!

Through the long night until the silver break  
 Of day the little gray feet know no rest;  
 Through the lone night until the last snow-flake  
 Has dropped from heaven upon the earth's white breast,  
 The dusky, half-clad girls of tired feet  
 Are trudging, thinly shod, from street to street.

Ah, stern harsh world, that in the wretched way  
 Of poverty, dishonor and disgrace,  
 Has pushed the timid little feet of clay,

96

The sacred brown feet of my fallen race!  
Ah, heart of me, the weary, weary feet  
In Harlem wandering from street to street.

**Question 3**

Comparatively discuss how Ofilwe and Fikile in Coconut attain to a state of disillusionment. [30]

**Question 4**

*Read the three poems below and comparatively discuss the images of black girlhood they advance. Make sure your discussion includes form, language use, tone and mood. [30]*

**“The Harlem Dancer” Claude McKay**

Applauding youth laughed with young prostitutes  
And watched her perfect, half-clothed body sway;  
Her voice was like the sound of blended flutes  
Blown by black players upon a picnic day.  
She sang and danced on gracefully and calm,  
The light gauze hanging loose about her form;  
To me she seemed like a proudly-swaying palm  
Grown lovelier for passing through a storm.  
Upon her swarthy neck black shiny curls  
Luxuriant fell; and tossing coins in praise,  
The wine-flushed, bold-eyed boys, and even the girls,  
Devoured her shape with eager, passionate gaze;  
But looking at her falsely-smiling face,  
I knew her self was not in that strange place.

**“Red Silk Stockings” Langston Hughes**

Put on yo' red silk stockings,  
Black girl.  
Go out an' let de white boys  
Look at yo' legs.  
Ain't nothin' to do for you, nohow,  
Round this town,  
You's too pretty.  
Put on yo' red silk stockings, gal,  
An' tomorrow's chile'll

Be a high yaller.

Go out an' let de white boys  
Look at yo' legs.

**“The Scarlet Woman”** Fenton Johnson

Once I was good like the Virgin Mary and the Minister's wife.  
My father worked for Mr. Pullman and white people's tips; but  
he died two days after his insurance expired.  
I had nothing, so I had to go to work.  
All the stock I had was a white girl's education and a face that  
enchanted the men of both races.  
Starvation danced with me.  
So when Big Lizzie, who kept a house for white men, came to  
me with tales of fortune that I could reap from the  
sale of my virtue I bowed my head to Vice.  
Now I can drink more gin than any man for miles around.  
Gin is better than all the water in Lethe.

**Question 5**

By focusing on the roles of five characters in all, comparatively discuss the images of post-apartheid South Africa mirrored by Kopano Matlwa in Coconut and Nicholas Mhlongo in Dog Eat Dog. [30]

**Question 6**

‘Though set in different times and locales, both Lorraine Hansberry in A Raisin in the Sun and Kopano Matlwa in Coconut tackle the issue of class within the black community.’ Discuss fully.