

Reg. No.:

Date:

**ST. JOSEPH’S UNIVERSITY, BENGALURU - 27**

**VI SEMESTER
END SEMESTER EXAMINATION: APRIL 2024**

**(Examination conducted in May / June 2024)**

**TS 6123 – THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE STUDIES VI**

**(For current batch students only)**

**Time: 2 Hours Max Marks: 60**

**This paper contains three printed pages and three parts.**

**PART A**

1. **Read Lynn Nottage’s profile of her play *Ruined* for Almeida Theatre Company:**

Six years ago, I traveled to East Africa to interview Congolese women fleeing the armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). I was fueled by my desire to tell the story of war, but through the eyes of women, who as we know rarely start conflicts, but inevitably find themselves right smack in the middle of them. I was interested in giving voice and audience to African women living in the shadows of war.

The circumstances in the DRC are complicated; there is a slow simmering armed conflict that continues to be fought on several fronts, even though the war officially ended in 2002. You have one war being fought for natural resources between militias funded by the government and industry; you have the remnants of an ethnic war, which is the residue of the genocide in Rwanda that spilled over the border into Congo; and then you have the war that I examine in my play *Ruined*, which is the war being waged against women. To throw some statistics at you, according to International Rescue Committee, nearly 5.4 million people have died in that country since that conflict began; every month, 45,000 Congolese people die from hunger, preventable disease, and violence related to war. The fact is the war in the Congo is the deadliest conflict since World War II. It is sometimes called World War III, because of the international interests that fuel the conflict in order to exploit the land, which is rich in minerals such as gold, coltan, copper, and diamonds.

In 2004, I went to East Africa to collect the narratives of Congolese women, because I knew their stories weren’t being heard. I had no idea what play I would find in that war-torn landscape, but I traveled to the region because I wanted to paint a three-dimensional portrait of the women caught in the middle of armed conflicts; I wanted to understand who they were beyond their status as victims.

I was surprised by the number of women who readily wanted to share their stories. One by one, through tears and in voices just above a whisper, they recounted raw, revealing stories of sexual abuse and torture at the hands of both rebel soldiers and government militias. The word rape was a painful refrain, repeated so often it made me physically sick. By the end of the interviews, I realized that a war was being fought over the bodies of women. Rape was being used as a weapon to punish and destroy communities. In listening to their narratives, I came to terms with the extent to which their bodies had become battlefields.

I remember the strong visceral response that I had to the very first Congolese woman who shared her story. Her name was Salima, and she related her story in such graphic detail that I remember wanting to cry out for her to stop, but I knew that she had a need to be heard. She’d walked miles from her refugee camp to share her story with a willing listener. Salima described being dragged from her home, arrested, and wrongfully imprisoned by men seeking to arrest her husband. In prison she was beaten and raped by five soldiers. She finally bribed her way out of prison, only to discover that her husband and two of her four children were abducted. At the time of the interview, she had still not learned the whereabouts of her husband and two children. I found my play *Ruined* in the painful narratives of Salima and the other Congolese women, in their gentle cadences and the monumental space between their gasps and sighs. I also found my play in the way they occasionally accessed their smiles, as if glimpsing beyond their wounds into the future. In *Ruined*, Mama Nadi gives three young women refuge and an unsavory means of survival. As such, the women do a fragile dance between hope and disillusionment in an attempt to navigate life on the edge of an unforgiving conflict. My play is not about victims, but survivors. *Ruined* is also the story of the Congo. A country blessed with an abundance of natural beauty and resources, which has been its blessing and its curse.

1. **Answer the following questions in 5-8 sentences each. (3x5=15)**
2. In 2004, Nottage went to East Africa to collect the narratives of Congolese women, because she knew their stories weren’t being heard. Why do you think “their stories weren’t being heard”?
3. Nottage says that her “play is not about victims, but survivors”. What is the difference you perceive in the way she uses the terms, “victims” and “survivors”?
4. Lynn Nottage in narrating the pain, gasps, and sighs of Salima and the other Congolese women, also finds space in “the way they occasionally accessed their smiles, as if glimpsing beyond their wounds into the future.” Give any instance from the play to justify this statement.

**PART B**

1. **Read the following excerpt from *Ruined*:**

**MAMA.** Can I get you something?

**OSEMBENGA.** Bring me a cold Primus. A pack of cigarettes, fresh. *(Mama produces a chair for Osembenga, then she fishes into the cooler for a beer.)*

**MAMA.** *Monsieur,* I must ask you to leave all your bullets at the bar, otherwise you don’t come in.

**OSEMBENGA.** And if I choose not to. *(Mama holds the cold beer in her hand.)*

**MAMA.** Then you don’t get served. I don’t want any mischief in here. Is that clear? *(Osembenga is charmed by her tenacity. He laughs with the robust authority of a man in charge.)*

**OSEMBENGA.** Do you know who I am?

**MAMA.** I’m afraid you must edify me. And, then forgive me, if it makes absolutely no difference. Once you step through my door, then you’re in my house. And I make the rules here. *(Osembenga laughs again.)*

1. **Answer the following questions in about 150 words each. (3x10=30)**
2. Explain the context of the above extract.
3. Why does Mama Nadi say that “it makes absolutely no difference” who Osembenga is? What does this tell you about her?
4. “And I make the rules here.” How are Mama Nadi’s rules different from that of Osembenga’s?

**PART C**

1. If you were given an option to alter the conclusion of the play *Ruined,* what would you change? If you would have to include intersectionality, what would you add? What other aspects of production would you keep in mind for the concluding scene? Explain in detail. **Don’t exceed 200-250 words. (15 marks)**

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