

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE

FINAL EXAMINATION PAPER, DECEMBER 2014

TITLE OF PAPER: ADVANCED STUDIES IN AFRICAN NOVEL AND AUTO/BIOGRAPHY

COURSE CODE: AL 313/ IDE AL 313 – MAIN PAPER

TIME ALLOWED: THREE (3) HOURS

**INSTRUCTIONS**

- (1) ANSWER THREE QUESTIONS IN ALL, INCLUDING AT LEAST ONE QUESTION FROM EACH SECTION
- (2) DO NOT ANSWER TWO QUESTIONS FROM ONE TEXTBOOK
- (3) DO NOT REPEAT MATERIAL IN YOUR ANSWERS
- (4) EACH QUESTION SHOULD BE COMMENCED ON A NEW SHEET
- (5) CLARITY OF EXPRESSION AND GOOD ORGANIZATION OF CONTENT WILL COUNT IN THE ASSESSMENT OF THIS PAPER
- (6) EACH QUESTION IS WORTH 33 MARKS.

THIS PAPER IS NOT TO BE OPENED UNTIL PERMISSION TO DO SO HAS BEEN GRANTED BY THE INVIGILATOR

## SECTION A

### SHORT FICTION

#### Question 1

Read the excerpt starting with, "The heat in the cell was solid . . ." and then answer the following questions.

- (a) Identify and discuss diction capturing the overcrowded condition in the cell. 11 points
- (b) Discuss the evocation of the five senses in the excerpt and suggest how this contributes to the thematic impact of the passage. 11 points
- (c) Comment on the richness of the following phrase: 'sucking at the disintegrating bitter cigarette end of life.' 11 points

#### Question 2

Using the example of a short story of your choice, discuss how symbolism is used simultaneously as a literary device and as a carrier of the thematic weight of a story.

### LONG PROSE FICTION

#### Question 3

"Chinua Achebe, in *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), exposes the ills of the African postcolonial nation-state in an effort to propose credible alternatives to them." Discuss these alternatives and their corresponding merits.

#### Question 4

"Ikem Osodi is by far the most endearing and most effectively depicted character in *Anthills . . .*" How far do you agree with this assessment?

SECTION C

(AUTO)/BIOGRAPHICAL PROSE NON-FICTION

*The Fear* by Peter Godwin

Question 5

In your view, which is best done in *The Fear* – journalistic reportage or an account of the situation of Zimbabwe in 2008? Support your response with textual evidence from *The Fear*.

Question 6

Account for the quality of relationships that the journalist/narrator has with the myriad of characters that he meets in the course of the book.

*I Write What I Like* by Steve Biko

Question 7

What is the origin of the politics and aesthetics of the 'black is beautiful' campaign?

Question 8

To what extent do other authorities on African culture enrich Steve Biko's polemic in *I Write What I Like*?

END

The heat in the cell was solid. It was usually hot in the cells, what with over one hundred prisoners packed in, lying on the concrete floor like sardines in a can or tangled like macaroni. But it was the middle of summer, and a week-end when prisoners are locked up early in the day until the following morning, there being only a skeleton staff of guards on duty; it was doubly, perhaps trebly hotter than usual.

The heat was solid. As Ahmed the Turk remarked, you could reach out before your face, grab a handful of heat, fling it at the wall, and it would stick.

The barred windows of the caserne were high up the walls, against the ceiling, and covered by thick wire mesh, its tiny holes themselves clogged and plugged with generations of grime.

We were all awaiting trial. The fact that all such prisoners were deprived of their clothes every time they were locked up in the cells did not make much difference. Naked bodies, or half-naked, only allowed the stench of sweat from close-packed bodies to circulate more freely.

"I know of only one place hotter than this," said Ahmed the Turk, alleged housebreaker, assaulter and stabber. He smiled, flashing his teeth the color of ripe corn in his dark handsome face. "And I don't mean Hell," he added.

Around us were packed a human salad of accused petty-thieves, gangsters, murderers, rapists, burglars, thugs, drunks, more brawlers, dope-peddlers: most of them by no means strangers to the cells, many of them still young, others already depraved, and several old and abandoned, sucking at the disintegrating, bitter cigarette-end of life.

Now and then pandemonium would reign: different men bawling different songs, others howling or talking at the top of their voices, just for the sake of creating an uproar, others quarreling violently and often fighting. Here and there parties crouched over games of tattered packs of hand-made or smuggled cards, draughts played with scraps of paper or chips of coal as counters on boards scraped on the floor.