We, at African Literature Today, mourn the death of Chinua Achebe, one of the greatest writers of all time. He chose for his moment of transition (11.51 pm, 21 March), not a mere coincidence, during the 2013 annual conference of the African Literature Association (20-24 March) at Charleston, South Carolina, USA. His novel, Things Fall Apart (1958), initiated the Heinemann African Writers Series which laid the foundation for what today is known as African Literary studies, which is the central focus of African Literature Today’s publications. We convey our condolences to the family of Prof. Chinua Achebe at this difficult time. We mourn his death, we celebrate his legacies!

Things Fall Apart, one of the greatest novels in living memory, like the Comet that its creator was, appeared and streaked into the heavens and stayed there, and as we all know, it will for ever stay, palpable and immoveable. Achebe executed for the world to behold, a mandate of destiny that will remain out there without parallel. Chinua Achebe, bards come and go, but we know here that the courage and dignity which you exhibited over the years, will like the stories you told so well, endure in our sight like the grand iroko tree in our consciousness upon whose greenery you remain, majestic and grand in well-deserved immortality.

Like the inimitable character in your Things Fall Apart, we bid you farewell in your own words:

If you had been poor in your last life, we would have asked you to be rich when you come again. But you were rich. If you had been a coward, we would have asked you to bring courage. But you were a
Ernest N. Emenyonu

fearless warrior. If you had died young, we would have asked you to
get life. But you lived long. So we shall ask you to come again the way
you came before!

Chinua Achebe, the Eagle on the Iroko, the Comet of African
Literature, your kind appears once in a century. We say, ‘Go in
Peace’. Most worthy son, may the ancestors cheer you with drums
into the Hallowed Hall of Illustrious Ancestors!!

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STOP PRESS/ TRIBUTE TO KOFI AWOONOR 1935–2013

As we were going to press we heard the terrible news that Ghanaian
poet Kofi Awoonor, one of Africa’s pioneer and most versatile
writers of the twentieth century, was among those killed during
the shootings in the Westgate Mall in Nairobi on 21 September. We
will carry a full tribute on his life and work in the next volume of
ALT 32: Politics & Social Justice.

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