

The Movement of Transition in Achebe's Work: A Study of Five Novels

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Abstract: *This paper looks at the movement of transition in the novels of Chinua Achebe, a literary icon who can be regarded as Nigeria and Africa's best - known novelist. By a movement of transition, what is meant is how Achebe has succeeded in giving an artistic interpretation of the history of his people through two kinds of movement – time and place. The movement of time starts from the late 19th century for Things Fall Apart to around the 1920's for Arrow of God, the 1950's for No Longer at Ease, the mid 60's for A Man of the People and the eighties for Anthills of the Savannah. The movement of place starts gradually from the country – side to the cities. One other feature that can be seen in Achebe's novels is that in establishing his theme of the transition in the history of his people, Achebe has always relied on the tragic medium in handling this as the tragedy of the major character(s) in each novel become synonymous with the tragedy of a community (either local or national). The paper also explores his contributions to the literary development of Africa, especially with his death on the 22nd of March, 2013.*

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper looks at the work of Chinua Achebe, a literary icon who can be regarded as Nigeria and Africa's best known novelist who recently died at the age of 82 and his contributions to the literary development of Africa.,

Chinua Achebe, a man who has had a long and distinguished literary career spanning about five decades, was born in Ogidi, present day Anambra State in 1930. Born to an evangelist father who also doubled as a school teacher, Achebe grew up at a point where the western culture was trying to have a great in-road into the Igbo society hence he grew up 'at the cross roads of cultures' (Innes & Lindfor 1979:1). He had his early education at a Mission School. He also attended Government College, Umuahia and finally the University College, Ibadan where he graduated in 1953. He published his first novel, Things Fall Apart in 1958, No Longer at Ease (1960), Arrow of God (1964), A Man of the People (1966) and Anthills of the Savannah (1988). Apart from these novels, he also has a collection of short stories titled Girls At War, four children novels (The Drum, The Flute, Chike and the River and How the Leopard got His Claws), a collection of poems titled Beware Soul Brother, a book – The Problems with Nigeria and a collection of essays – Morning Yet on Creation Day. His last offering, There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra (2012), a memoir of the Nigerian civil war, has stirred controversy and whipped up sentiments across divides in Nigeria.

2. MOVEMENT OF TRANSITION IN ACHEBE'S NOVELS

One thing that is so peculiar in Achebe's novels is its movement of transition. By a movement of transition, what is meant is how Achebe has succeeded in giving an artistic interpretation of the history of his people through two kinds of movement – time and place. The movement of time starts from the late 19th century for Things Fall Apart to around the 1920's for Arrow of God, the 1950's for No Longer at Ease, the mid 60's for A Man of the People and the eighties for Anthills of the Savannah. The movement of place starts gradually from the country – side to the cities. One other feature that can be seen in Achebe's novels is that in establishing his theme of the transition in the history of his people, Achebe has always relied on the tragic medium in handling this.

Starting from his first novel, "Achebe's main preoccupation as a writer has been to capture and interpret the momentous clash between traditional African and modern European cultures, so that his people can make meaning out of the configuration of socio-political and historical forces, which resulted in the African's loss of identity, and lack of sense of worth and self confidence". (Eneke 1988:31).

Achebe has been stressing it that Africans did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans, that the societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and that they had dignity. In his essay titled "The Role of the Writer in a New Nation", Achebe affirms his concern as a novelist. He writes:

The worst thing that can happen to any people is the loss to their dignity and self respect. The writer's duty is to help them regain it by showing them in human terms what happened to them, what they lost (Nigerian Magazine, June, 1964 :157).

In achieving his theme of culture contact and its effect, Achebe relied so much on the oral tradition, myth and belief of his people. Alluding to this use of traditional materials, Amadi (1987:5) writes:

To set up a shrine, the dibia must have a piece of earth . . . He must have a strong and stable link with his community in order to practise his art of spiritual and physical healing. A shrine in the air is unheard of, an abomination. For creative writers, this is equally true. He must have a root somewhere. He must be nurtured by his ethnic background.

In *Things Fall Apart*, one sees the traumatic consequence of the impact of western colonialism on the traditional values and institutions of the African people and things fell apart. In the novel, the tragedy of Okonkwo is synonymous with the tragedy of a people. In the views of Irele (1979:10), "Okonkwo represents his society in so far as the society has made the man" but it should also be noted that the man's personal flaws and his reactions to the socio-political situation around him prepares him for his fate.

Okonkwo, as is seen in the story is a man who grows up in a society – Umuofia – known for what can be termed 'manliness complex' (Jabbi 1979:135) hence his desire for show of manliness and his desire not to end up a weakling like his father – Unoka:

Okonkwo never showed any emotion openly, unless it be the emotion of anger. To show affection was a sign of weakness, the only thing worth demonstrating was strength. (24)

In order to distinguish himself in the community, he pursues with an obsession his ambition and he shuts out everything else from his view except his blinding ambition. He is usually impatient with others, especially members of his household. Thus, it is not surprising that he has set the stage for a tragic end. His concern for a public image makes him participate in the killing of Ikemefuna despite Ogbuefi Okagbue's warning.

Okonkwo's tragedy starts setting in with his serial breaking of the customs of the people such as beating his wife during the weak of peace and nearly killing another with a gun shot. The iron hand with which he handles his family makes his son, Nwoye, defect to the Christian faith. Ironically, he kills the 16 year old son of Ogbuefi Okagbue during the latter's funeral. Thus he has to be banned from the community.

After his return from exile, he seeks to reestablish himself in the community by fighting the Christians who are already established in Umuofia. He is hell-bent in averting change, to nip in the bud the influence of Christianity, which he sees as an influence from outside trying to destroy his society's traditional values. He gets himself involved in the attack of the Christian church hence he and others are arrested. After his release, the impact of this incident on his mind prepares him for the last stage of his tragedy – he kills a messenger of the colonial administration in his 'revenge'. Realizing the import of what he has done, he commits suicide.

Jabbi (1979:135) says of this:

Throughout the story, Okonkwo indulges without restraint a personal misoneism which he seeks to impose upon the clan; he is hell-bent to avert change, to nip in the bud all new influences from

outside, lest they enervate his society's values. His sustained incapacity for adjustment or compromise sparks off his final tragedy.

Okonkwo's suicide ends his reversal of fortune as well as the collapse of the old order, which he represents. Even his death – hanging himself – an abominated form of death, earns him a dishonourable burial like his father, Unoka, one thing he has been struggling to avoid all his life. Obierika appeals to the District Commissioner to help cut down Okonkwo's body and bury it, for it is an abomination for his townsmen to do so. In his words:

It is an abomination for a man to take his life. It is an offence against the Earth, and a man who commits it will not be buried by his clansmen. His body is evil, and only a stranger may touch it (186).

According to Achebe in an interview published in the Sunday Sun of April 20, 2008, he says, "Okonkwo is a man of excess. I see him as a hero, but a flawed hero". Thus, one sees the tragedy of a man who refuses to move with time and is not ready to accept change. I support the view of Killam (1973: 32) that "...having embodied the tragic drama of a society in the tragic destiny of a representative member of that society, having suggested that the inexorable forces which determine Okonkwo's personal tragedy are analogous to the inevitable, irrepressible forces which determine historical change, Achebe seeks to distance himself from the particular events of the story and to fit both story and theme into a wider historical context".

The tragedy in *Arrow of God* stems from how the life of an individual meets with a combination of events to force a tragic end. On one hand, the village of Umuaro is polarized around the person of Ezeulu, the chief priest of Ulu and that of his rival, Nwaka, the priest of Idemili and on the other hand, the conflict between the traditional culture and the Western culture as represented in the misunderstanding between Ezeulu and the colonial administration in the person of Clarke and Captain Winterbottom.

The setting is the 1930's when the colonial administrators had successfully made an in - road into the Igbo society. Ezeulu, the principal character is shown to be a man of stable moral and powerful mental structure. An attestation of his moral standard can be seen in his forthright stand against what he termed 'the war of blame' between Umuaro and Okperi. He is also seen as a man who accepts changes; he understands what the coming of the white man means hence he sends his son, Oduche, to the Christian school: He tells Oduche:

I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eye there. If there is nothing in it you will come back. But if there is something there you will bring home my share. The world is like a Mask dancing. If you want to see it well you do not stand in one place. My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the white man today will be saying had we known tomorrow (63).

One of the vehicles for the tragic conflict in the novel has to do with the uneasy rivalry between Ezeulu and Nwaka. Achebe presents the conflict that the priest of Ulu and the other lesser deities have as deadly, for each wants its deity to be supreme. Ezeulu wields enormous power in the nine villages of Umuaro. He names the date of the new yam festival as well as other festivals. The power of Ezeulu is described thus:

Whenever Ezeulu considered the immensity of his power over the year and the crops and, therefore, over the people, he wondered if it was real. It was true he named the day for the feast of the Pumpkin Leaves and for the New Yam feast but he did not choose the day. He was merely a watchman. His power was no more than the power of a child over a goat that was said to be his. As long as the goat was alive it was his; he would find it food and take care of it. But the day it was slaughtered he would know who the real owner was. No! the Chief Priest of Ulu was more than that, must be more than that. If he should refuse to name the day there would be no festival no planting and no reaping. But could he refuse? No Chief Priest had ever refused. So it could not be done. He would not dare (pp. 78 – 79).

The tragic conflict between Ezeulu and the colonial administrator starts when Captain Winterbottom wants him to be made a warrant chief. His refusal to be a warrant chief culminates in his imprisonment for two months. After his release, he contemplates avenging on his rivals his humiliation in the hands of the white man. He later realizes that it is more than a personal issue: it

was a fight of the Gods. He was no more than an arrow in the bow of his god. Despite this, he still commits the error of judgement in letting his personal feelings interfere with his usual lucid way of handling things.

The complexity of Ezeulu's problem has to do with the fact that he cannot be said not to have attended to his god faithfully nor has he failed in divining correctly. His insistence in finishing the tubers of yam for the two months that he was incarcerated leads to a breakdown in communication between him and his people. They now see him as headstrong and proud hence he becomes isolated.

With the Christians at hand, the people of the village takes their yams to the Christian church 'in the name of the son' and thereafter start eating the new yam without waiting for Ezeulu's own yam festival. Thus the Christian God triumphs over the old order due to the internal weakness of the old order. The way the Umuaro people embrace the new order and the death of Ezeulu's son, Obika, while carrying the Agbazulobodo masquerade makes Ezeulu to live his final days as a demented chief. Thus we see an ironic – tragedy, the type in *Things Fall Apart*; for Akubue's assertion that 'when two brothers fight, a stranger inherits their father's estate' is proven. The Christians gain from this tragedy of Ezeulu.

In the case of *No Longer at Ease*, one sees the tragedy of Obi Okonkwo, who is the grandson of Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*. In the novel, Obi's tragedy does not result from any act of heroism but from the confrontation between individualism (as symbolized by Obi) and communal values as symbolized by the Umuofia Progressive Movement and the Umuofia community.

The novel deals with the plight of the new generation of Nigerians in the 1960s who, having been exposed to education in the western world, become cut off from their roots in traditional society. They discover on their return that the demands of tradition are still strong and they are hopelessly caught in the clash between the old and the new order.

The intricate web Obi finds himself starts from when the Umuofia Progressive Union gave him a scholarship, which is to be repaid after his return from studies overseas. This scholarship had been given by the union with an eye on its own interest. They believe that if Obi studies Law, this will help them in the various land cases Umuofia has with her neighbours. Because the members of the union think of Obi's education as something of their making, they expect him as a senior civil servant to continue to share the same communal ideals and values with them and to refrain from any act of individualism.

One major cause of disagreement between Obi, his parent and the Union is his proposed marriage to Clara, an 'Osu'. Writing on the vehemence with which the Igbo society frowns at the union between a 'freeborn' and an 'Osu', Francis (2007) writes:

... people too often make themselves slaves to tradition. Why? It beats me! It is terrible to know that a lady and a guy cannot find happiness together because their parents think either one of the lovebirds would be a disaster because the person was born an Osu. What makes the person an Osu? What makes the preacher better than the Osu? Tell me, what sort of blood flows in the veins of an Osu, which does not flow in the veins of the so-called freeborn fool? Please correct me if I am wrong, is the free man or the lady that is not cursed like the Osu better in bed than the Osu? (Sunday Sun, September 16, 2007, p.43).

Though Obi knows what is right – to be individualistic and marry Clara – he has no moral courage to see it through. All we see is a feeble intent; he is not strong enough to spearhead an attack against tradition. Another can be seen in Obi's absence from his mother's burial. This is seen by the Umuofia people as an irrational act. Despite this they congregate in his Ikoyi residence to take some drinks. Obi could not also repay the loan the Union gave him and he runs into a serious financial mess.

With this state of things, Obi lost his moral values, betrays Clara and after this, due to his numerous financial problems, he starts taking bribe – which is something he had always stood against. From this, one can see that his moral value is dead and it is not surprising that he is caught receiving a bribe and later sentenced to a term of imprisonment. Thus Achebe has been able to show that Obi's tragedy arises because he is torn between two sets of values.

A Man of the People is a story of corruption, thuggery and violence in the post independent Nigeria of the early sixties. The story is told in the first person – through Odili. In the views of Echeruo (1975:160), “By having the novel told in the first person, Achebe obviously succeeds in creating the necessary authenticity of narration which would give a further illusion in intimacy to the events being related. But this first – person narrative device also enables Achebe to avoid the interpretation of events in an authorial voice which could have been regarded as intrusive . . .”

‘A Man of the People’, according to Griffith (1979), “is something if an intrusion into the steady flow of Achebe’s novels. Nigerian reviewers hailed it as a sign of Achebe’s new ‘commitment’(77)”. But to regard it as making a volte face in Achebe’s work is to ignore the continuity it has with earlier preoccupations and procedures.

Speaking on the novel, Achebe, in an interview with Robert Serumaga says:

A Man of the People is a rather serious indictment – if you like – on post-independence Africa. But I don’t despair because I think this is a necessary stage in our growth... If you take the example of Nigeria, which is the place I know best, things had got to such a point politically that there was no other answer –no way you could resolve this impasse politically. The political machine had been so abused that whichever way you pressed it, it produced the same results; and therefore another force had to come in.

Now when I was writing A Man of the People it wasn’t clear to me that this was going to be necessarily military intervention. It could easily have been civil war, which in fact it very nearly was in Nigeria. But I think the next generation of politicians in Nigeria, when we do have them, will have learned one or two lessons, I hope, from what happened to the First Republic. This is the only hope I have and if it turns out to be vain, it would be terrible... (Killam 1973: 85-86).

The first person narrator, Odili, is shown to be a man who hides his own corruption and ambition behind the moralizing of the new class. It is through him that we see the most powerful character – Chief Nanga – the man of the people. Chief Nanga is described as a man of tremendous charm and attractiveness and an expert in public relations and he uses this skill as political weapons. He uses his position as minister to enrich himself at the expense of the country. He also indulges in immorality.

At the start, Odili is miffed with the glaring act of corruption by Chief Nanga but Achebe later shows that Odili also has the tendency to be corrupt despite his idealism. Thus Achebe ‘is emphasizing the inability of the new generation if educated Africans to resist temptation and abide by their principles’ (Palmer 1982:82). At first, Nanga and Odili seem socially and politically orientated towards different ideals, but later it is revealed that each to a varying degree is interested in the material gains that come with political power. Odili shares in Nanga’s affluence and corruption, he never once questioned the morality of living off Nanga. He never once contemplates going against Chief Nanga politically until he is outwitted in a love affair by the chief.

Odili later decides to contest Nanga’s seat in parliament. In doing this, he is not sure whether it is out of political conviction or for revenge. He joins in forming the Common Peoples Party. As the organising secretary of the party, he misappropriates party funds for his wedding thus showing that he is not morally better than Nanga. The struggle for political leadership leads to conflicts, chaos and bloodletting which culminate in the killing of Max, Odili’s political associate.

The series of political conflict, thuggery, violence and death that goes with the election process leads to a military take-over which is a doom for the political players as well as the country at large, as military regimes are aberrations; they usually spell doom for nations. Edozie Udeze, in an article, describes the work as “A prophetic book in all sense of the world, a few months after it was published, there was a coup detat in Nigeria and Achebe was promptly arrested and hounded in prison. The military accused him of having a pre-knowledge of the coup (The Nation on Sunday, June 17, 2007, p 20.).

Achebe’s Anthills of the Savannah is an expose on the political situation in Nigeria of the 1970s to the 1990’s. In the novel, Achebe reflects on the problem of leadership in Nigeria, which is symbolized by Kangan. The leaders are shown to be dictatorial, morally and financially corrupt

and also agents of imperialism. The struggle for political leadership in the novel leads to a series of tragedy. The tragedy in the novel is shown through Sam – the president, Chris Oriko – the commissioner for information, and Ikem Osodi – the editor of the government owned Gazette Newspaper. The problem of leadership manifests in how Sam deals with the members of his cabinet. He does not like taking advice from them, he only orders them around. Days are good or bad according to how His Excellency gets out of bed in the morning. According to Chris, the president was not as bad as this in the beginning but the influence of sycophants had turned in him into a bully. They never tell him the truth; instead, they worship him.

One also sees the way leaders in Nigeria are ethnic sensitive and do not entertain dissenting views. This can be seen in the way Sam decides to punish the Abazon people because they did not support his bid to become a life president. The people of Abazon then decide to send a delegation of six to the president. In the words of the leader of the delegation, they have come to visit ‘the man who holds the yam and the knife.’ Instead of listening to the delegates, Sam orders their arrest for subversive activities. Ikem, the Editor of the Gazette newspaper, who visits the delegates is later fired from his job, arrested and subsequently killed by the State Research Council after he giving a lecture at the University of Kangan.

Achebe sees some of the problems of Africa as caused by the imperialist Western nations. Most Nigerian leaders are shown to be imperialist agents. Sam is said to like everything British. Another instance of his imperialist tendency is the president’s support for the views of Lou Cranford, the American journalist, that the country should maintain its unpopular level of foreign debt servicing running at slightly more than fifty-one percent of total national export earning. This is for increased American aid in surplus grains for the drought province.

The president is shown to be so corrupt that he has one Alhaji Mahmoud fronting for him. He is also morally corrupt. The death of Ikem leads to some other chain of events. Chris decides to escape from the country but he meets his death in the hand of a trigger-happy policeman. Sam is later overthrown through a palace coup d’etat. His body was never found. This is also a sad commentary on the life of the country. As the policeman puts it sarcastically:

Why you de make all this cross examination. Wetin concern poor man like you and president; eh! I say wetin concern vulture and barber? ...Anyway, the president done disappear. They no fit find am again. They say unknown persons enter the palace and kidnap am. So make everybody de watch proper for this check point. . . This our country na waa! I never hear the likeness before. A whole president de miss like old woman de waka for village talk say him goat de miss! This Africa na waa! (213).

The general bloodletting and chaos in the country makes Elewa’s uncle to comment during the naming of Elewa’s daughter that: “We have seen to much trouble since the Whiteman left because those who make plans make plans for themselves only and their families”(228). This comment is apt to the Nigerian situation where a clique and their family usually control the nation hence Achebe tries to send a message at the end of novel through the meaning Beatrice gives to Chris’ last words – The Last Grin. She says it is a message to all in the country that “This world belongs to the people of the world not to any little caucus no matter how talented...”(232).

Reviewing the novel, Emenyonu (1991:109) writes:

Anthills can, therefore, be summed up as Achebe’s disenchantment with leadership in Africa, his artistic articulation of the trouble with African leadership at the turn of this century. The setting, however, can be said to be universal for the novel effectively applies to any country or human location where decadence and tyranny are the rule rather than exception.

He adds further:

Achebe reveals in Anthills his concealment of frustration about the Nigerian society. All real political happenings in Nigeria seem to be at variance with his political beliefs. Thus, there is abundant evidence of parallelism in the context of the fictitious and the real characteristics in the novel (112).

The importance of Achebe as a great African Novelist is not in doubt. Right from the beginning he has made his commitment as a writer known. He says his duty is to his society. His first task is to rehabilitate his culture, which colonization has distorted. In his words:

That African peoples did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry and, above all, they had dignity (cited by Innes and Lindfor 1979: 69).

Nkosi (1981:33) also alludes to this that

Chinua Achebe, has made day-to-day Ibo life a vivid experience for readers who have never set foot in West Africa. Part of the relative success of the West African novelist can be attributed to the fact that the traditional 'past' is not really that 'distant': it is still very much alive.

Later, Achebe shifts his attention to the ills of post independent African nations. In doing this, Achebe opines that:

Most of Africa is today politically free; there are . . . independent African states managing their own affairs – sometimes very badly. A new situation has thus arisen. One of the writer's main functions has always been to expose and attack injustice. Should we keep at the old theme of racial injustice (sore as it is still) when new injustices have sprouted all around us? I think not (Nigerian Libraries, Vol 1, No 3, 1964: 113).

Ngugi also quotes Achebe as saying that

It is clear to me that an African writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issues of the contemporary Africa will end up being completely irrelevant like that absurd man in the proverb who leaves his house burning to pursue a rat fleeing from the flames (BUSARA, No 1, 1978: 3).

One of the factors that had made Achebe's works of great significance is his use of oral tradition showing the mores, beliefs and traditional belief of his people through show-casing the festivals and their importance.

The great use to which Achebe has put proverbs into use is one other factor that has endeared him to many readers. He once describes proverbs as "the palm oil with which words are eaten". He spices his novels with a lot of proverbs, which show much about the values of the Igbo society. In Innes and Lindfor's (1979:49) view:

Achebe's use of an African vernacular style is not limited to dialogue. In *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, novels set in tribal society, the narrative itself is studded with proverbs and similes, which help to evoke the cultural milieu in which the action takes place. In *No Longer at Ease* and *A Man of People*, on the other hand, one finds the language of the narrative more cosmopolitan, more Westernized, more suited to life in the city .

Achebe's success as a writer is also portrayed in his character portrayal. In the view of Killam (1973:57):

It is Achebe's intellectual understanding of his characters which enables him to describe aspects of human character, and more important, to describe successfully how a character develops. This is rare among contemporary Nigerian writers .

Paying tribute to him, M. J. C. Echeruo (1982:68) writes:

Achebe's is both an absolute achievement and an achievement in context. It is absolute in the sense that his novels demonstrate that it is possible for a writer with his roots firmly planted in the local African soil and writing in a foreign language to produce work that is authentic as regards local colour and universal in terms of the humanity and the empathy that informs it .

In her comments concerning Achebe's works, Gordimer says: "Chinua Achebe's early work made him the father of modern African Literature as an integral part of world literature...

A joy and an illumination to read" (The Nation on Sunday, June, 27, 2006:21). "Short of winning the Nobel Prize in literature, Achebe has garnered all the known literary awards in world history" (Edozie 2007:20). Also paying tribute to him , Sam Omatseye says: "If Soyinka is the icon of

poetry and drama, Achebe has been the master of prose”(The Nation on Sunday, June, 27, 2006:21).

Upon his demise on 22nd March, 2013, many distinguished people have been paying tributes to the late literary icon. The Nigerian president, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan says:

Achebe’s frank, truthful and fearless interventions in national affairs will be greatly missed at home...because while others may have disagreed with his views, most Nigerians never doubted his immense patriotism and sincere commitment to the building of a greater, more united and prosperous nation that all Africans and the entire black race can be proud of... (The Nation, March 23, 2013:4).

Achebe’s schoolmate, contemporary and renowned author, Professor Chukwuemeka Ike, says “ his exemplary works will remain relevant in Nigerian and world literature. In fact he was a pioneer in terms of quality literature output...”(The Nation, March 23, 2013:5).

South African president, Jacob Zuma describes Achebe as a “colossus of African writing...Nelson Mandela, who read Achebe’s work in jail, has called him a writer in whose company the prison walls fell down” (The Nation, March 23, 2013:57). Novelist Margaret Atwood called him “a magical writer – one of the greatest of the twentieth century”(http://en.m.wikipedia.org). The New York Times describes him as “ one of Africa’s most widely read novelists and one of the continent’s towering man of letter” (http://en.m.wikipedia.org).

With these tributes, one can conveniently say that Achebe was one of the greatest fiction writers to have emerged from Africa, whose works have been dictated by his interest in show-casing the social-political and historical factors that have affected the life of his people. Short of winning the Nobel Prize for Literature, he has won many awards including the Nigerian National Merit Award and the Man Booker International Prize (the United Kingdom’s most prestigious literary award) for 2007. With his final goodnight on the 22nd of March, 2012, the literary world has sorely lost an icon.

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