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The Literary Corner: Introduction to African English Fiction/Prose with Brooks Robinson (side a)

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<i>Eldred Jones</i>: Preferred compromise, compromise is the art of survival.

<i>Brooks B. Robinson</i>: mm-hmm.

<i>Eldred Jones</i>: And he could not compromise. So he hanged himself. So a man who started life triumphantly upholding the values of the society ends up totally defeated, dying a death, which was so abominated that he could not even be buried by his own countrymen. It's a complete change from the triumphant beginning to this defeated end.

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From that he wrote a novel, the hero which was the grandson of this hero of the earlier novel,

<i>Brooks B. Robinson</i>: Right.

<i>Eldred Jones</i>: Obi Okonkwo. He was somebody of much smaller stature, and the book is tended to be looked at from this point of view. People look at the hero of the new novel and say well, he certainly didn't have the stature of his grandfather.

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And therefore think that it's an unsuccessful novel because of this.

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In fact, Achebe's intention was to portray somebody who did not have the stature to carry through his ideals.

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As this grandson of Obi Okonkwo certainly had ideals, but he don't have the strength of character to go through with the consequences of following his ideas. So he also ends up defeated, but for different reasons from the reasons why his grandfather got defeated.

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Now, Achebe had moved from way back in history into the prelude to independence. And for his third novel he went back into history

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<i>Brooks B. Robinson</i>: mm-mm-mm.

<i>Eldred Jones</i>: with Arrow of God, which many critics feel is his best novel overall.

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And this was a very intriguing novel from many points of view. Because in Things Fall Apart one had seen an opposition between a traditional civilization and the new imperialistic missionary civilization. We had seen no longer at ease, a situation in which a young man had been plunged into the modern society.

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And again, he seemed to be confronted with different values than the traditional values. Now what the interesting thing about Arrow of God was that the major conflicts took place within the society itself.

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And you had almost schizophrenic situations, where the priest who was the spiritual leader of the community. And of course life was so integrated that even agriculture was tied to worship. And because he was priest, it was he who had to give the signal for the harvesting of the yam. And of course for the planting of new yam. So all life revolved --



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