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*National Museum of African American History and Culture*

## **The Literary Corner: Introduction to African American Poetry with Eugene Redmond—Part I (side a)**

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..style, it gave us form, it gave us verve, in short soul

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but on the other hand of course you have the literacy tradition. Now they merged later on but between the years of 1834 roughly and 1861,

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these were the peak years for anti-slavery activity, very stressful years for Blacks and Whites who joined them in the abolitionist effort.

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There was a lot of literary activity, mostly what we would call protest poetry in both the oral and the written, sometimes what we call the literary forms.

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These poets formed pretty much the background, the spine, the foundation, for the literary tradition that we have in Afro-America today.

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I think one of the things we have to keep in mind when we talk about development of Afro-American poetry

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whether we are talking about the oral or literary, is that the act of creation

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and the act of liberation have always been connected and that and those two forks have formed the basis of the Black aesthetic, kind of an ideological aesthetic.

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<i>Brooks B. Robinson</i>: Okay. What about writers in the 1800s or the 19th Century?

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<i>Eugene B. Redmond</i>: Ok, in the 1800s of course we had the end of slavery writers, the abolitionist writers

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

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<i>Eugene B. Redmond</i>: but then after the Emancipation Proclamation, after the Civil War,

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we had a maturation of Afro-American poetry, a very, development, highly-stylized poetry and the epics of someone like a Whitman, who I've

already mentioned or the fine poetry of Paul Laurence Dunbar, the excellent folk-based, Black-based work of James Weldon Johnson.

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But yes. The poetry of the latter quarter of the...



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