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*National Museum of African American History and Culture*

## **The Literary Corner: Introduction to African English Poetry with Brooks Robinson (side a)**

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WEBVTT

00:08:39.000 --> 00:08:45.000

<i>Dennis Brutus</i>: John Dunn down to Tennyson on Browning.

00:08:45.000 --> 00:08:52.000

So much of my work, I think, has a fairly conventional pattern.

00:08:52.000 --> 00:08:57.000

But I was also exposed to the African tradition

00:08:57.000 --> 00:09:07.000

A tradition of praise poetry, satirical poetry, poetry which deals with history, and indeed, occasional poetry

00:09:07.000 --> 00:09:13.000

Poetry for a wedding, for a birth, for a death, for a birthday.

00:09:13.000 --> 00:09:19.000

So I think my work is a fusion of these two streams.

00:09:19.000 --> 00:09:23.000

The style I think has undergone a major change.

00:09:23.000 --> 00:09:33.000

When I began, I wrote in a formal kind of pattern, of rhyme and metrical structure.

00:09:33.000 --> 00:09:46.000

Um, partly because of the period I spent in prison, when I was in isolation and I had the time to reexamine my own work.

00:09:46.000 --> 00:09:55.000

I decided that I needed to write a much more simple, more direct, a more immediate kind of communication.

00:09:55.000 --> 00:10:05.000

So I think that there's less ornament and less self-conscious craft.

00:10:05.000 --> 00:10:11.000

I like to think that the poems work better as a result of trying to be more direct.

00:10:11.000 --> 00:10:28.000

<i>Brooks B. Robinson</i>: In the future, where do you see your work going? Are you contemplating changing themes or will you continue to write basically about the same concept, issues, themes that you've been writing?

00:10:28.000 --> 00:10:31.000

<i>Dennis Brutus</i>: I think I live in the present.

00:10:31.000 --> 00:10:40.000

I don't think I can predict. I don't think I particularly want to try to predict.

00:10:40.000 --> 00:10:43.085

Um... In the past, there were many times when I--



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