

Dear Loved Friends and Champions of Baha'u'llah of Colorado Cluster 13:

The momentum is beginning to accelerate within our Cluster due to the increase in activity of training institute courses, related Ruhi practices, core activities, firesides and other initiatives at the individual level. This should come as no surprise to any of us as the Universal House of Justice gave us their assurance this would be the case if we were to arise to the call. Rest assured, due to this direct correlation, the degree to which we arise in unity and with "instant, exact and complete obedience" to the Supreme Institution in carrying out its directives, will determine the degree and rapidity of growth and expansion we will experience. In short, we control in our hands the destiny of our Cluster by controlling how fast we are getting the healing message of Baha'u'llah into the hearts of the inhabitants of the Pikes Peak region in El Paso and Teller counties. Yet, as we grow and expand it is inevitable that we will experience growth pangs. Nothing in nature can grow or expand without pain or sacrifice and so too must this be in the Faith. Rest assured, however, with love and patience we will relish the outcome and results.

It is to this end that our dear Auxiliary Board, Alice Bathke, is directing our attention with her attached letter of encouragement and her sharing with us the letter from the International Teaching Center regarding "Reflections on Growth". Please take the time to read these letters and discuss them in your meetings and gatherings where appropriate. With loving Baha'í greetings, Peter Bruss

January 9, 2006

Dear Friends:

I am pleased to share with you the latest newsletter from the ITC: Reflections on Growth.

<http://www.estelphoto.com/05DecITCReflectionsGrowth10.pdf>

The theme might well be: Administration of the processes of growth.

As I recall the early days of my appointment as an ABM, I recall the trepidation and my bewilderment at the cluster concept. We were asked by our

Continued on page 3



Robert Hayden 1913 - 1980

ROBERT HAYDEN

by Christopher Buck

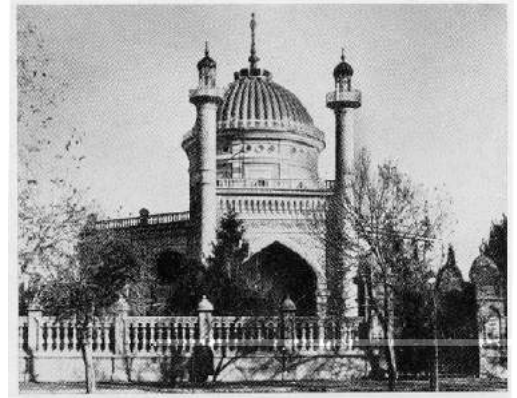
Robert Hayden was made poet laureate of Senegal in 1966 and ten years later became America's first black poet laureate. Acclaimed as "People's Poet" early in his career, later he was severely criticized for refusing to call himself a "Negro poet," even though he wrote some of the most powerful "black history" poems in the English language. Hayden transcended the identity politics of what W. E. B. Du Bois called "art as propaganda"-something that elite African-American artists (the Talented Tenth) were expected to produce. On the principle that race divides while a higher identity unifies, Hayden presented himself as an American poet rather than as a black poet. His greatness is that he was really both, and that his art was a fusion music of the American experience.

LIFE AND WORK

Legally, Robert Earl Hayden was never born. He had no birth certificate to show that Asa and Ruth Sheffey (born Gladys Finn), who separated before his birth, were his natural parents. So it was that Asa Bundy Sheffey came into this world,

Continued on page 3

ODDs & ENds



The Construction of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in 'Ishqábád

Under the protection and freedom given by the Russian authorities, the number of Bahá'ís there rose to over 1,000 and for the first time anywhere in the world a true Bahá'í community was established, with its own schools, medical facilities, cemetery, etc. Eventually the Bahá'ís in 'Ishqábád decided to build the institution that Bahá'u'lláh has ordained as the spiritual and social heart of the Bahá'í community, d. Mashriqu'l-Adhkár (Dawning Place of the Praises of God) (see fig. 45)

A Russian official who was in 'Ishqábád at this time, A. D. Kalmykov (q.v.), has recorded in his memoirs:

This harmless, progressive, liberal sect was founded by the Bab, who was shot in Tabriz in 1850, close to the wall of the citadel at a place which I tried in vain to locate. The Babis were persecuted in Persia in my time and had to conceal their faith; I had never met them there. They came to Russia and even spread to America, where they were called Baha'i.

The Babis in Ashkhabad formed a closely knit community of honest, law-abiding people, somewhat reminiscent of the early Christian churches in the first century after Christ. The great event in the life of the Babi colony was the arrival of Hadji Mirza M. Taghi,* a Babi chief, and nephew of Bab, from Yezd, Persia in 1902. A rich, wise, kind old man of Biblical appearance and dressed in floating Oriental garments, he looked like one of the Magi who came to Bethlehem to adore the birth of Christ. Hadji Mirza M. Taghi had been consular agent for Russia, England, and France in his native town for many years. Although widely respected, he was finally forced to leave by persecution which continuously increased in violence. I had been informed beforehand about his arrival, and he was warmly recommended to

Continued on page 2

ODDs and ENds from page 1

me by my friend and future brother-in-law, Dr D. M. Vinogradov, who had visited him in Yazd.

After being welcomed with due reverence by all the Babi community of Ashkhabad and meeting with a hospitable reception on the part of the Russian authorities, Hadji Mirza M. Taghi decided to settle in Ashkhabad and, as the crowning act of his long religious life, to build there a beautiful Babi temple, the first on the continent of Asia. He lived in a very simple manner but spared no money for the completion of the temple or the cause of his religion.

I presented Hadji Mirza M. Taghi to military governor of Transcaspia, General D. I. Subotich, who agreed to lay the corner-stone of the Babi temple. It was an impressive ceremony, this Russian recognition of Babism as an established religion at a moment when hundreds of Babis were being slaughtered in Persia. The Bab community presented General Subotich with a picture by the famous calligrapher Meshkin Kalam, representing a bird on a tree. The picture was formed with the letters composing the verse, 'On the Tree of Eternity sits the Bird of Truth repeating: "He (God) is one, is one, is one."'

Although the Babis in Ashkhabad kept the outward appearance of old-fashioned Moslems, their conceptions were entirely different. Babi women visited European families and enjoyed a freedom unknown at that time in Moslem countries. The Babishad a small book called Kitabi Siossieh (The Book of Behavior). They considered that each man had a divine spark which must be kept pure during his lifetime in order to ascend to heaven. The Babis in Ashkhabad presented various stages of evolution, ranging from a purely Oriental to a European way of life. However, they retained their Persian attire, whereas in European Russia they wore western clothes. I was glad to hear that after the revolution the persecution of Babis ceased in Persia, and I have no doubt that they will prove to be excellent Persian citizens. They are certainly good examples of what may become of a Persian liberated from the suffocating atmosphere of an old decaying past. 3 *Haji Mirza Muhammad-Taqi, the Afnan (q.v., see fig.45)

Farsi Language & Farsi/Arabic Transliteration & Pronunciation Classes by Samira Sabet Azm & Peter Bruss

Following a recent Feast suggestion, the Spiritual Assembly of Colorado Springs has approved the formation of two language related classes to be held for the Friends in our cluster.

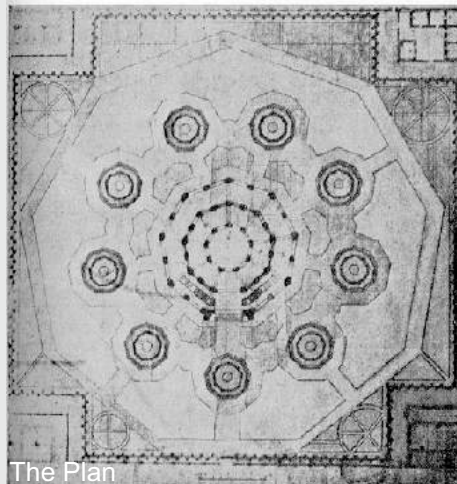
Samira's class will be covering the basics of speaking the Farsi language starting with the alphabet and vocabulary development. It will also include polite conversational phrases which the friends might encounter while visiting with the Iranian Baha'is during Baha'i activities. As the class becomes more proficient it may consult on tackling more advanced subject matters such as advanced conversation, reading, writing and grammar.

Peter's class will involve the correct pronunciation of Persian and Arabic words as transliterated into English and found in the English Baha'i text. Transliteration literally means to put the letters of one alphabet into letters of another alphabet. There are many words in the Sacred Writings and Baha'i history text that we encounter which have accents and other diacriticals. Transliteration is all about understanding how to read these diacriticals and pronounce the transliterated letters in a way that is close to the pronunciation in the language of origin.

Classes for these two subjects can be held concurrently or separate. The teachers will bend as much as possible to the interest and will of the students. Classes will be held at the Baha'i Center. Date and time to be announced.

Please look for a sign-up sheet at the Baha'i Center or contact Peter: tel 278-9226 / email ptbruss@adelphia.net.

Regenerating the First Baha'i House of Worship in Computer CAD software from one floor plan and one photograph.



Bahá'í Connection

**PUBLICATION: MONTHLY
VOL. 20 ISSUE 01**

Contributions/Subscriptions to offset publication costs and mailing should be sent to Larry Barnes, 5690 Del Paz Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80918. The cost of producing each newsletter is currently \$8.00 per year.

Submissions

If you wish to have the Bahá'í Connection run an article or advertise for your event please submit as soon as possible. The Bahá'í Connection is finished on the 21st of each month that means that regular type is received up to the 20th. If you want a special design connected with an event please send it so that it is received by the 14th.

Articles are edited for size, clarity and relative value to the readers. Photographs and artwork are encouraged, however it is best to avoid having us return the images.

All items for the Bahá'í Connection can be sent to:

Richard Stamats
705 Drew Drive
Colorado Springs, CO 80911
(719) 391-2541
FAX- (719) 391-2541 *51
EMAIL: rstamats@gmail.com

Published by

The Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of
Colorado Springs,
5690 Del Paz Drive
Colorado Springs, CO 80918

Please send all address changes to assembly address.

*There is no copyright,
but please include source.*

continued from page 1

Counselor to work with our communities to designate cluster boundaries for our area of work. Can you imagine the stress, anxiety, and heartache it caused? After all the months of working on cluster boundaries with many of the communities in the 4 state communities, I thought I would never be welcomed to their homes again.

But here we are in 2006 and it seems the concept of the cluster is one we cannot live without. For many, teaching at the cluster level is a manageable tool. At first, there was limited experience with managing the process of growth at the grassroots. But with each year, it seems that our clusters have become even more confident in its administration of growth at the cluster level.

Increase in Individual Initiative The training institute process has continued to enhance the capacity of an increasing number of believers. How true this statement is in view of the spiritually enhanced capacities of our local native youth. Growth at the grassroots is what teaching is about to these youth. Our young people have become so empowered as to bring more and more of their friends to this community of interest.

The learning that has taken place at the grassroots level about the administration of growth at the cluster level really is a major accomplishment of the Five Year Plan. Nowhere is it more evident than in our own little AI 03 cluster where it seemed that our resources were so limited. We were thinking to ourselves, how can we possibly grow?

Our youth have been instrumental in inviting many more of their friends if they see no division between BahaEi and non-BahaEi. As Bahá'ís, they see the need for acquiring more training and therefore more deepening. So why not train and deepen with your non-BahaEi friends? That seems to be their attitude. So they just invite more friends to study with them. They are the champions of making others feel right at home!

Involvement of the Local Spiritual Assembly The Houck LSA never felt the Assembly was an obstacle to the training institute process. Inviting more friends to their 3 core activities was the gateway to their teaching work. By taking Ruhi Book 1 together, the Assembly members were a living example of obedience to the other community members. Obedience is highly valued in the Navajo community.

As a result, participation at the 19 day feasts and other community functions has increased. Certainly, their capacity for outreach keeps growing. The happiness generated at these gatherings is a salve to any suffering any member may have endured in the past. When one speaks of the healing message of the Blessed Beauty, it is readily exemplified in their midst -- in the example of their personal lives.

Decentralization and the Regional BahaEi Councils As clusters grow, all developments must take place at the grassroots, hence the value of decentralization. The Regional BahaEi Councils understand expansion and consolidation. We have been working with the

Council in appointing Cluster Coordinating Teams (CCT) to deal with the intensive programs of growth in anticipation of the entry by troops.

However, during our 6/11/05 dedication ceremonies at NABI, the indigenous friends were struck and impressed with the love of our National Spiritual Assembly and four Auxiliary Board members who came to be with them. It was a moment I know I shall never forget. The love that came from the highest level of BahaEi administration, the NSA, to the grassroots people was so evident. It was not only gratifying, but so substantial that the friends still feel it to this very day.

Enjoy your personal and community study of the attached ITC document. I look forward to hearing about what you are learning in your clusters, and to your sharing that learning with all of us.

It has been a pleasure to visit with you through this newsletter. You are in my



on 4 August 1913, in Paradise Valley, a ghetto on Detroit's East Side. At eighteen months, the boy was given to next-door neighbors William and Sue Ellen Hayden, who reared and rechristened him. William "Pa" Hayden is immortalized in one of Robert's most anthologized poems, "Those Winter Sundays." He remained with what he thought were his adoptive parents until the age of twenty-seven. In 1953 Robert was shocked to discover that the Haydens had never legally adopted him, contrary to their claim, and that he was really Asa Sheffey.

Paradise Valley was racially mixed but predominantly black, with color prejudice dividing dark- and light skinned blacks, young Robert saw bigotry from within and without. By virtue of being underprivileged, however, the boy suffered more from poverty than prejudice. The very antithesis of the American Dream, Paradise Valley filled him with a perpetual sense of vulnerability and victimization. Handicapped by congenitally impaired

vision, Hayden was acutely nearsighted and his eyeglasses were extraordinarily thick. Being "four-eyed" and unathletic predisposed Hayden to reading and writing. Turning his myopia into an asset, introversion nurtured him as a poet.

In his senior year of high school, Robert was placed in Northern High, an East Side, predominantly white "sight saving school," where he graduated in 1930. At sixteen he discovered, entirely by accident, the Harlem Renaissance poets in Alain Locke's anthology, *The New Negro* (1925). Hayden was instantly drawn to Countee Cullen, who declined to call himself a "Negro poet" -an example the young poet would later follow. Although the volume "Songs at Eighteen" was rejected by Harper Publishers, the poem "Africa"--Hayden's first-appeared in a 1931 issue of Chicago's *Abbott's Monthly*, a popular ethnic magazine. Revealing the influence of the Harlem Renaissance in its twilight period, "Africa" echoed the primitivism of Cullen's "Heritage."

During the Depression era, Hayden attended Detroit City College (later Wayne State University) from 1932 to 1936. His family being on welfare, he could not afford the sixty-five dollars for tuition. Fortunately, the State Rehabilitation Service awarded Hayden the tuition scholarship he so desperately needed. A Spanish major and honor student, Hayden ended up just one credit hour short of graduation when his resources finally ran out.

Professional experience began where education ended. His job as writer and researcher for the Detroit branch of the Federal Writers Project of the Works Progress Administration from, 1936 to 1939 gave Hayden his first national exposure when "Autumnal" was anthologized in the FWP publication, *American Stuff* (1937). More significant was the local recognition he achieved at a Detroit United Auto Workers Union rally, when Hayden read his eight-page mass chant, "These Are My People," and was spontaneously proclaimed "People's Poet" of Detroit. Originally composed for the Negro Culture Exhibit sponsored by the local National Negro Congress, his mass chant was later performed by a "verse chorus" and dramatized by Chicago's Negro Group Theater. It was around this time when he first met Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes, who came to see his play, *Drums of Haiti*, performed; Hayden played a voodoo priest. Moonlighting by taking on extra writing

continued next page

jobs, in 1938 Hayden wrote weekly radio scripts based on episodes in African American history for CKLW Radio in Windsor, Ontario. He was hired in 1939 as director of Negro Research for the Federal Historical Records Survey but fired in 1940. Hayden also worked part-time as a staff writer for the Michigan Chronicle for a mere six dollars per week.

Although still one credit shy of a bachelor of arts degree (which Wayne State would grant in 1942), in 1938 Hayden was provisionally accepted into the graduate program in English at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. There, he won the Summer Jules and Avery Hopwood Award for the eleven-poem Heart-Shape in the Dust (the title came from Elinor Wylie's "Hospes Comesque Coparis"), published in 1940 by Falcon, a local press. Heart-Shape in the Dust was written during Hayden's left-wing, proletarian phase. The poems have a pronouncedly populist style, providing social commentary on racism, lynching, and economic oppression. Hayden characterized these as "prentice pieces." Yet he was an apprentice with no master.

After college another influence entered his life: Erma Inez Morris. They were married in 1940. "In some ways she was quite different in temperament from the young poet. She was demonstrative, happy, affirmative, resilient. The granddaughter of an Episcopalian priest, the daughter of parents who had met in medical school, Erma was born in Philadelphia in 1911 into a family which had infused in her expectations of college and achievements." (John Hatcher, *From the Auroral Darkness* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1984), p. 13.)

Publication of his first slim volume of poetry, Heart-shape in the Dust, the year they were married, may have eased some of the family's objections to the marriage. Here was evidence, at least, that Hayden was serious about poetry. And this collection was reviewed in the *New York Times* -impressive indeed.

But this little book did not stand up well to the passage of time. Even Hayden himself came to criticize it and eventually relegated it to the large body of his work which he considered unworthy. Today it is extremely difficult to find even a copy to copy. Critics of this book contend that it is, "more protest statement than poetry, it no longer pleases the modern readers, partly because we are no longer moved by the subjects treated." (Arthur Davis, *From the Dark Tower: Afro-American Writers 1900-*

1960, (Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1974), p. 176.) The poems in it are "...dated and repetitious, echoing themes already used too often during the (Harlem) Renaissance years." (ibid.) If he had continued in this vein, Hayden would have disappeared long ago in the mass of protest rhetoric that buried so many of his contemporaries who are no longer remembered today. Hayden rejected poetry for propaganda's sake. The art was as important as the message. He refused to write poetry according to a "Black agenda," determined by radical black racists.

During the 1940s his poetic career looked promising. Yet in the 1950s and early 60s he accomplished little. In 1966 he was awarded the "Grand prix de la Poesie" in Dakar, Senegal, at the First World Festival of Negro Arts. In the last decade of his life honor and accomplishment followed one another in a steady stream. One of the highest honors was his appointment, not once, but twice, as Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress of the United States. His terms extended from 1976-78. He was the first Black American to receive this honor. In 1985 this position was renamed "Poet Laureate of the United States," to more clearly reflect the honor it bestowed. So Robert Hayden was in effect Poet Laureate of his country, a long way indeed from the ghetto of Detroit.

Hayden became Bahá'í, he said, for several reasons: the belief in progressive revelation; the belief that the Bahá'í teachings could effect the relationship between religious thought and scientific discovery necessary to a unified physical and metaphysical outlook; and, most important, the belief, in the transcendentalist principle of universal brotherhood. (Pontheolla T. Williams, *Robert Hayden: A Critical Analysis of His Poetry*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), p. 26.)

His first reaction to the Bahá'í Faith was one of detached interest. His wife of two years urged him to investigate and he finally stated that, if she persisted, he would refuse to consider it. In his own time, and at his own pace, Hayden learned more and more about the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. Though the cardinal principles of universal brotherhood and world peace were dear to his heart, the Bahá'í religion was radically different from his intense Baptist upbringing. In 1943 he made the decision and formally entered the Bahá'í community.

This decision did not appear to

immediately influence the poetry he wrote. Even years later he did not consider it to have had much effect, but upon reflection, he concluded that it must have, "I realize it has given me a base, a focus." (Robert Hayden, 'From the Life: Some remembrances,' unpublished autobiographical notes, Hayden Papers, Bahá'í National Archives, pp. 15-16.)

Writing from 'a Bahá'í perspective,' or as some would say, 'with a Bahá'í agenda' was not a conscious decision. The influence of the Revelation came through his work naturally and spontaneously. He did not set that as a goal, it simply was a part of his life. Gerald Parks concluded that Hayden's poetry cannot be understood except by reference to his religious attitudes. (Gerald Parks, 'The Bahá'í Muse: Religion in Robert Hayden's Poetry,' *World Order*, 16, No. 1 (1981), p. 38.)

Hayden participated in the Bahá'í community at a local as well as national level. In 1967 he was appointed as Poetry Editor to the quarterly, *World Order*. He retained the appointment for the rest of his life. Hayden was not a spokesman for the Bahá'í community. The Bahá'í references in his poetry come from Hayden himself, not from any "position" he held. As poetry editor for *World Order* he selected poems for publication and wrote brief introductions to three collections published in its pages.

The influence of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh is reflected in Hayden's work on various levels. One could be the general influence that took his work from social protest to a celebration of the Black American experience. Next would be the indirect references to the Bahá'í Revelation or some aspect of it. These references and poems are not written for a Bahá'í audience, for the meaning of the poem continues without the reader knowing the Bahá'í reference. The Bahá'í references add another layer of meaning and depth to the poem for those familiar with the Bahá'í Teachings. After that would come clear and direct references to some aspect of the Bahá'í Faith. And, finally, the most direct reflection of the Revelation would be the incorporation of quotations from the Bahá'í Writings into the text of a poem.

Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith wrote that: "the believers should make use, in their meetings, of hymns composed by Bahá'ís themselves, and also of such hymns, poems and chants as are based on the Holy Words." (Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, Bahá'í Meetings and the Nineteen Day Feast Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976) p. 25.)

Robert Hayden has done this on all levels. Examples of each will be examined in turn.

That Hayden alluded to the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh often in his poetry was confirmed by Hayden himself in an interview in January 1971 with Paul McCluskey, his editor at Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. This interview was later published as a section of *How I Write*. In it he referred to the poem "Full Moon," the fifth and sixth stanzas of which read:

And burned in the Garden of
Gethsemane,
its light made holy by the blazing tears
with which it mingled

And spread its radiance on the exile's
path
of Him who was The Glorious One,
its light made holy by His Holiness.

(Robert Hayden, "Full Moon," *Ballad of Remembrance* (London: Paul Breman, 1962) and *Collected Poems*, (New York: Liveright, 1985) p. 6.)

Hayden stated: "From there (the time of Christ) we move to the nineteenth century - to a spring in 1862, to be specific. "The Glorious One" alluded to is Bahá'u'lláh, like Christ a Divine Manifestation."

(*How I Write*, 'Robert Hayden, The Poet and His Art: A Conversation,' New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1972, p. 209.)

In another poem "The Night-Blooming Cereus" are these lines:

older than human
cries, ancient as prayers
invoking Osiris, Krishna,
Tezcátlipóca.

Here is more evidence of a religious harmony which would not occur to most people. The poem is about waiting for the flowering of this exotic blossom. The watchers are in awe of the unfolding event.

We spoke
in whispers when
we spoke
at all...

(Robert Hayden, 'Night-Blooming Cereus,' in *Angle of Ascent*, (New York: Liveright, 1975), pp. 24-26; also in *Collected Poems*, (New York, Liveright, 1985), pp. 114-116.)

They are aware of the transcendence of

this event, at least that it transcends the ordinariness of their own lives. As John Hatcher, explains, the characters in the poem are aware that they are in the presence of a vital connection to an eternal ordering, much as the succession of Prophets (Osiris to ancient Egyptians, Krishna to the Indian sub-continent, Tezcátlipóca to the Aztecs) likewise reflects divine ordination in human history. (Hatcher, pp. 184-5.)

In Hatcher's analogy the flower is Bahá'u'lláh, or perhaps the Bahá'í Revelation, which like all revelations of the major religions, came in a time of a spiritual darkness. The theme of a spiritual winter and then of a springtime as the result of the coming of a messenger of God, comes from the Bahá'í writings. Hatcher comments, "The appearance itself is "Lunar" (fleeting and in the night-time), but the effect it has on the observers, we infer, will be lasting. For this reason Hayden has written the poem in the past tense to indicate the lasting impact this epiphany has had on their lives." (ibid, p. 185.)

In a note he adds, "In effect, awaiting the flower's bloom may symbolize the couple's search, and the flower's bloom may symbolize the fulfillment of that search in discovering the Bahá'í Faith." (ibid, p. 327, note 12) The symbolism works both ways, humankind is lost in the darkness which precedes the appearance of each Prophet, and individual's lives are in darkness until they personally find the Revelation. The critic, Ponthella Williams, not recognizing the Bahá'í references, considers it as "Hayden's most deeply moving recognition of the creative life force... ..The poem's interest arises from Hayden's insistence in recognizing both the spiritual and the physical. It represents the reaction of a sensitive, intelligent man whose roots in the human race are as ancient as the civilizations he cites. He is fascinated by observation of the natural process. The dramatic tension is high because his vigil is idealistic, romantic, ..." (Williams, p. 136 -137)



Another example of Hayden's reference to the Bahá'í Faith is in the closing stanza of the poem "Year of the Child," written in honor of his grandson Michael Ahman Tedla. He expresses his concerns and admiration like any grandfather who hopes for a better life for the coming generation. He closes with a benediction:

May Huck and Jim
attend you. May you walk
with beauty before you,
beauty behind you, all
around you, and
The Most Great Beauty keep
you His concern.

(Robert Hayden, 'Year of the Child,' *American Journal*, (1978, Effendi Press; 1982, New York: Liveright), p. 43-44 and *Collected Poems*, p. 179.)

The first sentence refers, as any American would know, to Huckleberry Finn and his runaway companion Jim, an interracial pair united forever in American literature, symbolizing the freedom, adventure, conflicts and growth of boyhood. The next three lines and their reference to beauty may seem a bit out of place to most readers, not part of the boyhood image invoked immediately before. The critic, Fred M. Fetrow, described this "benedictive closing" as an eclectic fusion of secular wish, Navaho Indian song, and Bahá'í prayer.

(Fred M. Fetrow, *Robert Hayden*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), p. 128.)

The reference to "The Most Great beauty" would be recognized by most Bahá'ís as a reference to Bahá'u'lláh (Bahá'u'lláh, 'Tarazat,' in *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, (Haifa: Bahá'í World Center, 1978), p. 43.).

Another example is the poem "The Prisoners." Hayden describes a visit to a prison: the physical reality of the prison, the characteristics of the prisoners, their reaction to his visit and what the persona (presumably Hayden with at least one companion) did during the visit. The fifth stanza:

We shared reprieving Hidden Words
revealed by the Godlike imprisoned
One, whose crime was truth.

(Robert Hayden, "The Prisoners," *American Journal*, p. 18 and *Collected Poems*, p. 159.)

continued next page

Each line contains a reference to some aspect of the Bahá'í Revelation. The "Hidden Words" is the title of one of the most familiar books by Bahá'u'lláh. The "Godlike imprisoned One" refers to Bahá'u'lláh, who spent most of his life imprisoned by the Persian and Ottoman authorities for "the crime of truth". Bahá'u'lláh was imprisoned for being a follower of The Báb.

Probably the poem which most directly refers to the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh is titled: 'Bahá'u'lláh in the Garden of Ridwan.' This poem originally appeared in "Ballad of Remembrance" with the title: 'The Prophet' (it is not clear why he changed the title, or why Ridwan has a variant spelling). The "Garden of Ridwan" refers to either of two identically designated island gardens, one on the edge of Baghdad in the Tigres River, the other in Israel in a stream that has since become dry. The poem speaks of events which occurred in the first where Bahá'u'lláh announced, in 1863, that he was a messenger of God. After twelve days in the Garden of Ridwan, Bahá'u'lláh left Baghdad, by order of the Sultan, to further exile, the next destination being Constantinople. His final destination was the penal colony of Akka, in present-day Israel. He remained there for the last decades of His life.

The text of the poem reads:

Agonies confirm His hour,
and swords like compass-needles turn
toward His heart,

The midnight air is forested
with presences that shelter Him
and sheltering praise

The auroral darkness which is God
and sing the word made flesh again
in Him.

Eternal exile whose return
epiphanies repeatedly
foretell

He watches in a borrowed garden,
prays. And sleepers toss upon
their armored beds,

Half-roused by golden knocking at
the doors of consciousness. Energies
like angels dance

Glorias of recognition.
Within the rock the undiscovered suns
release their light.

(Robert Hayden, 'Bahá'u'lláh in the Garden of Ridwan,' *Angle of Ascent*, p. 117, and *Collected Poems*, p. 47.)

"As My Blood Was Drawn" is another poem with specific reference to the Bahá'í Faith. This time the reference is to the "People of Baha," a term for the followers of Bahá'u'lláh. The poem compares the cancer then invading his body with the concurrent persecution of the Bahá'í community of Iran. This poem appears in *American Journal*, first published in 1978, the first year of the most violent persecution of the Bahá'ís at the close of the twentieth century. Those events in revolutionary Iran shocked the world. The poem begins:

As my blood was drawn,
as my bones were scanned,
the People of Bahá
were savaged
were slain;

(Robert Hayden, 'As My Blood was Drawn,' *American Journal*, p. 40, and *Collected Poems*, p. 176.)

and compares the cancer invading and destroying his body with the evil that was destroying the Bahá'ís of Irán. The fourth stanza of the poem again relates his fate to that of the Bahá'ís:

As surgeons put
me to the knife,
innocents
were sacrificed.

This is also one of the rare instances where Hayden uses what is almost a rhyme, an off-rhyme; generally he uses no rhyme at all.

In section "X" of "Words in the Mourning Time," subtitled, "and all the atoms cry aloud," not only is the name of Bahá'u'lláh directly used and identified as "the mystery of God: / Baha'u'llah,"

(Robert Hayden, "Words in the Mourning Time," in *Words in the Mourning Time and Collected Poems*, pp. 99-100.) the poem contains quotations from the Bahá'í Writings as well. The first line, "I bear Him witness now" is close to the first words of the Bahá'í short obligatory prayer: "I bear witness, O My God..."⁶ Near the end of the

poem the merger is more complete, when the words of the poem are nearly exactly the words from the Bahá'í Writings:

I was but a man
like others, asleep upon
My couch, when, lo, the breezes of the
All-Glorious
were wafted over Me...

This is Bahá'u'lláh's description of the process by which the Revelation came to Him in 1853 (Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982, XLI, p. 90.)

Thematically the poetry of Robert Hayden does not seem to have changed a great deal during the course of his career. As a young man with hope of being a poet, he dwelt with racial injustice, calling for equality and world brotherhood. As a poet confident of his voice, he celebrated the diversity of the human race, calling the world to witness. The protest of his early years matured into a dynamic force for the same ends. As his assurance grew, he more and more referred to the source of his positive vision of the human race.

In the interview in 1971, McCluskey asked Hayden: "The reference to the Bahá'í faith in this poem (Full Moon) is one of many that appear in your poetry. How important are your religious beliefs to you as a poet?" Hayden answered: "As a Bahá'í I am committed to belief in the fundamental oneness of all races, the essential oneness of mankind, to the vision of world unity. And these are increasingly powerful influences on my poetry today. (How I Write, p. 209.)

It is obvious that it is the Bahá'í Revelation which transformed and channeled his early protest into celebratory song. The frequent allusions to that Revelation are just hints of the source of that song. Just as an exultant singer cannot hide the sources of his song, a poet, in Hayden's own words, will "try to tell all the truth" but, in Emily Dickinson's words, "tell it slant." (ibid. p. 167.)

Robert Hayden did that and more.

This is an edited adaptation of the article "A Preliminary examination of the poetry of Robert Hayden in Light of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah" which appeared in the December 1992 and March 1993 issues of the BAFA newsletter.



Ayyam-i-Ha Celebration
at the Rickert Home in Woodland Park, CO
 407 Oxford Lane Woodland Park CO

SATURDAY
FEB 25
EVENING

Saturday, February 25, 2006 5pm
until the party dies.

Everyone is invited!

There will be food, fun and games for all ages.

Feel free to invite non-Baha'i friends as will have plenty of our own non-Baha'i friends attending!

Directions:

Hwy 24 to Woodland Park, Hwy 67 North 2 miles, Right on Regent Drive (The Reserve Tamarac), Left on (the second) Pembroke Lane, Right on Oxford Lane and we are the 2nd house on the left. Park on the circle drive or on the road.

RSVP to 719-687-5315 or
 charlotte.rickert@configuresoft.com

Love,

Charlotte Rickert

Mobile: 719-310-2151



SUNDAY
FEB 26
AFTERNOON

AYYAM-I-HA
POOL PARTY-
PIZZA PARTY

Sunday February
 NOON to 2 PM.
 Memorial Park

Starting after Sunday Classes.



SUNDAY
FEB 26
EVENING

Ayyam-i-Ha
Potluck
at Otis Park



Sunday, February 26
 Potluck 5:30 - 8:30 PM

FEASTS

Mulk (Dominion) Tuesday, February 7
 Program and refreshment hosts are needed. If no one signs up to host, the refreshments will be potluck.

Ala (Loftiness) Wednesday, March 1

Please contact Nazanin Dewald to sign up for hosting feast programs or refreshments. 227-7109

Thank you , Nazanin

AYYAM-I-HA
The Act of Giving

Toy collection for Griffith Centers for Children and Chins Up. New and excellent shape used Toys should be brought to the Baha'i Center. Deadline by Feb 26th.



A note of Thanks from Barbara Bradley!!

To all involved with Baha'u'llah's birthday celebration of 2005. Thank you for making it a success! Thank you to Colorado Springs treasury for making it possible. Trish Evans for face painting, Dixie Cole and Star Stone for personal invitations, Richard and Spencer from East Elpaso community for story telling and helping in preparing for party, also my personal assistant, Brian Bradley. All Whom came early to help in decorating and supporting. Thank you all very much!

Pikes Peak Baha'i Singers
are seeking additional
members.

"If only the birds with perfect voices sang, the forest would be silent."

All voices wanted contact Janina Barnes

Horseback riding in Woodland Sat Feb 18
 contact Star Stone

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Ayyam-i-Ha

It behoveth the people of Bahá, throughout these days, to provide good cheer for themselves, their kindred and, beyond them, the poor and needy, and with joy and exultation, to hail and glorify their Lord, to sing His praise and magnify His name...

(Kitáb-I-Aqdas, 16.)

**See Page 7 for the
Ayyam-i-Ha Events**