

ROBERT HAYDEN, THE HISTORIAN AND THE SYMBOLIST IN *ANGLE OF ASCENT*

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ABSTRACT

Analysis of Robert Hayden's (1913-1980) poems revealed the significant place history and symbolism occupied in his poems. The present study aimed to explore the historical elements and the pervasive sense of the past in Hayden's *Angle of Ascent* (1975). *Angle of Ascent* showed Hayden's interest in Afro-American history since he knew that it was misrepresented and distorted and hence it was imperative for him to correct the misconceptions surrounding it. *Angle of Ascent* also re-enacted the collaboration of Hayden's character as a symbolist and an historian and emphasised the remarkable fertility of their union as the bipolar extremes of his unique poetic genius. Symbolism in Hayden's poems allowed him to reinforce various meanings using symbols to show different meanings. Hayden's poetry also made it clear that since the horrible actualities of life can realise their true meaning in the higher order of spirit, the transcendent realm should reveal a meaning to man as long as it is materialised in his own experience.

KEYWORDS: Afro-American History, Historical Misconceptions, Symbolism, Ideal and Real, Divine Inclinations