

On Meeting Robert Hayden in a Dream

Abdul Ali

here among them the dead the others the aliens
I see you without coke bottle glasses a wavy comb over
your nose buried inside a notebook over-

flowing with strange sightings men and women
without a homeland a library to shelve histories
dreams the names of rare flowers fruits baby names

exiled from their villages learning to say hello
with accents thick with nostalgia for their purple planets
here UFO sightings aren't so spectacular

border crossing is quintessentially american universal
crowds gather in squalid ghettos where every country is a city
every city is a verse & every verse echoes "Those Winter
Sundays"

where a New World opens up where all the martians are
welcome
at the writing table with their fountain pens & swollen digits &
you whispering

what took so long?