

# FOREWARD

Jawdat Haydar, author of *Voices*, published by the Vantage Press in the United States in 1980, has provided poetry-readers with yet another volume that reflects his distinctive poetic talent. In the previous volume, the prevailing tone was one of lyric melancholy; Jawdat Haydar's over-riding concern was to awaken his readers to the dangers of their hostile environment and to remind them also of the precious privilege of their humanity.

To some degree, these same words might also be applied to the present volume, yet in his later work one detects more contemplative tone. This is understandable, for almost all these later poems were written during the time of Lebanon's most recent political troubles. Now, Jawdat Haydar, a true patriot and genuine lover of his country, has reacted to the anarchy and destruction he sees everywhere around him with stoical fortitude as one might expect from someone who for many years has been a keen observer of the human condition.

Yet, through the tumult, Haydar's clear, strong voice can still be heard. Beneath the surface description, the poet speaks with the confident tones of a man conscious of his humanity, a man, moreover, who has speculated on existence and has at last succeeded in drawing its often contradictory voices into a mournful yet noble harmony. Indeed, one might almost say that Jawdat Haydar is the Orpheus of one of his more successful

poems, the shaper, the controller of wayward, imaginative forces, the poet who forces them into a unity that lies beyond the petty strictures devised by pedantic critics.

Orpheus pull out the strings of my heart  
And stretch them head to bottom on your lyre  
Tighten them tune them and please quickly start  
The yearning melodies of my desire

Thanks Orpheus now let me hear the strain  
Of the tuneful Nine sent across the years  
The soft rhythm within the roar of the main  
The calm airs within the gales of the spheres.

And the final, enigmatic last stanza, which seems to hint at the possibility of attaining ultimate vision, rounded off with a tantalising couplet which links the poet's passionate intensity of the inexorable passage of time.

The meaning of this ecstasy is in the lay  
Since time was born out of time yesterday.

These are not poems of joy. Jawdat Haydar has experienced too much suffering not for it to have left its mark. Nor does he offer much in the way of consolation, other than the painful truth that Man is bound to follow the path of stoical fortitude. Human existence, he seems to say, is confusing and fraught with difficulties, and by our conduct we complicate our lives still further. If only we could learn to respect the traditional values associated with family, dedicate ourselves to noble toil and learn to love our country, then, perhaps, the world might become a more tolerable place in which to live, though its mystery would undoubtedly remain the same.

***John M. Munro.***