

Commemorating a Visionary



On October 12, LAU NY, in partnership with the Consulate General of Lebanon and the New Pen League, hosted a commemoration of Lebanese poet Jawdat Haydar, offering a glimpse of his legacy through film, readings, and an exhibit featuring artifacts from his life.

Haydar not only lived until 101, but produced some of his most brilliant and profound work towards the end of his life.

Born in Baalbeck in 1905, the young Haydar's childhood was filled with strife. His father and siblings were forced into exile in Turkey under the Ottoman Empire. At nine, he was left alone with his mother, who was stricken with typhus and died. He then took the long and harrowing trip to Turkey by himself to reunite with his family.

At age 16, as a student at North Texas University, he wrote his first poem.

While Haydar went on to have a career outside of poetry, first as an educator and then as a director at the Iraq Petroleum Company and the Mid-East Auto and Trading Company, he came back to poetry later in life.

"He was a visionary. He wrote about universal issues like science and the beauty of nature, and focused on themes of non-violence, tolerance, and human rights," said his daughter Shahina Osseiran, who attended the event, along with several other members of his family.

The evening began with readings of Haydar's poems by alumna

Hilda Abla, and New Pen League member Rita Zihenni.

His work touched many lives, earning him recognition from the Lebanese Order of the Cedars, the Golden Medal of Lebanese Merit, the Legion of Honor of France, and the Papal Medal from Pope John XXIII for humanitarian work.

"Jawdat Haydar contributed to building bridges of understanding," said Lina Beydoun, executive director of the New York Academic Center.

It is for these reasons that Haydar is often remembered not just as a poet, but as a humanist.

"Haydar rejected the divisions of religion, language or ethnicity, and embraced a universal spirituality that encompasses humanity," said Consul General of Lebanon in New York Majdi Ramadan.

The evening concluded with a reading in Arabic from Youssef Abdel Samad, poet and managing editor of the New Pen League, a group that helps maintain the heritage of the early immigrant poets such as Kahlil Gibran, Mikhael Naimy, and Elia Abu Madey.

In 2011, LAU dedicated the Jawdat R. Haydar Memorial Study Room in the Riyad Nassar Library in Beirut, to which Haydar's family has donated some of his precious books, old manuscripts, and personal belongings.

To read more of his work, visit jawdathaydar.org

Syria Resilient Series

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Ketterer, dean of International Studies at Bard College. "That includes putting the crisis into the context of the arts, poetry, and music, which helps personify a population."

A musical/visual art performance on November 3 featured Syrian composer and clarinetist Kinan Azmeh, and Syrian-Armenian visual artist Kevork Mourad. The production documents how the duo have felt during different stages of the war. "I know that the clarinet cannot stop a bullet, it cannot feed the hungry, it cannot bring the refugees back home, but what it can do is inspire," said Azmeh.

The series wraps up in December with two documentary film screenings: *50 Feet from Syria* and *Little Gandhi*.

By offering a counter-narrative to the headlines about Syria in the mainstream media, the *Syria Resilient* series advances the New York Academic Center's goals of raising public awareness of the Middle East and promoting cross-cultural understanding.



Syria analyst Joshua Landis during the panel.

The Syria Resilient Series is made possible by the generous support of The Violet Jabara Charitable Trust, New York Council for the Humanities, Aida Sharabati-Shawwaf, BNP PARIBAS, and Lloyd Baroodly & Zeina Mehio.

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