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It is the ending to every road taken. It is the ultimate farewell. It is the inevitable destiny. It is death that awaits us all. When is our time? How will death approach us? And when it finally does, what impression will we leave behind? These are questions that never cease to plague me. What scares me most is the prospect of losing the people I love, of being forced to part with my family and friends forever. Through Jawdat Haydar's poems, "What a Lethal Shock I Feel in My Brain" and "Going Back," I am able to relate to Jawdat's loss of a dear family member, and his contemplation of a deceased traveler's footprints on the track of life.

In "What a Lethal Shock I Feel in My Brain," Haydar is overwhelmed with pain when he learns of his daughter's recurring illness. He is overcome with devastation and feels his child's pain, as if it were his own. Haydar's world has become a gloomy and lonesome place, since the death of his wife and son. Now, he is left in fear once again, in fear of losing yet another family member. He prays whole-heartedly for his daughter, Hanan, all the while "living bottled up in [his] acrid pain" (l 10).

We, as readers, can almost feel Haydar's pain concerning his daughter's terminal illness. It is a pain that makes him "suffer like a bird wing shot on the plain" (l 4). It is a pain that resembles a "lethal shot" to his brain (l 1). He writes with such a wounded pen that we can't help but understand his agony. His emotions leak all over his poem. It is no wonder that Haydar is suffering in agony. He has had to face death at the very young age of 8 years old when he lost his mother to Typhus. The experiences that a child faces at a young age leave a life long impression on him. It remains etched in his memory, and becomes an emotional baggage that one has to carry around. As an adult, Haydar once again had to relive a similar experience of losing another family member, Hanan. And once again, his pain increased as his loved one's health deteriorated. In his poem, he cries out, he agonizes, he despairs, the fear of loneliness surging within him. His mind is hazy with distress, and he is "bearing the worries of doubt," (l 9) for he has already lost his wife and son. Must he lose his daughter too? Counting his losses only shows us how much he has had to suffer, and how often he has had to forever part with his loved ones. Indeed Haydar has lived a full, successful, and ambitious life, yet he has also endured his share of heartache.

I believe that I speak for everyone when I say that the greatest loss and the most difficult farewell, is the death of a loved one. It is heart-wrenching to think that we can no longer see that person, no longer be with him. We are left with mere memories to keep us warm, however, in the end, memories are simply a cold comfort. We can reminisce and ponder on the good times we have spent with this loved one. We can keep him alive in our hearts. Yet no matter what we do, nothing can replace his actual presence, his scent, his vitality, and his actually being there. What's more, the greater time it takes for this person to die, the harder the experience becomes. It is easier to see that a person has died swiftly and painlessly, than to watch him suffer through a long, terminal sickness. To see that person slowly lose his grip on life, each day getting closer to his grave is unbearable. Similarly, we truly experience helplessness when we know that a person we love is dying and there is nothing we can do to help, no way to alleviate the pain. What then? What are we to do? Shall we wait? Each day seems like a month, and each month like an eternity. We live with mixed emotions, for we are afraid of losing this person to death, yet we can't stand watching him suffer any longer. All we can do is wait, and wait, and wait...

I can relate to Haydar's pain in losing a family member to a terminal illness. I should know how hard it is, for I have lost my grandfather to cancer. One in a million men have breast cancer and my grandfather had to be among those very few, unfortunate victims of this fatal disease. I can say that I literally feel Haydar's pain because I have lived through this experience myself. I've lived through years of watching my once vivacious, cheerful grandfather grow into a weak, miserable man. Every month, he got closer and closer to his grave. I was there to witness the nausea, the endless visits to the hospital, the midnight vomiting, and reduced appetite... I was there to see him kept captive by his sickness, imprisoned in his room, never leaving his bed. I was there to wipe the cold sweat off his forehead, to reassure him when I desperately needed someone to reassure me, to tell me he was going to miraculously heal. There were endless days where the sight of his weakness made me nauseous, literally queasy to the stomach. Of course I had to go on pretending and flashing brave smiles here and there. I continued to watch horrified until one day, my grandfather left us. To make matters worse, my state of shock and depression left me unable to attend the funeral. I knew that my mom, who was the eldest among her siblings, yet the most emotional, needed me to be strong. But I couldn't be there for anyone. I couldn't help with the funeral arrangements. I couldn't comfort my younger sisters who were terrified and confused. I

could only lie in my pathetic state of helplessness, balled up in the fetal position, sobbing away. In short, my heart goes out to Haydar, for I know his pain all too well.

In the poem "Going Back," Haydar expresses the journey that a traveler takes on the path of life. The traveler walks the road of life only to look back and inspect his path. It is "a ring back, on the track into the blind" (14). After we have taken this destined, inevitable expedition, we glance back, and ponder the steps we've taken, the moves we've made, and the imprints we've left behind. When we part with this world, signaling our journey to an end, what we leave behind is our name. This is all that remains.

We take our steps into the world, marking our way as we walk along the path. There are several twists and turns. There are many obstacles and intersections. There are endless decisions to make concerning this path we embark on. Some take this path with care, others with fear. Some are reckless, others are shrewd. We each walk the line from birth till death. What distinguishes us from each other is how we choose to walk it. What impression will we leave behind? Will we make a difference in the world? Did we use our time wisely, or was our life a meaningless collection of wasted years? It is no wonder that we should live our lives as if we were to die tomorrow. Hence, we should make each day count; each year prosper. What's worse, it is truly a shame to leave behind a bad name; ill fame that will haunt us even while we rest in our graves. The solution? Constant contemplation of our life decisions and self-evaluation go hand in hand. Why wait till we are old and gray to make amends? What if we don't live that long? Hence, there is no time like the present!

Jawdat Haydar, having lived a full, prosperous life, has left us with an impeccable name. He has paved the way for English poetry in Lebanon. He writes with an honest pen that is there to inspire, guide, and share. He writes from experience to teach readers about friendship, family, love, and patriotism. Not only has he carefully marked his footsteps into the world, but he has inspired people to do the same. Through his poems, we can envision an album portraying Haydar's life. We can inspect the walks he has taken, for his poems are a scrapbook of his moments through life, his perceptions, and inner most thoughts. He teaches through example. That's precisely why his poem, "Going Back," has a way of urging readers to look through their own scrapbook of life.

When I think of my deceased grandfather, I am proud to say that this traveler has traveled all the right paths, and has left a name that speaks very highly of him. He's had his share of obstacles, yet has faced them with dignity and grace. When people speak of him, they never fail to mention the usual funny anecdotes. Yet at the

heart of all these stories, and most importantly, they speak of his generosity, kindness, faith, forgiveness, and his addictive love of life. This is what I want to leave behind. "That's how travelers ahead walking back/ [leave] impressions only of name" (ll 13-14). This is what a Will should be all about. It's not about the inheritance we leave for our family. It's not about anything materialistic. It's about the friendships we make, the families we love, and the strangers we inspire. In short, the secret to our good name is in making a difference, and leaving behind a unique impression.

Now that I have discussed the substance of Haydar's poems, I would like to address the issue of his technicality. After having read most of Haydar's collection of poems, I have realized that he is a fan of musical poetry. There is a rhythmic beat to the verses of his work. In fact, I have rarely read any work by him that isn't melodious in one way or another. The rhyming scheme in "What A Lethal Shock I Feel In My Brain" is a,a,a,a,b,c,b,c,d,a,d,a,e,e. It appears though, through this scheme, that there is no exact pattern between the verses. As for "Going back," its scheme is a,b,a,b,c,d,c,d,e,f,e,f,d,g,d,g. This rhyming pattern on the other hand, follows more of a consistent pattern, as it's obvious from the scheme. In either way, the rhythmic tune adds fluidity and continuity to his poems. His verses roll smoothly off the tongue.

The diction that Haydar uses is simple and comfortable. He has a very moderate use for figures of speech. It is this uncomplicated use of words that puts the reader at ease. Instead of being distracted by uncovering hidden meanings, the reader can solely focus on the poet's message. Similarly, Haydar's few images are from everyday life. They are common and relatable, as if coming out of Haydar's journal or diary. Hence, it is safe to say that this poet goes for the 'less is more' technique. As for the tone, it proves to vary from one poem to the other. In the poem to his daughter, it seems as if Haydar is conversing with Hanan herself, confessing his hurting and suffering to her. His agony is obvious, his "acrid pain" (l 10) almost visible. Hence, the poem's tone is somber and serious. In his second poem, he seems to be conversing with all people, travelers of different walks of life. His words are mundane and flow with ease. Therefore, the tone in this poem is conversational, reflecting a calm mood.

Jawdat Haydar's work is universal and speaks to readers of all generations. His themes are relatable and are true to people of different ages and cultures. His aim is to speak the truth. He writes what he cares about, what has touched his life and his heart. His poetry almost seems like a stream of consciousness. It is his heart and soul speaking. It is his experiences which bring his poetry to life. Best of all, his tone is comforting and puts

readers at ease. Each poem reflects his life. There are genuine emotions behind his verses. This is precisely what distinguishes his poems; his authenticity is crystal clear. In other words, his poems resemble pictures from an album, snapshots of his life. Likewise, his passions and ambitions are all squeezed into the ink of his pen. Jawdat Haydar therefore, lives from beyond the grave. He is alive in his poetry. He speaks to us in versus from his poems. He speaks to us in the silence in between the lines... He speaks hushed words of wisdom to all those who listen.