

FOUAD MATAR

THIS IS MY
SHARE
OF THE WORLD

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY



This painting, which combines drawing and caricature, expresses how Tunisian artist Mustafa al-Merchawi sees the Arab solidarity view of Mr. Fouad Matar repairing the cracks in Arab relations.

Preamble

A Prophet Mohamed's saying:

Make use of five before five:

Your youth before your aging

Your health before your sickness

Your wealth before your poverty

Your leisure before your work

And

Your life before your death

To those who did not read this wisdom, I wish they do

To those who were pleased to read it, I wish they re-read it

To all, I wish they hang it in a prominent place at home or in the office

I did and I had peace of mind

Fouad Matar

Contents

Introduction:	11
Prominent personalities and colleagues introduce this biography to the readers, including Dr. Selim al-Hoss; publisher Talal Salman; and prominent journalist François Aql.	
Why did I have to write this autobiography?	45
There are many reasons including the times I lived in Lebanon and abroad; historical events such as the 1952 revolution in Egypt; the Lebanese civil war; defeat in 1967; an attempt to meet Hasan Nasrallah; Sadat's action which denigrated Egypt's position in the Arab world; loss of Saddam and Qaddafi; and immigration from Lebanon and return to it.	
Son of the Village and story of Grandfather	48
Memoirs of living in a Lebanese village and interaction with grandfather; loss of an iconic horse; sharing feasts among all sects and religions; grief on grandfather's death; and going to Beirut to study.	
Son of Beirut and the story of Journalism	52
First home in Beirut; moving schools; reading the Quran and dozens of books; studying journalism by remote teaching from Cairo; and working in many Lebanese publications.	
Son of Arabism from the Ocean to the Gulf	54
Start of political interest after reading book reviews in An-Nahar newspaper; writing in the culture page after a visit to Cairo; and interviews with prominent personalities which changed An-Nahar from a Lebanese to a pan-Arab newspaper.	
From a Daily in Lebanon to a Weekly in Europe	75
In the European period I moved on from daily journalism over 25 years to a weekly publication; reasons for the move and role of Mohamed Hassanein Haikal; an interview with Haikal turns into a book about Nasser; experience of "Arabic and International An-Nahar" published from Paris; move from Paris to London to edit "Economics and Business" magazine; story of At-Tadamon magazine; valuable visions by prominent writers in At-Tadamon; and Saddam's invasion of Kuwait and the resulting schism in the Arab World.	

Return after the Diaspora..... 93

Sad story of At-Tadamon’s end; moving from a five-story building to a room attached to a lawyer’s office in Piccadilly; work on a Gulf War Encyclopedia; Gulf personalities’ objections to the extensive work done on the Encyclopedia; return to Beirut; and my books after returning to Beirut.

On the Road to Summits to Unite the Nation..... 101

Move of An-Nahar to a new building; some prominent colleagues; some Arab summits and stories told by officials; a Baghdad summit that the US administration behaved outside the norms; and the Beirut Summit which produced a consensus on the Arab Peace Initiative.

A Glimpse in Asharq al-Awsat of the Experience 113

A long interview in Asharq al-Awsat – al-Majalla was published about my journalistic experience and the establishment of At-Tadamon; and some advice to the new generation of journalists.

My Relationship with Haikal from al-Ahram’s Throne to the Sickbed..... 116

Two articles I wrote about Haikal when he moved to satellite TV from writing and when he fell ill; memoirs of relationship with Haikal and attempts to reconcile him with some adversaries; and Haikal sends congratulations on the occasion of my daughter’s marriage.

My Books on Nasser’s Egypt and Sadat’s Egypt and the heirs..... 130

How Nasser’s supporters exiled in Beirut saw my book about Nasser; reviews by contemporaries of my books about Nasser and Sadat; how we felt about Sadat going to Knesset; and coverage of the tense Egyptian-Soviet relations.

My Books about Sudan; its Sects, Generals and Imams 133

Several books written about Sudan and the years of president Numeiri; receiving some documents from Numeiri which resulted in a book about the impossible Arab solidarity; and how Sadat tore up Arab unity.

Books about Saudi Arabia between a King of Wisdom and a King of Resolve..... 138

How the idea of Saudi method in calming conflicts started and resulted in three books; meeting with Gulf officials cleared up a lot of issues; telling Saudis that current luxury was built by hard lives of ancestors; women in Saudi Shura Council; and a book about the resolve of King Salman.

At-Tadamon: After the Rise and before the twilight 140
Impressions about At-Tadamon written by prominent writers; and greeting from Queen Nour to At-Tadamon given during an interview.

After the Curtain comes down and before Lights are out 142
Words of appreciation are due for colleagues in At-Tadamon; story of an attack by a fellow journalist in An-Nahar in Beirut; experiment with publishing which stopped when the Lebanese civil war started; and move to Paris to start the international edition of An-Nahar.

Arabist, Unionist who became Neutral 144
Palestinian wife who insisted that our children salute the Lebanese flag; forced immigration from Jaffa to Beirut then to Paris and London; use of the Palestinian Cause by Arab regime as card to their benefit convinced me to become neutral instead of calling for Arab unity; neutrality is protecting Lebanese politics; emergence of two empires: Wahabis in Saudi Arabia and Shia empire in Iran; and Shia in Saudi Arabi need Saudization not nationalization.

Old age and Beginning of the End 152
Mixed feeling upon returning to Lebanon after 23 years of living abroad; memories of the civil war and its devastating effects; buying graves for me and my wife – a decision that shocked our children; reluctance to write after setbacks in Iraq; Syria; Libya; Sudan and Yemen; verses from Islam and Christianity which influenced my thinking; and memories of those who passed and left us behind in a chaotic world.