



Dr Faysal Mikdadi

20 March 1948 – 5 August 2021

An Appreciation

Faysal was a unique man who was my life partner for 20 years. There are so many things I could say about Faysal that it is difficult to know where to start.

He was first and foremost the love of my life; secondly, he was a writer of poems, novels, articles, reviews, papers and research. His creative writing gave him the greatest pleasure as well as pleasure to his readers and listeners alike.

Faysal was born in Nablus, Palestine in 1948, brought up in Beirut, Lebanon and arrived in Britain in 1967 to study English Literature. It was at this time that he accidentally fell into teaching. Years later he would also fall into OfSTED (the Office for Standards in Education schools inspectorate) – he became known in schools as the human face of the process. He would unerringly look for the positive, but never shied away from calling attention to areas which did not serve the students well.

He was a lifelong learner. Faysal believed passionately that without an education, one's life chances were reduced and so he led by example. He relished the challenge of something new. He touched many people's lives along the way, many of whom remained in touch or got back in touch with him. His ex-students referred to him as 'Legend!'. And he was always very pleased to

hear how 'his students' had got on in this game we call life.

Faysal came into my life when I was working as a teacher. He was there to advise how the school I was working in could improve. Initially I found him quite intimidating, but that impression of him did not last long because we soon realised that we liked each other very much and that he was really a gentle soul with a huge heart. Chats in classrooms turned into dinners and before we knew it, we were 'a couple'. Life was never dull; there was always a walk to take, a book to read, a holiday to enjoy, a conversation to have, a picnic to eat by the river or in the woods, a quiet togetherness in the evening; there was so much joy in the little things.

We were each the 'best thing to happen' to each other, and we told each other this every day of our time together. He encouraged me to start writing poetry and prose again, and was instrumental in seeing a poetry collection and a short novel published. He held my hand literally and figuratively throughout the grieving process when my father died in 2018 whilst I expressed the journey in 'Dad'. He advised, proof-read and edited my short novel, *Bärenplatz*, through to publication. I am eternally grateful to him for believing in me and I sincerely hope that he will continue to hold my hand as I, his children, my

children ('our' five children) and our eleven grandchildren now grieve his passing.

Throughout his life, Faysal's happiest times were when he had a book in his hand and a few spare moments to read, or when he was writing poetry or short stories, and especially when he had completed his novel, *Return*, published initially as *Chateau en Palestine* by a French publishing house. Faysal published several poetry anthologies over the years too.

Before his death, he had been working on two creative projects, a collection of poetry and a novel which I think he saw as his Opus Magnus and which he had hoped to have published in the next year. Sadly, he is no longer here to see them to fruition, but his children and I will be doing our very best to bring them into the light for others to enjoy.

More recently, Faysal had been the Academic Director of The Thomas Hardy Society – a post he relished as he was able to pass on his love of literature to another generation. He worked tirelessly in leading workshops in a variety of schools across the country, and edited *Inspired by Hardy*, two very well received poetry anthologies of the students' work (which were reviewed in *Self & Society*).

Faysal was a complex man in many ways and this was a huge part of his charm, yet he was also open, gregarious, generous, kind, empathic and sympathetic to all he encountered. His sense of 'otherness' was so well-developed that no-one in his presence ever felt excluded. He was never a 'half measures' man; if you needed his help and support it would be yours, for as long as you needed him.

There is so much more I could say about Faysal but here is probably a good place to pause. Faysal leaves behind myself, his sister Lina in Beirut, his daughter Catherine, his son Richard, my three children, Fleur, Chloë and Charles (our five children) and, between us, eleven grandchildren, all of whom he loved dearly.

Susan Walpole

Dorchester, Dorset, August 2021