

Speculating on a Common GCC Currency

By Anne Hamilton

On Sunday night, David Marsh, author of *The Euro: the Politics of the New Global Currency*, offered his insights on the potential of a unified Gulf currency as part of a speaker's series sponsored by the Gulf Studies Center. Marsh currently serves as the chairman of a London-based corporate finance and investment company, London and Oxford Capital Markets. The room-full of business faculty, bank representatives and students received an introduction to the concept of the "Araby," one of the potential names for the unified Gulf currency (among other names were the "Khaleeji," the "Kareem," and a strange amalgam of the riyal, the dinar and the diera).

Economic unification of the Arab States is not a new idea. After the Bretton Woods conference of 1944, which established the framework for commercial and fiscal relations among the world's most industrialized states (also where the International Monetary Fund was born), 22 Arab nations met to discuss unification. In 1976, these states founded the Arab Monetary Fund which would act as a regulatory body to improve Arab monetary co-operation. The AMF, Marsh insisted, represents the inevi-



David Marsh, chairman of London and Oxford Capital Markets.

table steps to be taken towards full monetary union.

Based on the experience of the Euro monetary union, Marsh gave three primary reasons for why the single currency model would work exceptionally well for the Gulf. First, that the concentration of hydrocarbons in the GCC region gives them strategic and economic importance. Second, most GCC states hold massive sovereign wealth funds based on the account surpluses from the windfall

petroleum profits and these large stocks of assets provides a strong foundation for a unified currency. Finally, a unified Gulf currency would most likely not be pegged to the U.S. dollar and could, as a result, produce a global "balance-of-power" in terms of money.

Marsh advocated that the Gulf States need not make the same mistakes of the European Union. The recent treaty on monetary union that was just ratified by the Arab League is

a step in the right direction, he said. However, complete centralization of fiscal decision-making was still an imperative, he said, to enhance fiscal security and promote growth within each member state.

Additionally, Marsh viewed the challenges of Gulf monetary union as less problematic than the European case because of the relative "homogeneity" of the Gulf States. The

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Student Conference on Global Learning

By Nur Soliman

To celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day on the 18th of January, AUK and Dartmouth cooperated once more to participate in a Dartmouth-based conference entitled "Student Conference on Global Learning," hosted by Dartmouth's Dickey Center for International Understanding. In strengthening and pushing forward old connections and developing the relationship between the two campuses, students from Dartmouth and AUK participated in sharing their experiences of being abroad and adding vibrant, new dimensions to their personal experiences and their understanding of different cultures and different ways of learning and connecting.

The meeting as part of the Panel 1 sessions underway was made possible given the long distance thanks to the use of DVC equipment to facilitate a video-conference meeting, made possible with the invaluable help of Dartmouth's departments and Nezam Hamzeh from our own IT department. Using this, students Matt Forman (Dartmouth, '11) and Nur Soliman (AUK, '10) were able to moderate and lead a dynamic discussion on "reviving Aristotle in Arabia," or the nature and the future of a young, growing liberal arts institution in the Middle East such as AUK. The panel session was one of many in Dartmouth's Haldeman Center that morning (EST), and this panel seemed well-attended, with the support of the AUK-Dartmouth Project staff, a few students, staff, and other interested guests.

The discussion centered on Forman's and Soliman's experiences in both Dartmouth and AUK over the last year. Forman introduced AUK in the context of university life and the higher education environment in Kuwait, while Soliman discussed then the aims of AUK and its ambitions and aspirations for its students based on its mission statement. The presentation, which lasted over a half-hour, mainly focused on both the achievements and the problems or challenges facing AUK. They discussed the university's achievements and ambitions in terms of organizational structure, active campus life, diverse classrooms, as well as the challenges fac-

ing AUK, which the students were sure would change in the course of AUK's institutional life.

Among the things the students discussed were reviewing concepts of learning and the true definition of liberal arts in the cultural and religious milieu of Kuwait, and whether or not the "liberal arts" as traditions in thinking, teaching, and learning were alien to Middle Eastern Muslim culture or were already there in a variant form. The students also brought up various cultural, political, and societal difficulties that AUK faced as an institution, and suggested that the nature of the AUK community was such that these challenges promise to serve as ways of improvement and strength.

The presentation elicited a good response from the audience, and drew quite a number of various questions about aspects of AUK, Kuwaiti, or Arab culture, and concepts of learning, following up from the actual presentation, leading to a continued active discussion amongst the guests themselves, who came from diverse professional, educational, and cultural backgrounds. The two groups hope to continue to maintain varied discussions in the future and perhaps begin to better refine and identify various points for discussion between the two campuses on a student level.

The "Student Conference on Global Learning" centered mainly on students' experiences abroad and within Dartmouth in ways that challenged how they understood different cultures, communities, concepts of poverty or volunteering, and learning. The theme was "Where do we go from here?" taken from the title of the 1967 speech by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and highlighted the interconnectedness of various social struggles or issues worldwide. The conference, as part of MLK Day, was jointly organized by various Dartmouth institutions, the Dickey Center, the Office of Institutional Diversity & Equity, the Tucker Foundation, the Rockefeller Center, The Office of Undergraduate Advising & Research, the Office of Off-Campus Programs, the Office of Pluralism & Leadership, and the Dartmouth College-American University of Kuwait Project.

Comin' Thru the Rye: Celebrating Salinger

By Kawther Sadeq, Nur Soliman and Sara Soliman

J. D. Salinger, the famous American author, noted for *Catcher in the Rye* (1951) and *Nine Stories* (1953) died on 27th of January of natural causes in his home in Cornish, NH. After his early successes, Salinger moved to Cornish in 1953 and resigned himself to living in isolation, hiding from reporters, photographers, or admirers asking for autographs. John Updike reviewed *Franny* and *Zooie* in 1961 and wrote that Salinger's "conviction that our inner lives greatly matter peculiarly qualifies him to sing of an America where... there seems little to do but to feel." On the University of Wisconsin web page dedicated to the book *Letters to J D Salinger*, poet Adrian Lewis writes "We are not writing these letters to you. Indeed, we are merely writing to ourselves or to the part of ourselves that once had true literary aspirations, had honor, had good-hearted and honest artistic intentions, and was not jaded." In *Catcher in the Sky*,

an article in *The Dartmouth*, Tom Mandel writes that, "The other discernible impact that Salinger's death will have on me is that, from now on, whenever I see an old man in the library, I will no longer entertain the notion that he is J. D. Salinger."

The response to the very unique personality of Salinger and his voice, especially as embodied in his novel, *Catcher in the Rye*, has been as diverse as it was passionate. In this issue of the *Voice*, we hear from four AUK students whose living experiences have been affected in some way by Salinger in his novel *Catcher in the Rye* and its protagonist, Holden Caulfield.

Kawther Sadeq – Salinger's Holden as the Embodiment of the Universal Human Condition:

J. D. Salinger has left behind an incredibly strange yet familiar story. He did this by merely dealing with the human condition that seems so universal but at the same time so personal to the extent that almost every individual could relate to it. One can

probably say that *Catcher in the Rye* could have been somewhat close to an autobiography of Salinger himself due to his own experience of separation from society that is reflected by *Catcher's* protagonist, Holden.

Sadly, since Salinger has practically distanced himself from civilization to the point of isolation, one can only hope to identify him with his characters. Holden Caulfield is, in one way or another, everyone; at least to me he is. The difference is that through his point of view, I was able to see how his rebellion against societal norms was a way for him to try to show who he really was.

After reading the book, I started thinking: how can I be sure that I'm not losing who I really am in a society that requires me to act normal? I cannot express my honest emotions because society asks me to act in a certain way, eventually recruiting everyone into being the same person so that they can avoid trouble when dealing with each other. Everything unique becomes suppressed



Author J. D. Salinger

and that is, naturally, what we all want because we do not want to expect the unexpected. Yet we are also frustrated because we lose our original personalities, for they are ever-changing.

Catcher was something I instantly related to and felt like everyone else could easily see a connection with Holden if and

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Reconceptualizing Interpellation

By Anne N. Hamilton

Anne Hamilton is a U.S. Fulbright Fellow based at the American University of Kuwait until October 2010. In the summer of 2007, Anne received a research grant to work as a consultant to Al-Zahra Women's Organization in Sakhnin, Israel. She holds an MA in Comparative Studies from American University in Washington, D.C. She is originally from Memphis, Tennessee. The focus of her research is the political development of Kuwait, in particular, the evolution of the interpellation (istajwab) process as a democratic mechanism by which the National Assembly is able to check executive authority. Her research asks how the interpellation process evolved over time and what are the main impediments to its full functioning as a democratic mechanism? As democracy activists and others have pointed out, if the lesson being learned from National Assembly's interpellations (istajwabat) is that democracy is too troublesome for a ruling family to undertake, then the wrong lessons are being drawn from this situation. Recently, the Prime Minister endured his istajwab and demonstrated yet again the ruling

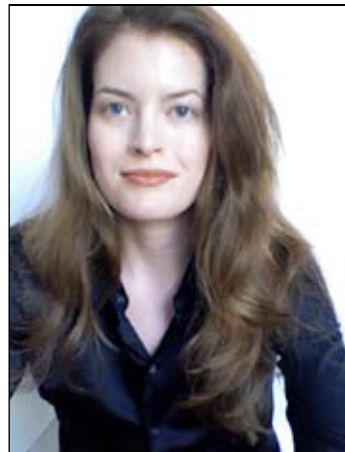
family's calculated willingness to undergo public examination by elected representatives. However, a close reading of the political factors that cause conflict between executive and legislature suggest that a fresh approach, if implemented, can overcome the pattern of lurching from "crisis" to "crisis."

The National Assembly is not necessarily destined to stay interlocked in struggle with the government into the foreseeable future. How the pattern of impasses will be overcome depends a great deal on whether a formula can be developed that is acceptable to lawmakers and government alike. If a lessening of tension and increased cooperation is considered essential for progress then several steps must be taken to give the interpellations process a new level of legitimacy and institutionalized authority among the public as well as regional analysts.

First, there must be an attempt on behalf of the press, the National Assembly and the ruling family to reconceptualize interpellation as a normal and indeed normative constitutional process in Kuwait that is not only legitimate but also necessary for good governance. As long as the government and

its supporters as well as MPs themselves are able to frame these limited, fledgling parliamentary checks and balances on executive authority as divisive, disruptive and prompted by unworthy ulterior motives, istajwabat will remain vulnerable to the accusations of recklessness and disruptions to the proper administration that are contrary to the national interest.

Second, the MPs who file interpellations must think more strategically. When MPs consider the interpellation of a minister, particularly the Prime Minister, the allegations must be specific and directly related to the minister's portfolio. They should also be specific in scope, pointed rather than rambling, and limited to a logical progression of interrogatories that investigate a particular issue of unquestionable public concern. The past pattern of presenting interpellations that result in crazy quilts of questions that mix the serious with the trivial and sometimes seem disconnected are a gift to all those who would dismiss the interpellations as unworthy of respect. When the interpellations are focused and limited only to the most serious questions that follow logically



Fulbright Fellow Anne N. Hamilton

upon each other in a clear pattern and avoid political non-sequiturs, MPs can strongly bolster not only each individual interpellation, but also the integrity of the process itself as a normative government function and the parliament as an institution. What MPs most importantly need to avoid is the sense that they are acting irresponsibly, recklessly or abusing their authority. Such self-awareness on the part of MPs would strengthen the institution of the Parliament and its power of interpellation. Such a shift in the political landscape will require a serious campaign to frame future

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Political Role of Kuwaiti Women

By Christina Koningisor

The process of conducting research is rarely smooth, characterized most often by frustration, self-doubt and constant revision. These unexpected turns and roadblocks, however, should not be viewed as a negative corollary of the research process, but rather, as an opportunity—as a means of stumbling across new and, in many cases, more relevant research themes.

The first research project that I conducted was in the summer of 2006 in the West African countries of Sierra Leone and Liberia. My original research proposal had involved an investigation of the debate between international criminal tribunals (punishment) and truth and reconciliation commissions (forgiveness) as a means for promoting post-conflict resolution. The debate had been thriving in academic circles for some time, and Sierra Leone seemed to offer the perfect case study; in the aftermath of a brutal, decade-long civil war, the nation had implemented both a truth and reconciliation commission and an international tribunal.

Yet I arrived in West Africa to discover two concerning trends. The first was that there were a number of highly qualified researchers who had developed similar research proposals. Even more problematic was the realization that the people of Sierra Leone were far less concerned with this theoretical debate between justice and forgiveness than the international community was. Sierra Leone is among the poorest nations in the world, ranking second-to-last on the United Nation's Human Development Index. Abstract debates between forgiveness and punishment in the aftermath of conflict were far less crucial than whether or not parents would be able to feed their children.

As a result, my research began to evolve, undergoing many incarnations before eventually expanding to become a more general investigation of the impact of international institutions on local populations. I spent the next three months attempting to understand the many complex reasons why such international institutions had failed to become entrenched among the local population.

When I drafted my Fulbright research proposal to Kuwait, I was operating under similar confines as I had before; I had not yet traveled to the Gulf region, and my understanding of the issues, concerns, and successes of Kuwait were confined to what I was able to glean from second-hand sources. My original research proposal was drafted in the summer of 2007, and it focused on investigating the efforts of female parliamentary candidates to become elected to Parliament. By the time that I arrived in Kuwait, four women had already been elected to Parliament, rendering the goals outlined in my proposal out-dated and, while still relevant, certainly less salient than before.

As a result, much of my research thus far has been devoted to identifying what are the salient issues among women in Kuwait today. Like my experience in West Africa, this has been a process filled with



Fulbright Fellow Christina Koningisor

many false leads and circuitous routes. One of the many interesting themes that have emerged from my research, however, is the relationship between the judicial system and women's rights. I began noticing that many of my interviews touched upon the same constitutional court rulings—for instance, the court's recent decision to allow women to secure passports, or its decision that female parliamentary members would not be required to wear the hijab.

Therefore, I began to expand my focus to include not only the legislative aspects of women's experience in Kuwait, but also to examine the role of women within the Kuwaiti legal system. This change in research approach has opened up a whole host of new questions; for example, does the Constitutional Court serve as a means for advancing women's rights in Kuwait, taking a more progressive stance at times when the government, for political reasons, either cannot or will not? Is there any tension between Sharia law and secular sources of law with regards to women's issues in Kuwait, and if so, how is this tension resolved?

Another issue that has repeatedly surfaced in the course of these interviews is whether or not women should be allowed to serve as judges in Kuwait. While those interviewed have held widely disparate views on the subject, I have found that the process by which an individual has arrived at a decision to support or oppose this right has been as illuminating as their conclusion itself. While a number of those interviewed have supported women's right to serve as judges, some have argued the issue from a secular perspective while others have argued the point from a religious standpoint. The Kuwaiti Constitution derives its laws from both Islamic Sharia and secular sources, and thus it can be argued that both legal frameworks are constitutionally valid.

Moving forward with my research, I aim to continue to explore the legal questions, problems, and theories that serve as the underpinning of the Kuwaiti legal system. Also, as I continue to absorb new information and new perspectives, I anticipate that there will be a number of future shifts in the direction and shape that this research assumes. Yet I can also be assured that this is not merely a part of the research process, but the very best part, for this process of revision, questioning, and self-examination is what allows a researcher to arrive, in time, at a truly unique conclusion.

Women's Rights Priorities in Kuwait

By Jessica Cusano

When applying for a Fulbright Research Grant during the Fall of 2008, there was no doubt in my mind to draft a project proposal for Kuwait. Having briefly visited the country during Eid Al-Iftar in 2007, my interest in the politics and culture of Kuwait expanded exponentially. At the time, I was studying abroad at the American University of Cairo and was fascinated by the obvious and more subtle differences between life in North Africa and the Gulf. Due to my interest in the overlaps between gender studies, politics, and anthropology of the Middle East, I enrolled in a course titled Islam, Women, and the State; a comparative study of women from various Islamic countries in the region and their historical role in their respective societies. I found myself reverting back to the articles about Kuwaiti women and their undeniable and fateful role during the Iraqi occupation.

Having traced the tireless efforts of Kuwaiti women to obtain political rights, such as the right to vote and run for parliamentary office, I felt optimistic to learn of women participating in their first rounds of elections. Yet, I became invested in wanting to understand why, in 2008, there were still no elected Kuwaiti women in Parliament despite two election cycles. The women's votes were clearly an intricate and vital part of the election process, and I wanted to explore the women's challenges to gaining a seat. During

my senior year of university, I decided to further investigate the effects of female suffrage on parliamentary elections through a Fulbright grant.

As fate would have it, in May 2009, the week after I received notification that I had been awarded the grant, not one but four Kuwaiti women were elected to Parliament for the first time in history— an obvious triumph for women in Kuwait and a potential influence for women in the region. While filled with admiration for these first four elected women, I began to wonder what my new topic related to this issue would be.

I arrived in Kuwait in early February 2010 at AUK to fully address this question. With so few Gulf humanities researchers in general and even fewer specifically researching politics and culture in Kuwait, the opportunities seem abundant and even a little overwhelming. With regard to my project on Kuwaiti women and politics, one such obvious advantage here as opposed to neighboring countries is the accessibility to watch a Parliament session, wander the Majlis Al-Umma halls, and find oneself in the office of one of the four women arranging an interview appointment. Not to mention the general ease of discussing politics at the dinner table, an old-fashioned taboo for a woman even in my own country.

Due to the fact that Kuwaiti women are politically active from the top down, there are opportunities to observe female

political participation on all levels: from the women's rights subcommittee in the Parliament to grassroots organizations such as the Women's Cultural and Social Society. With the hurdle of female suffrage behind them, women are able to focus on a plethora of other pressing issues. I aim to research the legislative process of women's rights laws from the beginning; when women on the ground in women's groups have an inside understanding of the ideas for change and consult members in Parliament, to the end; when a law is drafted and proposed in the women's rights subcommittee before the final stages of being introduced to all Parliament members. I will meet with representatives from local women's groups to understand their ongoing projects and listen as they voice their suggestions. The questions I intend to answer center around: what are the current priority women's rights laws and which groups in society voice these issues enough to capture the attention of Parliament members, particularly the four women? I find the legislative process, especially tied to Sharia's Law, highly intriguing, and I hope to gain a greater understanding of the process by which women's issues are discussed on the ground and then morph into laws debated in Parliament.

Upon arrival in Kuwait nearly a year and a half since the Fulbright application process began, the country is in many ways exactly how I remembered



Fulbright Fellow Jessica Cusano

it during my first visit. Kuwait is an incredibly beneficial country to perform Fulbright research. The hospitality of its people combined with its small population size and intricate web of politics make it an ideal place to become heavily involved in research with a closer, more intimate view of daily life. I am relieved to finally be here, after all the anticipation, to begin my project and look forward to the end result.

Jessica Cusano is a U.S. Fulbright Fellow based at American University Kuwait until October 2010. Jessica was born in Jacksonville, Florida. She graduated from Boston College in May 2009 with a BA in Islamic Civilizations and Societies. Jessica is on the role of the four recently elected women in Parliament and the effects of the women's subcommittee in the Parliament. She is also interested to study along the reaction to the four female members' participation in Parliament from other members.

Common Currency, from pg. 1



Members of Business & Economics Division ponder a common GCC currency

Gulf economies are of similar size compared to the disparity between the largest European economies, Germany, which is 400 times the size of the economy of the smallest, Malta. No such disparity is present between Saudi Arabia, the largest of the Gulf States, and Bahrain, the smallest. Marsh also characterized the shared cultural and linguistic attributes of the Gulf States as “homogenous” such that the challenges of the European scheme would not come into play.

As for the first steps towards unification in the Gulf, Marsh listed three crucial actions. First, a political consensus of fiscal obligations must be reached between the members and standards must be set so that members adhere to a level of responsibility and stability.

Second, monetary policy decision-making must become more independent from the government. Lastly, the states must craft a foreign exchange reserves agreement, which would further ensure coordination.

If the recent performance of the Euro during the financial crisis is any indication, the unification of the Gulf States under an “Araby” currency and pegged in value to a basket of currencies, might insure that the Gulf States sail peacefully through the rough financial straits of the future. Arab financial experts would seem to agree with David Marsh when they recently set the year 2015 as the goal for monetary and fiscal unification. However, serious questions remain: Will the unification be among only Gulf States or

among the Arab states? How long will it take until the Gulf and/or Arab states reach the economic union needed to support monetary union? And even if this union were to be achieved between the Gulf or Arab states, how would the external security of such a system be ensured?

Domestically, as the first step for each Gulf country, Marsh advocates increased transparency on economic and monetary performance of Gulf States citing the case of Kuwait which does not regularly publish the inflation rate of its dinar. He also underscored the need for the independence of financial markets from governments, also at issue in Kuwait where MPs currently struggle to establish an independent regulatory body for the stock exchange.

Public Speaking & Toastmasters

By Nawal T. Al-Adasani

On a regular day at the university, in my Public Speaking class, my professor Mr. Prades, announced that a guest speaker would come to our class within the next week. I was excited because I might learn more about Public Speaking, which I highly enjoy. Then the day came and Mr. Prades introduced Mr. Abdulla Al-Mahdi, founder and CEO of SPCL-HD, a local consulting firm that specializes in communication and leadership training. Mr. Al-Mahdi had set up a wonderful power point demonstration on communication skills and human development that led to the introduction of “Toastmasters” and the whole class was invited to attend their meetings to discover for ourselves what Toastmasters is all about. Not only did we learn a lot from his presentation, but we were also invited the Toastmasters and participate in their meetings.

Mr. Prades had mentioned that attending and participating in the Toastmasters would have a positive impact on our grades. He has a well-defined policy about getting a solid ‘A’ in his class. When the semester started, he gave us his rules and policies. One of them was in order “to get an ‘A’ you have to deliver a speech outside the classroom.” It could be accomplished by speaking in the Academic Showcase or any other venue. Since we did not have the showcase this semester, he urged us to attend and participate in the Toastmasters meetings which we did. I did care for that, but mostly I just wanted to try something new. I became nervous when I first attended the Toastmasters together with some of my classmates but once I went inside I felt comfortable. Although there weren’t many

people, the meeting went well. When table topics (impromptu speaking) were introduced, I decided to go for it and spoke outside the familiar confines of the classroom. I felt confident but a little terrified because it was my first time to perform in front of the Toastmasters members. But then the professional evaluations from the members turned out to be great and I was proud of myself. After speaking for the first time at the Toastmasters, the sense of comfort began to build up and the members were very friendly. That meeting went very well and turned out to be a lot better than I thought it would be. Not only was I going to attend Toastmasters again for my class, but also to build up my skills in public speaking and seek more opportunities for self-development.

After missing more meetings at Toastmasters due to a heavy schedule I had at the university, I decided to make time to attend another meeting. My second time was even more exciting because there were more people and there was more enthusiasm. Being a “veteran” already, I felt even more confident to speak at the table topics competition and won the best table topic speaker award and I have the Toastmasters certificate to prove it! The meeting was another great experience and everyone who spoke at the Toastmasters that night did a wonderful job. I kept thinking to myself, “I’m going to do my best to keep attending the Toastmasters meetings”.

The third time I attended Toastmasters was much more of a learning experience even though there weren’t many people. I did a power point presentation and used the same one that I delivered in my Public Speaking class. Unfortunately, I didn’t do very well and my

confidence level wasn’t one hundred percent there. I felt that my presentation was presented a lot better in class. I then realized that whenever you perform any type of presentation for the first time in a different setting and in an unfamiliar environment, it makes you a lot more nervous than what you can ever imagine.

Although my presentation didn’t go as well as I thought it would, I learned a lot from the Toastmasters expert feedback and I was very glad that I did it because I know in the future I will be presenting these types of presentations. One of the members of the Toastmasters told me that the best way to do well in a new environment is to come early and rehearse so I’ll be able to pick up the feel of the atmosphere and help increase the level of my confidence.

I saw that performing in Toastmasters isn’t that much different from performing in class because in the beginning I was nervous but eventually got better after attending more meetings just like in a regular class. The beautiful thing about Toastmasters is that they understand you, they help you improve your skills, and they show you the beauty of public speaking. Everybody is rooting for you and wants you to succeed. I look forward to attending more meetings, meeting new people, learning more about myself and becoming a more skilled speaker. I recommend Toastmasters to those who love to speak publicly and to those who seek personal development because it is a great learning experience and it is a lot of fun. I encourage English 108 students to attend the Toastmasters meetings to hone their public speaking skills or better still to establish our own Toastmasters club at AUK. Any takers?

Interpellation, from pg. 2

interpellations in a way that reshapes public and regional perceptions of the legitimacy and the political value of the process to the Kuwaiti national interest. Interpellations are now frequently perceived as disruptive, need to become perceived as not only legitimate, but also constructive and indeed indispensable.

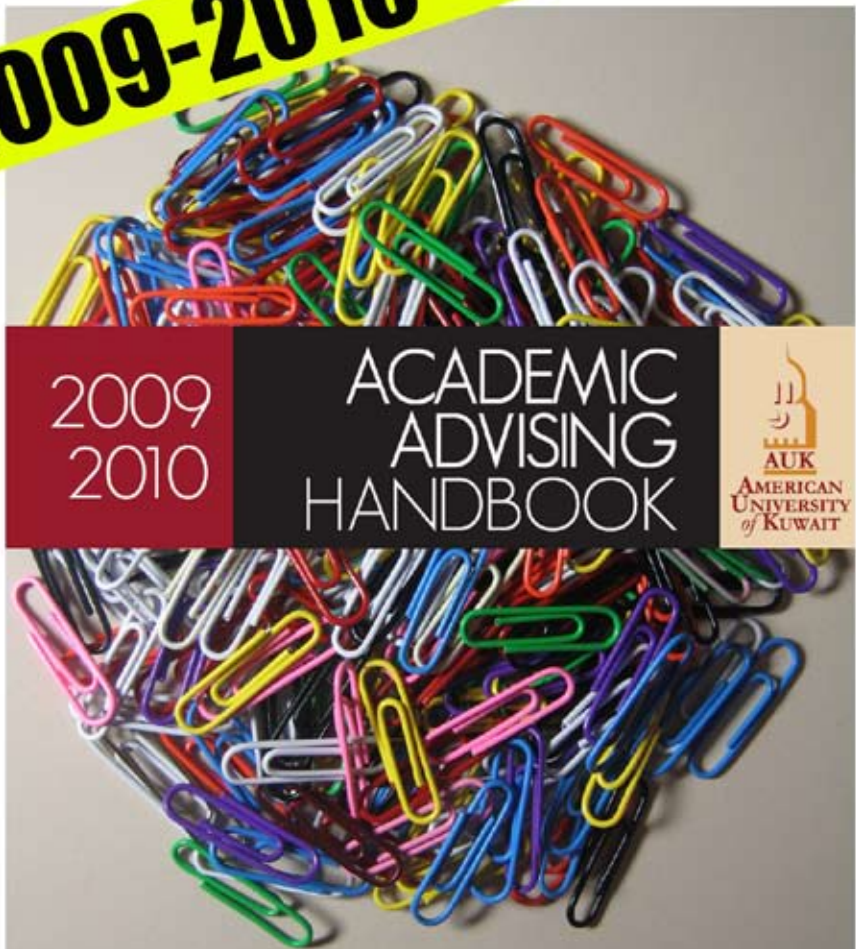
Third, parliamentary blocs that file an interpellation request must work to form solid majorities that support the request. Simultaneously, these MPs must work with other and even rival lawmakers to establish a new framework for dissenting opinions so that they remain professional and respectful of the interpellation procedure as a legislative mechanism of crucial importance to all blocs and to the institution as a whole. Though some blocs may be opposed to

a specific interpellation on political grounds, the procedure has been used by all parties to accomplish their respective goals and if the parliament as a body can cultivate buy-in from all blocs on defending the process, this would lessen the credibility of the “crisis” rhetoric as a government counterattack. Parliamentarians need to think not only in terms of their political affiliations but also their institutional imperatives, and work together at times to defend the prerogatives of their branch of government.

Fourth, MPs should focus on passing transparency legislation that mandates government disclosure of financial allocations. Such disclosure would take some of the guesswork out of the interpellation process by providing evidence for the investigative bodies and MPs who are questioning the


minister. It would make interpellations more focused and pointed, better informed, less frequent and more credible. After the most recent elections, the emergence of a somewhat evenly distributed “mosaic” parliament has given some observers hope that the impasses will be lessened to a degree that will permit more progress on development projects. Both the government and the parliament, some argue, now have greater opportunities to focus on restarting developmental projects that will prepare Kuwait to become a financial and commercial hub in the region. However, until there is some progress on the interpellation process itself, the “crisis” rhetoric and the stalled government projects could continue to detract from the real opportunity for political development unlike any in the region.

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Children of a Lesser God

By Dana Al-Otaibi

At first sight the women sitting next to me in the hospital’s waiting room seemed Kuwaiti. In fact, she was the perfect embodiment of a conventional Kuwaiti woman, complete with the accent, the appearance, and the very traditional name! After she picks up the prescription for her child, she opens her wallet to pay for the medicine. My curiosity was killing me; I could not help but ask her why she had to pay, as Kuwaitis are exempted from payment. With a reticent laugh and a slight sarcastic tone she answered, “My son will be a Kuwaiti citizen as soon as my Lebanese husband dies or divorces me.”

This young woman represents a small fraction of the discrimination that hundreds of Kuwaiti women face every day. Her case is perhaps a pale representation of the ever-growing battle that hundreds of women in our country have to undergo every day. They are treated as second class citizens in their own country; denied housing, unlike her male counterpart when they get married, she is forced to pay fees of residence for her husband and her children, forced to pay for her children’s education and medical care. One might conceive of this notion that these women have committed an incriminating act or national treason. But in fact, their only “crime” is marrying non-Kuwaiti men. For conservative and self-labeled Islamists, this is not a case that needs to be put on the table; for God, as they declared, has settled this issue; children follow the father’s line of descent. Yet, the women and children who are the victims of this prejudice have a very different story to tell.

The opposing side, comprised mostly of conservatives and traditionalists who made

it their mission to protect our “values and traditions,” have set their camp of the ever familiar “Sharia” ground. They adhere strongly to their position, perhaps because it is the last shackle that holds us women prisoners to men. Young men and women in Kuwait have expressed their patent rejection of any change regarding this law; surveys indicate that they feel that it might bring negative consequences. Nevertheless; these surveys might not speak for the entire society. The majority of AUK students and I have discussed this issue with expressed desire to see the children of Kuwait mothers being treated as citizens; however there was a visible apprehension about the changes it will bring to the society, while others believed that the spouse, be it a wife or husband, should not be nationalized.

The people who oppose any amendment to this law are either intimidated by the changes it will bring or more significantly, are misguided by what our religion’s vital concept tenets. The opponents with modest or no knowledge of the Islamic jurisprudence, recite what they believe to be “Allah’s” will. Islamists claim that children must follow the father’s line of descent. It seems like, upon a recent telepathic discussion with God; they came to decide that since the father is responsible for the children’s economical well-being, and is the “the head” of the house hold, the children must inherit the father’s name, religion and, of course, nationality. The fact that they proclaim that religion is inherited is a flagrant sign of their lack of knowledge of Islam. They also ignore the fact that during the Prophet days, people identify themselves by stating both the father’s and the mother’s line of

descent. Their other claim that children follow their father’s line of descent exhibits one of two: their confusion about the reproduction process, or their shortage of excuses. I think we can agree that the latter is more plausible. Jan Feldman, a Harvard scholar and researcher, had a very sensible view of this case. She says: “This creates a situation of near dual citizenship for Kuwaiti women in their own country; treated equally under civil law, but unequally under “Shari’a.” (Feldman 2007) Perhaps it is their version of the “Shari’a” that contradicts our civil rights.

The most sticking observation I have witnessed while conducting research for this paper was that women were very vocal opponents of any amendment. “Why should a child of a Jordanian father be treated as a Kuwaiti?” They display the typical hypocrisy and double standard that we unfortunately have grown accustomed to. Those people firmly believe that nationalizing children of foreign fathers will change the culture. In their absurd notion, a foreign mother brings absolutely no cultural, religious, or ethical diversity to our cultural fabric. Phrases such “mother tongue” and “mother land” are not included in their dictionaries. But they forget that the Kuwaiti society itself is magnificently diverse and multi-ethnic. Furthermore, any examination of any sociology book will show that children drive their identity from both parents. Also, children who come from multi-national unions can add to the mosaic of any nation, and shouldn’t be forced to choose a side. What is most shocking is that the most adversarial group is children of foreign mothers. The stand that they take expresses not patriotism, but racism; it ex-

presses not a conservative view, but a hypocritical one. The sad fact is that women are becoming each other’s most vicious foes. A study by Haya al-Mughni; a researcher in the field of women in the Middle East discussing the role of women organizations in Kuwait gives us a hard fact to swallow. Al-Mughni explains how the women organizations have gone through a difficult period of establishment in the 70’s of the last century with the rise of the Women’s Right Movement only to live an unfinished dream that came to a closure in the 80s with the Islamist coming to power. She recites the heartrending story of how women organizations moved from demonstrations for equal access to educating and career choices to “teaching women how to become better housewives (Mughni 34).” She gives a close look on how upper class women, who enjoy a slightly better treatment due to their prestige, are blocking all gate ways and muting all voices that might one day lead to justice and equality for women of all classes. (Middle East Report, No 198).

The people opposed to the amendment explain that this law shouldn’t be changed because “it’s in the constitution.” The constitution card that they raise every time also states in its 7th article that “Justice, Liberty, and Equality are the pillars of society; co-operation and mutual help are the firmest bonds between citizens.” This nationality law itself is a flagrant and calculated ‘misreading’ of the constitution. In this law, we see a deliberate dehumanization and disgrace of 50% of Kuwaiti people.

On the other hand, the nationality law states that children of unknown parents born in Kuwait considered Kuwaiti chil-

dren of an unknown father and Kuwaiti mother are also considered Kuwaiti. Plus, any person who served the county in a significant way will be granted the nationality. The laws most irritating yet the most humorous are that the children of Kuwait mothers have the right to “gain” citizenship only if their father dies or divorces the mother. Here is my interpretation of law: the Kuwaiti government is more than pleased to give the nationality to children of Kuwaiti fathers but not Kuwaiti mothers because the children conceived with a foreign man might have patriotic problems and loyalty issues. Yet this genetic malfunction will magically be cured once the alien father in out of the picture. Ironically the same groups of people who support this law are those who also oppose divorce.

The government decided with constant scrutiny from human right organizations to be generous and just. They agreed to give the children of Kuwaiti mothers “certain privileges” such as applying for universities in Kuwait. This comes not as a quest for justice, as much as a calculated silencer that keeps the victims from speaking. Even if one day, the children of Kuwaiti mothers are granted all rights as their peers, as long as these rights are labeled as “privileges” as they are actually called, they will still carry the bitter sense of inequality. Only when these children are given the title Kuwaitis instead of “children of Kuwaiti mother”, then justice will be established. Sanja Kelly from the Freedom House states despite of the recent gains of Kuwaiti women, this issue remains an obstacle. She also compares the pace of progress in Kuwait compared to the other Gulf countries which reflects that our nation is sadly

advancing in a slower pace in comparison. The government, feeling the pressure, has made several changes. The suffrage rights obtained in 2005 and the independent passport law in 2009, that allows women to obtain their own passports without the consent of their male relative necessary in the old days, was a victory savored by many women in Kuwait. However, the nationality law is the main gateway towards other essential rights such as housing, education and the right to travel. The nationality is the only tangible evidence that a person belongs to a country, for patriotism and the sense of belonging cannot be discerned.

The main obstacle in our journey towards justice and equality is neither the Islamists’ loud voices nor the liberals’ lame voices. What is really curbing our stamina is the mentality that we still adhere to today. We would rather remain as we are, than make waves, not because the current situation is right, but because the current situation in convenient; not because change is impossible, but because change is an inconveniently lengthy and demanding process. This issue casts a limelight over the discreet practices of racism and sexism in our nation. A few sentences written in the last century reflect nothing but men’s insecurities, their fear that we will no longer face the Hobson’s choice, and their concern that women might have other options, as men do. The Islamists and, unfortunately, the majority of men will hold on tight to these laws and fight aggressively to maintain the status quo. Changing this law to benefit women will free them from any manacle that might restrain them from making free choices. This will not be our last fight, but it sure will be our hardest.

In Response to ‘Islam and Secularism’

By Fatima Ibraheem

A lecture entitled ‘Islam and Secularism’ took place in December at AUK. It seems that the event is quite out-dated to respond to after two months. However, a topic similar to the one mentioned is never considered obsolete, but rather, a very hot topic that increases its heat every minute, especially amid this time of the world. Actually, it was this fact that made me feel sensitive to respond to an interesting lecture like this one. I have unfortunately not attended the lecture; however, the published press release in the December issue made me wonder whether it is worth publishing my personal comments I had in response to the lecture. The decision, obviously, took me until February; until I compiled the sufficient information I required for my response from the simple research I conducted.

The minute I saw the title of the lecture “Islam and Secularism” in one of the sent emails by AUK, I had one of these grins that was loaded with implications. It was interesting to see the one major aspect that attracted my attention; the combination of two antonyms in the same title, with a connecting word in between.

To begin with, I believe that it is crucial to make the clear distinction between Islam and politicized Islam. They, absolutely, are different, yet are very deeply intertwined to such an extent that it is easy to assume that they are both the same. Though there is not an official definition that distinguishes them, we can still extract a

definition from the dynamic worldly politics we undergo nowadays.

“He has instituted the (same) religion for you (Muslims) as He recommended for Noah, and which we have revealed to you and recommended for Abraham, Moses and Jesus. Keep up religion and do not create any division in it” (Qura’an 42:13). Islam in itself, just like any religion, is an embodiment of the code of life, which God has revealed for the guidance. In other words, we should not look at Islam as merely a separate entity concerned only for spiritual matters, rather, a system of life that its practitioners turn to in need of life management, direction and regulation. Yes – Islam is a religion, not a state, but that does not mean that Islam is personal and not communal. At the same time, Prophet Mohammed (PUBH), being a messenger of the Islamic message, automatically makes him the leader of the society back then. In other words, messenger and leadership came in a package; they are not separate. Being a messenger also meant being the guider, the teacher and the preacher; thus, making him a leader of the people he guided. He, therefore, elected his truest companions while he was alive as ministers and representatives for the sake of dispersal within and outside of the boundaries of Arabia. Muslims would turn to him or to any of these chosen representatives, if they were outside Arabia, in any situation; whether concerning politics, finance or religion. One piece of evidence is the spread of Islam itself; “the Hu-

daibiya treaty between Prophet Mohammed and Qoraisb was the beginning of a new phase in the Prophet’s journey to accomplish his mission and preach his call for the divine faith to all nations.” Therefore, yes – he was a messenger but a leader as well.

With this in mind, it will be easier to base it on the “invalidity of the concept of Caliph” that has been mentioned in the press release that described the lecture in brief. In spite of my disagreement with the fact that Prophet Mohammed was only a messenger and not a leader, I still, however, agree with the point that describes the invalidity of the notion of ‘caliph.’ After the Prophet’s death (PBUH), the concept of a human ‘Caliph’ rather than a Godly leader (similar to the Prophet) has emerged. It is true that ‘caliphate’ is considered “to be a human innovation rather a religious imperative.” In other words, the notion of caliph is the human leader that is not flawless. Therefore, it is not unusual to observe a flawed government to be headed after the Prophet had passed away. Thus, this is why the Prophet did not want this to happen. He therefore appointed a successor by choosing an infallible leader just like him – Ali Bin Abi Taleb, who was succeeded by eleven infallibles of his descendants after he passed away. (History has shown that the Muslims after the Prophet’s death became branched into two; those who followed the Twelve Infallibles and those who followed the Caliph). “And We assigned from among them some Imams

(leaders/successors) who guide by Our Authority since they were patient and believed firmly in Our Signs” (Qura’an 32:24). “And, He it is who made the stars for you that ye maybe rightly guided by observing them in the darkness of the land and the sea; Indeed we have made plain the Signs for the people who can know” (Qura’an 6:97). The Holy Prophet said, “As the stars in the sky are the Source of guidance to the travelers, The Holy Ones of my twelve successors are The Source of Guidance for the people. And, as the stars will remain in the sky until The Day of Judgment, The earth will never be without a Divinely Guide from My successors, that is an Imam”.

However, a lot of controversy revolves around this subject. It has been clear that human’s intervention has caused a lot of, not just controversies, but problematic issues that would lead to today’s dynamics and what has been described in the lecture, “the urgency of such an investigation becomes particularly significant in the midst of current resurgences of Islamic ‘fundamentalism’ or Islamist ideologies in reference to political Islam.” People have justified their acts under the banner of religion, and unfortunately, have used religion as a bloody sword for attack rather than a divine shield for defense like it has always been since the days of the Prophet. This is the façade of politicized Islam; the ‘Islam’ that many countries struggle to separate from the state/government nowadays.

A Fortunate Disaster



By Fatima Ibraheem

On the 12th day of the New Year, a magnitude of seven on the Richter scale had taken the lives of a number equivalent to the population of Kuwait. Twelve more aftershocks with a magnitude of no less than five followed the initial quake. Haiti, a state in South America, has encountered the worst earthquake in two centuries. As for infrastructure...no need to describe the damage. The numbers are already telling.

Haiti, an independent state that declared its independence in 1804, “became the second independent state in the Western Hemisphere and the first free black republic in the world.” Ironically, despite its long period of independence, Haiti remains one of the poorest, if not the poorest state, in a continent just under the so-called ‘most powerful’ continent in the world – the United States of America. Since its independence, Haiti has undergone minute improvement in the quality of life, which explains its poverty in terms of economy. Haiti’s history portrays the fact that its nation was governed by hindering tools such as the army and the military, which became highly involved in its politics. This intervention caused Haiti’s politics to remain unchallenged for more than 150 years thus feeding into its dictatorship and unsatisfactory development. In addition to its economy and politics, Haiti’s population included a large number of uneducated and illiterate resi-

dents. However, we do bear in mind that a newly independent state, just like any similar state, would have to take a period of time in order for it to improve and develop in all of its aspects: politics, economy, education and quality of life.

Haiti, on the other hand, seems to be an exception to that rule...

Haiti’s statistics from the year 2000 and beyond, as compared with the neighboring Dominican Republic, reveal very stunning information to us. Despite their location in the same continent, the gaps in the percentages between the two states are shocking. For instance, Haiti’s statistics show that almost half its population is illiterate (48.1%) whereas Dominican Republic is 15.6%! Also, the nation’s quality of life is in a very bad condition. The population that suffers without the sustainable access to improved water source in Haiti exceeds half the population (54%) compared to only 14% in the neighboring Republic. Economy? It is even worse. The GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of the entire state of Haiti is approximately 3 billion (US) dollars only. Multiply this by seven and you will get, more or less, the number of GDP (21.7) for the country neighboring Haiti a few kilometers away. The underprivileged quality of life in Haiti takes into account the high infant mortality rate, which is almost 80 per 1000 live births as opposed to 32 in Dominican Republic – not even half

the number.

With all this statistical information, do we agree that Haiti is an exception to the previously mentioned rule? Do we also agree that it is ironic to acknowledge these statistics while putting in mind that it is the first independent state amid the continent? Or is it even more ironic to admit that Haiti is a state that is in a continent just below the most powerful continent in the world, yet is the poorest? Yes, yes and yes. If one of the your answers is no, then you still indirectly agree with me that what has happened to Haiti from the natural disaster is a disaster – but a fortunate one, because if it wasn’t for this fatal crisis that has covered the media for almost the entire week then a large number of humans on this earth – including myself, to be honest – would still not know about the existence of a state named ‘Haiti.’ With this fortunate disaster or maybe a gift – but a jinxed one, Haiti is receiving a lot of support from the entire universe including donations – evidence that many countries have acknowledged its existence since then. A disaster like this earthquake will be able to alter the devastating statistics; hopefully...statistics that not even the most powerful continent was able to improve since 1804.

“And it may be that you dislike a thing which is good for you and that you like a thing that is bad for you...” (Al-Baqarah 216).



English Majors: What Are We Good For Anyway?

By Farah Al-Shamali

Ah, those English majors. For years, man has tracked this rare species into its uncharted habitats in hopes of indentifying its lifestyle and getting at the root of its psyche. English majors have treaded upon the face of the Earth for quite some time now and have become as elusive as aliens and undiscovered life in the deep, blue abyss. One is unidentifiable if they appear to be hauling a stack of books, papers, and anything with words on it from one place to another; often times, the books can be mistaken for pillows or armrests. Finally, they overanalyze everything and seem to use a cryptic language that very few can comprehend.

I, in fact, am a member of these mysterious beings and the age-old question that I have encountered numerous during collegial life is *why* I am an English major. My colleagues who are majoring in other professions and fields would ask me what my degree is good for and if I’ll end up becoming a teacher/professor. I can never really find myself relating to them and their views because their minds about a major in English are already made up that there’s nothing humanly possible for me to do to reverse the process and make them see otherwise. I receive nothing but direct denunciation and belittlement of what I do and the sentence would have already been carried out before I have a chance to take the stand and defend myself. So I guess I wrote this piece to set the record straight and to be heard for once.

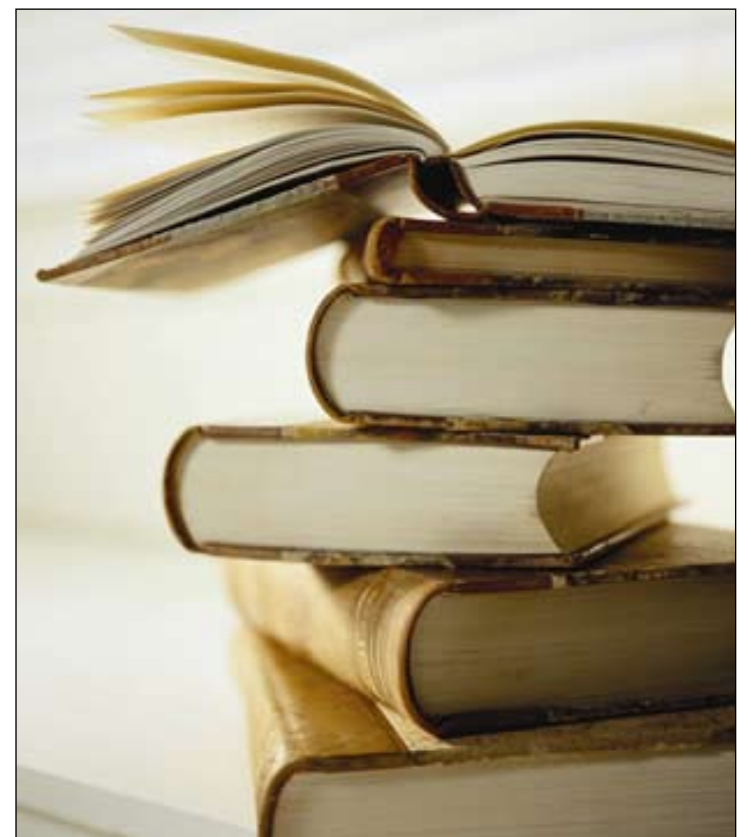
I suppose English majors have come to be viewed with such vagueness as described above and no one has really made a true effort to understand what we do and why we do it. First off, English majors are human beings (no kidding!) and we do perform other actions apart from reading and writing. Secondly, it is extremely important to factor in the atmosphere from which this rejection is emerging: Kuwait. That should ring a bell but if it didn’t: Kuwait is a pretty much business-oriented nation and a good percentage of our youth is being swept away by that current while we English majors fight it off and swim the other way. That alone should garner us some appreciation because we step outside of the intended norm by pursuing a career that is not very much supported in Kuwait. Lastly, despite popular belief, English majors can add a great deal to society and can exist alongside other professions and be considered just as legitimate.

In attempting to deconstruct the stereotypes people infer about English majors, I will be looking into and thoroughly explaining what we are, as degrading as that may sound. So what is an English major? For starters, we don’t just concern

ourselves with proper grammar and punctuation. I like to think of an English major as a global thinker and an individual that understands the figurative and literal building blocks of older and recent societies and is then able to chart a course for future ones. You see, we don’t just read literary works by authors and analyze them to death. It’s *more* than that. I wish I would be able to take you all into one of our classes so you can see the dynamism erupt and know what is at the very core: a venue that shapes, challenges, excites, propels, and engages students. One of the basic requirements of excelling at any educational institution, be it school, college and higher education, reading will definitely get you far. Because we do it constantly, it is second nature to us and professors would not have to breathe down our necks to get us to do it. We may be all-out “nerds” in your books but that’s just called being a diligent student. Plain and simple. When we’re

people were like back then. So it would not be out of the ordinary to find that an English major is well versed in a variety of different subjects. We are at a junction where different aspects of society surface. Is that not the very meaning of the acquisition of a liberal arts education? I know other professions meet that end as well but having a major in English is all the more comprehensive and *liberating*. Because of the different literary texts I’ve looked at and the time periods I’ve come to study, I find myself to worldly and cosmopolitan in outlook.

When I first came to AUK, declared my major in English Language and Literature and was given a list of possible career choices, I myself was surprised, let alone anyone who has no genuine interest in it. It was long and listed so many options that I never knew had anything to do with English. I then began to research about it over the net and found so many web pages that did the same. So



in grade school, we are formally introduced to reading on a regular basis and that underlies much of what we English majors do in our career pursuit. Later on in life, that fundamental practice becomes essential. I don’t need to rave anymore about how reading is an indispensable tool. We’ve all heard it at some point.

Rationally speaking, the study of English does embody having to look at several texts and that may be seen as tedious. But it is those texts that become a pool of knowledge and a source of emancipation. Looking at it from very simplistic terms for the sake of giving readers a hearty explanation, writing a piece of prose or poetry is not simply just pouring your deepest emotions onto paper. They are set against a social, cultural, political, and, sometimes, economic backdrop that exports the society of the text’s origin into future generations. In other words, it’s a mean by which we can know what

I wouldn’t just be doing something I loved but I’d have so many windows of opportunity opened for me! I get used to people coming up to me with the same, old-fashioned conjecture about what English majors would end up doing but I would now be shielded with an answer.

So looking at it from a general scope, we might not be technical and have to ever incorporate the texts we learn and study into our daily life dealings because we, in fact, do much more than that. We are full-fledged critical thinkers and go off into the world and are ready to meet its challenges. Of course, it would be an added bonus if we could discuss our fields of study every once in a while. My goal in writing this article is to banish any misperceptions anyone might have about our “species” and I hope to have done that. After a longwinded explanation, I can proudly say that I’m an English major and, ironically enough, I *did* the math.

Brahms Piano Quartets 1 & 3

By Sara Soliman

Famed virtuoso pianist, Martha Argerich, was noted to say, “Anyone who heard the Fauré Quartet perform will want to hear it again.” Argerich had perfect cause to say so, as the Faure Quartet plays with such magnificent virtuosity and incredible sensitivity. Like the counterpoint in a Bach fugue, each musician plays individually and with independent strength and talent, but together create a sound so enriched with color that has established them as such a celebrated chamber group. Sascha Froembling’s viola, somber and elegant, at times almost echoes Erika Geldsetzer’s impassioned, virtuosic violin, but each managed to rise in swelling streams of independent splendor. Konstantin Heidrich, on cello, constantly gives the Quartet weight, nonetheless playing recognizable melodies that are heard over the first strings through double stops or glissandos. Dirk



himself. His careful, free flourishes highlight the elegant tangle of melodies, adding a delicate finesse to the vibrancy of the strings.

Each musician plays with remarkable talent, their voices

ringing through their instruments. The two piano quartets demonstrate the Quartet’s versatility and talent; the impassioned Piano Quartet No. 1, especially its famed final movement, the Gypsy Rondo, presents Geldsetzer’s great precision and beauty of tone against Mommertz’s sensitivity and Horowitz-like delicacy. The Piano Quartet No. 3 is quite different in tone; there is little of the chaotic beauty and passion of the first piano quartet. It is more Romantic; the timbre is more elegant and delicate. The Faure Quartet, though, manages to play it remarkably well, demonstrating what is surprisingly different to the first piece. The Faure Quartet’s new album is a magnificent display of its great talent, one that you will surely want to hear again and again.

Dirk Mommertz, Piano, Erika Geldsetzer, Violin, Sascha Froembling, Viola, Konstantin Heidrich, Cello

Rez Abbasi: Things to Come

By Nur Soliman

This is definitely something to listen to if you have more eclectic tastes, especially in Jazz. There are differences in opinion as to where one draws the line with Jazz as a musical definition. Although it is not always completely successful in doing so, Things to Come by Pakistani-American jazz guitarist Rez Abbasi definitely takes 21st century Jazz in a new and interesting direction.

The first piece on the album, entitled Dream State, is more like cool, easy Jazz, with the beat slightly more bossa nova, especially with Weiss on the drums. Rudresh on the alto sax has a really rich sound, but if you do not like smooth jazz (sometimes called adult contemporary), this might irritate you slightly. That said, Abbasi’s guitar makes all the difference. Air Traffic is extremely interesting as it is cooler, with Weiss stepping into the background the same way Philly Joe Jones would for Miles

Davis, and we are introduced to the ethereal, airy voice of Kiran Ahluwalia. For the first time, the Eastern maqams and musical traditions of India are worked in a way to make them perfectly compatible, even beautiful, with modern Western Jazz. Ahluwalia sings again in Things to Come, a rendition completely different to



say, Dizzy Gillespie or George Benson. There is none of the orchestral richness, the frenetic explosions between the brass, piano, and drums. Instead, Abbasi totally re-appropriates the piece

to more Eastern sensibilities. Abbasi is mostly on solo, playing his guitar very gently, sometimes like a sitar, sometimes like the acoustics of Windham Hill, accompanied by the silvery, breathy voice of Ahluwalia, which can sometimes assume very blue notes.

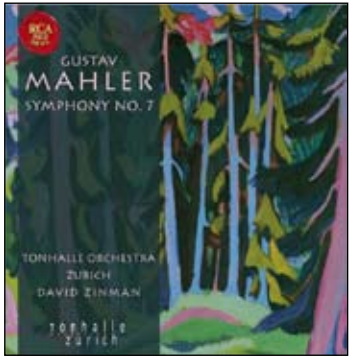
It is always interesting to hear different renditions of Jazz that have been re-appropriated through a different culture. It is always enriching and aesthetically interesting when they do it not for the sake of the very tired statement, to build bridges between East and West, but instead to genuinely explore the rich, hidden dynamics of two musical traditions and come up with something original. Abbasi’s Things to Come is definitely one of the better ones.

Rez Abbasi, guitar; Rudresh Mahanthappa, alto saxophone; Vijay Iyer, piano; Johannes Weidenmueller, bass; Dan Weiss, drums; Kiran Ahluwalia, Indian vocals Sunny Side Records August 25 2009 (Approx. 58:01).

Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra Plays Mahler's 7th

By Sara Soliman

Mahler’s Symphony No. 7 is an exhibit of many of the 19th Century’s musical clichés; the sonorous, fanfare-like passages, the passing moods, the glorious melodies on the strings and the flutter of the woodwinds. When listening, one hears echoes of Holst, Tchaikovsky, and Mendelssohn ringing through the bars. However, the depth of this symphony is quite profound. Mahler passed through the prime of his life in his career and in his life as he wrote this symphony, and fell to the bitter pains of rejection, illness and loss when he finished it. Triumphant, joyful passages are contrasted against pained discords. Before it was premiered, Mahler managed to alter the symphony and twinge it with melancholy,



to lift the deep complications stirring beneath the almost familiar passages and to sing out Mahler’s emotions, presenting the symphony as a showcase of the mood swings the great composer must have felt.

The symphony has been unofficially titled *The Song of the Night*, supposedly meant to represent the path of night to day. Zinman very sensitively guides the Zurich orchestra through the bars with a refreshing clarity, balancing the external form with the internal flow of feeling. Mahler wrote this symphony against the images of woods passing through the night; the movements pass through waltzes and marches, through dirge-like passages, pastoral nocturnes, a dense macabre, a serenade, and a rondo finale. Zinman’s interpretation is clear and coherent, and the orchestra precise and confident, presenting Mahler’s elegant and complex symphony with the precision of form and sensitivity of the undercurrent of emotion.

The Games Afoot - A Review

By Alia Mustafa Aref

We start the movie in the middle of a pursuit, it would seem. A pair of carriages race through London’s dark, wet streets, the horses gallop at a high speed as the carriages shudder and jerk from side to side. We are taken through the back window of one, where Dr. John Watson is seen riding calmly surrounded by Scotland Yard’s finest. Watson and the rest of the police officers are ready with arms in hand. Then, we see a dark figure running, as though away from the carriages, through dark alleyways as the carriages press on. The dark figure is seen running past burning lamps and we get a glimpse but are not quite sure if it is him or not. The scene switches from the dark figure to the carriages as the figure zigzags through columns, jumps off a ledge then rolls toward the screen. We are faced with our hero, Sherlock Holmes. He turns, pulls open a set of dark doors and hurries down a flight of even darker stairs. Holmes then eyes a brute on guard, with a lamp he pulls back with his back pressed to the wall. We are treated to Holmes’ unattained genius as he calculates the blows needed to render the brute unconscious. After knocking him out, he grabs the brute’s hat and lamp and hurries down the winding staircase, where a young girl is lying in a trance oblivious to her surroundings. Shivering, jerking her head from side to side as a sinister figure stands over her in a dark robe, mumbling. She is lying at the altar, waiting to be sacrificed. Just then, Holmes appears quietly evaluating his surroundings, as he is about done; another brute

sneaks up behind him. Just as Holmes turns and is about to



fight back, Watson appears and subdues the fiend. It is at this point where Holmes and Watson finally interact. Their relationship is comical and friendly and, at times, strained. The scene continues to an all-out fight between our heroes and the guards. Needless to say, Holmes stops the girl just in time before she is sacrificed. Lord Blackwood, the dark robed figure, is apprehended but this is only the beginning of our journey.

This movie is unlike any other Holmes movie you have seen or will see. What struck me was how the characters were portrayed. As any fan of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s ingenious sleuth, Sherlock Holmes may know that Sherlock was somewhat of an addict. This is implied but is not apparent. Holmes is usually tense and at other times erratic but that is the whole attraction to his character. His unpredictability and unbelievable genius are his trademarks. He does experiment with various drugs which is apparent in one scene when Watson examines various medi-

cine vials, turns to Holmes and asks “you do know what you’re drinking is meant for eye surgery?” Knowing full well what he has ingested, Holmes does not respond but goes on to explain his experiment! Holmes, who is played by Robert Downey Jr., is everything he should be. Bold, uncaring and arrogant at times but always a loyal friend. Downey’s attempt at an English accent was, in a word, believable; not many Americans can pull it off. Watson, who is played by Jude Law, is the sensible one, the voice of reason, and the long-suffering friend. Holmes takes advantage of his kindness and Watson knows this full well and allows it. Unlike the Watson in Sir Doyle’s books, Jude Law’s Watson is not Holmes’s lapdog. He does not froth at the mouth whenever Holmes makes a discovery. Not once during the movie does Watson exclaim “Good Heavens Holmes” or gasps an “I say, Holmes!” His expression is stony, unimpressed almost; Watson is his own man and for once, he is portrayed as the intelligent detective, doctor and the ex-army man that he is. Holmes and Watson are partners, equals; that is what makes this movie more believable. The familiarity and similarity between the pair is undeniable. They do act like children at times but that just adds to the fun as they slowly uncover Lord Blackwood’s sinister plan. The multifaceted Martin Strong plays the role of dark and downright creepy Lord Blackwood. Rachel McAdams plays the cunning and seductive Lady Irene Adler. Guy Ritchie, the man who brought us Snatch, directs the movie. Sherlock Holmes is a must-see movie; believe me, you do not want to miss it.

Boca Negra - Chicago Underground

By Nur Soliman

This album is one of those that get you thinking as to whether they are really Jazz or just something else, something in the realm of all notes electric and synthesized. What is interesting about Boca Negra is that it is a little hard to decide. Because of how artificial and out of real-time many of the tracks are. There is a sense of false stasis and manipulation that comes with electronics and synthesized performances. That said, there is a definite sense of live, vivid experimentation that possibly runs deep down to the beginnings of Jazz performance, digging down into the possible beginnings of improvised tunes, of call-and-response, of interesting dynamics between the chords and the melody, and even the beginnings of percussion and brass.

Green Ants is definitely such a piece, where it begins with simple experimentations of sound, beginning with intense percussion, skin drums that beat fiercely, sometimes like a marching procession, sometimes like a ceremony, rumbling underneath a reedy, breathless pipe that seems to echo early sounds. Then, at

some point, Mazurek’s cornet rushes in, tripping along like the beginning notes of Dizzy Gillespie and the percussion magically transforms into regular Jazz rhythm. Hermeto is one that drifts away slightly from Jazz and wanders



closely to synthesized music, where there is a repeated synthesized phrase, echoed by the vibraphone, which subdues the faint cries of the cornet. Even more so distant and strange are Quantum Eye and Confliction.

Laughing with the Sun, Spy on the Floor, and Roots and Shooting Stars are more confident steps in the direction of something clearly bluesy or Jazzy, especially with the catchy rhythm bass-line of Spy on the Floor that actually sets the stage for a bright cornet line. On the other hand, Laugh-

ing with the Sun is a richer, more orchestrated composition that sounds warm with the beautiful cornet melody, but also adding cooler acoustic sounds and a beat that is actually good to hear.

Mazurek and Taylor have composed all 10 pieces except Broken Shadows, which is by Ornette Coleman, although it is somewhat of a far cry from what one would expect, the rhythm section completely taking over with wild phrases on the drums and cymbals, while the thin, echoing, disappearing strains of the cornet, are positively uncanny.

Because it leaves you on a cliffhanger as to what you have been listening to, the overwhelming feeling is dissatisfaction and uncertainty, despite occasional excellent Jazz tracks. That said, as an album of 21st century Jazz, it makes a worthy, if not hugely significant, contribution to the discussion on where Jazz is going.

Rob Mazurek, cornet, electronics, Chad Taylor, drums, vibraphone, thumb piano, piano, electronics. Matthew Lux, producer; Fernando Sanches, engineer. Thrill Jockey Records. January 26 2010 (Approx. 54:00).

Ahmadi Music Group and Kuwait Jazz Collective Present Gideon

By Nur Soliman

Local audiences were treated to the world premier of *Gideon* as a Jazz Oratorio, opening for three nights, starting on January 25th, performed jointly by the Ahmadi Music Group and the Kuwait Jazz Collective. The oratorio was performed in Tarek Al-Ali Theater, AIS, in Maidan Hawalli. The libretto, originally by Angela Morrison, was brought to life by Harriet Petherick Bushman and Raphael Bushman, under the musical direction and conducting of Richard Bushman, who has seen the performances of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Pirates of Penzance* in 2008 and *Mikado* in 2009. The musicians and singers performed to full audiences on all three nights, and received quite a positive response; dressed in brilliant theatric attire meant to evoke Biblical times, with long white dresses and shawls for the women, long dark robes and scarves or brightly coloured, striped tunics for the men. The effect was quite atmospheric, combined with the swell of dozens of voices as they sang alongside the Jazz Collective.

The story presents Gideon, a young, shy, weak man, son of Joash, living with his people, the tribe of Manasseh, under the tyrannical rule of the Midianites, who enslaved them as a form of punishment. Later, an angel addresses Gideon as a man of miracles, a mighty man of valor,



transforming him into the warrior-prophet who would lead his people to liberty and victory by a series of miracles, triumphing over the vast Midianite army with an army of 300. From conversations and blog responses, it seems people were concerned (perhaps unnecessarily) by the overtly religious nature of the tale. *Gideon*, after all, recounts a tale from the Book of Judges in the Old Testament; however, the arrangers for the performance had reworked the story and presented the libretto as much less religiously-charged, making it a general fable of bravery, faith, and miracles for a wider audience to relate to.

The unique thing about the whole performance was the fact that the Bushmans had decided to transform the story into an oratorio, and a Jazz one at that. The

most famous oratorios in Western classical music history are those of Handel, who wrote nearly 30 oratorios, the most famous one being *Messiah* (Handel also composed *Gideon* as an oratorio). The nature of an oratorio was initially a performance in the intervals of an opera, usually of a religious theme or story. Later, the oratorio developed into an independent genre, where the choir would sit or stand together and sing out their parts, not really acting them, and singing in time with an orchestra. Owing to traditions, the Kuwait audience also received copies of the oratorio text, so that they would read along and interpret the sung words for themselves.

The Jazz made the whole performance unique, giving it added contemporary energy and life. In an earlier interview with *The*



Arab Times, Harriet Bushman also thought Jazz would be more appropriate given the vivid energy of the oratorio, although she was not intimately acquainted with Jazz. The Bushmans employed various Jazzy genres, from what was considered be-bop to doowop to the blues, and other frankly remote genres such as hip-hop and gospel, covering both the Jazz Collective and the choir.

While that was what originally appealed to some of the audience, it was also, what rather put the performance down. It seemed that although the Jazz Collective members themselves had excellent Jazz sensibilities, the arrangement for much of the interval music was, to be frank, quite discordant. Chords are used quite heavily in Jazz piano, agreed, and some of them quite creative;

but the piano (played by Harriet Bushman) would open the recurrent oratorio motif with a most cacophonous, irritating attack on the keys, which would unfortunately be echoed by the rest of the ensemble. Otherwise, her playing was excellent, bordering on more classical George Winston tones, sometimes like Michael Nyman, but otherwise, the opening phrases were not at all pleasant, and did not accurately reflect some of the major themes of the oratorio.

Some of what was supposed to be Jazz was tragically kitschy, almost caricatures of Jazz – when it came to the vocals, especially. When it came to scenes in Act II that were in gospel revival style, that worked quite well with the leading voice of soprano Tonya Ray, who belted out powerful melodies in a rich, soul voice.

However, when it came to what Richard Bushman called 1940s doowop style vocals; the result could only have been the worst nightmare of the Andrew Sisters, to be frank.

That said, the choir presented some brilliant, talented singers, from soprano Tonya Ray, soprano Anna Karadimitrova, playing as First Angel, who sang in a powerfully rich, sparkling voice, and the US Ambassador Ms. Deborah K Jones, who had a remarkable, moving alto voice, singing in rich, smooth bluesy tones as Second Angel. Chad Von Heel, playing *Gideon* himself and dressed in a sand-colored tunic lined in sparkling turquoise bands, had a strong, expressive tenor-baritone voice that did not compromise excellent singing for careful pronunciation, reminiscent of the voice of Eric the Phantom in *The Phantom of the Opera*. Young Jacob Pohl-sander, who played as the *Mikado* in 2009, performed as one of the Midianites, singing in a very deep bass, while Don Graybiel really stole the spotlight as the Narrator who sung with incredible talent, his rich, eloquent baritone voice resounding to the back of the hall, singing with the sensitivity and poetic weight of Paul Robeson. If any vocal arrangements were tailored so perfectly, and blended the Biblical with the bluesy, his

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V For Vendetta

By Farah Al-Shamali

The golden rule is that a movie review is written and published for public consumption and subsequent debate a few days after the movie has been released. Or so I think it is. The movie I am about to review does not abide by it by any means but I still feel compelled to bring it back to the forefront. I was actually made aware of this movie via my English 405 class I was enrolled in this past Fall semester with Dr. Rawda Awwad. It directly complemented the title and description of the course so it was highly relevant for the class to watch it. I initially thought it would be just another movie that had stereotypical allegations of any sort at its core and the many ways that manifested in real life. But it truly turned out to be more than that. I will suffice in explaining how by leaving you with the review below.

Based on a comic-book series, *V for Vendetta* begins with a look into the past as a prisoner is being hung and a narrative voice makes reference to the importance of ideas, the fact that they can never be killed. It then shifts to the same city, London, undeniably an important cosmopolitan center and a highly commercialized city, and is set in the future: 2027. For whatever reasons, Britain now houses a totalitarian government that branches out into all aspects of society and makes it its main priority to control the public through orchestrated mechanisms that stimulate terror. Much



like any hard-line government, it propagates heavy surveillance and widespread censorship. The story begins with a woman, Evey Hammond, who works at the British Television Network (BTN). When she breaks her curfew, she is confronted by the secret police but is romantically rescued by a mysterious, masked vigilante who came to be known as 'V.' He eventually blows up Old Bailey, or the Central Criminal Court. He then makes a televised message to incite the people of Britain to rise up against the government on the fifth of November, a date which marks 'Guy Fawkes Night' – the failure of Catholic conspirators to blow up the House of Parliament in 1605. When she is discovered to be with him during the assault, she immediately becomes an outlaw and is left with no choice than to seek refuge in V's magnificent t lair when he takes her there against her will.

Our caped crusader then embarks on a journey to commit high profile assassinations of individuals who are considerably vital to the fascist regime. Evey is captured and tortured in attempts by the government to know of V's whereabouts but she refuses to submit to pressure. Evey then learns that her imprisonment was actually staged by V to rid her of her fear of the government. He tells her, "Only when you have no fear are you free." As the story progresses, many truths are unraveled, including how the Chancellor Norsefire came to power, and the government cracks down on dissent in unspeakable ways. Tension begins to escalate between the government and people and it would only take one more catastrophe to have the people fight back. On the fourth of November, Evey visits V who shows her a train that he had filled with explosives that will destroy the House of Parliament. The Chancellor is brought to V and is killed; V is greatly wounded, goes back to see Evey and dies in her arms. She places his body in the train amongst the explosives and commences with the plan (this takes place on the fifth of November). As onlookers of the explosion pull away their Guy Fawkes masks (which are exact replicas of V's and were shipped to London at some point), viewers are taken aback to find that people who had died during the

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Pixar's Latest: Up

By Nada Bedir

Adventure, love, excitement and friendship are features that describe the Pixar-animated cartoon *Up*. Directed by Pete Docter and Bob Peterson, *Up* takes you to the world of Carl Fredericksen, a young boy who dreams of becoming an adventurer like his idol explorer, Charles Muntz. Carl then meets the love of his life, Ellie, who shares with him his dreams of exploring South America at some point of their lives together as a husband and wife.

The first 20 minutes of the film takes you in a fast yet interesting overview of Carl's and Ellie's lives together since they met, got married, got older together, and finally the death of Ellie after a serious illness due to her old age. It also shows you the beauty of the life of two couples living a dream together and trying their best to bring this dream into reality.

Unfortunately, life is not as perfect as we always think. After Ellie passes away, Carl now has to re-live again, through what once has been their dream by himself. Carl now faces a new obstacle that is capable of destroying all his ambitions. His house is now right in the path of a new construction plan. Carl



is unable to stand legally in front of those who want to level his house. So, he decides to tie his house with thousands of helium-filled balloons to his roof and float away to his dream destination: Paradise Falls in South Africa.

Now, after overcoming the challenge of the house destruction, Carl encounters Russell, a helpful Wilderness Explorer scout who is trying to offer any kind of help to him. At the beginning, Carl does not seem to like Russell, but will later discover that this boy will add a real meaning and leave a mark in his life.

The rest of the adventure is captured in South America with both Carl and Russell. New characters will also enter this delightful story such as the loyal

friendly dogs named Dug and Kevin and a huge bird who will all add some problems to Carl's adventure while he is making his way through South America to reach Paradise Falls, his target landing spot for his house.

This journey allowed the audience to see the world from two different perspectives. The first is through the eyes of an old man whose only concern in the world is to accomplish his childhood dream of moving to Paradise Falls. On the other hand, the audience also recognized the same events through young Russell who was trying to help Carl and take care of his new friend, Kevin.

This animated movie was able to capture the attention of people of all ages. Pixar proved once again that they are capable of coming up with new ideas and new characters that will have a long-lasting impact on their audience. The audiences were able to connect to the characters and live this exciting journey with them. An ambitious, old man, a polite little boy who loves to help others, and a funny furry dog that speaks English; all of these are characters that added a lively taste to the film. In brief, *Up* was able to attain the admiration of Disney-Pixar fans!

Celebrating Salinger, from pg. 1

when the text was clearly understood and I felt like the book defined how humans function when they're alone or with others or when thinking about living in a community. It is about a boy in the world. This sort of immense power is rarely found in other books and it is a shame to lose such a talented author that simply uses a unique, specific style of writing to convey deep messages as well as clearly giving each reader someone to relate to.

Nur Soliman – Salinger: The 20th century American Cyrano de Bergerac as Embodied in Holden

Other tributes to authors start by telling us how the writer first met the author, on a lake in Lebanon, a fancy ball in Cairo, in some salon in Paris, or the German countryside. I cannot, given I live very far away from NH, and even if I did not, Salinger probably would not be in the mood to meet me, or anyone else. However, reading *Catcher* is enough for one to mark his passing.

When I was younger, I only read Salinger's name in other novels, shrouded in tension, something I imagined I might never get a chance to read. *Catcher in the Rye* meant a book stuffed into pockets of American students during the 60s and 70s, or a book often on the list of banned books along with *Huckleberry Finn*. Years later, after reading it in a single evening-and-night, I was captivated and enthralled, while feeling I should not be. However, I am, and the words have long resonated.

People who dislike *Catcher* (or who haven't read it) will tell about Mark Chapman's murder of John Lennon, or Hinckley Jr's attempt at assassinating Ronald Reagan. Others still have criticized the

book's profanity, self-indulgent complaining tone, and then extreme views of morality and sexuality. Salinger, for them, is the author of a misguided, obscene adolescent novel, but they have missed the point; they haven't read *Catcher* for what it is: a story about teenage student, Holden Caulfield, in his rites of passage, and feeling the last vivid, confusing experiences of being the catcher in the rye, keeping within the fields of innocence, kindness, curiosity, and simplicity, not realizing he is slowly growing up.

Salinger had remarkable talent for writing with a real voice, and for me, he has been more brilliantly, brutally honest than other authors who do not quite deserve such a title. That is how we will remember him through history, along with the countless readers who have loved *Catcher* and loved Holden, and feel that a real hero has taken his last breath. He wrote intensely and truly, about the integrity and disintegration of spirit, not just in the urban jungle of New York City, but everywhere else too, so deeply that in my mind, the novel will forever occupy the back-pockets and coat-pockets of the young and true at heart, for years to come.

Sara Soliman: Honesty and Solitude

There is always a certain distance that one feels towards authors of great works of literature. More than distances of time, authors always seem to be on higher levels not only of intellect or thought, but also of status and understanding. However, with J. D. Salinger, such was not the case. There was, of course, the distance that is always present between the author and the reader, but Salinger's voice was far too close for the reader to believe in that distance.

Catcher in the Rye affected me the same way it did every teenager, I suppose. Holden's words echoed my un-articulated thoughts. He sort of reached out and touched us all on the arm and made us realize we were running and weren't looking where we were going, and caught us. Holden Caulfield, alone in the grand city of New York, became the image of every kid suddenly alone in the world.

Phoniness became my word too; everything I had been frowning on, turning my head from, cringing from, fell into Holden's new word. What perhaps made me love the book so much and find comfort in its understanding was its honesty. Salinger wrote with such a convincing voice. It sounded like the transcription of a murmured conversation with an actual boy, and it was this honesty, this truth in the words of the book, despite their symbolic and metaphorical significance, that made me, and many others, relate to it so keenly.

Salinger turned his back upon the world when, in 1953, he moved to a house in Cornish, New Hampshire, away from reporters and publishers. Like Holden, he took a step back and separated himself from the world. When I learnt of his reclusion, the honesty in the novel became more pronounced. There was certainly no phoniness in the book. Salinger was for real.

It feels odd, when big, distant figures like him pass away. All of a sudden, they are not quite so distant, and even more so all the same. However, he passed away with the same grace and silence that he wrote his books with, and so there is an elegant crescendo to his absence, but what is comforting is that, like musicians who leave, we can still hear his voice in the silence.



Vendetta, from pg. 7

course of the movie are among them.

Reading the entire synopsis of the movie may be quite overwhelming but digesting my take on it would be futile without it. I did not focus so much on particulars, place names, secondary figures, and plot fillers. I only made it my obligation to give a general overview and use it to make coherent deductions about the movie. First off, I love a good political thriller. They have always gripped my fascination because their messages are so subtle yet evocative. In other words, we know what the movie is trying to say but it goes about saying it in the most bizarre way, maybe even more so in the case of this movie. The plot really kicks off and centers around one thing: the power of ideas. Their importance is magnified historically by making a point to viewers that even after so many decades, centuries, what have you, an idea can never be exterminated. The obvious reason for this is because it is intangible; it may be censored by authorities in more ways than one, but it never dies. They live on through oral traditions and written manuscripts. At a later time when ideological restrictions are lessened or completely lifted, they may be revisited. That really spoke volumes to me. Being a politics junkie, I recognized and understood that point clearly.

Then, I began to make note of the dictatorship with which the government conducted itself and the many systematic acts of aggression it committed on its people to strike fear into their hearts and have them pledge undying loyalty to it. I thought to myself: present-day regimes much? Of the many home truths in this movie I

related to, this one took the gold. It made perfect sense: governments who force themselves upon their people do not feel the need to legitimize their right to power. Because of that, they are always on the edge of their seats and worry that some sort of uprising might lead to their downfall. Solution? Surveillance and lots of it. They leave no stone unturned and self-proclaim themselves as having the full right to invade anyone's privacy. It reminded me of what I either read or saw once (can't remember really) about how a good percentage of Americans feel violated by having to be checked at airports to see if they had any sharp weapons, poisonous fluids, etc. underneath their clothes as a result of heightened security measures after the 9/11 incident.

At some point during the movie, the Chancellor was making his usual rant of a speech to his officials and he said something that caught my ear and it is a phrase that I had heard on TV once but I never associated it with anything political and had no idea it was saturated with meaning: "I want everyone to remember why they need us!" Hearing him say that generated an inward response from me that surfaced into a facial expression of pure disgust. I was in awe and surprised at myself for not figuring it out sooner. Of course! The government senses bubbling opposition, creates controversy and contrives a scheme to silence it, people are distraught and in need of help, and the government is then there to save the day. It's foolproof!

As if the movie wasn't complicated enough, I was even more dumbfounded to find that V embodies everyone – that's

right! V is everyone and everyone is V. Anyone who has a voice and projects it over the occasional howls of a ruthless government is V. That did it for me; I instantly became a fan of the storyline and the many things it taught me. Everything I came to realize when the credits began to roll had always been swimming in my subconscious somewhere but were never really aroused. It made me stop and think about the state the world is in today and why peace can never really be attained. As ironic as it may sound, dictatorships (or anyone in the pursuit of power for that matter to be entirely simplistic) create war and fund several projects that infiltrate utter confusion into their respective societies to attain peace, or a fabrication of it rather. I highly commend the crew that worked on the movie for delivering it with such high-quality and for not making it too star-studded and Hollywood-like to have viewers focus their attention on what's really important: opening their eyes to what some heads of state and the administrations under them do in the name of peace. But where is this peace they talk of? It's unattainable because governments and their people have conflicting views of it. For anyone who has not seen this movie, I urge you to do so. You won't regret it – it gets you thinking; amidst the political assassinations, explosions, and the enormity of human suffering as a result of it, it will leave you with a strong conviction about our world and what we can change within ourselves as individuals to promote gradual, positive change.

Gideon, from pg. 7

was surely it. Save for the few solos, most of the choral passages were sung well but without much character, so that the significance of the words, or the weight of particular changes of narrative were lost on the audience, especially as the choir sounded rather flat and thin in comparison to the robust sound of the nearby ensemble.

The Jazz Collective, founded by young Raffy Bushman as one of the newest Jazz Ensembles in Kuwait, played incredibly that night. Phil Smith and Raffy Bushman played the guitar and bass respectively, underlining the whole musical performance with excellent chords, while Sobiryon Mukhammadiyev was remarkable on the drums, now playing like a modern or contemporary Jazz Percussionist, now playing to accommodate swing or hip-hop rhythms. Although one would not expect it, the flutes played a vital role in setting the mood for much of the acts. Dagmara Bienias and Adam Benobaid would play beautiful, silvery phrases in poetic response to every other line sung by members of the Joash family, who in Act II, defend their son Gideon by defending his act to

destroy the heathen idols that his people had been worshipping. The voices of Jumal Caravajal and Marja Butterworth as Mr. and Mrs. Joash were sincere and sentimental, echoed perfectly by the flute, and the crowning achievement of the evening was the work of the brass section, who really set the mood to a decent jazzy tone, performing excellently and really stirring the audience to respond enthusiastically after every scene. Preslav Petkov, known to most of us as a clarinetist, played on the saxophone with great skill, sounding very much like a Charlie Parker in many of his phrases. Ravshanbayov Aliyev played the horn whose warm sound emerged at the more dramatic scenes, while trumpets Edward Temershin, Ra'afat el-Gamal, and Elaine Ledgard (Rev. Andy Thompson not playing on the final night) kept the tone up with brash, warm, blaring golden notes, with the extraordinary Temershin playing some beautiful solo phrases. Sometimes rich and frenetic like a hot jazz trumpet, sometimes mellow and muted, a genuine evocation of Miles Davis.

With so much immense, great potential in the Jazz Collective and the many vivid, passionate voices of the Ahmadi Music Group, there is room for improvement. One hopes that the ensembles and their directors are not pushed into complacency and comfort after the very positive response they get from their audiences. With the combination of excellent ensembles and choirs, with their talent for experimenting with forms and choosing excellent, classic material, we cannot be happy with letting the Bushmans, the Music Group, and the Collective be content and finally satisfied with their achievements. In improving the substance of their arrangements, in constructing more cohesive, eloquent, meaningful librettos, and refining every element of the performance, from the arrangements to the musical genres, there is space – and potential – for them to push on to greater heights of brilliance.

The upcoming performance of the Ahmadi Music Group is due in May 2010, where they plan to present Gilbert & Sullivan's *The Gondoliers*. For more information, you can email info@ahmadimusicgroup.com or phone 99151099.

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The Writing Center @ AUK (Sciences Building Room A207) is open for business from 9am-5pm until March 1 after which our hours of operation will be 9am-7pm.

On the Relationship between Reading & Writing

By Nur Soliman

I would say that even if we put aside English 101 and any book review or literary analysis assignments we are given, reading and writing still intertwine closely. Because one of them appears to be more active than the other, we might see them as quite different, meaning some of us might assume that one can read and not write, or write and not read. Nevertheless, they do go hand in hand, as intimately as do writing and researching, for instance.

When we write for an academic or journalistic purpose, we usually refer to texts we have read that articulate ideas far better than we can, provide reliable facts or statistics that back up our argument, put in a statement that you plan to discuss, or lend a voice of authority to what we are trying to say. Sometimes, you do not have to quote or paraphrase that reflects what you have read about a subject, but instead, weeks or months or years of reading about a subject or by a certain author will filter down into your “voice,” so that those voices echo in your words. Eventually, you will start to sound less like others and more like yourself, whatever that might include, but that same personal voice will still retain the brilliance of older voices that once had an influence on you. A professor once told someone I know, who studied English Literature in the 80s, that she “sounded so much like F Scott Fitzgerald” in her term pa-

pers – reading her writing now, it is not so evident, but the impression lingers.

All this said, there is, as with all kinds of relationships, a balance and a thoughtful dynamic to be made between reading and writing, in a way that we as beginner writers, learn where we stand in the worlds of reading and writing – and learning. Julia A. Moore, unhappily called the worst poet in American history, is said to have “never read the great poets,” or something like that. This may have had something to do with the quality of her verse, but perhaps reading is not the sole requisite to being a good writer, as the words attributed to Turkish ney musician Kudsi Erguner attest: “Virtuosity alone cannot replace an execution that is simpler but rich in knowledge and full of imagination.” He was talking about music, but it is about articulation, nevertheless. Much has been written on virtuosity and imagination. I know little about it myself, though perhaps once one has read the narrative of other voices; it is easier to find the uniqueness of their own voice.

To find a healthy middle space, an analytical and inquisitive reading into a text can inform your writing and give it substance and depth. It means you read ideas in the text that may develop in wonderful, untold directions, which makes your writing (essays, most of the time), deeper and more inquiring as you begin to make connections between various texts. Using one’s lifelong reading experi-

ence can also mean that one finds a voice; a resounding, vivid, living voice. With this, one can be part of the greater conversation that hundreds of authors across hundreds of miles have entered in for centuries. Even if most of what we write at AUK stays in a Starbucks-coffee-stained manila folder in a professor’s office long after the semester is over (or, if it was creative work, stashed in the bottom of our bag where no one can find it), it was still part of the process towards achieving true excellence in articulation, and was written in response to texts (written or otherwise) that we have read.

By Amal Behbehani

The correlation between reading and writing is very strong. To be able to write well, one must read a lot. Good writing consists of good vocabulary and an understanding of the plot formation. This needs a lot of exercise to achieve it, and the more you exercise, the better your writing becomes. The best form of exercise for writing is reading. Reading books, magazines, newspaper, and so on improves a person’s vocabulary and at the same time educates the person with information. So the more you read, the more you will be able to improve your writing. Same goes for the opposite case; the less you read, the less you will be able to improve your writing.

The Secret Realm of Writing

By Fatima Ibraheem

Before we began this new semester, we ran into days where we would just wish to take that deep comforting sigh after a hectic week of finals. Finals, not just exams, but also papers and projects might become a reason for us to practice studying and writing only for the sake of a pass, not for the sake of enjoying the topic and learning. We might even end up hating the subject matter. Let us be honest. One of the major factors that might foster this feeling of hatred in students is writing...the writing of endless essays and professional-like papers. Writing, while it has been superficially correlated with academia only, became the enemy of some students, since it can be one of the reasons students flunk their courses. Academic writing, however, is not solely what all writing is about. It, however, has many realms, or perspectives, only one of these angles is academic writing. If we take the time to delve into these various different secret realms, we will appreciate writing more; thus, suppressing the negative senses we, as students, have towards writing and its zone. It seems that we really need to work on the love-hate relationship we have with it, or else one of us must win and the

other loses; either the students or writing.

One might start in their private life book “Dear Diary...” or begin listing the rhyming words to fabricate poetic verses, or even draw up a beautiful portrait by writing a descriptive metaphorical piece. All of these are forms of writing escapades. One might subconsciously escape from the tiring reality by simply grabbing the pen and jotting thoughts onto paper, decorating each thought with the writer’s personal voice, and then end up producing something that is unique to the public and special to the individual. All of this is produced by the feature we underestimate and, unfortunately, do not appreciate since we only limit writing to the circle of college and nothing beyond. While writing with our own pen and paper, not English 101’s pen and paper, we will be able to recreate our own matchless mirror by smartly utilising the different facades of writing.

Technical writing only for the purpose of college has restricted us from feeling the genuineness of pen and paper. With Microsoft Word and a solid keyboard, we type, type and type. We might not feel that, but writing in itself with a block of words will not have its magic touch until the writer himself/herself devotes the sufficient charm while writ-

ing. Some of this charm comes from manually writing rather than typing using technology. The vertical screen and horizontal keyboard are more likely to cause writer’s desensitisation as opposed to literally holding a blue pen and A4 paper. It has been described once that a “plastic flower has a different smell from a real flower.” Also, realise, the handwritten material written in a dreadful mood looks different from a piece written after you have heard the best news ever in your entire life. That handwritten paragraph of yours is much more telling than a font 12 Arial-typed paragraph, definitely. Writing is writing, not typing; they are different verbs. But again, what do we do in this time, the technological age? It is out of our hands, we shall just shrug.

All in all, it has been realised that neither side wins nor loses; students versus writing. I was wrong in the beginning. It has been apparent that it is not an equation of one beating the other, and one hating the other. Writing has always been in harmony with students; they are simply incongruent twins. They are pals on the same line, not opposing armies against each other. It only, however, depends on the proprietor of writing and the property of writing, wherein lie the secret realms.

The Dean's Corner

By Carol Ross

It's spring time in the Dean's Corner! Welcome new members of the Wolf Pack family. There is a lot of pride in the Wolf Pack. Our Pack excels academically, in leadership and athletically to name a few areas. Make the most of your time; take your academics seriously; don't stand on the side road and watch college pass you by. This is your collegiate experience. You are an undergraduate only once, we hope! So get involved in this journey of a lifetime!

With Spring comes sunny days, big smiles and spring fashions. Speaking of fashion...Please remember that we have a dress code. If it is too short or over exposed or remotely profane, don't wear it. If you stuffed it in your purse or didn't wear it out the house because you intend to change into it when you get to campus, chances are you should not have it on! If you are approached, by a university official about your spring fashion, there is a question about its appropriateness. We have a right to question and if deemed necessary, we will. Don't become irate, listen and act accordingly.

Before the end of the Fall semester, I held a forum to identify issues that students felt impacted their lives and success at AUK. If we were in an elevator, it would have been standing room only! Instead we were in the multi-purpose room and thank goodness, size didn't matter much; it was the quality of the conversation that was most important. I am going to go through some of the issues presented and provide feedback. In the Spring, in addition to the Tell It to the Dean of Student Affairs time where I sit and hand you candy while you unburden your thoughts, we will have another student forum and make sure that other members of the Wolf Pack are present. Remember that things I think are important may not be as important to you as a college student. When there is an opportunity to come and share what's on your mind, JUST DO IT!

Students are so bold...

AUK is boring; doesn't have campus life. I am firm believer that college should be one of the most positively unforgettable experiences of your life. The Division of Student Affairs is committed to bringing "fun" back to AUK. Be on the look out for opportunities to put a little excitement in your collegiate experience this spring! We will bring the games but you gotta play! (after you finish classes!)

Students miss the tables and chairs that used to be outside the Library. Campus Services is having furniture made. Students who hangout in that area must remember that the Library is a place of study and students who want to get to the Library shouldn't

have to walk through a party to get to it.

AUK should pay for the parking tickets. (LOL-haha-hahaha-LOL!) We won't pay the tickets but we have gotten more parking spaces for you around the perimeter of the campus. Make sure you park legally. One space per car; you don't want to be inducted into the parking gallery of shame!

Only 4 computers in the library for streaming, internet times out too soon. The University Librarian confirmed there are 4 multi-media computers for females and 4 for males. It is understood that many projects require usage of multi-media streaming computers. The wireless that is offered on campus is free to students. I recommend that if the majority of the students feel this is an issue, then the Student Government Association should develop a proposal of options on behalf of the student body and present the case for review to the University Administration. (hint!hint!hint!)

More selective in admissions and English speaking requirements are too low. AUK operates on a rolling admission program which means that applicants will be accepted until the enrollment goal is met. The average entering class grade point average is 2.7! The university is moving in the direction of being more selective by implementing acceptance deadlines. We cannot just wake up one morning and tell future Wolf Packers they must be potential rocket scientists to come to AUK. To become more selective in admissions will be a BIG university discussion. The English competency requirements adopted for admissions purposes are pretty standard across many colleges and universities for English as Second Language students. A student's ability to pass an exam and then perform in an academic setting can be rather challenging. That is why we try to emphasize the importance of you practicing your English language skills, oral and written. The more you practice, the more fluent you become. Practicing your English outside the classroom does not mean you are turning your back on your Arabic culture. Fluency makes you more competitive in the global society which in turn enhances your contribution to the culture!

Academic issues: attendance, advising, courses offered, transfer credit, academic integrity. Until students, all over the world, can master the ability to be in two places at one time, the one place you need to be is class! No excuses, bar none, go to class! If you do not like the idea of coming to campus to sit in a class, then consider finding an online degree program. You will still be required to attend (sitting at your computer) but

with an online program there is no dress code! Advising begins with you reading the catalog and doing the best you can to understand what it is saying. When you have an idea about your goals and the rules, the advising process goes much smoother. All advisors are given training and have advising handbooks similar to one you received when you were admitted and went to PAR. The SSC advisors are generalists that prepare you for major declaration. Your faculty advisor is a subject matter expert who will guide you once you have declared your major. If you have concerns about your advisor, see the Director of the SSC if you are undeclared or the Division Chair if you are declared. The College of Arts and Sciences plans undergraduate course offerings. When planning, the College takes into account such factors as faculty availability and load, classroom space, gender separation, and program requirements. Unfortunately, we cannot always offer everything in the catalog but courses will be offered to ensure you are making steady progress towards degree completion. Students must also keep in mind that faculty are not required to teach in the summer. Summer offerings are fewer and more geared toward lower division courses. When we transfer credit from another institution, AUK is saying that the transfer course where you earned at least a C grade, is equivalent to an AUK course. Sometimes it requires faculty evaluation; some courses are already in the system and the process goes faster. When students have concerns about transfer credit awarded, there is an appeal process for a second review that begins with the Registrar's office and ends with the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Most importantly, students seeking transfer credit must provide as much information about the course as possible so that a thorough review can be done. The Division of Student Affairs and the College of Arts and Sciences are working together to develop procedures to enhance and expedite the transfer credit evaluation process. Your integrity is a personal characteristic that you should cherish. It is more valuable than Gucci, Bottega, Bentley and the list goes on. Now is not the time to cut corners, take the easy way out, be lazy, or slick. Your integrity is priceless. It is about who you are as a person. I, for once, am speechless, at a loss for words, in trying to express to you how important it is for you to place such a high value on your integrity. Don't cheat. You are devaluing everything about yourself and your education. JUST DON'T DO IT.

Backing out of the Dean's Corner till next time...PEACE! LOVE THE WOLF PACK!

SSC's Advanced Advising



Students enjoy SSC-provided entertainment as they await advising

By Laila Al-Daghestani – Peer Academic Leader (PAL)

The Student Success Center held its Advanced Academic Advising over the course of a whole week. The center was buzzing with an unprecedented number of students as the university implemented the RAC Number

System for the first time.

The large number of students seeking advising had long waited but the SSC ensured it was not a dull experience. Great selections of blockbuster films were screened in the SSC office for the pleasure of those waiting. Snacks and candy

were also made available for the students, with a popcorn machine complementing the cinematic atmosphere in the waiting area.

What could have been a dull and tiring process turned into a relaxing, enjoyable experience for the undeclared student population at AUK.

From the Registrar

Office of the Registrar

The Registrar's Office staff welcomes you back for the spring semester! Please feel free to stop in anytime should you have questions in regard to your registration, academic history, scholarship, government allowance or the graduation timetable. If you have questions in regard to the re-

quirements toward graduation, please view your degree audit on Self-Service and, if necessary, see your advisor to be sure you're completing all the requirements as necessary.

If you have questions regarding Drop/Add/Withdrawal, government allowance application dates, you may find those on the Academic Calendar

which has a link from the AUK web home page. The Office of the Registrar communicates with registered students via AUK e-mail, so we highly recommend our students to check their AUK e-mail accounts daily to not miss any important news or events!

Best wishes for a successful spring semester.



Shahed W

From English 108 to Toastmasters

By Hanan M. Al-Harran

To begin with, I would like to apologize for one thing, I only have one set of eyes and one set of ears with which to gather information from one point of view. In spite of the limitation in only having that one point of view, I would like to share with you what I observed when I attended a club meeting with the members of Toastmasters. There are twenty-four different Toastmasters clubs in Kuwait, but I visited only three of them on 3 different occasions, "Al-Koot", "Kuwait" and "Active Minds." I visited each of these clubs once; these clubs are similar in their meeting format, organization, and they serve one purpose, "to provide a mutually supportive and positive learning environment in which every member has the opportunity to develop communication and leadership skills, which in turn foster self-confidence and personal growth." My Public Speaking teacher, Mr. Don Prades, a member of the original team that brought Toastmasters International to Kuwait 12 years ago, advised my class to visit any of the Toastmasters club meetings. One of his stringent requirements to get an 'A' in his class is to speak outside the classroom. No one gets an 'A' unless the student has delivered a speech outside the classroom. He made that very clear during the first day of class. So attending and speaking in the Toastmasters meeting satisfies his requirement; that's why a lot of my classmates paid the Toastmasters a curious but productive visit.



Once mentioned, the first question that probably comes to mind is "What is Toastmasters?" Well in short, Toastmasters International is a U.S. based organization where one can learn and practice the art of public speaking. The Toastmasters International brochure says, "The Toastmasters will show you how to listen effectively, think on your feet and speak confidently. You will learn valuable leadership skills-all in a supportive, non-intimidating environment." The art of public speaking is a tool that is used to connect with and in short, market ideas or information to an audience. And at many points in our lives, we will have the opportunity or obligation to speak to a group of people whether it's for work or to our families.

I got to see people giving a speech in the Toastmasters club whom I might not have

ever guessed would be good at it. Sometimes one's appearance can be deceptive until that person starts speaking. There was one man who might otherwise be described as very unexciting, but once he started talking about aerobics, his appearance completely changed for me. With his skill at using the tools of public speaking, the eye contact, the gestures, the body language, the connection with the audience and good delivery, my lackluster opinion of him improved to the point of wanting to not just know who he was but to know him more.

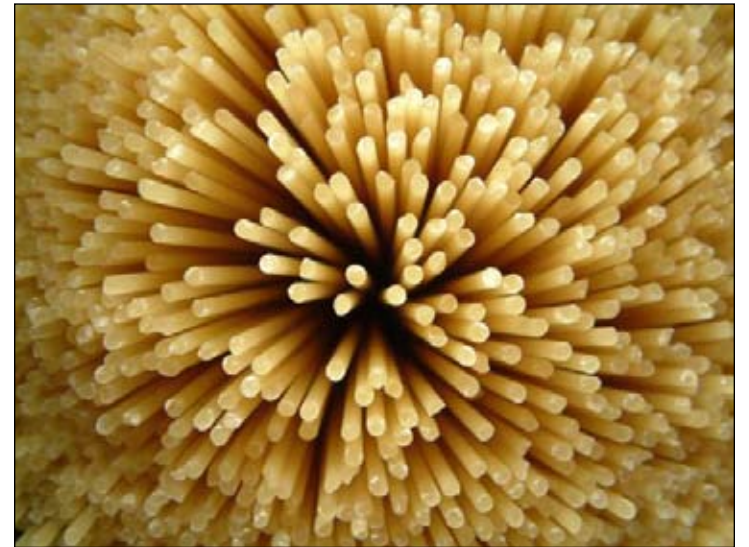
I also noticed how a person who is good at the art of public speaking can make what would normally be a subject that I would not be interested in suddenly engaging and interesting. There was another person who gave a short speech on rap music. Under nor-

mal circumstances, I would not have chosen to listen to a speech on this subject. But when this person started speaking, she captured the attention of the audience with a story about her struggle to become a successful rap singer and suddenly everyone was interested in that subject.

You may think there is no difference between giving a speech in a class and giving a speech in the Toastmasters club; but there is a difference between them. Giving a speech in a Toastmasters club meeting gives you the opportunity to get expert feedback from the members, learn from your mistakes and many more while enjoying your time amidst a hearty applause of appreciation for delivering your speech. The success of the club is largely due to the comfortable atmosphere and friendly members who always encourage you to visit and join the club. Everybody makes you feel welcome and comfortable and wants you to do well.

Even just one visit to the Toastmasters club was an education for me. I would recommend at least visiting once should you get a chance and take notice of what I noticed. And perhaps, if we meet up after your visit, you can share more observations with me that I may not have noticed. Of course, if you're in Professor Prades' Eng. 108 class, it's a must do activity. Who knows, maybe one day we will both be listening to each other as members of the Toastmasters club ourselves? How cool would that be?

A Dish-a-Day



Keeps the Doctor Away

Fatma Al-Fadhli

Back to back classes, work, loads of assignments and above all, you're hungry. All you need is to go to the AUK Diner where you can find all varieties of pasta. If you feel you need vitamins, you should try a veggie-pasta. If you need proteins, you will find the chicken pasta ready for you. Even if you do not like any of these sorts of pasta dishes, you may love the sea food pasta. The daily pasta dishes at the AUK Diner try to bridge the cultural gap between Kuwait and Italy through encouraging the students to eat pasta daily; viva Italia!

As a student at AUK who eats at the AUK Diner on a daily basis, I tried all the different varieties of pasta the diner serves to the AUK community. I must admit at the beginning the chicken pasta was the best of all; however, eating

the same dish every day will not keep the doctor away, it will keep the students away as well, from the AUK Diner. The easiest thing that most AUK students can do is to call any restaurant and get what they want, other than eating from the daily pasta menu. If any person eats the same dish every day, they will hate it over a period of time; it is human nature. The people at the diner should know about it.

I believe, as many other students do, the importance of introducing new dishes. Change is good and there is nothing bad with changing. Just grab any cooking book and try one of the recipes there. Maybe someone will think about the idea of bringing Italy and Kuwait together through pasta dishes. Then try bridging the gap through pizza or spaghetti. Viva Italia!





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