5th Annual Exhibition Affirms AUK's Commitment to the Arts

By Mubarak Al-Mutairi

Art exhibitions are peculiar events, and this year’s was no exception. The opening ceremony was held on Monday, 13th December, in the university’s auditorium, with contribu-
ting artists, interested students, artsy patrons and the media freely mingling with each other amongst the exhibited works. The auditorium was divided into seven sections each one dedicat-
ed to one of several categories: Photography, Graphic Design, 3D Art, Drawing, Painting, Special Theme: Kuwait; and Poetry. The exhibits were numero-
us and displayed the many diverse ways that students chose to express themselves. Such ex-
amples include Rana Emtair’s somber and thoughtful A Shate-tered Revelation, Maryam Al-
Morad’s slightly eccentric and colorful 3D portraits and Dana Jamah’s experimental Lion.

The organizers of this yearly exhibition, the Office of Student Life, hoped that such an event would help to not only promote the works and endeavors of its students, but also to solidify the university’s position as an in-
stitute where artistic expression is nurtured. Ranya Al-Mastaki on the other hand hoped that the art exhibition would “en-

courage the artistic skills of [the university’s] students” and “to have them engage more with the community”.

The art exhibition, after five consecutive years, is doing a marvelous job of establish-
ing itself as an integral part of the university’s community as proven by the number of works submitted to the Office of Stu-
dent Life. In fact Ranya herself states that “Around 30 students are taking part with more than one piece, and the [submissions] are more than last year” she also states that the art exhibition at-
tracted “more submissions from freshmen.”

There is no better way to end this article than with congratula-
tions not only to the Ameri-
can University of Kuwait and those who helped organize and promote this event for contrib-
uting more to the artistic fabric of Kuwait and the region, but also the winners of the exhi-
bition: Fakhreema Badri for Crimson Creek; Ghasan Al-
Qudmani for Smoke All Star Shoes; Sperdah Behbehahi for her untitled bust; Mariam Al-Enezi for Thinking; Abda-
laizy Al-Mudharf for 3; Afian Abdullaiz for The Amir Safah Al-Ahmad, and the author of these lines for Dance Tap.

MUNAUK Makes Impressive Showing in Bahrain

By Ghobam Reza Vahandoust, Ph.D.

Seventeen members of the American University of Kuwait’s Model United Na-\ntions team (MUNAUK) partici-
pated in the Fifth Bahrain Uni-
versities Model United Nations (BUMUN) two-day conference on 12-13 December 2009. AUK students represented various countries in the Gen-
eral Assembly, the Interna-
tional Atomic Energy Association (IAEA) and the Security Council. Tackling issues such as the current financial cri-


Wonderland and the Magic of the Ballot Box

I

t its thirty years of topsy-tur-


vex existence, Wonderland has held more elections than any oth-

er on the face of this earth. This is a sign of grandeur, civil society and democracy for Wonderland, where the Supreme Guardian, the self proclaimed savior of the world, would sublime
gently guide his flock towards heavenly bliss. Wonderland proclaims to be a free and democratic state with open and fair elections in which God’s representative, the guard-
ian and trusted Holy Padre, would ensure that no rights were under-


Continued on page 3

Continued on page 5
Islam in Russia Exhibition at the Grand Mosque

By Nur Soliman

The Russian Federation is not one of the most typical countries one would list as a ‘Muslim’ country in the sense of the word, countries like Egypt, Indonesia, or Turkey would come to mind. That said, Muslims come to mind. That said, Muslims’ country in the sense of Russia are greater than the number of Muslims living in Russia. That said, Muslims’ country in the sense of the Russian Federation is such a vast, rich spectrum of cultures that have evolved, which was followed by his response along the lines of “massacre and assassination. As he continued to evoke his memories, he mentioned the massacre of society, which was not only a painful past record in some societies such as Poland and Hungary. Nevertheless, the Ambassador was precise on the idea that there was a sharp distinction between his ideological opposition to Soviet Communism and its grasp on Poland, Hungary and the rest of Central Europe, and his love of Russian culture as a whole, which includes Russian literature, art and whatnot. With a conical tone he explained that democracy was the saviour from the Communist regime. He mentioned that the Communist regime was not only a system that was politically destructive, but it was also “against any religion.” Its destruction was successful in being forceful to the extent that the regime was able to serve for several years with no direct opponents. He asked the rhetorical question: “How were they able to create it by force?” after several members of the audience brooded, which was followed by his reaction to the different ethnic traditions, to their unique cuisine and musical traditions, to the stunning geography of the region, and the apparent vigor and liveliness of the community, the exhibition, almost poetically set against the exquisite side-fras of the Grand Mosque, truly shed much light on the lives of a fellow Muslim community that was so alike, and yet so delightfully different.

Pi Gamma Mu Revives Cold War Memories

By Fatima Ibrahim

“Where tyranny exists…that tyranny exists…not only in the barrel of the gun…not only in the cells of a prison” starts the Hungarian poem Egy mondat a zsomoromban (A Sentence of Tyranny) by Gyula Illyes. The poem was not just a “sentence of tyranny,” but also a statement that retrieved the memories of the Hungarian and Polish Ambassadors; Janos Hovari and Janusz Szwezo, respectively, on 8 December 2009. Pi Gamma Mu arranged when the Wall Came Down: Personal Memories from Two Ambassadors in the American Corner on this day. It included a presentation of an Ambassador’s memoirs and recalled his painful memories of the Communist regime in his country in the past. The Ambassador explained that both Poland as well as Hungary experienced agony during the Communist era. He attributed to Communist different facades, including the fact that it is “a biased, running commentary.” He also correlated it with the Soviet Union, making it familiar to Russian culture today, as a result. As for the world today, he stated that “China is considered a Communist society, if not officially.” However, Pyromyshka dolls, displayed for such a very small size to peasant’s straw shoes, even a beautiful nickel-plated, decorated samovar. There were also brightly coloured, embroidered costumes for men and women, traditional to Russian and Cze- cassinian communities as well as those of Georgia. Several booths were also set up with publication from daily Muslim Russian newspapers, to many books on Islam’s origins from the Holy Qur’an in Cyrillic. The sheer uniqueness of Mus- lim communities, as well as the Caspian region has such a unique richness and diversity to it, from the different ethnic traditions, to their unique cuisine and musical traditions, to the stunning geography of the region, and the apparent vigor and liveliness of the community, the exhibition, almost poetically set against the exquisite side-fras of the Grand Mosque, truly shed much light on the lives of a fellow Muslim community that was so alike, and yet so delightfully different.

The Voice of AUK

Volume 6, Issue 3

NEWS

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Yanus-Bek Yevkurov who made opening remarks alongside the Deputy Minister of Arts.

The exhibition featured a vast, wide spectrum of Russian culture that really broadened one’s scope of understanding when it came to those unique communities. Much of the material was from a local photographer, University, also in the Republic of Tatarstan. Most of the photos displayed candid, vivid portraits of M u s l i m communiti es, from y oung children playing in the American Corner on this day. It included a presentation of an Ambassador’s memoirs and recalled his painful memories of the Communist regime in his country in the past. The Ambassador explained that both Poland as well as Hungary experienced agony during the Communist era. He attributed to Communist different facades, including the fact that it is “a biased, running commentary.” He also correlated it with the Soviet Union, making it familiar to Russian culture today, as a result. As for the world today, he stated that “China is considered a Communist society, if not officially.” However, Pyromyshka dolls, displayed for such a very small size to peasant’s straw shoes, even a beautiful nickel-plated, decorated samovar. There were also brightly coloured, embroidered costumes for men and women, traditional to Russian and Cze- cassinian communities as well as those of Georgia. Several booths were also set up with publication from daily Muslim Russian newspapers, to many books on Islam’s origins from the Holy Qur’an in Cyrillic. The sheer uniqueness of Mus- lim communities, as well as the Caspian region has such a unique richness and diversity to it, from the different ethnic traditions, to their unique cuisine and musical traditions, to the stunning geography of the region, and the apparent vigor and liveliness of the community, the exhibition, almost poetically set against the exquisite side-fras of the Grand Mosque, truly shed much light on the lives of a fellow Muslim community that was so alike, and yet so delightfully different.

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Games People Play
By Magdalene El-Neaman

The ACM-AUK chapter was pleased to host a lecture on 18th November 2009 for the Sciences & Engineer- ing Division entitled ‘Games People Play’ by Dr. William B. Poucher. He directed his lecture towards computer science enthusiasts. His relevant mes- sage still lingers in the memo- ry of his audience well after his talk. He explained, “When we look at creation, one of the behavioral and survival traits of mammals is to teach their young by playing. We humans being also train our young by playing games. We can train ourselves since we have a spirit and mind.”

Dr. William B. Poucher is a professor of computer science at Baylor University in Texas, an ACM Fellow and IBM Facu- lty Partner and Executive Director of the ACM Interna- tional Collegiate Programming contest, as well as a Director of the Competitive Infrastructure Initiative. Dr. Poucher’s pres- ent day research and develop- ment centers around software development and application design. His research improves competitive learning. Among his collection of projects, his most current one is the global ICPC Contest Management System with co-investigator Dr. Jeff Donahoo, the ICPC System with co-einvestigator ICPC Contest Management Committee of the contest for the past years.

Dr. Poucher was invited in the audience after his talk to the AUK students. Dima Al-Thuab, Assistant Professor of Computer Science, was the chair of the event.

In all, the AUK team gar- nered five out of a total of ten diplomacy awards and four honorable mentions. The uni- versity has reason to be proud of all members of the AUK delegation at the conference as, once again, the members of the AUK team stood above most delegates regarding their preparation, and rhetorical and diplomatic skills. In the words of Doris Martin, organizer of BUMUN, “Since AUK began participating in the conference four years ago, AUK students have earned a reputation as some of the best delegates at the conference and a force to be reckoned with.”

The conference was spon- sored by the General Organiza- tion for Sport and Youth (GOSY) in BahRAIN and at- tended by nearly 200 student- delegates from seventeen local and three regional universities. The members of MUNAUK offer a special thanks to the American University of Ku-WAIT for their continued sup- port and to Daniya Alaman who traveled to Bahrain as the female cha- pereon. Her encour- age- ment and professionalism served as an inspiration to the MUNAUK team.

Dr. Anwar Zaid (Program Lead of CSIS), Dr. William Poucher (Lecturer), and Dr. Ziad Najem (Regional Contest Director)

Library Press Release

T he American University of Kuwait (AUK) Library celebrated on Sunday, 7th December, 2009 the opening of its ‘AUK Li- brary Fair: Building Information Bridges’ at the campus auditori- um. The opening ceremony was well attended by the University President, Dr. Marina Tomluchova, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, faculty, staff and students. The book fair which was orga- nized by the University Library hosted 19 exhibitors, including international publishers, ven- dors, local institutions and book distributors.

Dr. Marina Tomluchova welcomed the participants and guests stressing the importance of read- ing and the role of the library in promoting a culture of reading. She donated some of her valuable books to the Library. At the end of the opening ceremony, AUK President and the Library Direc- tor Mr. Anna Al-Munteer thanked the participants and sponsors by handing out appreciation certifi- cates. The fair ended on Tuesday, 8th December.

By Daven Al-Thuab

On Thursday 14th January 2010 from 2-5 pm a significant event took place in AUK’s audi- torium and multipurpose space: la journée de la Francophonie—a day to celebrate the French language and the world’s Francophone cul- tures. The enthusiasm and anxiety were felt around the AUK campus. The Liberal Arts building was un- der spotlights. People were walk- ing in and out of the building, carry- ing tables, posters, computers, and colourful costumes. Every- thing was being set up very neatly, and the colourful designs were seen everywhere.

French 101 students were very an- noyed and excited about the Francophonie exhibition. Each group of students chose a French-speaking country to represent. The countries which are members of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, varied from Switzerland, Egypt, Canada, Mo- naco, Lebanon and even more. Professor Joseph Fiannaca decided to give his students the chance to be more creative and artistic by planning for a project instead of doing a traditional written final exam. The project included PowerPoint presentations, magazines that contained a new identity, a ce- lebrity, ads, and 10 of the touristy places related to the country they se- lected. All in French!

At the event itself, students didn’t only enjoy the fabulous atmos- phere, but they also had the chance to practice the French lan- guage and expressions that they had learned in class. Everyone was feeling particularly content for put- ting together all the effort.

Donations for French-speaking Haiti, which was recently hit by an earthquake, took place on that day. Professor Joseph Fiannaca made an announcement about the dona- tions in the multipurpose room where poems, videos, and games were presented. Teachers, visitors, and students donated to help Haiti.

The visitors were then invited to the Liberal Arts building. The welcoming nature of students and the pleasant music played attracted visitors. Everyone was amazed to see all the hard work the students had done to impress the guests and Professor Fiannaca, who com- mented that it was an opportunity to show that the French language is not the sole property of France; it is important to pay tribute to the countries who contribute to the government of la langue fran- cain.

The way the Canadian team with their red hockey jerseys waved around the auditorium on roll skates giving out brochures was splendid. The Greek costumes were enchanting. The Moroccan booth design was breath taking, and the beautiful smell of their incense filled the air. The Switzer- land red table was eye catching, and the food was delicious, filled with all different kinds of cheese, and chocolates. The trad- itional Swiss costumes were stun- ning and beautifully designed. Finally, the arrival of Farida Omar and Olivier Deserez of the French embassy was an honour for all the participants.

In the end, everybody—includ- ing both teachers and students— went back to their classes. Tables were cleared, and posters were put down. It was one of the exhausting days at AUK, but it was worth all the hard work and effort. Simply, it was a day to remember: Vive La France et la Francophonie!
SALE

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Starting 23/12/09 until 31/01/10
A Heroic Voice?

By Var Soliman

From the voice of cartoonist Herbert Block in his criticism of Nixon or General McCarthy to La Xar's Diary of a Madman criticizing contemporary Chinese society, there have emerged, over the decades, numerous voices that have resisted waves of change (or the lack thereof). One such voice that has remained on the side of the opposition for many years has been that of Shafii Vahidnia, the professor of political science at the University of Tehran. As one of the most outspoken critics of the regime, Vahidnia has been at the heart of the opposition for many years, and his words have been a beacon of hope for those who seek change. Vahidnia's voice has been a powerful reminder that silence is not an option in the face of injustice.

At a time when there are mul-
tiple, often contradictory statements, where the truth (whatever that might be) is mired in uncertainty and malevolent intent, we find that what we need is a clear vision. Vahidnia's words have been more than just words; they have been a beacon of hope for those who seek change. Even amidst the uncertainty and malevolent intent, Vahidnia's words have been a source of light for those who seek change.

We should probably laud Mah-
moud Vahidnia for his seemingly simple but powerful words. His words are a reminder that in the face of uncertainty, we must always remember that silence is not an option in the face of injustice.

The magic of Wonderland is its ability to erase its past, par-
adoxically present, and disappear from the wrenched earth. The magic of Wonderland is its dis-
appearance on the last day of the Circus. The magic of Wonderland is its disappear-
ance on the last day of the Circus.

Only a few hours after the publication of the results, the remainder of the speech and the remainder of the story was already in the news. The magic of Wonderland is its disappear-
ance on the last day of the Circus.
CAB CHARITY CARNIVAL

Photos by: Dalal A. Marafie and Fatma Khamis
Islamic Art at the Grand Mosque

By Nur Soliman

Kuwait’s 4th Annual International Forum for Islamic Arts was hosted by the Grand Mosque between 4th and 15th January. Sponsored by the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs in conjunction with the Kuwait Center for Islamic Art in the Grand Mosque, this forum was just as diverse and interesting as the previous one, showcasing the arts of the Islamic world as well as hosting short lectures and workshops.

The forum showcased some of the beautiful works of Islamic calligraphy and paintings from across the world, from China and Iran to Turkey and Jordan, in addition to presenting the native crafts of Syria, Turkey, and other countries, from paneled wood-and-mother-of-pearl from Syria and Jordan to textile work from other nations. Also, to celebrate Kuwait’s 2009 Capital of Arab culture, the forum hosted calligraphers from the Occupied Palestinian Territory to discuss their art. One of the more popular demonstrations that will return to the Kuwaiti forum will be sharing Turkish marble-painting techniques known as ‘Abru,’ where passengers and their children can even try their hand at the art.

This is one of the few more interactive artistic events in Kuwait, where viewers can not only observe and look at works of art, but also listen to lectures while surrounded by beautiful works of calligraphy in black ink or delicate Safavid paintings of birds and flowers, the lecturer’s voice occasionally muffled by the sound of wood panels being cut or hammered or the voices of children as they colour in patterns, or overcome by the compelling calls to sunset or night prayers at the Mosque.

The artists themselves are also very genial, and are often willing to hold conversations and answer questions for passersby, also providing them with leaflets, brochures, or even letting them help in their crafts. In addition, there are many stalls representing libraries from Bahrain, Qatar, or Turkey and Southeast Asia selling or displaying books on Islam, history, Islamic art, science philosophy, and other related subjects.

The forum is a place where visitors can immerse themselves in cultures and artistic traditions that go beyond their own, be they Arab or traditional European, affording them an opportunity to understand Islam in a more diverse, dynamic entity that goes beyond traditional “Arab” Islam, but is understood and reflected in far more representations, leaving viewers with an increased respect and interest for these arts and these communities.

The Bright Mississippi

By Sara M. Soliman

Played by contemporary artists, some known for their R&B music more than jazz, The Bright Mississippi is an interesting compilation of old Dixieland and Swing classics, as well as some of Thelonious Monk’s compositions, played with a delightful mixture of styles, ranging from that of Monk to Armstrong, from Ellington to Sidney ‘Jelly Roll’ Morton. While listening to several numbers in Toussaint’s album, one would believe greats like Sidney Bechet or Art Blakey were playing. Toussaint’s band is remarkably talented, able to swing through the jazz timeline to recreate old favorites the way they always meant to be played, but with the clarity and solidity of contemporary jazz music. In several old favorites, like Dixieland classics Dear Old Southland, there’s a pleasant evidence of Toussaint’s contemporary playing, his fluid, elegant runs unlike those of a Dixieland pianist, but delightfully contrasted against tension-filled, Pavarotti’s clear, Harlem sound. The weight of the blues chords and climbing tonic triads is heard in Ellington’s classic, Solitude, pulling the Billie Holliday number up several decades, her course, elegant voice replaced by Marc Ribot’s electric guitar, lifting and almost like that of a country ballad. Ribot’s guitar then smoothly shifts into the familiar strumming of Django Reinhardt, forming the bass line for Louis Armstrong’s soulful, St. James Infirmary. This compilation of musical styles, sounds, timbres, tempos and atmospheres, mixed and matched throughout the songbooks of jazz greats in history, presents a colorful album that is pure delight to listen to, delivering old favorites with a flare either convincingly faithful to the original or charmingly reworked with a modern twist.

Ravi Coltrane Not Just John’s Son

By Sara Soliman

While some offspring of famous figures might follow in their parent’s footsteps, many of them also follow their own paths and styles, techniques, and talents that make them more unique. One of the greatest is Ravi Coltrane, son to the legendary tenor saxophonist John Coltrane and his wife, Alice Coltrane, also a noted jazz pianist and performer. Ravi’s name has always been tied to that of his father’s; his style and techniques on the tenor sax are likewise compared. But with this fifth album, it is clear that Ravi Coltrane, while intimately familiar with his father’s style, ventures forth with his own voice.

This album, Blending Times, impresses the listener with how John-Coltrane it sounds, and also how remarkably modern it sounds. Tracks like ‘First Circuit’ and ‘Last Circuit’ evoke the rich, frenetic, almost mystical sounds of John Coltrane, almost symbolically paying tribute to the great saxophonist, reflecting what his father sounds like in his Love Supreme suite, as well as in Giant Steps or My Favorite Things.

Very different to these are tracks like ‘Amalgam,’ where the opening certainly has a John Coltrane sound to it, almost like ‘Acknowledgment,’ yet the sentiment and piano and piano give it a more creative, softer tone. ‘Nascined’ also has a very unique piano and rhythm arrangement, where the piano is more fluid, the percussion a little more edgy and adventurous like modern jazz. ‘One Wheeler Will’ has an almost bossa nova like percussive beat, the dual basses of Haden and Gress are on-the-spot, with the saxophone sounding more like Rolfson or Parker, ultimately.

One touching piece is ‘For Turtya,’ dedicated to his mother Alice who later gave herself an Indian name. The track features very lyrical, harp chords, sometimes like Andreas Vollenweider, the famous Swiss harpist. ‘Before With After’ is very solemn, sounding like Coltrane, but also like Adderley, with an almost Ellingtonian bluesy lift that is very interesting to hear.

My personal favourite, though, has got to be ‘Last Circuit,’ as though Ravi Coltrane has come full circle and created an entirely new, creative blend between his own style, the very edgy, upbeat, and abstract cool sound of the percussion working very well with the rich, mellow sound of the tenor, really ‘blending’ the times.

This disc is a definite recommendation for those interested in seeing where 2009 is taking us with artists taking the older with the new to create something exciting.

Ravi Coltrane, tenor saxophone; Drew Gress, acoustic bass; Charlie Hudson, acoustic bass (guest appearance); Luis Perdomo, piano; Brandee Younger, harp (guest appearance); Producer: Ravi Coltrane. Executive Producer: Joshua Sherman. SATYF JAZZ Recording. 2009 (Audio CD). Approx: 54:27 minutes

Furore of Joyce Didanto

By Sara Soliman

With a voice fiery and rich, Didinato presents a fine selection of Handel’s arias, accompanied by the distinctive Baroque orchestra, Les Talens Lyriques.

Heavy and urgent, Didinato gives life and character to the arias, creating a colourful impression of a singer in full costume on stage. The opening piece, Xerxes, exhibits Didinato’s virtuoso talent and impressive vocal abilities, presenting adequate to the elegant period-instrument orchestra.

The delicacy and vibrancy of the ornamented Baroque melodies are contrasted by the dark, descending motifs in the oboe movement of the Teeso opera, constantly heightened by the minor chords of the harpsichord. Didinato’s flexible voice and powerful vibrato enables her to switch roles smoothly, each aria delivered with renewed vigor and individual strength.

Similar to the poignancy and enthusiasm with which Loraine Lieberson Hunt sings Bach’s cantatas—for which she is most renowned—Didinato here presents many of Handel’s well-loved arias with rich feeling and virtuoso strength, demonstrating these arias in ‘furore’ in its highest splendor.

By Jane Th.}

Do they give us homework ‘cause they can? Because there’s a lesser chance they’ll bump us into while they’re abroad? Because they think we have nothing better to do?!

But you know, I’m still gonna do it... because I’m like that.
AUK is also working on gaining internation- al programmatic accreditation (for selected degree programs). The College of Arts & Sciences, under the guidance of Dean Humzeh, is working hard on a self-study for the American Academy for Liberal Education (AACLE). The self-study process is being coordinated by Dr. Rawda Anwad, CAS Assistant Dean for Accreditation and Curriculum. If AUK succeeds in submitting the self-study to AACLE in early 2010, our Bachelor of Arts programs in the Humanities & Arts and Social Science divisions may hope to receive international accreditation in time for FY 2010-2011. The Division of Business & Economics is going through the self-study process, and the College of Liberal Arts will soon follow. Accreditation Update

A report to the Board, AUK is looking forward to the next steps in the accreditation process. For all AUK graduates and current students, it is most important to know that when questions of accreditation arise, what AUK needs first and foremost is Kuwaiti academic support from the Kuwaiti MOHE-accredited institutions in the Middle East. How- ever, for Kuwaiti credentials, it is best to apply to a Master’s program in the field of your first major. Again, if you depend on the Kuwaiti government-approved list for graduate education, you have to know what programs at what foreign institutions are accepted by the Ministry of Higher Education approved list for scholarship support. But remember: the degree approval (for MOHE certification or for employment purposes through the Kuwait Civil Service Commission) is different from the program approval for purposes of international scholarship for Kuwaiti citizens. You can find Kuwait MOHE-approved lists of degree programs eligible for international scholarships on the MOHE web site. Graduate Study

A UK is extremely proud that some of our graduates have been admitted to such prestigious American schools as Yale and the University of Chicago, which are extremely selective in their graduate admissions. Others now study in the UK or have entered graduate programs in Kuwait. Some of our very first graduates who received their degrees in June 2006 applied to graduate school right away and had no problem having their AUK credentials recognized. If you are earning two different undergraduate degrees, you can apply to graduate programs internationally in either field or even in yet another, new field. However, for Kuwaiti credentials, it is best to apply to a Master’s program in the field of your first major. Again, if you depend on the Kuwaiti government-approved list for graduate education, you have to know what programs at what institutions are on the Ministry of Higher Education approved list for graduate education (in English, post-graduate) scholarship. This may limit your choice of location, institution, and field of study.

December 2009 is my last month here at AUK, and soon I’ll be returning to the United States. Looking back on the four years in Kuwait, I take pride in the distinguished aca- demic institute that AUK has become. The strength of any university is rooted in its faculty, and we have attracted and retained outstanding teachers who are actively engaged with our students and maintain their expertise through research and creative activity. AUK is also very fortunate in having a dedicated staff of academic and administrative profession- als who help us serve our mission of building an institution of excellence which provides a broadly-based arts & sciences education and educates global citizens for success in the twenty-first century.

You, our students, are both our main con- tributors and a ‘product’ of our efforts. The knowledge you acquire and the skills you develop at AUK will serve yourselves, Ku-wait, and the world. The distinctions and suc- cesses achieved by our students over the last five years – be they in academic, extra- and co-curricular activities, in athletics or in communi- ty service – all speak well to the learn- ing and personal growth that take place on the AUK campus. The current student population of about 2250 total (undergraduates and IEP) is being well served by our faculty and staff. Even with a growing number of private insti- tutions of higher education in Kuwait and the United States, AUK is continuing to build the excel- lence of our programs, faculty, and facilities in order to ensure the learning outcomes and career success of our students. I wish you all continued success in your stud- ies at AUK!
By Nour Solliman

When I thought about this question, of all eloquence and the skill of the art of writing, it sort of reminded me of a conversation (it bordered on an argument) with a young musician about whether mastering the technique was more important than the “spirit” of performance. I was somewhat inclined to the idea that you had to have the “essence” or the content before you work on mastering the “technical form” or the form, which meant much more. The young musician responded by saying that spirit or feeling was no good if one couldn’t adequately master the techniques; it might even sound worse. She had a point, but taking it a step further, I thought then about how deeply intertwined the two were.

In discussing the question of where eloquence comes in when it comes to writing, I believe we can discuss the issue on similar lines. Before this, I guess we have to think about what “eloquence” and “rhetoric” really mean. Edward Said had wonderfully rich essay called Living in Arabic which he wrote shortly before his death in 2003. In it, he describes eloquence (or rhetoric) and the “eloquence” of language in contrast with simple linguistic communication. According to Said, eloquence, something not many of us think about much, conveys “distinguished verbal practice, a skill with words that will mark an eloquent person as possessing something that others do not,” things that constitute rhetoric that is made up of linguistic tools, such as tropes, schemes, figures of speech and other devices that are part of eloquence. It is not just verbal cleverness, but a way to animate what you say, as he quotes from an 18th century professor of rhetoric, Giambattista Vico.

I firmly believe in the importance of animating one’s writing (or speech) with such a spirit of conviction or passion. That said, the consultant in me also reminds me that without clarity, none of a writer’s enthusiasm and feeling can ever be truly communicated unless it is delivered in excellent clarity of language and organization of thought. If one has not yet mastered a language with its sentence structures, its vocabulary, and its grammar, one cannot yet hope to aim for eloquence. Also, organized thoughts and a planned out draft or skeleton structure to what one is trying to say are really important. If you can spell things out, then all your already epic ideas and deep, rich feelings will find a space for themselves to show, and it is here that a rhetoric device like a metaphor or any other figure of speech will really help.

By Kheiriyeh Ahmadi

Eloquence could more often be a natural talent possessed by those who are born with a particular language and they seem to swiftly grasp the structure of their native language from early ages as they often use a sublime style when speaking. The power of this is because it is these people’s innate gift. Nonetheless, eloquence can also be achieved and improved by practice and after mastering a language but I believe this is a rarity as very few possess that much perseverance and fortitude! Although it might differ in various languages, I believe that eloquence is not using bra-vura words to convey great ideas. Eloquence is in the use of simple words that create great effects, such effects that move a nation toward a revolution.

By Hanouf S. Al-Juhail

In a room occupied by too many people, there I sat next to my father clenching every word he was saying. I was thirteen, and it was the first week of August, where nothing looked familiar, with the exception of the heat. The room became too hot and clouded with cigarette smoke, so I decided to walk around the house and look for a quiet place. I peeked from a window and saw three Iraqi soldiers, fully equipped with their weapons and machineguns, marching the streets of our neighborhood. I realized there was no good if one couldn’t adequately master the techniques; it might even sound worse.

I started writing at the age of eleven when my English teacher suggested it as a way for me to improve my writing skills. During the invasion however, writing became an outlet for me. It was a way to vent, explore, fantasize, and not to mention comprehend everything that was going on around me, I had to find a way to answer, and write words. I wrote every day, and on some days, I wrote several times. I had to use words like invaders, retaliation, and bombardment in my journal entries, which was bizarre at the beginning. Prior to that dark August, our journals consisted of vocabularies like boy crush, Madonna’s leg warmers and moonwalking. I started writing at the age of eleven when my English teacher suggested it as a way for me to improve my writing skills. During the invasion however, writing became an outlet for me. It was a way to vent, explore, fantasize, and not to mention comprehend everything that was going on around me, I had to find a way to answer, and write words. I wrote every day, and on some days, I wrote several times. I had to use words like invaders, retaliation, and bombardment in my journal entries, which was bizarre at the beginning.

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Dr. Mohnes A. Bagnied, Chair of the Department of Economics and Business and Economics Division, participated in the Annual Conference of the Association of American Scholars in the US and Canada (AAS), held at the American University of Cairo (AUC) from December 28-29, 2009. Dr. Bagnied who is also the Vice President of AAS presented a paper on "Global Economic Crisis, Causes—Impact on the Arab World—Policy Recommendations". The conclusions of Dr. Bagnied's research were included professors from several times in the Egyptian American educators and university education in the upgrading both school and university education in Egypt, particularly his 8e experience is one of the most respected and renowned accounting firms in the world. The conference was held at the American University in Cairo, and was attended by Dr. Al Mousa, Associate Professor of Management at AUC. In addition, during the conference Dr. Bagnied chaired the Workshop, "Seeking Excellence in Egyptian Education. He pre- sented his paper as part of a panel on "Doing Business in Egypt". The paper discussed the challenges of doing business in Egypt, particularly for foreign investors, and highlighted the importance of developing business relationships with local counterparts. The paper was well received by the audience and generated a lot of discussion. Overall, the conference was a great opportunity for Dr. Bagnied to share his research and insights with other scholars and professionals in the field.
Television Soaps Empower Women
An Interview with Professor Shoma Munshi

By Utpal Borpujari

They have influenced fashion, created fierce debates in media and the society and mesmerised people across regions and languages. Some of them even have brought the entire country to a standstill when they are on. Yes, we are talking about the ubiquitous TV serials on the numerous channels spanning genre, theme and class representation.

A latest book seeks to analyse the impact of prime time soap operas on the contemporary Indian society. The writer, Shoma Munshi, division head of social sciences and professor of anthropology at the American University of Kuwait (AUK), has chosen five most popular soaps for her study. Munshi talks to Utpal Borpujari of Deccan Herald on the idea behind her book, “Prime Time Soap Operas on Indian Television” (Routledge).

Excerpts:

You have chosen five specific serials for your book. What were your criteria for selecting them?

It was deliberate. The book tracks the specific time period of 2000-2008. The three most successful soaps from Balaji Telefilms – ‘Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi’, ‘Kahani Ghar Ghar Kii’ and ‘Kasautii Zindagi Kay’ – were obvious choices, having topped TRPs for eight years. I chose ‘Saat Phere… Saloni Ka Trai’ and ‘Buniyaad’. One must also remember, however, that DD was the only channel available to us.

How do you view the latest trend of serials taking on social causes like child marriage, female foeticide, farmers’ suicides, etc., even if perfunctorily?

Viewership data shows that the audience base has spread from metros to include smaller towns and villages, and TAM (Television Audience Measurement) data now tracks this. In such a scenario, stories of soaps have to take into account issues that relate to a larger base of people. Besides, after eight years of the family sagas of K soaps, people were looking for a change.

Soap operas, ironically, are female character dominated. Why is it so when we see it in the context of the fact that India has a male-dominated society? There is nothing ironic about this. Soap operas are in fact referred to as ‘soaps’ because their origins lie in the 1950s radio dramas in the US that were broadcast during the day, when women were mainly at home doing household chores. These radio dramas were sponsored by companies such as Proctor and Gamble who were soap manufacturers, hence the name, which stuck. In addition, the very genre of soap operas is women-centric.

This is the case not just in India, but anywhere in the world. The ‘soaps’ characteristic address is to women viewers.

What is your view regarding the quality of serials on Indian channels at present, particularly when compared to days when DD was the only channel?

There is no question about the fact that DD had some landmark shows such as ‘Hum Log’ and ‘Buniyaad’. One must also remember, however, that DD was the only channel available to us. Open skies policy means more to choose from. Of course, the recognisability of channels also helps, in that Star Plus, Colors and Zee have greater recognition value.

Coalition to watch out?

They are very much in control, as well as characters who despite living in fear of their mothers-in-law, are very much in control. Nowadays, there are women characters with more shades of grey than earlier who demonstrate that rural women are the major qualities of Indian soaps. Soaps have popularised festivals like Karva Chauth to the extent that it is now celebrated all over India. The mangalsutra is now worn by communities where it was not the norm earlier. Very importantly, and however strange it sounds, soaps play a role in empowering women. Recent academic research clearly demonstrates that rural women admire the independence of strong soap heroines, especially Tulsi and Parvati.

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