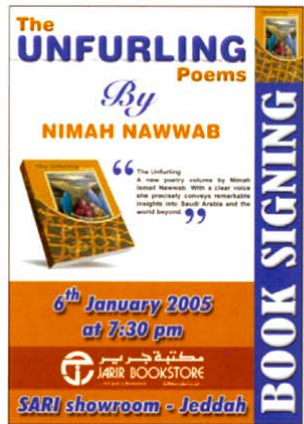


Aramco Literati Score a Double in Jiddah, Washington



“It looked like a scene from the Western literary world when book lovers made a bee-line to get the copies of a newly published book signed by its author.” So said the *Arab News*, reporting on the successful debut of Nimah Ismail Nawwab’s book of poetry, *The Unfurling*, on Jan. 8 in Jiddah, Saudi Arabia.

The success was actually a double for literati with close connections to the company:

Nimah is a second-generation Aramcon who grew up in Dhahran and works as a writer-editor for Saudi Aramco; and the book is published by Selwa Press, a California company owned by Tim Barger, who also grew up at company headquarters. Shortly after her Jiddah debut, Nimah went on to a successful book tour in the United States.

“The groundbreaking event took place at Jarir Bookstore...,” the *Arab News* continued. “Saudis, Arabs and expats of different nationalities were among the large number of book lovers who converged on the scene. There were ladies and men as well as students and academics.

“Nimah readily and smilingly obliged all of them not only with her signature, but with a message too. ‘This is a proud moment for me,’ she remarked.”

The story included a number of laudatory quotes. Lama Younes, 21, a senior at Jiddah’s Effat College, called Nawwab “a role model” and said, “I am happy that we’ve a voice that can speak on behalf of all women. This will also motivate all of us to pursue our dream project.”

Hazar Bogary, 20, a graphic design student in the United States, called the book-signing “a unique event, especially since a woman has done it.”

“As the event started unfolding, visitors started lining up before Nimah to get their books signed,” the story said. “The crowd kept getting bigger and bigger around the writer. In spite of the glamor attached to the event, Nimah maintained her cool, kept signing her books and continued to interact with new visitors.

“There were many photographers clicking away. *The Unfurling* includes a collection of poetry about freedom, women, family, culture, faith, tradition and change....”



→ Nimah Nawwab signs a copy of *The Unfurling* in Jiddah. *Arab News* photo by Ahmed Al-Marwanie.

Newsweek International picked up on the story in its Feb. 21 issue. *The Unfurling* “will resonate with her compatriots as well as with outsiders looking for insight into Saudi Arabia,” the magazine reported, adding that “locals and foreigners of all ages waited in line for up to 45 minutes to meet the author” at the book-signing.

“Nawwab is especially eloquent on the subject of Saudi women emerging into society and the work force like herself,” *Newsweek* said. “As a voice for women in the Middle East today, whom we hear so little from save for ululations, Nawwab’s poems inject vital nuance and melody into what can be a shrill stereotype.”

Discussing Nawwab’s U.S. book tour, her publisher Tim Barger said, “The reading and signing she did at Barnes & Noble in downtown Washington, DC., on Feb. 17 was a nice bookend to the Jiddah event. It was the biggest turnout they’ve ever had for a lunchtime signing, and she is now the first Saudi writer – male or female – to have such an event in our nation’s capital.”



→ Tim Barger