

JOYCE, Miriam: *Kuwait 1945-1996. An Anglo-American Perspective*. London and Portland, Or., Frank Cass, 1998, XXIII+182 pp.

This ambitious book describes the historical events in Kuwait in the second half of the last century. In six chapters the author examines how the political development of Kuwaiti society and institutions is seen from an Anglo-American perspective.

In the "Introduction" the author offers a clear picture about the development since the end of the nineteenth century and how Great Britain concerned with increasing Turkish, German and Russian interest decided to "safeguard" Kuwait. British imperial ambitions were demonstrated also in challenging the Turkish right to convert its suzerainty over Kuwait into sovereignty (p. X). The British grasp of Kuwait became still stronger in 1934, after the Kuwait Oil Company, a company registered in Britain and owned equally by the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and the American Gulf Exploration Company, obtained a concession that covered the land and territorial waters of Kuwait and most of the islands offshore.

The first chapter named "The New Reality" treats the decade after the conclusion of World War II. The author is right in stating that nationalization of Anglo-Iranian Oil Company by the Iranian government led by Dr. Muḥammad Musaddiq enhanced the importance of Kuwait's oil, but it is necessary to say that Britain was pressed by circumstances to sign the new agreement providing for an even division of profits (p. 2).

The second chapter entitled "The Egyptian Factor" deals with Arab nationalism and its influence upon Kuwaiti society in the mid-fifties. The British did everything possible to keep up their dominant position and secure in a semicolonial manner their share of Kuwaiti oil wealth. They did everything to thwart the rising "danger" of the revolutionary Egypt of president Jamāl ʿAbd an-Nāṣir. After the failure of the "tripartite (British-French-Israeli) aggression" against Egypt in November 1956 the British naturally wanted to limit damage to their interests in Kuwait. The author gives clear evidence here that where their prior collusion with the Israelis was concerned, they deliberately deceived everyone including the ruler of Kuwait, who was solemnly assured by the Foreign Office that there was no such collusion (p. 45).

The next chapter entitled "Independence" highlights in detail the years 1957-1961 when Kuwait was still under the British protectorate and under British guidance, it moved toward independence. In June 1961, Kuwait and Britain signed a Treaty of Independence terminating the 1889 Exclusive Agreement, giving Kuwait formal independence and guaranteeing British military assistance, if the ruler requested it. Within a month Kuwait joined the League of Arab States.

The fourth chapter entitled "The Iraqi Threat" deals with Iraqi claims to sovereignty over the whole of Kuwait or at the very least the Kuwaiti islands of Warba and Būbiyān which overlook the approaches to Umm Qaṣr. In June 1961 the Iraqi prime minister General ʿAbd al-Karīm Qāsim based the claim on the assertion that Kuwait had been a district of the Ottoman province of Basra, unjustly severed by the British from the main body of the Iraqi state when it had been created in 1920s. He suggested that Iraq had "natural" boundaries, and that these boundaries had been deliberately flouted by the British authorities, to restrict Iraq's access to the sea and thus to reduce its influence in the Gulf. Nevertheless, he did not threaten to pursue his claim by force. The author correctly puts the role of the Egyptian president in solving of this inter-Arab crisis.

The fifth chapter entitled "After Independence" deals with the political development of Kuwait until the end of 1965. In December 1961, a Constituent Assembly was creat-

ed to draft a constitution. The constitution was signed by the ruler in November 1962, and in January 1963, Kuwait held a general election to the newly created 50-member National Assembly. All political parties were banned, and candidates ran on independent platforms. The tracing of the Iraq-Kuwait frontier demarcation dispute is also interesting. The last chapter entitled "From London to Washington" is a brief summary of events during the period from 1966 until 1996.

There are some irregularities in the transliteration of Arab names like Abdalla(h) Mulla(h). The compound proper names should be written in a unified form either in the scientific way: °Abdullāh and °Abdulkarīm (p. 100) and °Abdul°azīz (p. 107) and Dūlfāqār (p. 107) or in the more common way, for example JamTl °Abd an-Nāṣir. It is disturbing to see the erroneous writing of the name of the late Egyptian president (pp. 31, 101, 105).

The reader finishes this substantial book with a firm grasp of the main tendencies of the historical development. The impressive part of it is its comprehensiveness. The book is eminently readable and a significant contribution to Kuwaiti history. The author has put together a fascinating account of continuity and change and succeeded on every score.

Karol R. Sorby

LEDER, Stefan (ed.): *Story-telling in the Framework of Non-fictional Arabic Literature*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag 1998. 528 pp. ISBN: 3-447-04034-3. Price: DM 148,00.

The predominant aim of this inspiring collection of studies is to identify elements of narrative art in texts of non-fictional Arabic literature. Preliminary versions of the contributions included were presented at the second Johann-Wilhelm-Fück colloquium "Fiction in non-fictional classical Arabic literature" held at the Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg from May 15 to 18, 1997.

The volume consists of five closely interwoven thematic parts:

- A. Elements of Fictional Literature;
- B. Story-telling in adab Literature and Theory.
- C. Philologists' Narrative Art.
- D. Narration in the Qur'ān, Tafsīr and Ḥadīth.
- E. Facts and Fiction.

#### A.

The first three studies of this collection are discussing approaches to the definition of fictional literature within the theoretical framework suggested.

Is autobiography a piece of art or rather a mere historical account? This and related problems are examined by Susanne Enderwitz (*From curriculum vitae to self-narration. Fiction in Arabic autobiography*, 1-19). In spite of the fact that classical Arabic autobiography (*sīra* / *tarjama*) does not seem to be consistent with what is generally understood by autobiography in European cultural milieu, the classical texts do meet the requirements of the post-modern view of fiction. In the domain of modern literature, the most immediate attention was given to *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's al-Ayyām*, classified as novelized