

of form and structure since the novel is plotless and amounts to a collection of different stories, vignettes, and narrations. A unifying element is the usage by Cabrera's characters of language and sound in a creative manner. Beneath the apparent playfulness and mockery of certain parts of the novel (ie. "La muerte de Trotsky" segment), Souza uncovers proof of the conviction that a person's style rather than his ideology is more apt to survive the test of time. Souza does not emphasize the antiliterary character nor does he bring forth the escapist attitude hidden in Cabrera's games. He concludes his analysis by saying that Cabrera uses language as a means of fighting a world of chaos and confusion and protesting against the winds of time.

Some of the points made by Souza in this work have been analyzed in previous critical studies. There is, however, new insight in his criticism, especially in the chapter devoted to Lezama Lima. Souza strives at clarity, conciseness, and meaningful simplicity when discussing complex and difficult matters. He keeps in line with his avowal (in the Preface) to avoid "more sparkling criticism" while trying instead to clearly reveal the process and actuality of the novel in Cuba through each novelist's contribution. The main premises of his study—the general theme of order and chaos, and the relationship between innovation and tradition—are set forth lucidly and effectively. He is occasionally repetitive for the sake of emphasis. One may disagree with his highlighting of certain novels (ie. *Los niños se despiden* by Pablo A. Fernández) or his omission of newer generation writers such as David Buzzi and Miguel Collazo who have made interesting contributions to the areas of magical realism and science fiction. Souza's judgment nonetheless is consistently accurate and any study of this nature always implies a good degree of personal selection. *Major Cuban Novelists* is indeed a highly useful introduction and important contribution to the study of the Cuban novel.

Jorge A. Marbán

KINGSLEY AMIS

Rudyard Kipling and His World

London: Thames and Hudson, 1975. Pp. 128. £350.

Rudyard Kipling and His World is readable, but the text is not always likeable. It consists of a single, undivided chapter followed by a select bibliography of eleven titles, and it reproduces well over a hundred photographs, some of which have very little to do with Rudyard Kipling. Kingsley Amis's reliance upon the official biography of Charles Carrington (*Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work*) is noted in the preface, as is the author's lack of concern "to find and reveal new facts" (p. 7). More important is Kingsley Amis's decision to omit the critical apparatus which one usually associates with studies of this nature. This omission is dismissed rather fatuously in the preface in the following terms: "To give names and other details is so often to give profitless trouble: who, for instance, would be much better off for being told, in parenthesis or footnote, that it was Kipling's eldest aunt's granddaughter Angela Mackail, later the novelist Angela Thirkell, who described as 'deep and unhesitating' his voice when telling stories to children?" (p. 7). In the above instance, a footnote may not seem necessary, but vague statements like "So runs the account, and much of it must be true" (p. 22) or "Some authors have swallowed it whole . . . Others have rightly been more cautious" (p. 22) need some substantiating. Again, the statement that Kipling's autobiography (*Something of Myself*) "is a fascinating book, but Kipling did not live to revise it, and other parts of it are provenly inaccurate" (p. 24) leads even a casual reader to wonder which are the unreliable parts and according to whose opinion.

Kingsley Amis, himself an author of no small reputation, possesses insights into the creative processes which more commonplace critics may not. He is quick to point out that fiction is not autobiography (indeed, it is one of the central themes of his study) and yet he is unable to tread the razor edge which divides them and frequently confuses the two. In this fashion, Amis labels as autobiographical the reference to a six-year old boy of whom Kipling wrote that "it never entered into his head that any living being even Papa and Mama? could disobey his orders,"

since Kipling "clearly had in mind himself at that age" (p. 18). And yet, when discussing "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep" Amis is at great pains to point out that although there are autobiographical elements "it is a story; the author is not on oath" (p. 22). Autobiography and fiction are again confused when Amis states that nothing came of Kipling's first love (for Flo Garrard) "nothing except some parts of Kipling's first novel, *The Light that Failed . . .*" (p. 36). The confusion becomes apparent when it is realized that the chief character, Maisie, is founded on Flo Garrard; further "only the most tedious kind of sceptic could doubt that Kipling was putting on paper emotions of his own when he wrote of his Dick Helder's unhappy passion for Maisie" (p. 36). And yet, in spite of those often repeated warnings that fiction is not autobiography, Amis is still able to conclude that Kipling "never again published anything that could be referred to his sexual life" (p. 36). Amis quotes no texts to support his theories. There is no critical apparatus, and, as a result, one is not certain whether Amis is referring to scientifically objective information which differentiates the levels of experience as art in the two episodes, or whether he is merely backing a purely subjective hunch. Unfortunately, this same criticism can be leveled at Amis on several other occasions.

In *Rudyard Kipling and His World* Kipling's life is discussed at length. Amis spends less time, however, on Kipling's works, and it is rather distressing to gather that although a Kiplingian (i.e. a lover of Kipling), Amis has more to say against Kipling than for him. We have already seen that *Something of Myself* is, in some parts, "provenly untrue" (p. 24). In *The Light that Failed* "the 'Southsea' episode significantly fails to be an altogether appropriate prelude to the later events of the novel" (p. 24). Kipling was "very and oddly bad at naming his works" (p. 44). "The hand does not fly to a volume called *Actions and Reactions*" (p. 44). "The last two volumes [*Soldiers Three* and *Wee Willie Winkie*] contain little of Kipling's best work" (p. 62). "The Man Who Would Be King" is described as a "grossly overrated tale" (p. 62). *The Jungle Book* and *The Second Jungle Book* are dismissed with the statement that "I can say little more than that I remember disliking them in my childhood" (p. 73). The title "Love-o'-Women" (a man's nickname) is ridiculed in the following terms: "This excites incredulity: could you bring yourself to say, for

instance, 'Have one on me, Love-o'-Women?' " (p. 74). *Captain's Courageous* has a "defective plot" (p. 80). "There is not a single first-rate story in the collection called *The Day's Work*" (p. 80). Some of the other stories are "full of inaccuracies" (p. 81), and Amis writes that "even I, with my tiny knowledge of both fields, can catch Kipling out on the bull-fight and on naval gunnery. He is wrong about the manufacture of liqueurs, too" (p. 81). *Stalky and Co* is dismissed with the following remarks "Boyishness is missing from the book, and with it departs some probability, and with that we lose some interest too" (p. 81) and again "Stalky and the others are not particularly hideous, but they are not very attractive either. They lack warmth" (p. 82). In fact, the only two books that seem to have pleased Kingsley Amis are the *Just So Stories* and *Kim*. In spite of this, our critic manages his little dig about the latter "and if he [Kipling] says coriander when he means cardamum I will let it go" (p. 84). But Amis is unable to do so.

It will be clear from the tenor of the above remarks that much of Kingsley Amis's criticism does not impress. Indeed, not only is it excessively subjective, but it is also occasionally at fault. Thus the statement (qualified a little later on the same page) that "intimate knowledge of a foreign—preferably classical—language and some representative part of its literature, such as Kipling never attained, is an important part of a writer's training" (p. 30) seems to contradict the observation that "he became devoted to Horace" (p. 30) or that "Being cosseted by native servants meant affection and intimacy, and that intimacy meant, above all, that he learned their language, Hindustani or 'the vernacular,' actually a form of Hindi with a large admixture of Arabic, Persian and other foreign elements. It was so much his language that he thought and dreamed in it, and had to be prompted to speak English with his parents as best he could" (p. 19). Again, the statement that "it was Kipling's not very rewarding habit to preface and follow his stories with short poems. These can usually be skipped and read out of context in the collected verse" (p. 100) is very unsatisfactory. It suggests that stories and poetry are separable within the works. Clearly the books were not designed that way, and any dog owner who has read the story of "Garm—A Hostage" and followed it with a reading of "The Power of the Dog" with its haunting refrain "Broth-

ers and Sisters, I bid you beware / Of giving your heart to a dog to tear" will know that this is patently not true.

In 1554, Lazarillo de Tormes wrote in his autobiography that "no book is so bad that it contains nothing worthwhile." Perhaps the most valuable thing about *Rudyard Kipling and His World* (apart from some of the more relevant photos) is the fact that it sent this particular reader straight back to some of Kipling's texts in an effort to find some of the beautiful things that Kingsley Amis had so obviously missed.

Roger Moore

SAAD EL-GABALAWY,
Tr. & Ed.
Modern Egyptian Short Stories
Fredericton: York Press, 1977.
Pp. 81. \$5.50.

To those of us more familiar with the response of foreigners to Egypt than with fiction by Egyptians about themselves, this lean collection of stories comes as a welcome, if not wholly satisfying revelation. Evidently still loyal to European models of the last century, fiction today in Egypt is only starting to shed its chrysalis and flutter dutifully into the rarer air of modernism. Not that its failure to do so before now is the reason for our ignorance of it, for fairly traditional writers in say India—Anand, Narayan, Rao—are familiar enough names in the English-speaking world. Equally exotic names such as Mahfouz, Idris, and Elkhadem seem to have been born to blush unseen. In part the problem is one of translation; the Indian authors mentioned write in English, and can of course reap the benefits of their colonial heritage, which may in turn remind us of our own. It is therefore understandable, if unfortunate, that Durrell, Naipaul, and Updike are more familiar to non-Arabic readers, as storytellers of Egypt, than the trinity of writers Saad El-Gabalawy has chosen to translate and introduce in *Modern Egyptian Short Stories*.

He offers nine works by three writers, three stories each by Najib Mahfouz and Youssef Idris, one story and two selections from novels by Saad Elkhadem. The

reasons for this particular choice of writers is given parenthetically in the translator's critical introduction. Mahfouz "has an exquisite taste for uncommon and mysterious events"; Idris, less symbolic, "can be regarded as the master of realism in modern Egyptian fiction"; Elkhadem, finally, "represents the triumph of form in contemporary Egyptian short stories." (Here one feels obliged to ask why, if this is true of Elkhadem, he is represented by only one short story in its own right.)

With the balance tipping in favor of no particular mode, then, the collection begins with Mahfouz's stories. Though Professor El-Gabalawy does not mention it in his introduction—as he has elsewhere—Mahfouz is perhaps Egypt's outstanding contemporary novelist. This knowledge may help to explain why he, like Joyce Cary in his short fiction, does not seem entirely at home outside the more familiar genre. "The Happy Man," for example, is a wry piece, ironical in its paradox that happiness is natural to man the way disease is natural and obviously in need of a cure because perfect happiness is impossibly healthy and unethically consistent. The story, as far as it goes, appeals; but where it ends, in the protagonist's tears in the doctor's office, seems bathetic. The tale is effectively bare of consequences which might raise the interesting juxtaposition of normality and abnormality to benefit the universal implications hinted at earlier in the story. Still, the intoxicant of mystery at work in this tale, as well as in Mahfouz's "A Miracle" and "The Tavern of the Black Cat," does tend to lift and drop a question on one's plate; and this question is one of the imagination to which, in his introduction, the translator deftly addresses himself. Indeed his discussion of "A Miracle" is arguably more persuasive than the story itself, and even the ambitious attempt to uncover the complexity of "The Tavern of the Black Cat" may not convince us that this tale is clearly and entirely achieved.

Out of the uncommon, Youssef Idris's stories lead us into simpler realms. "The Wallet" is an engaging, if slight, epiphany about a boy's coming of age; "Farahat's Republic" is understandably well known in Egypt for the effect gained by its counterpunctal use of low comedy and utopian idealism. To my mind, the potentially finest story in the anthology is about a lion tamer who is mauled to death, Idris's "Sultan, The Law of Existence." Professor El-Gabalawy may be right to point out