

Grahame Smith remarks, in this new study of Graham Greene, on the sheer bulk of the writer's output over the course of his long career. Quite rightly, he points to Greene's lesser-known pieces (the short stories, the travel books, and the essays) as worthy of critical attention. Although he himself relegates discussion of them to the final chapter only, he evinces such enthusiasm and writes with such keenness here that one could wish he had made this side of Greene's talent the focus of his study in the first place.

It is clearly a question of freshness. So little has been said about Greene's other personae—critic, dramatist, cinema connoisseur—that one can hardly blame Mr. Smith for twitching his critical nose in that direction. He ought to have followed his instincts. What he plumps for of course is yet another probing of the novels, which by now are beginning to weary under the strain of constant dissection.

After a biographical introduction in which he gives due stress to the rather neglected issue of Greene's experience of psychoanalysis as an adolescent, Smith embarks on the path through the novels that so many others have traveled before him. There are a few notable digressions: to *The Ministry of Fear*, which he views as a major book, to the appeal of the so-called religious novels in terms of a secular morality as well as spiritual, and to the *The Human Factor* as the "culmination" (p. 191) of his literary career (not many would be so hasty to dismiss the more recent novels so categorically).

There are other, minor, features of Smith's analysis that are unique, though regrettably so. One is his odd use of pointless analogies of this sort: *The End of the Affair* "opens with an intimate immediacy . . . like Lockwood's diary at the beginning of *Wuthering Heights*" (p. 106), or "If Dickens's *David Copperfield* is 'saturated' in his love for Dora, it seems fair to say that Greene was saturated in cinema for a large part of his career" (p. 205). Another is his singular display of bad judgment regarding *The Quiet American*, a novel he claims is full of "flabby writing" and "general banality" (p. 131). There are, too, lapses into stylistic vagueness in such phrases as "the authority of imagined detail" (p. 139), or "fusion of character, setting, theme and language allows [for] richness and intensity of meaning" (p. 167). And one final, petty, complaint: why is Wormold of *Our Man in Havana* referred to continually as "Wormald"?

How much more stimulating and valuable an elaboration of his tantalizing comments in the final chapter would have been. Smith is right to point to *Collected Essays* as a mine of valuable clues to Greene's artistic leanings, and to link Greene's love of the cinema (and distaste for the experimental prose of Joyce and Woolf) to his own popular instincts as a writer. But as for the rest, perhaps Smith's own estimate of Allott and Farris's 1951 study, *The Art of Graham Greene*, as "the most distinguished critical book on Greene so far" (p. 215) is indictment enough.

Saad El-Gabalawy, trans & ed.

THREE PIONEERING EGYPTIAN NOVELS

Fredericton: York Press, 1986. Pp. 122. \$12.95

Reviewed by Victor J. Ramraj

This is Saad El-Gabalawy's third volume of translation of Egyptian fiction into English. The first two—*Modern Egyptian Short Stories* (1977) and *Three Contemporary Egyptian Novels* (1979)—were carefully chosen to be representative of the current thematic and formal trends in Egyptian fiction. The three novellas of this latest volume are taken from three different decades of the twentieth century—1900s, 1930s, and 1980s. El-Gabalawy's intention is to indicate the main phases in the development of the Egyptian novel. The first piece, Mahmūd Tāhir Haqqī's *The Maiden of Dinshway* (1906), is one of the early attempts at the novel in Egyptian literature, which then did not have a strong tradition in this genre. The second, Mahmūd Tāhir Lāshīn's *Eve Without Adam* (1934), shows the influence of the traditional, nineteenth-century European novels. The third, Sa'd al-Khādīm's *Ulysses's Hallucinations or the Like* (1985), is a modern, experimental work, employing stream-of-consciousness techniques. The novellas, of course, are not just of formal interest. They offer us graphic portraits of Egyptian society and, particularly in the second and third novels, perceptive studies of human experience that transcend the Egyptian ethos.

The Maiden of Dinshway is an attractive work, in which we observe Haqqî, a writer acquainted with the lyrical and the shorter narrative forms of folklore, trying to come to grips with the extended narrative demands of the novel. We are constantly aware of a formal hybridization, which fascinates but at times diverts attention from the matter at hand. Though the novel displays "an impressive sense of narrative art" (p. 8), as El-Gabalawy observes, Haqqî has some difficulty in handling the full-length narrative as the preponderance of brief scenes shows. The work is patently episodic, moving rapidly from one scene to another, many of which taken by themselves are effective vignettes and tableaux. The episodic nature of the work is underscored by the many settings, the host of primary characters, and the shifting of tone among the lyrical, the satirical, the confessional, the dramatic, the didactic, and the elegiac. The theme of the novel, the exploitation of the colonized by the colonizer and the concomitant feelings of anger, frustration, and betrayal, is for many contemporary readers a commonplace, and Haqqî adds little to it. But when the work was published, it would have been fresh and arresting—it was in fact a best-seller—particularly since it is based, as El-Gabalawy notes, on an actual incident that has passed into Egyptian folklore. El-Gabalawy points out certain authorial skills in the original work which are difficult to convey in a translation: Haqqî, he says, "enhances the effect of naturalness and spontaneity by using colloquial Arabic for the dialogue among the illiterate fellahin, classical Arabic for his sophisticated characters, and even occasional English words for the British officers" (p. 8).

When Lâshîn wrote his novella in 1934, he had, unlike Haqqî, a more established tradition of the novel in Egypt to draw on. He did not hesitate to look as well to European models, particularly to Russian writers such as Chekhov, whose influence is noticeable in *Eve Without Adam*. Lâshîn is essentially a short-story writer, with three published collections to his name. *Eve Without Adam* is his only novella. This work, however, has a sophisticated structural unity not evident in Haqqî's. And, as El-Gabalawy states, there is none of "the romantic nostalgia, profused elaboration, bombastic style, unsophisticated techniques, and tedious didacticism of classical Arabic writers" (p. 8). *Eve Without Adam* is a sensitive study of a lonely spinster, whose experience, as the archetype of the title suggests, transcends the localized. This is one of the strengths of Lâshîn's novella (unlike Haqqî's, which, though it deals with the universal struggle of the exploited against the exploiter, is cocooned by its documentary exactness in its account of the external incidents). Lâshîn has an ironical vision of life. The title itself is ironical: Eve's world is no paradise and she never wins over her Adam with the apple of her intellect and reason. This perceptive study of the modern Egyptian woman could be compared profitably with another novella translated earlier by El-Gabalawy, Ismail Waly al-Din's *Hommos Akhdar*, which examines the experiences of a similarly lonely but enlightened female Egyptian protagonist.

In *Ulysses's Hallucinations or the Like*, al-Khâdim skillfully employs the interior monologue to capture the complex experiences of an Egyptian professor teaching at an American university, who, delayed at Cairo's airport on a visit home, in a drunken stupor reviews his life. The work is multilayered, allowing various interpretations of the protagonist's numerous contiguous relationships, observations, and moods. It invites, for instance, consideration in Jungian terms of the "dark corner" and the "dark depth" of the selfish, immoral narrator's psyche. The narrator throughout addresses himself in the second person, and it is possible to see him as someone trying to come to terms, like Prufrock, with an unattractive aspect of his psyche. Eliot's influence is evident here and in the novelist's use of fragments from and allusions to a host of writers, including Eliot. Al-Khâdim intends the heroic implications of the title ironically, of course. The protagonist is no Ulysses returning to a waiting Penelope; his visit to Cairo, where he dies, is envisaged as the completion of an epic journey to and from darkness. The work is undoubtedly and foremost a portrait of a troubled individual, but it is as well a comment on contemporary society, perceived as a hellish wasteland. The narrator, himself a true denizen of this world, laments contemporary conditions in a voice reminiscent of the prophets: "They kept pounding you, Beirut, until they demolished your walls and dimmed your lights . . . While singing sacred hymns and intoning sacramental chants, humanity has committed the most horrible crimes and unforgivable sins, all in the name of religion, creed, and belief" (p. 100).

In his perceptive critical introduction, Professor El-Gabalawy provides the reader with useful information on the literary, social, and political milieu of the three works; he should be complimented on his effort to make these novels available to us. As someone active in Commonwealth literature, this reviewer finds these pieces of additional interest, written as they are out of experiences not altogether dissimilar to those of novelists of the former colonies of the Commonwealth.