

European picaresque novel? To begin with it can hardly be called a novel . . ." (p. 93). And T. E. Little in his article on *Dead Souls* (pp. 112-38) comments that "one might arrive at the conclusion that Gogol's novel cannot be called picaresque in the strict sense of the word" (p. 112). However, as he demonstrates in the body of the article, *Dead Souls* does belong to the European picaresque and "although not one of the intimate family, it does have the picaresque novel as an ancestor" (p. 112).

Once one accepts the lumping together of distant friends, in-laws, and blood relations of the picaresque bride, the essays in this collection are vital and interesting. The tone, and in some senses the unity, of the book is established in the first essay "Moral Ambiguity in the Spanish Picaresque Tradition" (pp. 1-24). In this composition C. J. Whitbourn examines the ambiguity which is present in most great literature, and she shows how it is an essential part of the picaresque tradition. Certain problems do arise, however, and one wishes that there had been time and space (in her essay as well as in this review) to discuss the exact indebtedness of Cervantes to the picaresque (cf. "Moral ambiguity . . ." p. 18).

The question of moral ambiguity is again discussed in J. A. Jones's essay "The Duality and Complexity of *Guzman de Alfarache*: Some Thoughts on the Structure and Interpretation of Aleman's novel" (pp. 25-47). *Guzman* is one of the Spanish picaresque novels in which the conversion (albeit ambiguous) of the protagonist plays an important role, and these two, conversion and ambiguity, combine to form the central trend which links the other articles to the theme of the picaresque. The two remaining essays are as follows: J. M. Ritchie, "Grimmelhausen's *Simplicissimus* and *The Runagate Courage*" (pp. 48-74); and J. A. Michie, "The Unity of *Moll Flanders*" (pp. 75-92). In view of the controversy which surrounds the term "picaresque" it is interesting that the word does not appear in the article on *Moll Flanders*. Further, since *Simplicissimus* is described as having, in Olivier, "the only truly picaresque figure in the whole cycle of Simplician writings . . ." (p. 53) one is forced to question once again the validity of the term "picaresque" as applied to some of these novels.

The six essays are worthwhile and are of particular value to those who are interested in the study of the picaresque. The bibliographies, which place great emphasis on critical and creative works in English, are also useful. The problem is the eternal one: the term "picaresque" has too wide a meaning and the circle of books which can be affiliated with it is growing ever wider. In spite of this, the themes of conversion and moral ambiguity, together with a certain emphasis on the importance of translations, lend this collection of papers a unity which, given the general nature of the topic, they would otherwise be lacking.

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Selected Stories of Lu Hsun
Translated from the Chinese by
Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang
Peking: Foreign Languages Press,
1972. Pp. 255.

This volume contains Lu Hsun's eighteen short stories, nine of which are selected from *Call to Arms*, seven from *Wandering*, and two from *Old Tales Retold*. All these pieces were written between 1918 and 1926, the first and the most important period in the life of Lu Hsun as a creative and imaginative writer. The volume is enhanced by the inclusion of the author's famous Preface (1922) to his first collection of short stories, *Call to Arms*, in which he explains his aims and methods as a writer.

Included in the volume are the two best known stories by Lu Hsun. "A Madman's Diary" (cf. *IFR*, 2 [1975], 86-87) and "The True Story of Ah Q." The former is a bitter attack on the dark feudal society, and the latter a penetrating portrayal of the mental sickness of the Chinese people in a semifeudal and semicolonial society. "A Madman's Diary" (1918) is not only a remarkable achievement as the first story

by the writer, but also a landmark in the history of modern Chinese fiction. Using the indirect method and powerful prose, the author through the acute sensibilities of a madman exposes the human cruelties and abuses of the old, patriarchal family system. The somewhat disjointed narrative is a record of the madman's haunted fear and vulnerability in a bestial society: "Pitch dark. I don't know whether it is day or night. The Chao family dog has started barking again. The fierceness of a lion, the timidity of a rabbit, the craftiness of a fox . . ." (p. 13). The images of darkness and animals are the predominant motifs of the story which, while depicting a man-eating society, is essentially a plea for human love and for a new way of treating fellow men. The story ends with a vehement cry: "Save the children . . ." (p. 18).

"The True Story of Ah Q" (1921), a novelette, is the most important work of Lu Hsun. Using the 1911 Revolution in China as the background, the story depicts the ills and pathos of rural life, and touches on the meaning of peasant protest. It focuses on the humiliating life of Ah Q, an ignorant and well-meaning farm laborer who typifies two traditional thoughts generally found with the Chinese people: a tendency to take pride in the glorious past, and a self-complacent way of enjoying moral victories when facing defeat. These two perverted attitudes are closely related. They both have their roots in the crippled will of men who dare not face the painful realities of life. By portraying Ah Q as a comic and backward peasant, and yet as one who in his confused way "wanted to revolt" (p. 107), the story is at once entertaining and thought provoking. It is a remarkable literary achievement for its fusion of romanticism and realism.

The other pieces are of equal interest. Told with economy and vigor which are characteristics of Lu Hsun's writing, some stories display the author's warm compassion for the painful life of the common folk, especially women, as revealed in "The New Year's Sacrifice," "Medicine," and "Tomorrow"; some show his genuine concern for the warped life of lonely intellectuals, as seen in "The Misanthrope," "In the Wine Shop," and "Kung I-chi"; and still some indicate his subtle scorn at the hypocrisy and small-mindedness of the town people and pseudo-writers, as shown in "Soap" and "A Happy Family." Most of

the stories are told with the intimate informality of the first person in retrospection. And in general there is something gloomy and somber about them. They are mainly set in the country, but the landscape is drab and barren. The recurring theme is one of human suffering caused by the oppressing old forces. Lu Hsun, however, is not a pessimist. As a realist and humanist, he foresees a better time for his fellow men and firmly believes in the creative power of the masses: ". . . the earth had no roads to begin with, but when many men pass one way, a road is made" (p. 64).

All in all, students of Chinese literature will find this volume of value, and it will prove useful for those who have an interest in the intellectual and social history of modern China.

Swan P. Chong

JAMES E. FALEN
Isaac Babel: Russian Master of the Short Story
 Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1974. Pp. 270. \$9.75.

Of all Soviet writers who fell victim to Stalin's reign of terror, Isaac Babel, a shortstory teller and playwright, was perhaps the most talented and accomplished. Although he had a slim output to his credit—two collections of short stories and two plays, plus a few uncollected stories and screenplays—he was recognized as a master storyteller already in the twenties. Today he is considered to be one of the best craftsmen in that genre in world literature. That he has not exerted the influence commensurate with his accomplishments is undoubtedly due to a relative obscurity into which he was forced in the latter part of his life and which he endured for more than two decades after his death. He found himself at odds with a new regime in Soviet cultural politics toward the end of the twenties. Unable to conform to the "social command" issued by the cultural czars, by which an artist had to put on a uniform, as