

All this is not to say that *People Pieces* is one long paean of self-praise. Far from it. For example, in "A Murder Story" narrow-mindedness ostracizes a sincere young Mennonite who spends most of his life under a cloud of suspicion. His desire for church services and hymns in English instead of the traditional German has convinced most of the community that he is capable of anything, including murder.

In "Gertie," the many kindnesses of Charity Landis come to an end when her aged and needy friend rescues the octogenarian Max from his park bench and brings him home to take care of him. It is evident that the name "Charity" applies only ironically to Mrs. Landis, and in its scriptural sense is much more appropriate to Gertie herself, who unhesitatingly sacrifices the one "luxury" in her drab life, a ten-dollar string of beads that "look like real pearls," to the old man's well-being.

Just as a great range of human character and feeling is displayed, likewise the setting in time and place is varied. The scene may be pioneer America, with its conflict between whites and Indians, the Russian Steppes where the Mennonites flee their persecutors, a peaceful Amish farm, a small town, or a large city in the late twentieth century.

One is left, then, with an impression of great outward variety. At the same time, at a deeper level, there is a common thread binding together the whole collection: even where there is not what is usually called a "happy ending," the feeling remains that life has a meaning, that there is such a thing as hope.

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ED.

*Knaves and Swindlers:*

*Essays on the Picaresque Novel in Europe*

London: Oxford University Press,  
1974. Pp. 145. \$8.20.

*Knaves and Swindlers* is a collection of six essays which are the result of a course of lectures (given at the University of Hull in 1969-1970) in which "members of several departments discussed the Picaresque novel as it appeared in different European countries" (p. ix). All the novels discussed have strong affinities with the Spanish picaresque tradition, the characteristics of which are outlined early in the Introduction. They are: (1) the low birth and disreputable background of the protagonists; (2) their attempts to gain themselves a living by begging, deception, and petty theft; (3) the absence of a romantic love interest and the feeling that love and marriage are a snare; (4) the episodic technique, in which the protagonist creates the chief link between a series of adventures; (5) the everyday and contemporary setting; (6) the corruption of a young person by a deceitful world; and (7) the questioning of accepted values through a persistently ambiguous attitude (p. ix).

Clearly, not all of the above characteristics can be found in each of the novels studied, and a distinction must be made between those books which can be linked, with some certainty, to the Spanish tradition, and those which cannot. In fact, given the present controversy over the meaning of the term "picaresque," it might have been as well to have distinguished from the start between the "Spanish picaresque" and the "European picaresque." In the former one would include all those novels which contain most or all of the characteristics listed in the Introduction. In the latter would be included those novels which have only elements of the picaresque. This would have avoided the necessity of defending the inclusion of certain novels within the study. Thus, in his essay "Diderot's *Neveu de Rameau*: Portrait of a Rogue in the French Enlightenment" (pp. 93-111), A. R. Strugnell commences with the following rhetorical question: "How can one justify the inclusion of this strange and remarkable work in a symposium on the

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.

Roger Moore

*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