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 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

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 semi-feudal 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 vehe-
ment 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 gen-
erally 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 compas-
sion 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 con-
cern for the warped life of lonely intellec-
tuals, 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 retrospec-
tion. 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 Tennes-

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 accomp-
lished. 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