

without revealing an ability to distinguish between the good and the bad in Kafka-criticism. Fickert's logic is suspect, not least when he seeks impressive formulations. Throughout he confuses fiction and reality. Kafka's fiction, we read, is his autobiography (p. 17); by 1907 he had begun to create "a fictitious and, therefore, real world" (p. 28); and Josef K. "is really Kafka" (p. 50). His use of other terms is equally inexact. Kafka, he says, was concerned with "the transliteration of the insubstantial world into the tangibility of a concept, a structure of words" (p. 28)—and Fickert appears unsure whether the insubstantial world is the mind or external reality or both.

Fickert states that the medium of *Das Urteil* is the metaphor, and continues: "Already in *The Metamorphosis*, however . . . the symbol has supplanted the simile as the main factor in the story, for, as Kafka's commitment to writing grew, the epic quality of his work increased" (p. 21). How would Fickert define metaphor, simile, and symbol, and how would Homer fit into his scale of epic quality? We are not likely to consider very seriously the merits of Fickert's division of Kafka's characters into representatives of the ego, super-ego, and id, to accept that the pinup in Gregor Samsa's room is the muse (p. 48), or to ponder on why Fickert talks of "the celibacy of the castle" (p. 70), when we have been informed that Therese's mother (in *Amerika*) commits suicide and that Karl Rossmann is last seen in New York (pp. 41, 44). There never has been an excuse for misrepresenting the few clear facts of Kafka's plots. And, despite all the precedents in Kafka-exegesis, there is in 1979 little excuse for pretending that his meaning is clear when he was deliberately noncommittal—what, if anything, the "junger Galeriebesucher" of *Auf der Galerie*, who "weint, ohne es zu wissen," "acknowledges to himself" (p. 62) is open to speculation but does not call for unequivocal statement. Fickert claims that Kafka was "the complete 'Dichter'" (p. 21)—whatever that means; but he fails in his aim of convincing the reader that Kafka's fiction is relevant to the human condition in general. To do that he would need at least to tell us what Kafka's work shows us of the human condition other than its susceptibility to Freudian analysis, and in what sense his artist figures may be equated with man in general.

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HARRY SIEBER

Language and Society in La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes.

Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978. Pp. xv, 108. \$8.95.

In this excellent little study Harry Sieber establishes himself firmly on the side of those critics who see *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes* as a finished work of art in which every word is relevant. Its author was no unconscious genius for, according to Sieber, the book's very silences are carefully constructed and even the shorter fourth and sixth *tratados* are highly polished and artistically meaningful.

Sieber's investigation is concerned with Lazarillo's attempt to establish his identity not only as a town crier, but also as a writer (*homo literatus*). This movement from dishonorable town crier to honorable author is achieved through Lazarillo's gradual awakening, in the course of his autobiography, to the exact meaning of words which in turn generates an awareness of the powers of language. In writing his own tale, Lazarillo is shown to be both a verbal self-creation and a self-conversion: he becomes a metaphor. Indeed, the symbolic, metaphoric, and figurative meanings of words are carefully analyzed by Sieber throughout his study.

In this fashion the concept of fatherhood, for example, is discussed, and Lazarillo is shown to have had experience of four different fathers (his natural father, the moor called Zaide, the blind man, and God) all of whom contribute something to Lazarillo's life and education. The theme of blindness is shown to recur throughout the novel. It is expressed initially through Lazarillo's apprenticeship to the beggar (first *tratado*) who is literally blind. Lazarillo, on the other hand, is blind to the meaning of words and the beggar, whose other senses have developed with his loss of sight, must teach the boy to see the various levels at which language can function. When Lazarillo is cured of his verbal blindness he is able, in his own fashion, to blind the blind man to the correct meaning of the post, and thus to deceive him.

Any study which attempts to establish the artistic unity of *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes* must be judged ultimately by

its approach to the dual problems of the fourth and sixth *tratados*. Sieber's analysis of the short fourth *tratado* is based on the symbolic meaning which he attaches to the new shoes with which the *fraile* provides Lazarillo. These are shown to be symbolic of Lazarillo's sexual initiation, and the *fraile's* "trotacillas" are linked to Trotaconventos and her activities as a procurress. Those who interpret Lazarillo's story as an incomplete, fragmented narrative may question this aspect of Sieber's study, although the homosexual interpretation of "otras cosillas que no digo" has already been expounded by such an eminent critic as Marcel Bataillon. Sieber's interpretation of the sixth *tratado* is based on the reasoning that if clothes make the man, then a parody of clothes makes the parody of the man! However, Lazarillo does not call himself an *hombre de bien* as a result of the "hábito" that he is able to buy, as Sieber suggests (p. 74), but rather he states that he is dressed like one: "Desque me vi en hábito de hombre de bien" (my emphasis). Lazarillo realizes, then, that he is not really an *hombre de bien* although he would like to be considered one.

In spite of the very minor reservations that I have expressed with regard to the difficult fourth and sixth *tratados*, Sieber's interpretation of *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes* as a unified, integrated work convinces. His lively and original reading makes this a valuable study of the precursor of the Spanish picaresque novel.

Roger Moore

FELIX J. OINAS, ED.

Heroic Epic and Saga: An Introduction to the World's Great Folk Epics

Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978. Pp. 373.

DAVID E. BYNUM

The Daemon in the Wood: A Study of Oral Narrative Patterns

Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978. Pp. 454.

ERIC S. RABKIN, ED.

Fantastic Worlds: Myths, Tales, and Stories

New York: Oxford University Press, 1979. Pp. 478.

GEORGE deFOREST LORD

Heroic Mockery: Variations on Epic Themes from Homer to Joyce

Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1977. Pp. 162.

JOSEPH A. KESTNER

The Spatiality of the Novel

Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978. Pp. 204.

A mixed bag of studies on fiction, all of which however bring different kinds of light to bear on the subject which concerns readers of this journal. Professor Oinas has got together a group of experts to discuss heroic epics around the world, from Ireland to West Africa, and from Homer to Serbocroatian songs. Most of this—like David Bynum's specialized study of tree tales in the Milman Parry Collection's publications series—will be of more interest to the folklorist or ethnographer than to the theorist of fiction, but such works do shed light on our genre, especially its oral origins. Folk or fairy tales are the link, since they arose among peasant communities and were not written down until relatively recently. As such, they are of considerable fascination to Professor Rabkin, who discusses them at some length in the introduction to his anthology of fantastic tales and stories. Again, the spread is international and takes us, in time, from the Old Testament to Amos