



End of a Mission: Kafka's Search for Truth in His Last Stories (Studies in German Literature Linguistics and Culture)

Kurt Fickert

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Fickert's critique of Kafka's shorter narratives written in or after 1917 concentrates on the writer's subjective poetics to a much greater degree than previous criticism has done. The concept of his raising his fiction to the life of "the pure, the true, the immutable", which Kafka considered to be his goal in writing, undergoes detailed analysis in this study, which deals with the origins of the concept itself and Kafka's exposition of it. Using the facts of his own life as the basis for startling metaphors deployed in a series of ingeniously crafted stories, Kafka sought to define the mission he felt he had as a writer. Fickert argues that Kafka was also intent on conveying to the reader a sense of the urgency of the messages the narratives are meant to promulgate in all their complexity. Kafka began to deal intensively with this theory of the purposefulness of fiction in the famous story "A Country Doctor". In this dreamlike tale he suggests that the core of the writer's existence is his mission to serve the community by guiding its members on the search for self-knowledge. But at the same time Kafka had to deal with his own doubts about the goal itself, and his ability to achieve it. Fickert's interpretations of the late, enigmatic stories of Kafka bring out the writer's dilemma, his wavering between an affirmation and rejection of his idealization of the writer's calling. The book is aimed both at those interested in modern fiction in general and scholars in the field of Kafka criticism. All quotations from Kafka's stories are given both in the original German and in English translation.

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