

main aloof from the brutal interrogation of prisoners, takes it upon himself to return a young black woman—blinded and maimed by her captors—to her people, now wintering many days' journey from the outpost. After a torturous trek the magistrate returns to imprisonment, physical abuse, and—what is clearly the most pernicious punishment of all—social ostracism and public humiliation. Yet, like the "mad" Lear reviling the storm, the magistrate's soul will not allow him to surrender. Himself a prisoner, he witnesses a group of captives displayed publicly in painful bondage. They are about to be beaten.

"For me, at this moment, striding away from the crowd, what has become important above all is that I should neither be contaminated by the atrocity that is about to be committed nor poison myself with impotent hatred of its perpetrators. I cannot save the prisoners, therefore let me save myself. Let it at the very least be said, if it ever comes to be said, if there is ever anyone in some remote future interested to know the way we lived, that in this farthest outpost of the Empire of light there existed one man who in his heart was not a barbarian."

The "political novel" is a delicate hybrid, susceptible to the fatal strains of didacticism, ponderous prose, structural transparency, to name only a few. What ultimately makes *Barbarians* such excellent fiction, then, is not its thematic *intention* but its artistic *execution*. Coetzee is simply superb, producing here the kind of probing, intense monologue reminiscent of Stendhal's. That the author can relate a tale of horror in prose so exquisite testifies both to his inordinate literary skill and, as a South African, to the indomitable spirit of the human heart. [WV]

**OURS ONCE MORE:
FOLKLORE, IDEOLOGY, AND
THE MAKING OF MODERN
GREECE**

by Michael Herzfeld
(University of Texas Press; 197 pp.; \$17.50)

Stephen Rousseas

The title of Herzfeld's book is taken from the "Song of Hagia Sophia" about the sack of Constantinople by the

Turks in 1453: The emperor and the patriarch are in the process of celebrating a solemn mass, with the sixty-two bells of Hagia Sophia pealing thunderously, when the voice of an archangel bids them cease the mass, gather the icons, and snuff out the light, "for it is the will of God that the city should turn Turk." At that moment, according to the song,

"The Holy Virgin was seized with trembling, and the icons wept tears.

'Be silent, Lady and Mistress, do not weep so much.

Again in years and times to come,
all will be yours again"

It is not clear who is speaking, the emperor or the archangel, nor is it of critical importance. What is important is the subsequent change in the last line from "yours again" to "ours once more." Greece is no longer the Virgin's. It is the emperor who speaks. The "Song of Hagia Sophia" thus became the rallying cry of an irredentist Greece, whose aspirations to reclaim ancient territories—the *Meghali Idhea* (Great Idea)—culminated in disaster and defeat by Turkey in 1922. One is tempted to extend the rampant emotions of the song to the idea of *Enosis* (Unification) that echoed through Greece in the 1960s and to the partitioning of Cyprus by the Turkish invasion of 1974. But that is not part of Herzfeld's story. His is about the unbridled superpatriotism of the Greeks and their vision of their homeland and its mission—a superpatriotism that has tainted most of the historical writing of contemporary Greeks and made their folklore a call to action.

Modern Greeks (or, as they prefer, *Hellenes*) have long had an identity crisis. From 1453 to the revolution of 1821 and establishment of the modern Greek state in 1833, the Greeks lived under the harness of the Turks. Throughout its long history, Greece has been repeatedly invaded by Dorians, Romans, Slavs, Franks, and others; but each time the captors became the captives. The Turks did not; and for four hundred years the Greeks struggled to maintain their national identity. The role of the Greek Orthodox Church in keeping the language and culture alive in clandestine schools and underground churches largely accounts for the fact that, unlike in the English, French, Italian, and Russian revolutions and wars of unification and independence,

only in Greece has the Church emerged with its vast land holdings and political influence intact. But Greece as we know it today is a creation of no more than sixty years. In 1833, Greece was restricted to the Peloponnese and Attica. It was not until the Balkan wars of 1912-13 and a series of treaties that followed that Greece was given Macedonia, Epirus, Western Thrace, and the island of Crete, as well as some of the eastern Aegean islands.

Herzfeld's concern is with the development of folklore studies in Greece and the key role they played in the *political* development of Greece. Unlike folklore studies in France, Germany, and other countries, *laographia* (from *laos* [the people] and *graphia* [writing]) was riddled with ideology from its inception and almost totally lacking in scholarly tradition. But as Herzfeld emphasizes, "in a real sense laography helped *define* the national culture [and therefore] no student of Greek society can afford not to take some account of it." Indeed, "Greek folklore studies were an organic part of the making of modern Greece."

Herzfeld is an anthropologist who has lived in Greece for several years and is fluent in the language. His fluency in modern Greek and his non-Greek professional training have allowed him to undertake what most native Greeks could not: an objective and relatively dispassionate history of the development of Greek folklore studies over the last hundred years, all of it in its political context. As Herzfeld points out, laography begins with the emergence of the modern Greek state from the revolution of 1821 and the need of its people to establish a cultural continuity with the Greeks of antiquity and of medieval Byzantium. Greek folklorists sought traces of antiquity in the customs, lore, and folksongs of the people.

This same effort led also to the attempt, which still plagues modern Greece, to purify the Greek language (*Katharevousa*), and set up the Hellenist and Romeic ideological confrontation. Modern Greek still suffers from this division between classical purists and a more introspective identification with Byzantium and its glories. There is not one language in Greece; there are five. There is *archaezousa*, an almost classical Greek used only by a few extremists; *katharevousa*, a language cleansed of

foreign intrusions with classical verb declensions; *kathomitoumeni*, the language of the better newspapers; *demoiki*, the people's language and the language of modern Greek poetry; and *maliari*, a language of the urban slums. All carry a political connotation, and it was only recently that demotic was designated by the government as the official language, although *katharevousa* remains the language of many Greek university professors of the old school. In the 1950s and 1960s one's political orientation could be determined simply by the declension of the word for "government"—the Right preferred *tis kivermiseos*; the Left insisted on *tis kivernisis*. Even the great Greek writer Kazantzakis was accused of Communist sympathies in the 1950s for his use of the demotic in his novels. The Katharevousiotes and the Demoticists differed not only in their political ideologies, but, as Herzfeld points out, in their reading of Greek history, "the Greeks' place in the world and...the Greek scholars' place among the people."

The politicization of language in Greece is a remarkable phenomenon.

Reverence for an ancient past and insistence on a continuity between ancient and modern Greeks, exaggerated by the identity crisis of a people long without an independent nation, led to the strong ideological tilt of Greek folklore studies. As Herzfeld demonstrates, Greek folklorists were given to doctoring texts and committing outright forgery when it served their hellenist purposes. His description of the evolution of laography from Spyridon Zambelios (1813?-81) through the non-Greek Dora d'Istria (1828-88) and the disreputable forger, Michael Lelekos (who published mostly in the 1850s and 1860s), to the towering father of modern Greek laography, Nikolaos Politis (1852-1921), is a fascinating study of the struggle to place Greek folklore studies on a modern "scientific" basis—which has yet to be achieved in full.

Herzfeld's book is an excellent introduction to the passion of the Greek mind and the excesses and hyperbole to which it is prone—at least in official quarters. Demagoguery comes easy to Greek political leaders, and the reasons for this are not hard to find in Herzfeld's study of Greek laography. If Herzfeld is

to be faulted, apart from his lackluster prose, it is in his excessive and gushing admiration for Nikolaos Politis, who dominates the book. While Herzfeld's analysis clearly shows that even the great Politis was not above some scholarly chicanery—especially over the change of "yours" to "ours" in the "Song of Hagia Sophia," with which he went along while knowing better—Herzfeld bends over backwards to find excuses for him. The fact is that Politis was a major and uncompromising exponent of the irredentist Great Idea, which led to the disastrous war with Turkey in 1922; and it is not convincing for Herzfeld to excuse Politis's acceptance and propagation of the "ours" version as "an act of *carelessness prompted...by patriotic enthusiasm...a rare lapse...an exception to Politis' long record of painstaking scholarship*" (emphasis added). Politis clearly knew what he was doing, and his doing it is easily accounted for by Herzfeld's own analysis of a Hellenism that easily tips over into boundless chauvinism.

Herzfeld closes his book with an all-too-brief Epilogue in which he mentions without examining them the

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"rebetika songs of the underworld and the urban slums"; and also recent neo-Marxian folklore analyses by Greek scholars in the Romeic tradition without its Christian trappings. Perhaps that will be the subject of another book. This one ends with the catastrophe of the Great Idea in 1922. Still, the book is important for any student of modern Greece and deserves wide currency—and particularly in Greece, where it is badly needed. [WV]

TOLSTOY IN THE SIXTIES

by **Boris Eikhenbaum**

(translated by Duffield White; Ardis Publishers [Ann Arbor, Mich.]; 255 pp.; \$25.00)

TOLSTOY IN THE SEVENTIES

by **Boris Eikhenbaum**

(translated by Albert Kaspin; Ardis; 174 pp.; \$22.50)

Philip Sicker

"Regardless of what I do," Leo Tolstoy wrote to a friend in 1874, "I am convinced that...the whole world will perish if I stop." The messianic need to untie "the main knot of life" that spurred Tolstoy to *War and Peace* during the '60s and *Anna Karenina* during the '70s also drove him to self-loathing and despair, almost to madness, during periods of intellectual confusion. Even during interludes of self-imposed exile at his ancestral estate, Yasnaya Polyana, he could not tolerate the idea that anything important in Russia might occur without his participation or intervention. Even less could he tolerate affiliation with any narrowly codified political ideology or philosophy. As the late Russian critic Boris Eikhenbaum stresses in his newly translated biography, Tolstoy's worldview is not a system but, rather, an "alloy" of ideas assimilated from an astonishing range of sources—from Schopenhauer to the mathematician Urusov, and from German populism to Slavic folklore. Both as artist and political man, Tolstoy cultivated enemies from all camps as he guarded his originality. Thus, he reviles the liberal intelligentsia for its belief in historical progress, science, and egalitarian reform, yet he refuses to join the Slavophiles in their retreat from Western learning and their cult of folk-

mysticism. From the Left he is declared a "reactionary," from the Right a "nihilist." Always he is looked upon as "a suspect renegade" or "an eccentric, a crank" as he formulates iconoclastic, often self-contradictory, theories on art, education, history, class structure, women's rights, religion, economics, farming, etc. And always, in his private writings, he rebukes himself for not doing enough.

Unlike the contemporary biographer cum psychoanalyst, Eikhenbaum is content simply to present Tolstoy's megalomania without probing its roots. Rather, he sets his subject against a vast and complex intellectual background to present a Russian historical Tolstoy with whom most Western readers are totally unfamiliar. This sense of unfamiliarity results not simply from Eikhenbaum's reliance upon a distinctively Russian intellectual atmosphere, but from his methodology. Before undertaking the Tolstoy biography in the 1920s, Eikhenbaum helped to found the so-called "Russian formalist" school of literary criticism. At its inception, formalism sought to free literary studies from all extraneous political and psychological concerns, to isolate for investigation in a poem or novel those devices and effects that were purely artistic.

The young Eikhenbaum took particular issue with Marxist notions about literature's dependence upon socio-cultural environment, notions that prevailed among the official Soviet establishment. Responding in part to government pressure, Eikhenbaum gradually turned away from "pure" literary criticism and sought to bridge the gap between Marxists and formalists in the concept of "literary environment." Beginning his biographical work in this hybrid mode with *The Young Tolstoy* and *Tolstoy in the Fifties*, Eikhenbaum found the intellectual atmosphere richest during Tolstoy's mature years. Blending conventional biography, social history, and literary analysis, as Tolstoy himself sometimes did, these volumes on the '60s and '70s trace the development not merely of a single feverish intellect, but of the Russian intelligentsia during two decades of the nineteenth century.

Eikhenbaum's technique serves him best when he is exploring the complex genius of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, novels which themselves

seek to fuse diverse literary, social, and political elements into an artistic whole. Nowhere are Tolstoy's conflicting interests revealed more clearly than in his transformation of *War and Peace* from a light domestic study (originally entitled *All's Well That Ends Well*) to a national epic and, finally, to a work of visionary historicism. And nowhere is the moral struggle in Tolstoy between intellectual misogyny and deeper compassion more evident than in Anna's conceptual evolution from a "disgusting woman, a female Cain" to a victim of circumstance. Of the novelist's own turbulent marriage, of the night terror that gripped him in 1869, of his suicidal depression in the mid-70s and the crisis of faith that he would record in *Confession*, we catch only fleeting glimpses. In Eikhenbaum's account, Tolstoy's struggle with these inner demons is always subordinate to the intellectual battles that he fought, in journals and in letters, with men like Turgenev, Chernyshevsky, and Chicherin. In what emerges as a recurrent pattern, Tolstoy's early admiration of each of these men turns to frustration and ends in bitter polemic. Eikhenbaum documents these struggles brilliantly, though often at exhaustive length and with a disarming plethora of evidence. If this technique occasionally borders on methodological overkill, it nevertheless enables Eikhenbaum to unravel the numerous intellectual filaments that Tolstoy spun into his writings, and, more important, to reveal, beneath all contradictions, a consistency, even a unity, in his thinking that few of the novelist's contemporaries would grant. Tolstoy, whether he is writing *War and Peace*, teaching peasant children at his school, or traveling in Germany, is at all times for Eikhenbaum both an "archaist," whose faith is grounded in Russia's traditional customs and class structure, and a "man of the sixties," who "did not retreat from contemporary life, but struggled against it and sometimes even used its means."

In welcoming these translations of books written during the 1930s, one only regrets that Eikhenbaum, frustrated by the Soviet establishment and in ill health, was unable to extend the biography into the 1880s to trace, as he had planned, Tolstoy's spiritual recovery, repudiation of literature, and turn to religion. Still, these long-anticipated volumes add immeasurably to our understanding of a life so multifarious