

Edward Wasiolek, ed.
CRITICAL ESSAYS ON TOLSTOY
Boston: G. K. Hall, 1986. Pp. 200, \$35.00
Reviewed by Vasa D. Mihailovich

Relatively modest in size yet containing some of the most important essays on Leo Tolstoy, both translated from Russian and written in English, this collection offers a wide spectrum of opinions on the great Russian master, both the man and the writer. The book is divided into five uneven sections: Biography, Reminiscences, and Reception; Early stories; *War and Peace*; *Anna Karenina*; and Late Novels. The biographical segment, as well as those on early stories and late novels, are overshadowed, understandably, by the critical examination of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*. Each section of criticism contains full-length articles and essays as well as reviews. Some of the latter are brief or extracted, yet the editor has skillfully selected pertinent passages that touch upon the most salient features of the work in question. The choice of the authors represented shows an equally wide spectrum that illuminates Tolstoy from many angles. In one section, for example, we find pieces by Henry James, Lenin, Virginia Woolf, and Maxim Gorky—juxtaposed in that order. Even though such eclecticism may give the impression of artificial versatility, it nevertheless affords a multi-faceted picture of a writer of such stature as Tolstoy that is the only satisfactory one. Other notable critics included are Chernishevsky, Dostoevsky, Turgenev, Merezhkovsky, Eikhenbaum, Percy Lubbock, E. M. Forster, Isaiah Berlin, George Steiner, Matthew Arnold, Lionel Trilling, and the editor of the book himself, Wasiolek. Undoubtedly, some other notables could have been included or used as substitutes, but that is the fate of a collection of this kind. As it is, the book offers an ample selection of critical views in general and evaluations of Tolstoy in particular.

It would be very difficult, perhaps even impertinent, to evaluate in a limited space these critical writings, some of which have withstood the test of more than a century. Each contributes in its own way a piece toward a kaleidoscopic portrait of Tolstoy. If there is room for criticism, it is in the fact—undoubtedly dictated by the scope of the book—that some essays had to be abbreviated, such as Berlin's long essay "The Hedgehog and the Fox." All in all, this is an extremely valuable collection, expertly and sensitively selected and edited.

One may question the necessity of yet another book of criticism of Tolstoy, especially when it is composed of reprints. It is never enough, however, when giants of world literature are concerned. Some of the included essays have been barely accessible lately; others that are considered classics *sui generis* should be reevaluated by every new generation of readers. If for no other reason, that alone makes this book a valuable tool in the further study of Tolstoy and Russian literature in general.

Bridget Connelly
ARAB FOLK EPIC AND IDENTITY
Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986. Pp. 328
Reviewed by Issa J. Boullata

Based on fieldwork done in Egypt and Tunisia and on meticulous research that took cognizance of all available scholarship, this book is an interpretive study of the Arab epic known as *Sirat Bani Hilal* which tells the story of the migratory trek of the Hilal tribe in the 10th and 11th centuries out of Arabia to Egypt, Sudan, and the Maghrib.

Bridget Connelly has recognized the importance of this epic, not merely as a written text, but as a living oral tradition still popular in Egypt and North Africa where, for generations,