

characters almost all die; as Seton observes in the story "Silver-spot," "there are no hospitals for sick crows." Morley, however, should be applauded for squelching the Polk-Atwood myth that Seton's stories therefore support their theory that Canadians are victims or losers. As she points out, "Seton's consuming interest in his stories lies in *the individual hero*," in animals "of unusual gifts and achievements," in "the real personality of the animal and its view of life rather than the ways of the species," in creatures "who excite our admiration in the highest degree." A hero, whether dead or alive, is neither victim nor loser.

The stories, selected because she regards them as among Seton's best with a Canadian setting, amply prove her point. The first five are from Seton's first collection, *Wild Animals I Have Known*. Silver-spot the crow, Raggylug the Cottontail rabbit, Bingo the dog, the Springfield fox and Redruff the partridge all engage our admiration for their exceptional courage, cleverness, and beauty. With the deaths of these heroic leaders, often through the agency of man, the entire society they have led passes away. Without being sentimental Seton bemoans man's needless destruction. "The Winnipeg Wolf" (from *Animal Heroes*) and "Krag, the Kootenay Ram" (from *Lives of the Hunted*) also stress that the hunted are more admirable than the hunters; in "The Wild Geese of Wyndygoul" (from *Wild Animal Ways*) the lifelong fidelity of the gander and his mate overcomes the interference of the author who has pinioned them.

Morley is perhaps more admiring of Seton's literary skills than other readers may be. Although one cannot deny that "his animal protagonists are dramatically rendered with a fine sense of detail, delightful humour, and simple yet vivid language," the stories lack the formal unity and vivid descriptions of natural setting found in Roberts's tales. As a naturalist who wanted to present his scientific observations in an attractive form, Seton chose a loose, episodic structure which enabled him to describe the training and development of his animal characters at all stages of their lives. This approach also has the advantage that it permits him to alter the mood radically within one story, from the comic to the horrific in "The Winnipeg Wolf," for example. However, it does not allow that intensity Roberts achieves by integrating all the parts in order to create a single

dramatic effect. Nevertheless, this volume should still engage the attention of adults who remember Seton only as a writer for children.

Winnifred M. Bogaards

ERROL TRZEBINSKI

Silence Will Speak: A Study of the Life of Denys Finch Hatton and his Relationship with Karen Blixen
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977. Pp. 348. \$15.00.

There can be no pretending that this is a well-written book, or even a necessary one; but to admirers of Isak Dinesen it is unquestionably an irresistible one. Errol Trzebinski has chosen an impossible subject—the legendary Denys Finch Hatton, dearest friend (lover?) of Karen Blixen—and left the mystery of this man and their relationship virtually intact. It is not entirely Trzebinski's fault. Finch Hatton seemed determined to leave as little of himself behind as he could, so that what is left simply raises more questions than it answers. The biographer's fear, in the introduction, that he will seem "too good to be true" is well founded. Finch Hatton begins and ends maddeningly "pure." Because there is so little to be known about him, the reader is tempted to entertain doubts where none may have previously existed. What secret impulses made him such a wanderer, such a loner, such a daredevil? Was he possessed by vanity, driven by demons? How inhibited were his desires? Just what *was* his relationship with Karen Blixen? This crucial question remains unanswered.

One is left with the curious impression that Karen Blixen was, after all, never really at home in Africa, that she suffered from intense loneliness that may account for her adoration of Finch Hatton. He, however, was perfectly at home there, and this, perhaps, is what stood between them. She tried to absorb it, whereas he let it absorb him. She projected onto it; he took it for what it was.

This study is at its best when it deals with its subject through Karen Blixen herself and Blixen's own writings. What mars much of the book is a fussy attention to every scrap of detail about Finch Hatton and a tendency to fall into the "must-have" school of biography (Dinesen's own off-hand account of a close encounter with marauding lions belies, says Trzebinski, the "sense of nightmare fear and urgency she must have felt").

All this aside, there is much in this book to attract anyone who is fascinated by the Dinesen enigma. Whenever she is on stage, the reading is worthwhile. Although Errol Trzebinski fails to deliver the one big piece of the puzzle as promised, there are compensations in some of the lesser pieces produced in this study. It is interesting, for example, to learn that Dinesen had more than a passing acquaintance with drugs, that she had contemplated suicide, that she could be mercurial in her emotions and possessive in her personal relationships.

Finally, one comes to Finch Hatton's death and Dinesen's removal from the Farm with almost a sense of relief, as if the path has at last been cleared for her to get on with the business for which she did truly seem destined. She needed to suffer in order to mature; and once Africa, which was really a prolonged adolescence for her, was behind her, her artistic genius matured unfettered. She was free at last to turn her African experience into the metaphor that would release her artistic consciousness.

All considered, Errol Trzebinski has done about the best one could with the available material.

Thomas Whissen

RICHARD M. DORSON
Folktales Told around the World
Chicago: The University of
Chicago Press, 1975. Phoenix
Edition, 1978. Pp. 622.

Richard M. Dorson is an eminent scholar who has made a valuable contribution to American and European folklore studies. His latest publication, a collection of folk-

tales from forty-six countries, is a highly scholarly work which is also amusing and entertaining. This is the largest one-volume collection of folktales that has been published lately; it includes tales from fifteen European countries as well as a considerable number from America (Canada is represented by ten tales), the Middle East, Asia, Oceania, and Africa.

In answering the question whether a collection of such tales be based on oral sources or on printed versions, Dorson decides in favor of oral tradition. For this reason most of the tales collected in this volume are published here for the first time. Dorson does not restrict himself to the acknowledged genres such as legend and fairy tale, but includes all forms of folk narratives (he even inserts a few jokes for he believes that a joke becomes a folktale when it is told often enough and endures the passing of time).

Each of these tales is preceded by useful bibliographical data and historical information as well as critical comments regarding the tale's extrinsic and intrinsic characteristics. The tales themselves are narrated exactly as they have been handed down by oral tradition and without any attempt on Dorson's part to improve their "literary quality and narrative artistry."

The book also includes some valuable indexes ("Index of Motifs," "Index of Tale Types," "Index of Bibliographic Items," "Index of Collections," and a "General Index"; a "List of Narrators" and pertinent information concerning the forty-four folklorists who contributed to this volume are also included.

Laszlo Szabo

MARIAN ENGEL
The Glassy Sea
Toronto: McClelland & Stewart,
1978. Pp. 167.

The author of *Bear*, in which a woman ironically commenting on original sin and hungering for psycho-sexual nourishment attempts to seduce a fortunately unwilling bear in a wilderness hermitage fur-