

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

Laszlo Szabo

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.

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-

nished with volumes of Hume and Milton, provides the reader of *The Glassy Sea* with another account of a woman's "dark night of the soul," in the language of the dust jacket. A middle-aged Anglican nun, Marguerite Heber (from the French "Hebert" [sic]), a "lost" (p. 60) woman of "unlosable innocence" (p. 141) who has "felt the metaphysic" of "the rose-world" (p. 19), records her life, from a childhood in a Non-Conformist Ontario home of "no nonsense, no romance" (p. 20), followed by brilliant studies in English literature at a Baptist college, to her joining a group of religious in a Victorian pseudo-medieval Anglican convent in London, Ontario, where nuns wear exquisitely silken underwear, to her experience of the delights and travails of "going on the Pill," then becoming the wife of a "life-denying" (p. 118) provincial politician, the mother of a hydrocephalic boy who dies, and a graduate student in philosophy who cannot remember what is meant by Occam's Razor, to the life of a promiscuous divorcee and a drunkard and, presently, of a Mother Superior of a modernized Anglican convent to be dedicated to mental health (there is to be a resident psychologist) and social relevance.

The novel has a few merits, principally of lyricism. The passages describing scenes of Prince Edward Island, where the protagonist prudently chooses to go no more than ankle-deep in "the glassy sea," are moving in their simplicity and music. There is much, however, that is less admirable. Berkeley, Woolf, Freud, Charles Williams, Keats, Byron, Arminius, Crashaw, Husserl, William Morris, Pelagius, Wells, Hopkins, Wordsworth, George Eliot, Pascal, T. S. Eliot, Robert Browning, Sartre, the German Expressionists, Chaucer, Bridges, Donne, the Surrealists, Augustine, Herbert, Strachey, Kierkegaard, Pusey, Trollope, the Structuralists, Heidegger, Newman, Dionysus [sic] the Aereopagite, and Jung—all are named to suggest that Marguerite Heber is, at the very least, an industrious reader with a pronounced thirst for ideas. From such a catalogue of genius, one might expect that she has learned to understand thought. But no. For example: her spiritual life, considered from an intellectual point of vantage, centers on the Pelagius-Augustine debate regarding human perfectibility. With "Mary Pelagia" as her religious name, she reads the work of her namesake. Subsequently, however, she explains that Calvinists are Pelagians (p. 78, e.g.),

and that to reject Pelagianism is to reject original sin: "I felt that it was only by rejecting . . . original sin that I could cope with him [her son]. He taught me to be, if not an existentialist, at least to cease to be a Pelagian" (p. 123). The proposition is as "infantile" as are her papers in philosophy (p. 113), for the fundamental principle of Pelagius's thought is the denial of the doctrine of original sin; and without original sin there is no Calvinism. The reader sees that, as Marguerite Heber confesses, she, unlike the professor in Anthony Burgess's *The Wanting Seed*, hankers for a competency in philosophy which eludes her. This much is quite convincing. On another occasion, the protagonist refers to Kierkegaard, then offers that "it would be more useful to be an existentialist than to be a Christian" (p. 122). Perhaps the irony of ignorance is worked at the expense of the character, as in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, where the ostensibly brilliant logician confuses Aristotle with his Renaissance adversary, Petrus Ramus (I, i). Unfortunately for the creator of Marguerite Heber, however, a young Brother who confounds this confused woman with his concise syllogisms repeats the Pelagian-Calvinist nonsense cited above (p. 152). He suggests another source for the nescience. Somewhat mystifying also is the absence of any reference to the theologians so popular during this character's lifetime. Deitrich Bonhoeffer, William Hamilton, Karl Barth, Paul Van Buren, Paul Tillich, Martin Buber, John A. T. Robinson, and Harvey Cox, for example, are not mentioned. The omission of the last is particularly striking in view of the fact that his book of sociological theology, *The Secular City*, clearly anticipates the vagaries of Marguerite's spiritual life. "Everything is vague," she tells us (p. 40). In addition, there is no reference to the classical treatises of theology on the active and the contemplative life—a curious omission in this tale of a woman caught, as the reader is continually reminded, between Martha and Mary.

Partly as a consequence of such nescience, perhaps, the unwitting ironies of the novel are sometimes distressing. For example: nuns ask of their Mother Superior, "make us happy—and therefore good" (p. 79). The doctrine implied here, one prefigured in the Pelagian monster identifying himself with Satan in *Frankenstein* ("Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous" [Bantam, 1967, p. 84]), is hardly compatible with Christianity. The character's confusion

of thought flows from her judging ideas by their sound: "It was the hymns that made the theology, not the preaching" (p. 28). As her psychologist observes, "the reason why music goes with religion . . . is that it is also anti-rational" (p. 10). The reader may very well doze off while reflecting on the thoughts of this woman who invariably falls asleep when reading Pascal, who had declared "philosophy not worth an hour of trouble" (*Pensée* 174). As rendered by the protagonist of *The Glassy Sea*, philosophy does not merit half that much study. Marguerite Heber indulges in "marvellous discussions of metaphysics" (p. 53), but the author never chooses to have her character articulate these for our intelligence and entertainment.

The Glassy Sea, a volume of "clouds of unknowing" (p. 157), in which sexual orgasm and mystical experiences are treated as "syntheses" (p. 19), mirrors a "lazy" (p. 59) "cluttered mind" (p. 153) reflecting on itself in a manner much inferior to Rilke's. For Rilke, who provides the epigraph of the novel, as for Engel's protagonist, God becomes a "tendency of the heart"; and, as in Rilke's *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*, which mirrors the progress of a soul from debasement to the possibility of unspeakable bliss, the integration of unknowing owes more to Jung than to theology. As Erich Fromm writes in *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, "Needless to say, in the logic of Jung's thinking insanity would have to be called an eminently religious phenomenon" (New Haven, 1959, p. 18). The author, perhaps, like her character, hankers after a discipline which eludes her. If, in the words of *The Glassy Sea*, "the essence of philosophy is logic" (p. 49), she "should never even have tried philosophy" (p. 154). Marguerite is much more at home in a world that makes few demands on intelligence: "There's apparently a greed for sex that comes and goes" (p. 141), she offers for our meditation.

Camille R. La Bossière

LARS HARTVEIT
*The Art of Persuasion:
 A Study of Six Novels*
 Bergen: Universitetsforlaget,
 1977. Pp. 152.

In his conclusion the author concedes or warns, "It is easy to over-elaborate the art of persuasion." (Easy for the critic, he means, though the sentence is ambiguous.) "All verbal communication is in the last resort a matter of persuasion" (p. 133). By then he has conducted the reader through *Pamela I*, *Silas Marner*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *A Passage to India*, *Brighton Rock*, *A Clockwork Orange*, revealing in them different "aspects" of the art. The choice of novels is "partly arbitrary, partly personal"; some are "old friends" (p. 7). A Forsterian conception, post-Leavis in analytic detail, and a Boothian interest in point of view.

Richardson is shown to have sought, unsuccessfully, how to fuse overt didactic purpose with convincing characterization ("Pamela as an exemplary character and Pamela as a character in her own right" [p. 16]). In *Silas Marner* the author's didactic impulse is woven into the patterns of imagery, principally of the open/closed door. The art of persuasion depends largely on authorial control of point of view. Hardy's dilemma to reconcile "his dogmatic need for inarticulate characters, who illustrate the view that man is a tiny creature that blindly collides with an inscrutable fate, with his need for a character who can perceive and articulate this bleak vision" (p. 50) is overcome by a sharing of narrative point of view with a central character—an interested spectator-victim, Elizabeth-Jane Newsom/Henchard/Farfrae. Forster varies the nature and degree of authorial involvement: he persuades through "accent"—modulating two "tones," symbolic-poetic and matter-of-fact ironic, to show that cultural differences put harmony between colonial and native always just out of reach—and by "design"—the evocation of India and human existence is with all the effects of elusiveness a conscious achievement of form. Greene, in contrast, is continuously present in his narrative, directing the reader to see tawdry Brighton as a battleground of Good and Evil: the novelist has taken over as persuader. Moral considerations are inapplicable in *A Clockwork Orange*; we are