

Probably the best tale of all, in terms of sheer storytelling, is "Anna." Set in Sicily in the last century, this story has everything—sharply defined characters, intrigue, romance, mystery—everything, that is, but an ending. Dinesen left it unfinished, but those who know and love Dinesen may prefer it that way. She herself has suggested that the last page should be blank, for upon the blank page all is revealed.

Two stories in the collection pose problems for Dinesen enthusiasts. "The Ghost Horses," one of her "dreaming child" stories, reinforces the suspicion some have that she was obsessed with royalty; and "The Proud Lady," the story of a persecuted aristocrat at the time of the French Revolution, tries but fails to justify tyranny in the name of divine necessity. "The Bear and the Kiss" is more of a puzzle than a problem. A curiously obscure story, it lacks the power but not the imagination of her *Seven Gothic Tales*.

The volume ends with the very last tale Dinesen ever wrote, "Second Meeting," a lean and moving story of Lord Byron's second meeting with his double, just before Byron is about to go off to Greece to die. It is Dinesen at her best and fitting conclusion to a collection of tales that rank among her best.

Thomas Whissen

GUSTAVO ALVAREZ
GARDEAZABAL

E titiritero

Bogotá: Plaza y Janés, 1977.
Pp. 269.

El titiritero is the fifth novel that this young and talented Colombian writer has published, and each of his works demonstrates the continual development of Alvarez Gardeazabal's narrative art. His latest novel is divided into some 45 chapters or sections that develop six separate narrations. The chapters are not numbered in sequence, but simply indicate to which of the six narratives they pertain. Although

the narrations are fragmented and interspersed throughout the novel, *El titiritero* is symmetrical and ordered. This organizational configuration allows the author to present several different versions of the causes and effects of a violent confrontation between students at a university and armed soldiers. The style of the different narrations varies considerably and this creates a very dynamic effect.

The novel's tempo and tension gradually increase as the reader begins to understand the complex implications of different acts, and gains a comprehensive view of events. This progressive revelation of key facts and episodes is very skillfully handled and completely captures the reader. We learn near the end of the novel that one of the narrators is a dead student who was killed in the riots. Another is a patient in a psychiatric hospital and, as we proceed through the work, we learn of the events that lead to her commitment and retreat into insanity. One of the most unusual and humorous narrations is that of a professor who claims to be the author of the book we are reading.

The major events in *El titiritero* revolve around the conflict in a university and the eventual seizure of power by revolutionary elements. The multiple presentation of events makes the reader very aware of the elusive nature of truth and of the many ironies of history. A student who was killed in the riots becomes a martyr and solemn ceremonies are performed each year to commemorate his death. No one seems to know or care that he was not politically active and was on his way to play volleyball when he was caught in the rioting. His fate contrasts vividly with that of the insane girl who was an activist but has been forgotten and ignored. It is doubtful that this novel will please anyone involved in Colombian politics for the work exposes the callous and opportunistic nature of the drive for power.

Although the central focus of *El titiritero* is the turmoil at the university, there is a subplot or concern of considerable interest. The narration by the professor constitutes a marvelous parody of the experimental novel. The professor-author continually assures his reader that he will not confuse him, and that despite the fragmented nature of the novel his intent is not to deceive. He even apologizes at times for specific chapters and asks the reader to bear with his poetic or fanciful moods. Gardeazabal even extends the parody to

himself and his works. This humorous and often ironical view prevents the tragedy in the novel from overwhelming the reader. Many of the sections are narrated in the first person singular and this intimacy is counterbalanced by the distancing effect of the humor. This combination is one of the most attractive and dynamic aspects of *El titiritero*, an exceptional work by a writer whose youth and talent offer a promising future.

Raymond D. Souza

JENNIFER WAELTI-WALTERS
Michel Butor: A Study of his View of the World and a Panorama of his Work 1954-1974.
Victoria, B.C.: Sono Nis Press, 1977. Pp. 159.

In the very first pages of her study, Professor Waelti-Walters informs the readers that she intends to present a synthesis of the totality of Butor's oeuvre rather than an analysis of its individual components. Thus a whole variety of themes, resonances, and echoes appear in her overview, which encompasses the Butorian production of the last two decades. She derives the very schema for her critique from Butor's own pattern as it appears in the review *L'Arc*, No. 39.

Her first chapter deals with main themes and interrelations such as the position of man in the world as well as the writer's role and situation. The sub-themes derive from the dichotomy between reality and dream, time and space, imagination and the expression of reality. Ms. Waelti-Walters sees an evolution from Butor's early *Passage de Milan* (1954) to the later phase which begins at the onset of *Portrait de l'artiste en Jeune Singe* (1967). The fictional universe is seen as a microcosm of the author's self conception. The first few novels indicate a split as expressed by the divided identity theme typified by a mythical rebel hero or antihero such as Horace Buck, Cain and Abel, or Faust.

In *Portrait de l'artiste* Butor speaks in his own name indicating a more integrated fusion of his self and a realization of the connection between history and literature. The emphasis is on the tightly interwoven character of this fiction, and on the echoes and relationship themes which reverberate in all his books.

The second chapter, "Arts et Métiers," presents the juxtaposition in Butor's art, his insistence on the baffling complexity of the world and the didactic mission of the writer who seeks to involve the reader in the novelistic process. Ms. Waelti-Walters elucidates the harmonic patterns: culture seen as a museum in the context of a time and space continuum. The third division is entitled "Sites" and locates man in relation to himself, his surroundings, and other people. The geographical locations allude to a deeper network of significance. The fourth chapter, "Musées," deals with Butor's hermetic quality which comes to the fore especially in *Portrait de l'artiste*. The museums as typified by the German Harburg castle provide a strong link with Alchemy, the *Book of Dreams*, Mann's *Joseph in Egypt*. Butor sees museums as dynamic centers of culture and takes upon himself the role of a Mentor amidst their mazes.

"Spectacles" is the fifth chapter. There again Ms. Waelti-Walters distinguishes between imaginary and real plays such as *Votre Faust*, *Mobile*, and *Où*, a Zuni dance celebration which is a total experience embodying religious beliefs, music, decoration, and myth. Spectacles are seen as collaborative performances with ritual involvement of the collectivity. The sixth chapter "Livres" sees the novel as a tool for linking the past to the future and a way to a new and greater realism. The public must learn to look for a deeper meaning and decipher the subtlest clue. Quotations and influence play a major part in an intricate literature interwoven with a rich pattern of structures.

Literature is considered as a social force which leads towards greater awareness. Like the spectacles, sites, and museums which represent artifacts of the past, the book must incorporate these elements in a creation of the present.

The seventh and last chapter deals with man's place in the modern world. The reader, like the author, must undergo his own journey or quest. He must be cognizant of the past; learn the myths of his culture.