

*Presumptuous Girls'* early and concluding chapters are strongest. In between, Zeman copes with problems of social class and religious concerns, both of which cause her some difficulty. Zeman claims that "The novel in English is a middle-class affair" (p. 73), and she attempts, incorrectly, to include U. S. novels in the generalization. In fact, her references to novels and writers from the United States, which frequently seem to have been inserted as an afterthought, seem curiously inappropriate in context, and might better have been omitted. There are more than plenty British novels by women for her to cover. Zeman's discussion of religious attitudes among women writers is superficial, focusing most closely on the Brontës and George Eliot.

With one other exception, Zeman's work seems carefully documented and fully supported. This one exception is her willingness to conjecture anachronistically about an author's beliefs. Commenting on the self-sacrifice demanded of the contemporary housewife, Zeman concludes that "Jane Austen would most strongly have disapproved the immorality of all this . . ." (p. 144).

Best of all about *Presumptuous Girls* and one of many qualities that make the book worth reading is Zeman's delightful wit. Her metaphor for the English middle class, "a huge well-lit aviary, with its multi-coloured inhabitants fluttering in a semblance of freedom among the higher and lower branches and perches" (p. 73), is aptly drawn, especially since she mourns that "middle class" should ever have been "used as a term of abuse" (p. 73). Humor frequently emphasizes the good sense of Zeman's remarks. For instance, she writes that "Even in 1848, a wife whose attitude to motherhood was expressed by remarking 'God has given me a soul to educate for Heaven' should not have been surprised if her husband spent most of his time away from home" (p. 53). Finally, Zeman uses humor to examine problems objectively yet sympathetically. In describing the rising consciousness of adolescent females in the nineteenth century, Zeman puts it this way: "They must have been a nuisance; great girls wandering about in the night air looking at the stars instead of staying warm indoors and keeping things cheerful; writing diaries and wanting to read bits of them aloud; lurking in their rooms; complaining of being bored; wanting intense conversations with their ad-

mirers; expecting their admirers to be interested in their views" (p. 32).

Mary Beth Pringle

## ISAK DINESEN

### *Carnival: Entertainments and Posthumous Tales*

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977. Pp. 338. \$10.00.

Dinesen lovers will rejoice over *Carnival*, a collection of eleven Dinesen stories that either have been out of print or never before published. All but three of them were written originally in English, and those three have been sensitively translated by P. M. Mitchell and W. D. Paden. The stories, spanning half a century of creative effort, are of mixed quality, but all bear the inimitable Dinesen touch. All the familiar Dinesen themes are there: the double, the reality of the imagination, sorcery, the fusion of impulse and action, and above all, the joyful surrender to merciless destiny.

Two stories written in 1909 anticipate Dinesen's skill at plot twists. "The de Cats Family" develops the idea that a respectable family needs a black sheep to keep it respectable, and "Uncle Theodore" tells of an impoverished young nobleman who "invents" a rich uncle who turns out to be real. Both stories have a charm and clarity that is unfortunately missing from "Carnival," the title piece. This story of eight people who pool their incomes and then draw lots so that the winner may live for a year as he pleases is too contrived and digressive.

"The Last Day," originally intended to be included in *Winter's Tales* (see *IFR*, 3, 1976, 57-61), is more in the Dinesen stride. In this story-within-a-story, a dying old man and an exiled young man learn of love and loyalty from another of Dinesen's provocative young heroines. Two similar heroines appear in "Uncle Seneca" and "The Fat Man," both mystery stories; the first about Jack the Ripper, "an immortal name which ought to have a person to it" (p. 209), the second about a child murderer who is tricked into a tacit confession.

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