

poems.

The use of coyote in the title reminds readers who know the personality of this trickster of his duplicity. As Schöler points out, coyote in various forms is present in each of the writers in the anthology; so too is coyote a pervasive force in the universe: the force of human greed as well as folly. Schöler calls Coyote “a symbol of the unfailing and indomitable creative spirit that characterizes contemporary Native American writers.” As a force of greed, coyote is responsible for the present situation in the country, for it was greed that drove Europeans to steal Indian land, women, and now, the very identities and ideas of Indian writers. The folly is in the humor that many Indian writers maintain in spite of their situations. Perhaps Schöler is also satirizing the false expectation that white writers have that they can imitate Indian writers and thereby become something which they are not. Transformations are possible, but only for those who are “real” tricksters.

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**Ian Smart. *Central American Writers of West Indian Origin: A New Hispanic Literature.* (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1984) 149 pp., \$20.00; \$12.00 paper.**

Ian Smart has made, as he himself asserts in the “Author’s Foreword,” a very limited approach to the very complex body of literature written by Central American authors of West Indian origin. In fact one wonders if indeed his most insistent premises are verifiable: “the region comprises one cultural area in which common factors have forged a more or less common way of looking at life . . . share an identifiable Weltanschauung.” His emphasis lies on the commonness of the West Indian experiences which he perceives to be African. To be sure, there are many critics who would take issue with him, some of whom he does allude to. The truth is that he treads on perilous, indeed highly controversial, ground. Many critics would indeed demand that we look at the nuances of differences among the authors as a way of perceiving the complexity of the Caribbean experience. To be sure, there has been a “shared” history to a point, but it is this very juncture which makes all the difference. Generally, critically speaking, one is concerned more with those areas of differences, no matter how minute, which do indeed distinguish one entity from another.

To be sure, Smart himself is inimitably qualified to write this work since he is at once a native Trinidadian and a scholar, currently teaching Spanish at Howard University. Nevertheless, one wonders at the very

narrowness of the work, an examination principally of four authors, representing *two* countries, Panama and Costa Rica. It is from this extremely narrow sample that he derives all-inclusive generalizations. Puerto Rican authors, for example, are not ever mentioned until the concluding chapter, and then only in passing.

Another rather questionable technique used in this critical work is the author's basic approach; i.e. he begins the work with a precursory, even scanty review of several "Non-West Indian Precursors." His intent to use these authors as a contrast to the West Indian authors who are indeed "authentic"—while understandable—appears suspect in so short a critical investigation. It would appear that he would have been more convincing had he, indeed, treated *more* Carribean authors living in Central America and extracted a more conclusive generalization. In addition while this does not ultimately affect the value of the criticism itself, the many typographical errors in the text do tend to disenchant the reader.

Notwithstanding the limitations the author has imposed upon himself and the question which his primary premise invites, Smart has contributed significantly to the discipline of critical scholarship. Each chapter has been enriched with copious notes and a comprehensive bibliography has been included. While he has concentrated primarily on four authors, he has structured the work in a scholarly fashion so that the reader can follow the categories he establishes: language, religion, identity, exile, the plantation, mestizaje, interracial love, the journey. Within each category, he offers multiple examples, many of which are quotations from the texts under scrutiny. In addition, the total unity of the opus depends on his establishing the associational links between various authors and their works. Indeed, much of his study depends on this particular technique of networking. He does not, however, venture far afield from the representative authors he has chosen to study.

The book is particularly valuable to the non-Caribbean scholar, not only because it deals with Caribbean authors as reviewed by an author who is himself a product of one of the countries investigated, but also because of the generalizations he makes. He does, of course, bring to criticism a circumspect view of experience and knowledge which is in itself a new perspective. The result, obviously, is that the English-speaking reader is introduced to many concepts previously unfamiliar. For example, the novel term "green hell," while new to the uninformed reader, introduces a new and fascinating concept to be considered along with the traditional "fire and brimstone" and Dantean "Ice World" vision. Undeniably the jargon and myths appear fresh because they represent new perspectives. Often he quotes an author's Spanish, but Smart offers remarkably fine English translations, so that even the bilingual scholar does not reject the translation. The critic, then, provides a sort of gloss to the text of those poets whom he quotes. This concession to scholarship, especially for the initiate, I find particularly

valuable.

Finally then, it appears that Smart has indeed offered a scholarly work treating a very narrow sampling of Hispanic Caribbean authors writing in Central America. As valid as the study may be as related to the few authors investigated, the fact remains that one wonders at the validity of the ultimate generalization. "I see Africanness as the basis of a new culture, an identifiable Weltanschauung, 'a spirit' that is peculiarly Carribean." His avowedly central thesis embracing the entire geographical area appears to be not only a gross overgeneralization, but also one which was arrived at prior to this study and as such is assumed rather than validated by this work.

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**Dennis J. Starr. *The Italians of New Jersey: A Historical Introduction and Bibliography.* (Newark: New Jersey Historical Society, 1985) ii, 130 pp., \$14.95.**

This volume does not aim to be a definitive history of the Italians of New Jersey, but it is an excellent model of regionally grounded scholarship, offering not only the story of one state, but an excellent synthesis of the scholarship on the Italian role in that "greatest migration of peoples in history" to the new world at the end of the nineteenth century. "From 1891 to 1915 more Italians entered the United States than did immigrants from any other country."

Placing the story in comparative context, Starr states that the mass movement of Italians to the United States differed from that to Argentina and Brazil. Those who came to the U.S. were predominantly from southern Italy and "were neither as welcome nor as successful as quickly as those in the cities of Buenos Aires and Sao Paulo." Italian immigrants to the U.S. were regarded as a "source of cheap labor and maligned as a group that undermined the nation's institutions and cultural values."

Italians are the largest ethnic group of New Jersey and have left their imprint on the state's political and social history. In 1984 New Jersey had the largest (numerically and proportionally) state delegation of Italian American descent in the U.S. House of Representatives. Starr places this contemporary success story in the historical context of a twentieth century history of "Americanization" campaigns in the schools and churches, campaigns that aimed to remove "socialistic, anarchistic and plebian" characteristics from the thinking of Italians. "Americanization" contributed not only to political, but to religious disorientation: as early as 1907, Italians in Trenton celebrated the