hybridity. What each of the essays in the collection points out is that the Caribbean offers no easy answers to issues of nationhood, race, class and gender. For these critics, the Caribbean remains a space of contest: it is this contest which is instructive and deserving of further study.

MYRIAM J. A. CHANCY

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Anthony Julian Tamburri, *A Semiotic of Ethnicity: In (Re)cognition of the Italian/American Writer.* Albany: State U of New York P, 1998. Pp. xii, 176. $56.50, $18.95 pb.

A Semiotic of Ethnicity, by Anthony Julian Tamburri, is a book that had to be written. Ethnic literature needs tools of analysis, and the fact that many scholars are attempting to produce such analytical works is a sign of intellectual health and curiosity. However, I am not sure that Tamburri has succeeded in what he set out to do. If the use of a slash in the title was inspired (Tamburri refuses to hyphenate Italian-American, preferring to divide-unite these entities with a slash mark: Italian/American), his reference to "a semiotic" is not. To fit writers and their works into tidy critical compartments is to belittle both the seriousness of the critic's work and the importance of the author's freedom. In short, I am not sure that this book is about semiotics. If you remove all the convoluted sentence structure and the excessive quoting that burden these pages, the reader will find himself with a few good but poorly developed ideas.

Tamburri's position is ambiguous: he does not seem to have written this book to encourage the reader to rush out and buy the literature he discusses; nor does he want to providing new approaches to understanding ethnicity. It is as though he decided to proselytize for a cause he did not fully understand. Semiotics and semiology have their origins in what Roland Barthes referred to as *jouissance,* which is not "bliss," as it has been translated in America, but profound sexual-intellectual pleasure. Tamburri shares with us his enthusiasm for ethnicity and semiotics, but by his intellectual posturing, diminishes our pleasure in the works analyzed.

Tamburri starts from the dubious premise that ethnicity in literature is a matter of content. He seems not to realize that if ethnicity is reducible to content, then ethnicity is imitable, and anyone can be an ethnic writer. The problem here is that not everyone wants to play (or inherit) the ethnic role, and those who are not ethnics but pretend to be, usually do so for ulterior motives. Ethnicity is not a position one embraces half-heartedly. It is a prison into which "foreigners" are pushed by others. To embrace the cause of ethnicity, one must first fully comprehend the implications of this ideology, and though

Tamburri tries to explain *his* position, he never totally frees himself of American nationalism. As he result, he puts himself in the paradoxical position of praising an ideology that is at odds with his politics. This paradox becomes most evident in the last chapter of his book ("Italian/American Cultural Studies: Looking Forward"): here he admits, apparently without realizing he has done so, that to reduce ethnicity to content is to bring about the demise of ethnic literature itself. If this is the outcome of his study, Tamburri arrives at something he should have hoped to find. The problem with his results is that we are left with a handful of strategies and ideas that could very well be used by non-ethnic writers to produce artifacts that, given their authorship, we should no longer regard as "ethnic literature" at all. Whether we like it or not, if ethnic literature exists, it does so thanks to "ethnic" means of production. And although Tamburri lists in his bibliography certain books that consider the means of production, he himself does not raise this issue.

Instead, Tamburri proposes a tripartite classification of authors and texts that in fact differs very little from tripartite systems of classification introduced elsewhere by other writers, including Daniel Aaron, Charles Sanders Pierce, and Tamburri's friend, the scholar Fred Gardaphé. Tamburri admits his debt, yet one wonders, what is the point of rehashing ideas by simply changing their labels? All Tamburri does is rename what was named already. Aaron's categories (first-, second-, and third-stage writers), Pierce's processes (firstness, secondness and thirdness), and Gardaphé/Vico classifications (poetic, mythic and philosophic) become Tamburri's expressive, comparative, and synthetic writers. Tamburri has not even attempted to give another dimension to this cubic of ideas. (I am amazed he did not use those nine pre-established concepts to come up with his own Rubik's cube on ethnicity, to demonstrate how in fact ethnic literature reveals a lively world with ever-changing yet finite possibilities.)

According to Tamburri, the expressive writer is "not concerned with an adherence to or the creation of some form of objective, rhetorical literary paradigm. S/he is an expressive writer, not a paradigmatic one; his/her ethnic experiences of the more visceral kind serve more as the foundation of his/her literary signification" (p 10). An entire chapter is dedicated to Tony Ardizzone's *Evening News* in order to prove to the reader that Ardizzone is an expressive writer. The second-stage writer is called the comparative writer:

> The use of ethnicity at this second stage shifts from the expressive to the descriptive. As a rhetorical-ideological tool, ethnicity becomes much more functional and quasi descriptive. It is no longer the predominantly expressive element it is in the pre modernist, poetic writer . . . for the modernist, mythic writer ethnicity becomes more the tool with which s/he communicates his/her ideology. (p.11).

Helen Barolini's *Umbertina* is the text Tamburri uses to discuss this stage. The third-stage writer transcends the first two stages "through parody or diminution of significance of his/her expressivity, because s/he has seen 'both sides of the shield' and can therefore 'contemplate them from the outside only'" (p. 12). Tamburri analyzes, as an example of synthetic writing, Giose Rimanelli's *Benedetta in Guysterland.*

Classification is an essential tool for scholars seeking to understand the works of art that a community produces. A semotician should provide critical tools for use by other scholars, glasses we can place over our eyes in order to see the world in a different way. Tamburri's classifications, however, are too encompassing to be of use. The boundaries of his categories are so permeable that we often notice, as we are reading his explanations, that the texts slip easily from one category into another. The examples are interchangeable. Though Tamburri asserts that these classifications should not be confused with moral judgements, for example, we should not regard the expressive writer as better or worse than the synthetic writer, Tamburri does unwittingly pass moral judgements when he attempts to explain what characterizes writing in each of the specific categories.

To call Ardizzone an expressive writer, a first-stage writer, is ludicrous. Born in the USA, the child of an inter-ethnic marriage, Ardizzone stands at the extreme end of what ethnic literature is all about. (Tamburri defines ethnic literature as being "the type of writing which deals contextually with customs and behavioral patterns that the North-American mind-set may consider different" [4].) Ardizzone is a fine writer, yet to say that he is an ethnic writer is farfetched. If anything, Ardizzone is a synthetic writer, or at most, a comparative one. But an expressive writer? Where is experience as first-hand truth? Can experience be passed-on knowledge, rumors and hearsay? To label Ardizzone an expressive writer would require us to accept the possibility that non-Italian Americans can tell us what being Italian in America is all about. Invention is best, this is the conclusion we come to if we accept the hypothesis that ethnicity is content. It is equally strange to conclude that Barolini is a comparative writer or that Rimanelli is a synthetic writer. Rimanelli was born in Italy; his writings belong to a completely different reality, *even if written in English.* Rimanelli is very much an Italian writer who happens to have written a few books in English.

Another problem with Tamburri's classifications is that we don't learn much about the writing itself. We close the chapters dedicated to individual writers and realize that what we are left with is not an appreciation of Rimanelli's greatness, but with a handful of ideas concerning how, if he wants to fit into the American tradition, a writer should act, according to the ethnic principles advanced by Tamburri.

Ethnic literature exists because it was forced to exist. It exists because it survives the attacks it has had to endure. Mainstream culture accepts into its ranks only a handful of token ethnic writers. The rest are silenced. It is this silence that must be analyzed. Ethnic literature makes sense only if we see it as the most radical expression of modern literature and culture. To reduce this voice to content, to pin pretty labels onto it, is to denaturalize it. Ethnic literature is centrifugal in spirit. It moves away from all nationalisms and national cultures. The only way to analyze it is by studying the works individually, very much as Roland Barthes did in *S/Z*. Tamburri's work is significant in that it points to the limitations of group studies when it comes to literature, ethnic or not. Better to study ethnic writers individually. Then we will realize that ethnic literature is the joyful expression of a person's free mind.

ANTONIO D'ALONSO

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Ronald Reichertz. *The Making of the Alice Books: Lewis Carroll's Use of Earlier Children's Literature.* Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1997. Pp. x, 251. $55.00.

In *The Making of the Alice Books*, Ronald Reichertz sets out to show how three different "general literary topoi and forms" (4) influenced the form and content of the Alice books. They are the "world upside down books," didactic "looking-glass books," and the dream vision, all genres found in children's literature by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Reichertz' text itself is rather short, a mere 78 pages. The rest is given over to an interesting selection of excerpts from many of the sources referred to in the text.

The first two chapters are mainly introductory: they review previous Carroll criticism and provide a general discussion of the "specific sources and analogues"(13). Reichertz' premise, that the critic can find analogues of his three topoi in the Alice books, is based on what we might call the "rag-bag" or "litter" (recollections, readings, etc.) of Carroll's mind and the ingenious uses to which he put the "common stock of thematic and formal codes and conventions" (4). In the introduction to *Sylvie and Bruno*, Carroll coined the portmanteau word "li*tt*erature" (emphasis mine) to reflect this. This premise obviates the need to prove that Carroll knew specific works; however, Reichertz does provide suggestive connections in most cases. In the third chapter, Reichertz discusses the didactic and imaginative conflict of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This background places Carroll within the controversy, but it does not necessarily further the argument.

The last three chapters, somewhat more than half of Reichertz' text, deal with specific evidence of the three topoi. The "world upside down" topos is found mainly in *Alice in Wonderland*, where it enables