in his essay "Paleface and Redskin," offers as his own main insight the belief that our national literature suffers from "a split personality." One type of writer exclusively cultivates theories of conduct, while an opposing type seeks solely an unthinking immersion in the flux of experience. Rahv wants writers to participate in and lucidly evaluate the totality of human experience. He praises such writers as Henry James and Thomas Mann for achieving this goal; and, in the majority of his essays, pinpoints the failure of other writers to do so. Thus, discussing Proletarian Literature, he censures writers who wear political blinkers. In other essays, he criticizes our culture for its mythomania (in reality, "a fear of history"), for its idealization of the past (a "perverted historicism") and for its demand that writers express a blind affirmation of America. Similarly, he attacks such writers as D. H. Lawrence for forcing his characters to illustrate his narrow theories and Norman Mailer, whose An American Dream presents merely "a dream of romantic omnipotence."

Suffolk University

KENNETH JOHNSON


There are too many facts and too few evaluations in this biography of Hart Crane. Only in the final sequence, when Crane's turmoil reaches its climax, do all the facts hold the reader's attention. And, yet, this book should be read, for Crane's life was as much a symbol of the American experience in the 1920's—and, in some ways, before and after that period—as Scott Fitzgerald's life was. The product of an unhappy marriage, Crane had an intensely possessive mother and a well-meaning, but Philistine father. As a result, behind his—typically American—mask of buoyant optimism, he suffered from melancholia and self-doubt. He tried to decrease his unhappiness in many ways—in homosexuality, the Retreat To The Country, artist-cliques, alcoholism, expatriate-filled Europe and Mexican primitivism. However, only his writings brought him temporary relief—and when he also began to doubt his artistic ability, not even the new-found love he shared with Peggy Cowley could sustain him. Thus, at the age of thirty-two, he committed suicide.

Suffolk University

KENNETH JOHNSON


Though this journal is listed incorrectly (under American Quarterly) and omitted from the index, and though there are other errors and omissions, this slim volume is useful to those American Studies practitioners who deal with literature.

SGL

JOHN FORD. By Peter Bogdanovich. University of California Press. 1968. $1.95.

John Ford's name conjures in most minds a film shaman of the west—the man who invented the cowboy or at least the horizon. Many of his films were not westerns at all. This book displays excellent photographs from Ford's many works—works expressing the Irish and American experiences. It contains an interesting Ford interview, a sketchy filmography and no index.

Bogdanovich utilizes a quote from The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance: "When the legend becomes fact, print the legend." Much of Ford's work has been with our common myths, our legends. His power has been to translate those legends into moving images. Hence with John Ford we need no legends. We watch his films.

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

G. W. LINDEN


This is a volume which is going to be very heavily praised, and deservedly. It is a painstaking and imaginative review of what is known and what can be established about European voyages of discovery in the period and area named in the subtitle. Professor Morison has fingered every available book, manuscript and chart, visited and flown over every plausible harbor and place of settlement, and handled all the old instruments in his effort to find out who got where how, and what it must have felt like. And, as everyone knows, he is fun to read. We can expect detailed, friendly reviews from cartographers, historians and geographers, cranky reviews from proponents of theories of prior visitations, as well as high praise from the less specialized press, for Oxford is promoting the hell out of this, and it has been chosen as a Book-of-the-Month Club selection.

Perhaps the most useful thing American Studies can do for its readers, then, is to cover points likely to be skipped elsewhere, to quibble with a book, which, because it is very good, will not be quibbled with very much, and to say a word about it and our field.

1. I note a minor inconsistency. On page 87, Morison approvingly quotes the Bureau
of American Ethnology: “There is not a provable trace of Welsh, Gaelic or any other European language in any native American language.” On page 677, arguing for what he feels is the most plausible explanation of the fate of the “Lost Colony” of Virginia, he writes, “These Indians [the Croatoan, or Hatteras, or Lumbee tribe] have a strong tradition that the Roanoke colonists amalgamated with them; and the existence of blue-eyed and fair-haired types among them, as well as the incorporation of Elizabethan English words in their language and their using surnames from John White’s Lost colonists, bears this out.”

2. Morison is a little more breezy than necessary or judicious in putting down all offbeat theories of visitation. He convinces me that in the light of the best available evidence and his own excellent judgment, these should currently be regarded as unlikely. But I would venture to guess that at least one of them will turn out to be not wishful thinking by an ethnic group eager to pre-date Columbus, or a local historical club, Chamber of Commerce booster or over-ambitious historian. It was not too many years ago that we were quite sure Leif Ericson’s visit was myth; Morison is certain it occurred. There was no firm evidence then; now there is. In history as in science, a certain percentage of crack-pot theories turns out correct.

3. Admiral Morison knows ships, and it is splendid to have his expertise. He knows how different vessels sailed, the history of navigation, of oceanography and so forth. He is right in insisting that we take the details of rigging, provisioning and seamanship seriously. He is also right to explain details. But he explains unevenly. Even the conscientious landlubber, eager to understand, can’t.

4. His chapter endnotes are charming and informative. Many are miniature scholarly essays or essays in historiography. But they, too, are uneven in coverage. Certain questions raised in or by the text go unanswered; certain gaps are left unfilled.

5. Some reviewer is bound to refer to this as “a handsome volume.” It’s not, despite the great number of useful and well-utilized illustrations. As book design, European Discovery is several cuts below mediocre, an unhappy compromise between traditionalism and somebody’s old high school textbook. This despite the author’s obvious interest in making format as eloquent as context. His plates are a part of his argument; he has had some old maps simplified and redrawn, for example, to facilitate comparisons. Others are re-aligned on the page for the same reason. Given the wealth of first-rate visual material, the typographical challenge of brisk text and chatty endnotes, the designers should have responded far more imaginatively to produce an unusual and elegant volume. The fault, then, must be Oxford’s, and suitable punishments for those responsible appear in the cut on page 133.

6. If pressed by one of my good students to say what this volume taught me about European or American culture or society, I would have to answer in terms of Morison’s investigations of material culture, history of technology, and social organization. One is a little reluctant to say that the main point of the book—establishing firmly who voyaged where, and when—doesn’t really matter to us. But perhaps it is time for American Studies people to take such positions; certainly our best students feel we should. OK: this volume is a useful and authoritative compilation and analysis of data of interest to culturalists concerned with material culture, etc. To the extent, however, to which its prime purpose is to establish reliable judgments concerning dates, names and places, it is grist for the historians’ mill, not ours.


To say that despite obvious sensitivity, considerable on-site personal observation, years of correspondence with tribal friends and distinguished training, the author still does not begin to understand either her closest Potawatomi friends or the operation of their tribal culture as a whole is to say nothing very bad about this book. It is humbling evidence of the limitations of social science. Ruth Landis is reasonably frank about her difficulties; some stem from the notorious factionalism of her subject-tribe (see MASJ, VI, 2, 101-123), but some are simply the result of the fact that truly “alien” cultures are lamentably difficult to fathom.

SUPERGROW: ESSAYS AND REPORTS ON IMAGINATION IN AMERICA. By Benjamin DeMott. E. P. Dutton and Co. 1969. $5.95.

Despite his prolixity and his obsessive need to create catchy phrases, Benjamin DeMott provides enough stimulating evaluations of our contemporary culture to make his book worthwhile reading. His major concern is that people nurture their imaginations so that they will be more responsive to each other and to change. This concern leads DeMott to disapprove of Marshall McLuhan’s theories for offering a facile “release from consciousness.” Other targets of his adverse criticism include Living Theatre techniques, which decrease, not increase, audience participation; lyric