

Folklore on the American Land, by Duncan Emrich.
 xciii - 707 pp. Bibliography, chapter references, index, song and title
 index, illustrations.
 Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1972. \$15.00.

by Thomas and Elizabeth Adler.

According to its author, this slightly ponderous volume is intended to introduce the average reader to folklore. It is a general work, "not intended primarily for the scholar or advanced student" (p. ix). The truth of this characterization is borne out by a glance at the number and range of subjects covered. In thirty-six understandably superficial chapters Emrich deals with an amazing variety of genres and sub-genres, ranging from the usual folktales, proverbs, and folksongs to such eyebrow-raisers as "hound-dog names," "cattle brands," and "nonsense spellings." The chapters are presented in seven groups, only six of which have been titled: American Names, Children's Folklore, Street Cries and Epitaphs, Legends and Tales, Folksongs and Ballads, and Folk Beliefs and Superstitions.

There are some particularly delightful aspects of Folklore on the American Land. The curiously untitled introductory section dealing with folk language and grammar is very interesting. The chapters on folksongs and ballads include both common and unusual examples ("Down in the Valley" as opposed to "Loss of the New Columbia"). Several of Emrich's own specialties are well represented in the sections on belief and superstition, folklore of weddings, and so forth. The fifty-odd illustrations, largely taken from the Library of Congress, are absolutely superb.

Unfortunately, the volume as a whole has a great many faults. The bibliography is very small and general. Chapter references are provided, yet they do not offer the substantive information that would have been forthcoming in footnotes (which are totally absent from the text). Emrich's journalistic style, with many short, clipped sentences, becomes quite tiring after 700 pages. Occasional grammatical or typographical errors ("...men and women were christened for the places and states which they had come." [p. 148]) are mixed with unpunctuated "folksy" phrases ("A cowboy arrived in camp with no name but Pete. Pete? Just Pete. What camp you from? No camp, just Arizona. OK, Arizona Pete." [p. 148]). Many of the chapters consist of mere lists of names or strings of items, and where text does exist, it is too often a lackluster pointing-out of the obvious. For example, here are the complete notes to the song "Oh, Love It Is a Killing Thing":

The direct simplicity of statement and question in many folksongs is incredible:

Oh, love it is a killing thing
 Did you ever feel the pain?

The language is pure, and the question is as sharp as any arrow. Everyone has felt it, and you are brought at once into the song itself. There is no escape. (p. 552)

It is clear that this sort of "note" could never be presented to "the scholar or advanced student," but somehow it also seems unfair to fob it off on the "average reader" and then expect him to feel any sympathy or

respect for American folklore. Moreover, the poor reader must endure some disconcerting editorializing and non-productive flag-waving, and the crowning injustice of it all is the price of the book. Fifteen dollars may be what books cost nowadays, but it seems likely that many "average readers" will be discouraged by the prospect of laying out that kind of money for what is essentially a coffee-table book with too few pictures.

Kinesics and Context, by Ray L. Birdwhistell.

xiv - 338 pp. Appendices, bibliography.

Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970. \$3.95.

by Richard P. Sugg.

Ray L. Birdwhistell's book is a collection of essays and excerpts on what is popularly known as "body language." As the title suggests, Birdwhistell insists that kinesics cannot be understood apart from the cultural contexts in which the kines ("isolable elements of body motion") occur. "Insofar as we know, there is no body motion or gesture that can be regarded as a universal symbol." Further, within a given culture one gesture may communicate varying messages according to the idiosyncrasies of the person making the gesture. This is obviously a far cry from such simplistic observations as "Women with crossed legs are signalling their unavailability" which titillated the readers of Fast's Body Language, the book which claims a kinship with Birdwhistell's book.

Indeed, the methodology used by the founder of the science of kinesics is guaranteed to dismay the person in search of tips on how to turn his body into a pulsating message of social and sexual bounty. Birdwhistell specializes in micro-kinesics, which means that he films or otherwise records and analyzes examples of human communication, preferably mundane ones, usually lasting no more than 10 seconds. At 24 frames per second such films provide 240 possible examples of body motion, none of which will be very exciting to any but the scientist. Could Ray L. Birdwhistell be a pseudonym for Andy Warhol? This may be the meaning of the cryptic recommendation from Marshall McLuhan on the book's cover: "Ray Birdwhistell...is the first to have built a bridge between anthropology and the world of contemporary arts."

There is little evidence of such an accomplishment in this book. Birdwhistell contends that artists, like everybody else, are caught within a "conventional telecommunicative structure" which they are relatively powerless to change unless they understand it consciously. This necessitates rigorous observation and measurement and the general discarding of insights that are not testable. The scientist is the man for this job, and Birdwhistell provides an appendix from his earlier book The Introduction to Kinesics which consists of a notational system based on the division of the body into eight different sections, with symbols for various movements within the sections. These are to be used to analyze body movement without regard to the psychological or sociological interpretations of such movement, and Birdwhistell demonstrates their use in recording a communication on a bus between a mother and her child, who wants to go to the bathroom. But his example belies his method of pure analysis; for not only does he evince a number of culture-bound attitudes in his gloss