Because of the special glee and fervor he brings to these subjects, he has done what few other folklorists have managed to do--forced intellectuals from all disciplines to contend with his work, and thus to consider the materials and perspectives of other folklorists. If we have become more respectable in the academy, Alan is more responsible than any other folklorist. Yet, because he maintains that the study of folklore must ultimately focus primarily on the lore has made him somewhat less central in folkloristic activity within the profession. His unwillingness to address the place of lore in the socio-cultural dynamic means that the very forces of philistinism directed at folklore through the invasions of spurious imitations against which he has toiled may now be reified. The burden of Alan's work has been to show the centrality of folkloric materials in the study of man; but by foregoing (for the most part) analysis of the process by which folklore is employed in our quotidian lives, he calls forth accusations of model-building for its own sake. His mission--to elevate the study of folklore and folkloristics to intellectual respectability--is, then, somewhat undercut by his unwillingness to contend with a new folkloristics, one which underscores the importance of the folk rather than the lore, and which seeks to distinguish folklore from literary processes (through its inherent orality and face-to-face milieu) and from other more institutional representations of culture.

This is more than an intellectual and academic matter. We are in the midst of a world-wide social movement in which groups are seeking to understand sources of their own "ethnic" identification more fully. This means that these ethnic groups, as well as governmental and private agencies, are looking to the students of expressive culture for guidelines by which the authentic may be distinguished from the spurious. Any definition of folklore which emphasizes product rather than process, lore rather than folk, is not going to provide insights needed to engage in this dialogue. Furthermore, the profession now finds itself called upon to speak with one voice to the outside world, and in tones decipherable to everyone. To continue to define what folklore is solely in terms of the lore is to invite those interested in obtaining advice about developing publication programs to go to almost anyone who has collected or analyzed traditional matters and materials. This, of course, would simply encourage the fakeloric takeover--a very real and constant threat, as anyone who has worked in folk festivals knows.

This is not in any way to gainsay the Dundes achievement. That we continue to be swept up by the enthusiasm and integrity of his arguments testifies to his importance in our intellectual lives. His virtuosity even more than his models themselves, will continue to be the model by which we judge our continuing folkloristic products.


Reviewed by Charles L. Perdue

I was glad to get this book to review. My wife and I both have ancestral lines that go back to Louisa and Goochland Counties (Stamps, Byrds, Ballingers for me; Atkinsons and Fulchers for her) and we have driven through this area numerous times. We have also spent several days in the county courthouses doing genealogical research. In addition, I know that my great grandfather, Daniel Walton Mahry Perdue, was a private
in Company B, 45th Georgia Infantry, and that he was captured by the Yankees at North Anna, Virginia (twenty-five miles east of Gum Spring) on 22 May 1864. While reading this book I wondered what a scared private from a Georgia cotton farm thought of this land. To my eye it is scruffy country. I feel a sense of association with it but not a sense of identity, and I do not wonder why our ancestors left.

Culture is, by definition, patterned and therefore rule-governed. Henry Glassie has examined a corpus of 338 houses in Louisa and Goochland Counties, Virginia. Concentrating on the 164 traditional houses and ignoring the remainder (most of which were constructed from blueprints generated outside the area), Glassie has analyzed the patterning of the houses and devised a set of rules that could account for them. These rules constitute the traditional architectural competence of the collective "folk mind" in the area under consideration, from about 1720 to about 1925. This analysis and the setting out of the rules occupies the first half of the book.

In the second half, Glassie examines the evolution in various patterned architectural phenomena (materials, farm plans, ornamentation, interior and exterior dimensions, placement of chimneys, windows, and doors) to demonstrate a shift from paradigmatic to syntagmatic structures—at least if not a shift, an increasing emphasis on the syntagmatic. This can be seen in the increasing emphasis on repetition over variety, the practical over the aesthetic, the artificial over the natural, and the private over the public. This shift was consonant with what was generally happening in the Western world, but was intensified in America perhaps because Europeans were faced with (to them) a blank canvas on which they could paint the cultural landscape as their developing syntagmatic emphasis dictated.

It is exciting to consider Glassie's work in the light of recent research concerning the various functions of the cortical hemispheres of the brain. Evidence reported in Psychology Today 10:5 (October 1976): 36, and 10:6 (November 1976): 66 suggests that the right half of the brain is involved in simultaneous processing of information, in dreams, fantasy, and relational processes, and the left half in linear processing of information and logical operations. In other words, it appears that the right half controls paradigmatic functions and the left half controls syntagmatic functions. While Glassie considers this shift primarily in terms of its architectural implications, it appears to me that such findings suggest other far-reaching and important questions concerning the evolutionary, psycholinguistic, and socio-cultural impact of a possible shift in dominance from one neurological style of thinking and functioning to another. It is outside the scope of this review to ponder such questions, but I think they are of extreme importance and should be recognized.

Glassie sees one revolutionary change in the traditional architectural competence occurring in the middle of the eighteenth century. The Georgia house style came in, was accepted for a while, but was eventually assimilated by changing the old hall and parlor house to a central hall I house. The new house was symmetrical and intensive and constituted a statement of tight control. Glassie believes that the need for control grew out of the feelings generated by the religious, social, economic, and political unrest of the time.

It should come as no surprise that Glassie finds the various paradigmatic to syntagmatic shifts reflected in the traditional houses of the study area. Cultural "meaning" depends on transformations from one communicative mode to another—or from one symbol-set to another (see Edmund Leach, Culture and Communication, 1976). Architecture should (and does) carry some of the same cultural messages carried by song, ritual, dance, and so on—at least it is a part-transformation of the message carried by other symbol-sets. The implications of this should be satisfying to those folklorists who are interested in folklore communication. Material artifacts are as communicative as verbal lore.
This is a good book; it is an important book. Read it carefully. But permit me to comment on a few minor problems.

On page seven, Glassie says that there is not enough information available to allow a historian to write about the area. I would like to argue this point. Unless unavailable due to destruction by fire or other agencies, county courthouses contain marriage records, deeds for land transfers, deeds of trust, wills, inventories, estate sale records, muster rolls, death and birth records, tax lists, common-law orders, chancery orders, and other records. Housed in the Virginia State Library at Richmond are land patents, grants, vestry records, military records, and miscellaneous legislative petitions. The National Archives contains census and military records. The D.A.R. Library in Washington, D.C. contains an abundance of genealogical information, county histories, and compilations of other demographic data. The Baptist Historical Society in Richmond contains many early church records. There are other sources which, in toto, can provide the stuff of history. The work of writing history from these sources is tedious and time-consuming, but history can be written here.

On page 178, Glassie states that reliance on houses for information about antebellum Virginia reduces us to the study of the white half of the population. It may be that no slave houses survive in the study area but some parts of Virginia abound in them--I know of at least thirty slave cabins within fifteen miles of where I sit. This is an area that needs study soon, and could provide some information on how the black half of Virginia lived. It would be interesting to see what modifications, if any, would be required in the rules in order to account for slave housing.

One final note: if one takes a restricted sample of cultural behavior it is always possible (however difficult) to work backwards to a set of rules that could have generated that behavior. There is a tendency, I think, to forget that the behavior, in effect, generated the rules. In this case a corpus of extant houses in a restricted area of Virginia has been used to generate a set of rules which is then postulated to have generated the houses--a bit tautological. In the analysis of artifacts produced by a dead generation there seems to be no alternative to this procedure, but one can only wonder about houses that could have been built and weren't--or houses no longer extant that were generated from missing rules. What we have here is a set of rules that, based on the extant houses, is not incompatible with the traditional architectural competence--but we will never know the totality of that competence.


Reviewed by Gary Stanton

All too rarely does a book such as The Hand-Made Object and Its Maker arise to give new impetus and structure to theories of folklife scholarship. In a considerable re-writing of his dissertation, Michael Owen Jones has challenged the favorite concepts held jointly by folklore and anthropology. The orientation of his research is to explain individual behavior, and he waxes long over the impossibility of accurately generalizing human behavior in terms of cultural or structural models. The book is a long polemical essay using the format of investigating southeastern Kentucky chairmakers to discuss and denigrate the object orientation of past scholars.