instead, the real principles which guide the general appreciative response are symmetry, balance, centrality, and harmony (p. 205). The research frame must consist of specific contexts, not imaginary object histories, for chairs are produced without consistent corrective reference to any fixed form.

The real concern of research is with "individuals who make and do things, and those who buy and use things, in interaction with other people" (p. 217). Jones seeks solutions to questions about activities within the activities themselves. The process of decision-making in behavior and the process of acquisition of skill and knowledge are more faithful to the actual behavior of the individual than the static concepts of "tradition," "folk," and "lore."

Since chairs and all crafts are made to be used, the art in making chairs is "in the making or doing of that which functions as ... a stimulus to appreciation of an individual's mastery of tools and materials apparent in what he has made ..." (p. 15). Jones categorically rejects the possibility that the aesthetic of folk art can be examined in the formal features of the objects themselves. Although Jones may not wish to think of his book as being about artists and art in their socio-cultural context (p. 217), he nevertheless constantly investigates the explication of artistic-aesthetic questions in real life, as if the book was about art and artists.

One important model he develops concerns the common sources of grief and creativity--grief provides the stimulus for and finds resolution in the act of making things. Jones shows that Charley creatively tried to compensate for his personal failures by pursuing activities in which he had great expertise. The book leaves no doubt that Charley's personal life was a failure, and much of the author's criticism of research in the last chapter seems to be self-directed, as though by creating this book he was trying to overcome his unhappy complicity in the failure of Charley's life.

Therein lies a danger in the exceedingly particularistic and individualistic focus of The Hand-Made Object and Its Maker; in seeking to know every influence upon chairmaking, the researcher is reduced to inactivity and to reporting endless anecdotes of his interaction with the craftsman. The final, most complete, and most accurate way of knowing is experiential--to make the chair oneself. When one feels the urge, one should be the craftsman, not talk about him. Jones recognizes the similarities of creativity between the roles of chairmaker and folklorist, but he refuses to recognize that in folkloristic creation comparison is emphasized and is never present in the craftsman's creation. Real life and scholarship will never be identical to one another because life is fundamentally synthetic and scholarship is irrevocably analytic.

The Hand-Made Object and Its Maker is important for the questions it raises rather than for the answers it presents. I think that every important question of craft scholarship is raised between the covers of this book. The didactic insistence that individual behavior is the only scope of research has created basic schisms between this work and that of previous scholars whose focus may have been larger social units. In folklore it is so rare that a scholar raises his head from the description of little-known events to the theoretical issues implicit in our work; Jones' book will have an important impact on anyone who takes the time to read it.


Reviewed by John H. McDowell
The folklorist easily finds fault with this book, which from one point of view constitutes an instructive negative example, a sort of manual of proscribed methodology. Yet there is food for thought in One Potato, Two Potato... The Secret Education of American Children. The writing style is inconspicuously elegant, and even the specialist will admit that the book has some merit, certainly if addressed to the proper audience. In the following paragraphs, I will confine my critique of the book to a single issue of special importance to emerging folklore theory.

The Knapps are clearly indebted to the Opies, whose Lore and Language of Schoolchildren appears to be the model for One Potato, Two Potato. The latter is an abbreviated treatment of middle-class North American materials along the same lines developed by the Opies in reference to primarily British materials. The same basic criticism applies to both instances: over-reliance on static and external modes of observation. The Knapps specify the source of their materials:

Central to our materials are the 379 questionnaires that we collected from fifth-graders in Indiana in 1971, some of which we followed up with interviews (p. 269).

These collecting techniques have their uses in folklore studies, but the questionnaire in particular is ill-suited for providing insight into the way folklore operates within human and social environments. The Knapps are forced to invent likely contexts for their materials, using an ethnographic present which obliterates all sense of the corporeal child responding to and shaping a particular concrete situation. Consider the following passage:

A child confronted with relatives he doesn't know very well but can't ignore has no reserve of small talk to draw on. But he does have riddles. And if, miracle of miracles, Aunt Sue or Uncle George knows some too, the child not only has fun with his relatives but learns some new riddles that he can use in the unending scrimmage of wit on the playground (p. 106).

The objection here is not that the invented context is improbable, but rather that it is merely probable. What is missing is the unmistakable flavor of folklore rooted in actual performance environments.

Reliance on external modes of observation entails another undesirable effect: the presentation of complete, perfect, and (I suspect) composite texts. Virtually every page of the book sparkles with texts representing the fullest known version of a traditional item. Anyone who has worked with children's folklore has found that perfect texts are the exception rather than the rule, and more frequently one encounters partial texts often spontaneously augmented by impromptu substitutions. Once again, I don't mind reading complete texts of familiar items. In some cases I noted with pleasant surprise the probable ur-form of some items that I have encountered in particularly garbled versions. The problem is that in combination the composite texts and the invented contexts give the entire book a contrived or hypothetical tone. Perhaps analogy to linguistics will help clarify my point: Much as Chomsky presents us with idealized speech communities, which deprives his data of the sense of concrete reality, the Knapps offer us an idealized portrait of the child performer, who has about the same specificity as the ideal speaker-hearer in Chomskian linguistics.

The signal point to all this is that folklore, like speech, is situated behavior, and scientific rigor requires us to attend to these situations in all their actual complexity. It is simply not adequate to invent probable contexts and perfect texts, and thereby voluntarily remove ourselves one step from the data, when in fact we do have
access to actual performance occasions. The interplay of performance and situation is far too intricate and fraught with unsuspected twinnings of factors to allow for reliable construction of perfect texts and probable contexts. The failure of the Knapps to provide situated folklore limits a priori the range of conclusions they can justifiably draw and rendering the conclusions that they do draw to be somewhat speculative. For example, how could they possibly deal with the meshing of personalities in specific contexts that selects one genre or item over another?

Other transgressions against the folklorist's methodological code could be mentioned, particularly the failure to annotate the materials and fully document the references used in their analysis. However, I think it is time to assess the positive value of the Knapps' contribution. For reasons detailed above, One Potato, Two Potato has little to offer the serious student of folklore. Perhaps that is not amiss; there is no reason to believe that the Knapps had us in mind as their preferred audience. In fact, the evidence suggests that their intended audience is those who design and implement educational programs. Among these quarters, it is generally assumed that learning takes place only through organized and supervised activities. One Potato, Two Potato makes an excellent case for the positive functions and uses of folklore while properly warning that folklore is not easily harnessed to institutional purposes. One Potato, Two Potato, with its crisp writing style and attractive visual layout, may well contribute to the liberation of children's folklore from the prevailing attitude among educators that children's folklore is something to be suppressed.