

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 order, 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.

The Hand-Made Object and Its Maker. By Michael Owen Jones.  
Pp. xi + 261, illustrations, notes.  
Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975. \$14.95 cloth.

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 chair-makers to discuss and denigrate the object orientation of past scholars.

Such an angry book makes it easy for the reader also to fall into an angry posture. The book, however, deserves the careful attention of students of folklife for its insightful and cogent criticisms of the discipline, especially in the definitions of terms such as "folk art," "folklore," and "craft" which often carry undesirable implications about the people and products under scrutiny. Jones' excessively negative attitude leaves me anxious to see a sequel in which he provides a rigorous discussion of any phenomenon without falling into the definitional traps he exposes here.

The manifest focus of the book is on Charley, a Kentucky chairmaker who deserves the Mrs. Brown of Falkland award as one of the most studied individuals in American folklife. The use of pseudonyms for the craftsmen and their locations is understandable because of the excessively personal nature of some of the material (although unfortunately it is a little late to protect their anonymity). Charley and his chairs are excellent examples for a discussion of individual creativity and innovation because the man's tremendous woodworking skill, creativity, and personal circumstances combine to produce distinctive personal products which nicely illustrate Jones' points.

While the author and the publishers would like this book to appeal to everyone, it is difficult to read unless one has a definite interest in folklife studies. Michael Jones was one of the first graduate students of the Folklore Institute, Indiana University, to orient his research toward the study of material culture. He constantly makes reference to other genres of folklore, anthropology, cultural geography, and art. The equivalence of performance and production which Michael Owen Jones makes appears problematical to me. Performance is much less temporally segregated into a manipulation of the media followed by audience response: the categories of manipulation and response can only be considered simultaneous.

Several features of the book detract from its usefulness and readability. An index would have been a great help in reassembling the various points made on particular issues. How do so many books get published without them? The book is completely hand-lettered by David Comstock, a feat worthy of mention, but not very conducive to reading, as the print is very fatiguing and even the interested reader finds it tough sledding. The fine pun of hand-lettering The Hand-Made Object and Its Maker merely becomes painful after two hundred pages. Compounding the problem of eye strain is Jones' highly clausated writing style, particularly in his extreme left and right branching of noun clauses confusing the sense of what is being said. Much of this adjectival forest contributes little to the meaning of the sentence, instead it adds a tone of caveat or negativism to his work. Perhaps the clearest example of this confusion lies in Jones' constant use of "so-called," "alleged," "supposedly," or "sometimes labeled" as modifiers for terms with which he has complaint. Having established that the terms didn't suit him, it would have been easier to complain once and then either not use them, or make do until inspiration provided others.

The book should include reading instructions clearly marked on the front cover. Suggesting something like this: "If you are fresh, interested, and in a good mood read the preface and chapters one and seven; if you are fatigued or irritated, read chapters two through six." The latter contain ethnographic material about Charley and other craftsmen and include an excellent discussion of concepts and terms, such as the relationship of "precedence," "convention," and "tradition" (pp. 71-72). The former chapters are the summary portions, theoretical theses, and definitional disputes.

Jones argues against the object orientation of traditional scholarship. The object, he claims, is merely a precipitant of research, falling naturally between production and consumption on a continuum of behavior (p. 21). Jones argues that folk art and other impositions of elite standards upon basically utilitarian products are invalid;

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 the 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.

One Potato, Two Potatoes . . . The Secret Education of American Children. By Mary and Herbert Knapp.

Pp. 274, index, no bibliography.

New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1976.

Reviewed by John H. McDowell