



Mistaken Dichotomies

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett

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The dichotomy between pure and applied folklore has obscured the ideological, political, and economic bases of folklore as it is studied in the academy and practiced in the public sector. We need critical discourse that is independent of advocacy. We need advocacy that is informed by knowledge of the history of the field, its representational practices and essentially applied character.

EVEN AS THE AMERICAN FOLKLORE SOCIETY nears its centennial, folklore as an autonomous academic discipline within the American university is less than forty years old. Much of the American debate over "applied folklore" in the period after World War II must therefore be examined in relation to a young academic discipline on the defensive. As Richard M. Dorson fought to establish folklore as an autonomous academic discipline, the discourse on applied folklore entered a new phase, for never before, not even during the activism of the New Deal, did the public sector confront so vociferous an opponent.

Dorson was opposed equally to "popularization," which he saw as largely commercial and exploitative, and to "applied folklore," which he credited with the nobler aim of making the world a better place. For Dorson, popularization produced what he dubbed fakelore: the hapless consumer was duped into thinking he was getting the genuine folklore article, and folklore as an academic discipline was discredited with each new treasury and literary tall tale (Dorson 1971a, 1972). Though applied folklorists were better intended, they were, in Dorson's view, ill-equipped for the task. Further, applied folklore only diverted the professional folklorist from the call of pure scholarship, and the young discipline needed all the talent it could find. In other words, because both popularization and applied folklore blurred the boundaries of pure folklore scholarship and siphoned off intellectual talent, they threatened the fledgling academic discipline.

Ironically, folklore succeeded so well as a discipline that within about twenty years, by the 1970s, the academy had produced more professionals than it could absorb. How, in good faith, could university programs continue to train folklorists who would never work in their profession? As universities began to suffer from the shifting demographics of the 1970s and 1980s, how would these folklore programs stay afloat if they could not compete effectively

for students? The tables had turned. The enemy became the solution. Applied folklore was now in the interests of the discipline, rather than in competition with it. The public sector would, and did, absorb the surplus of professional folklorists.

To frame the history of applied folklore in America in the postwar period in this way is not cynical. Rather, it highlights several ironies. First, applied folklore has been instrumental in the academic discipline's consolidation of its own power, initially as a negative *raison d'être* for the academic discipline, a position for the academy to resist in the struggle for disciplinary self-definition, and later as a way to enlarge the scope of the profession and absorb the surplus of professionals. Second, as folklore was establishing itself in the American university, the American folksong revival was gathering momentum in the coffeehouse, on the concert stage, and in the recording studio. Though maligned as a threat to the academic discipline, the folksong revival created an appetite for formal folklore training: many individuals who would later achieve prominence as academic folklorists began as revivalists (Jackson 1985). Third, even as academic folklore programs depended on the public sector both to recruit students and to absorb graduates, the academy (and I speak here of departments and curricula, not individual folklorists) continued to disassociate itself from applied folklore.

By disassociation, I mean that academic folklore programs have tended to maintain the dichotomy between pure and applied folklore and consistently refused to examine their own essentially and inescapably applied character: the folkloristic enterprise is not and cannot be beyond ideology, national political interests, and economic concerns. Furthermore, while sending their graduates into the applied sector, folklore programs have unwittingly trivialized this arena by treating it as a largely practical, rather than intellectual, undertaking: with recent and important exceptions, folklorists are not being trained specifically for the public sector. By training, I do not mean learning how to write a press release, lobby politicians for money, or run a festival, though these are all essential skills, but rather acquiring a critical knowledge of the history of the field and its essentially applied character.

Nor has the public sector really entered the intellectual life of the discipline, whether as a subject in its own right or as integral to the entire conception and history of the field. Recent reassessments of Benjamin Botkin's career and the growing interest in New Deal folklorists suggest that here, too, there are important exceptions. We have much to learn from European, and particularly, German folklorists, who have lately proposed that *Volkskunde* be turned into an "applied cultural science" (Dow and Lixfeld 1986:2) and are now confronting the painful subject of *Volkskunde* and National Socialism (Dow 1987; Gerndt 1987).

The centrality of the issues raised by applied folklore would become clearer if the academic discipline as it is practiced in America would systematically examine the ideological and economic bases of its own practice, as a discourse

and as a profession. In an effort to stimulate such examination, the following discussion focuses on four areas of concern: advocacy, representation, art, and critical discourse.

Advocacy

Advocacy can distort inquiry, whether in the academy or in the public sector. In campaigning for folklore as a discipline, Dorson discredited popularization and applied folklore and failed to investigate folklore in the public sector as a phenomenon in its own right. An interchange of great potential intellectual interest was thereby reduced to polemic, vituperation, and personal attack. For someone so interested in the relation of American folklore to American history and civilization, an approach like Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's *Invention of Tradition* (1983), which analyzes the historical formation of "invented" traditions and the role of folklorists in this process, would have carried the debate beyond exposé and defamation to a more reflexive consideration of American folklore as a discipline. Such an approach might have illuminated how the academy claims for itself the authority to represent America to itself "in its most traditionalist form" (Hall 1981:230).

For their part, folklorists working in the public sector are often so overextended and so dependent on fickle government funding that they lose sight of the larger enterprise—the emancipatory potential of folklore as praxis, that is, how what we do as folklorists can be of socially redeeming value in ways that go beyond celebration. Indeed, dependence on government funding shapes the language of advocacy and blunts its critical potential. All the more reason to see such documents as *Cultural Conservation: The Protection of Cultural Heritage in the United States* (Loomis 1983) for what they are—affirmations of heritage.¹ However well intended they may be, documents like this one neither address the root causes of the marginalization of particular groups and cultural practices, nor examine the assumptions and potential consequences of legislation and regulation of cultural practice. These documents dramatize the need for a critical discourse that is independent of advocacy. The academy could fill that need. Stimulating critical discourse is a vital role for the academy to play. This is the appropriate training for those who would work in the public sector.

Representation

Anthropologists speak of their discipline as facing a crisis of representation. Though they locate this crisis in ethnography as a text-making activity, they have extended the discussion to museums, world's fairs, and tourism. Recent expressions of this concern included the Representations Symposium organized by the Museum of Mankind in London during the spring of 1985, the recent series in Stuttgart of exhibitions and catalogues on the theme, *Exotic Worlds, European Fantasies* (Pollig, Schlichtenmayer, and Baur-Burkhardt 1987), and the conference on the poetics and politics of representation in mu-

seums planned by the Smithsonian Institution and Rockefeller Foundation for the fall of 1988.

These programs grow in part out of the work of such scholars as Johannes Fabian (1983), James Clifford and George E. Marcus (1986), Michel Foucault (1970, 1980), and Pierre Bourdieu (1984). Their publications illuminate the representational practices not only of anthropology, but also, by extension, of folklore—these practices include the denial of coevalness or shared time, the pastoral allegory of cultural loss and folkloristic rescue, the rhetoric of authenticity, the objectification of culture, and the power inherent in the act of representing others.

To paraphrase Castoriadis, folklorists do not discover, they constitute; and the relation of what they constitute to the “real” is not one of verification. In this sense, folklorists, and anthropologists, may be said to “invent” culture (Wagner 1981). Or, as Hermann Bausinger formulates the problem: “Whoever plays ‘real folk culture’ off against folklorism thereby closes the circle in which folk culture is forced to mutate into folklorism” (1986:114). Distinctions between genuine folklore, on the one hand, and fakelore, revivalism, and folklorism, on the other, are worth reexamining in this light.

Edward Said’s notion of Orientalism takes this perspective a step further and offers a paradigm for folklore and related disciplines:

Orientalism responded more to the culture that produced it than to its putative object, which was also created by the West. The history of Orientalism has both an internal consistency and a highly articulated set of relationships to the dominant culture surrounding it. [Said 1978:22]

These statements remind us that folklorists, like other professionals, are an elite; their knowledge is a source of power; and like Orientalism, the study of folklore is “a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary [and] scholarship” (Said 1978:2). The academic folklorist generally appears as author, editor, or compiler, holds the copyright, and collects the royalties on folklore collections he or she publishes. In a scathing attack on these practices, Gershon Legman concludes: “And the owners of folklore—God bless us all—now turn out to be the folklorists who collect and print it, generally on government and university grants; but who did not create it, who are as a matter of fact, forbidden by the rules of the game even to try to create it, and who—one ventures to say—bloodywell cannot create it” (1964b:521).

Claims of ownership are also made by political entities. As Kathleen Verdery (1987), Michael Herzfeld (1982), and Benedict Anderson (1983) have shown so vividly, the history of folkloristics and applied folklore cannot be separated from the formation of nationalism as an ideology and the relation of that ideology to the political process of state formation. The history of the discipline of folklore in Europe and America is largely a commentary on the tensions between national identity and state building. What colonialism is to the history of anthropology, nationalism is to the study of folklore. We have yet to explore what may be called the political economy of the folkloristic

sign—that is, how our work in the public sector contributes to the discourse on peoplehood and nationality, recast in the American democratic context as ethnicity, as unity in diversity. The debates on what is American about American folklore and Dorson's contribution to this discourse are worth reviewing in this context.

The many brochures and booklets emanating from the graduate folklore programs and folklife festivals around the country reveal the internal consistency of this discourse, the relationships with supporting institutions (universities, arts councils, crafts associations, museums, historical societies), and the extent to which the folklore enterprise is a product of dominant cultural interests, however enlightened and well-intentioned. The alliance between the institutions of "dominant cultural production" and communities whose endangered heritage we strive to protect is a tricky one. Recent studies that shed light on these alliances include Douglas Cole's *Captured Heritage: The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts* (1985) and Karen Duffek's study of the contemporary revival of Northwest Coast Indian art (1983).

Historians such as Michael Wallace have exposed the ideology of many American history museums, and in so doing reveal that most of them were "constructed by members of dominant classes, and embodied interpretations that supported their sponsors' privileged positions" (Wallace 1981:63). Yet folklorists continue to cite Colonial Williamsburg and related projects as exemplary, without consideration of such issues (Loomis 1983:3). This lack of critical perspective is disappointing, though not surprising, considering that we regularly review books, films, and records in the pages of our professional journals, but with the recent exception of the *Journal of American Folklore*, not exhibitions and other public sector programs.

Following Stuart Hall (1981:234), we might consider the opposition of folklore/not folklore, not as a descriptive problem or matter of coming up with the right inventory of cultural forms, but rather in terms of the "forces and relations which sustain the distinction, the difference" between what counts as a genuine tradition, a revival, fakelore, or elite culture. Hall suggests that the categories tend to remain, though the inventories change, and that institutions such as universities, museums, and arts councils play a crucial role in maintaining the distinctions: "The important fact, then, is not a mere descriptive inventory—which may have the negative effect of freezing popular culture into some timeless descriptive mould—but the relations of power which are constantly punctuating and dividing the domain of culture into its preferred and its residual categories" (1981:234).

In the work of Stuart Hall (1981), Raymond Williams (1977), and other British social theorists, culture is a battlefield where the struggle over meaning and value affects what will count as folklore and what not, what will enter the great tradition and what not: "Educational and cultural institutions, along with the many positive things they do, also help to discipline and police this boundary" (Hall 1981:236). We would do well to examine our role in this dis-

ciplining process, and the danger of what Hall calls self-enclosed approaches, which “valuing ‘tradition’ for its own sake, and treating it in an ahistorical manner, analyze cultural forms as if they contained within themselves from their moment of origin, some fixed and unchanging meaning or value” (1981:237). With this formulation in mind, consider the following statement in *Cultural Conservation*, which I take to be a representative document, since it is a response from the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress to a request from the Congress:

The people of the United States benefit from canoe design, lacrosse, and coyote tales; bluegrass music, dinner-on-the-grounds, and clogging; blues music, strip quilts, and cumulative tales; Confucian and Taoist philosophy, ginseng medication, and chow mein; *tamburitza* bands, hewed-log building techniques, and *beseda* costumes; *santos*, *salsa* music, and buckaroo horse handling and gear. [Loomis 1983:11]

Such lists are essentially definitional exercises—they use what Hayden White (1978) has characterized as the paratactic mode of scholarship. Like the third-person ethnography, lists and collections obscure the hand that shapes the representation. They create the illusion of genuine, which is to say, unmediated, folklore. Dorson’s polemic against fakelore might best be seen as a way of claiming for the academy the power to authenticate, to determine what is genuine. The pertinent question becomes: how do some representations become authoritative?

Art

In the sometimes acrimonious debates between folklorists and American folk art historians over the nature of “folk art,” struggle for authority focuses around issues of how the material designated “folk art” should be defined, studied, and presented. In recent American folklore theory, particularly in what is known as the performance approach, the discipline has undergone a radical aesthetic recasting, in which folklore is characterized as artistic communication in small groups (Ben-Amos 1972), “artistic action in social life” (Bauman 1977:vii), and aesthetics of everyday life (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1983), to cite but three examples. This aestheticizing of the discipline is expressed in the public sector by the term folk arts, which is emphatically in the plural, to signal a clear separation from “folk art” as defined by American folk art historians. At the same time, folklorists have also stressed the importance of cultural context and indigenous categories and standards, information that is available in abundance, because folklorists generally work with living people. Attention to context and native categories are hallmarks of public sector folklore projects.

In contrast, American folk art historians have constituted folk art as a branch of art history by redrawing the boundaries of what may be considered art and by referring the new categories of folk art to those of the fine and decorative

arts. Defined as having been produced *outside* the academy and art world, folk art is thereby assimilated into both arenas, whether as a subject for study or as a commodity for the art market. Often, little if anything is known about the maker of the object, its function and immediate cultural context. The objects are usually old, the makers long dead. Typically, exhibitions of American folk art feature the autonomous art object, uncluttered by distracting contextual information.

American folk art so defined is thus an aesthetic category deriving not from the objects, their makers, or their consumers, but from the historical avant-garde, who relativized the concept of art by exposing the historical formation and institutional character of the autonomous aesthetic object (Bürger 1984). It is now a commonplace that American folk art was “discovered” and institutionalized as part of the art world by avant-garde artists, dealers, galleries, and modern art museums during the twenties and thirties of this century (Rumford 1980; Vlach 1985). What Jean Lipman and Alice Winchester (1974:11) have called “the triumph of a new taste and a new way of seeing” gave us American folk art and signaled that the revolution was not in the objects but in our categories. As Virginia Dominguez (1986:554) has written of ethnological collections, “everything about the collection itself—the way the objects were collected, why they were collected, and how and why they get displayed—points to us.” This statement applies equally to folklore and folk art collections.

Many American folk art historians still deny the notion that folk art is an artifact of the discipline and insist instead that folk art is a given in the world. Consider the proposal in the most recent issue of *The Clarion*, a handsome magazine published by the Museum of American Folk Art, that “folk art” serve as an “umbrella concept” for many kinds of objects, because the term would, “over time, allow material to define itself” (Kogan 1987:72), or the statement that “the spirit of folk art . . . makes it resistant to definition and to being put into an academic discipline” (Apfelbaum 1987:31). Such abdications of intellectual responsibility actually leave the task of definition to the market, which misses no opportunity to define and incorporate new categories of saleable items.

Sociologist Howard S. Becker has argued persuasively that the determination of what is art resides not in “the work but in the ability of an art world to accept it and its maker” (Becker 1982:227). Paid advertisements in *The Clarion*, which read like a burgeoning lexicon of what may be subsumed under the folk art umbrella, bear out Becker’s proposition. Dealers announce “art” (painting, sculpture, and other genres are specified), which they variously describe as folk, primitive, outsider, naive, popular, self-taught, visionary, tramp, country, ethnic, etc. They also offer craft (baskets, pottery, and other types of objects are identified), Americana, antiques, decorative art, eccentric artifacts, relics, and collectables.

No matter how disinterested the motive, scholarship is implicated in the folk art world by helping to extend the range of what may be studied and ac-

quired, creating the language for talking about the material, authenticating the objects in question, and increasing their commercial value through the very act of documentation. The stakes rise each time objects are exhibited and written about, each time they are acquired or deaccessioned by a museum or prominent private collector and recirculated via the auction house or gallery. As American folk art historians turn increasingly to living folk artists, the commercial exploitation of the artists themselves becomes a very pressing issue and one that folk art scholars have yet to address adequately (Hitt 1987).

Ironically, while both academic and applied folklorists resist the prevailing American folk art paradigm, they too are implicated ineluctably in the folk art world. Folklorists have been instrumental in encouraging arts endowments and councils at the federal and state level to hire folklorists and to establish folk arts divisions and programs. They depend on arts organizations for funding and venues. Consequently, folklorists in the public sector often have to define what they present as art: the NEA Folk Arts Division, for example, explains that "the term *folk arts* refers to the traditional patterned artistic expressions which have developed through time within the many subgroups of our larger society. Folk arts include music, dance, song, poetry, narrative, oratory, handcrafts, and ritual" (Coe 1977:92). While utilizing an enlarged view of folklore as "artistic action in social life" to justify support for a broad range of projects, folklorists use a narrow definition of folk art to reject much that the folk art historians subsume under the "folk art umbrella."

Unlike the classical subjects of art history, much that is called American folk art has historically not been created in the context of an art world, and is appealing for just this reason: such objects seem "to spring out of nowhere" (Becker 1982:264). As a result, what have come to be known as memory paintings, naive art, and outsider art fail to meet the criteria of traditionality that folklorists associate with folklore. They are "too personal." They are not communal enough, as the very choice of terminology suggests—"naive," "self-taught," "outsider." Having invented their own versions of "tradition" and "heritage," folklorists have drawn and policed boundaries that, until recently, have left to the American folk art specialists what folklore as a discipline has not been able to assimilate.

Memory painters, for example, proudly take credit for their personal discovery of a medium and form for recasting their lives: they have forged distinctly individual solutions to common needs. And for reasons that folklorists are at a loss to explain, these individual solutions have a lot in common. Paradoxically, while folklorists have typically studied precisely the kinds of subjects immortalized by the elderly in their memory projects—folkways of a bygone era—folklorists have had difficulty assimilating the memory objects themselves, though this is changing. A pioneering exhibition such as *The Grand Generation: Memory, Mastery, Legacy* (Hufford, Hunt, and Zeitlin 1987) reveals memory projects (not just paintings, but also miniatures and models) to be indigenous modes of life review that reveal much about the social con-

struction of the self through time and the transformation of experience through materials ready to hand. Such insights have the potential to reshape the boundaries not only of the folklore discipline, by creating a theoretical necessity for the inclusion of such objects in the study of folklore, but also of the field of American folk art history, by extending the analysis of such objects beyond strictly aesthetic considerations (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1987).

Until this potential is realized, much that has been put forward as folk art by American folk art historians will continue to be rejected by folklorists for not being *folk* and by segments of the art establishment for not being *art*. Falling between the cracks within federal and state arts agencies, where it becomes more difficult to get funding, many American folk art projects will continue to depend for support on a network of collectors and dealers, corporations and business interests. This trend runs against the grain of folklorists who uphold an ideology of resisting commodification and who condemn both elitist appropriations of folk art and irresponsible popularization, on the grounds of exploitation.

In part, the tension between American folk art historians and folklorists may be summed up in the failure of the materials netted under the rubric of folk art to resist commodification, which, of course, is not a failure of the objects but of those who deal with them. In this and other respects, folklorists are also implicated in the modernist project, as characterized by Fredric Jameson: "Modernism conceives of its formal vocation to be the resistance to commodity form, *not* to be a commodity, to devise an aesthetic language incapable of offering commodity satisfaction, and resistant to instrumentalization" (Jameson 1981:134–135). While the American folk art field appears to encourage the commercial expansion of the folk art market, folklorists, who are most at home in the nonprofit sector, have resisted this process. Some have gone so far as to define folklore as "noncommercial" (Wilson and Udall 1982:13) and to justify paying little if anything to traditional performers on this ground, a practice Wilson and Udall deplore. Another double bind emerges: not to pay fair market value is to exploit traditional artists, but to commercialize exchange is to risk the depletion of value.

Consistent with these concerns, folklorists have worked to increase support for folk arts, broadly defined, within federal and state funding agencies. Further, they have struggled with the wrenching problem of how to intervene responsibly in the folk art market in order to protect the interests of the artists, a problem the American folk art historians could ignore so long as the artists were dead (Hitt 1987). At the same time, folklorists have often encountered within arts endowments and councils resistance to folklife projects, on the grounds that the material to be presented is not art or does not meet certain aesthetic standards.

Neither the folklorists nor the American folk art historians are in the clear. Both camps, by aestheticizing folklore, are in danger of ignoring that which the establishment does not count as art and will not fund. Both take the risk

of depoliticizing the material they study and exhibit by valorizing an aesthetics of marginalization. Willingly or not, both contribute to the rampant commodification of culture.³ To paraphrase Deborah Silverman, the line between custodians of culture and cultural cannibals is blurred; the museum and the department store become extensions of each other—folk art is produced for a growing and ever more distant market, designs are licensed, and replicas are mass produced. This process may be characterized as the “annexing of museum culture for marketing” (Silverman 1986:19).

Cultural Critique

Is applied folklore in danger of becoming our intellectual midden, basing practice on outmoded concepts? Or will the public sector challenge the received wisdom of the academy? After all, applied folklore is not just a matter of practical, ethical, political, and economic issues (as if this were not enough). Folklore in the public sector also has its own intellectual tradition, the history of which remains to be written. Some important beginnings have been made: David Whisnant’s *All that is Native and Fine* (1983) is exemplary. In a word, applied folklore has the potential to offer a critical perspective on the entire discipline.

As for the academy, will we descend into what German folklorist Dieter Kramer has dubbed the “meaningless administering of a traditional subject without any obligations” (Kramer 1986:42)? Or will we examine our own ideological structures and representational practices? How long will we follow Dorson’s lead, with its venerable roots in Enlightenment optimism, that the pursuit of pure knowledge would solve all problems? (“By teaching, studying, collecting, and writing about folklore, the scholarly folklorist is making a noble contribution to man’s knowledge of man” [Dorson 1971b:41].) When will we act on Kramer’s assertion that “Pure science is an alibi for the status quo” (1986:44)?

The history of folklore as a field is inextricably intertwined with nationalism, which is nowhere clearer today than in the public sector, where dependence on government funds has evoked a distinctive nationalistic discourse—unity in diversity—without a critical reconsideration of the phrase. What are the contours of the pluralism and unity we so often assert but seldom explore? Diversity is not a solution to all of our problems: too often it is a way to mask inequity and conflict and evade more challenging approaches to our material. The public sector has tended to embrace received notions of ethnicity and ethnic group, of heritage and tradition, without considering the historical formation of these notions in the postwar American context.

Even more troubling, a recent critique points out that such ideas privilege descent over consent (Sollers 1986). All the assertions of how diversity protects freedom and choice notwithstanding, there are unexamined assumptions here about heritage as birthright and inheritance. Where do freedom and

choice figure? The right to say, "No, I will not claim my heritage?" This was the battle that was fought in America before World War II—the right not to identify or be identified. But, with regard to what one does claim, "descent" still plays a decisive role in our formulations of heritage.

One of the most poignant examples of the problem of descent is a grant proposal to support apprenticeships to a Peking opera master in New York City. By the master's account, the proposal was turned down because the apprentices were of European rather than Chinese descent: during a demonstration of Peking opera that featured his students, the master explained to the audience that he once had two Chinese-American students in his group, but they gave up the training after two years because their parents encouraged them to attend the university and succeed in well-paying professions. The Euro-American students had persisted despite parental objections and at considerable personal sacrifice, and were the only ones willing to make the commitment necessary to master this art. In his view, Euro-Americans would carry the tradition until such time as future generations of Chinese-American youths were willing to take it up again. What he did not say is that students, whatever their origins, are also vital to the survival of the master.

The master's assessment is consistent with the policy of numerous agencies, though these agencies have on occasion funded apprentices whose cultural backgrounds are different from the master's. For example, the guidelines issued by the Folk Arts Program at the National Endowment for the Arts state: "The particular ways these artistic traditions are expressed serve to identify and symbolize the group that *originated* them" (Folk Arts Program Description 1981:1, emphasis mine). The guidelines speak of "sharing the same ethnic heritage," "arts that have endured through several generations," and "authenticity of the practitioners of these arts." The Folk Arts Program at the New York State Council for the Arts, one of the largest and most innovative such programs at the state level, "strives to sustain traditions as they are rooted in particular traditional communities" (New York State Council for the Arts Program Guidelines 1987:47). NYSCA Folk Arts "stresses support for projects involving individual folk artists whose involvement with a tradition stems from their community membership or direct participation in a specific tradition, as distinguished from revivalists. Revivalists are artists who interpret and revive the traditions for which they are outsiders." The guidelines go on to indicate that "projects which include revivalists as presenters and collaborators with traditional folk artists are, however, eligible for support from the Folk Arts Program," and that revivalists may seek support from other divisions of the Council. Examples from many other funding agencies could be cited.

The distinction between traditional and revival performers has long informed public sector folklore; during the 1930s, for example, Sarah Gertrude Knott distinguished "survival" from "revival" at the National Folk Festivals she organized (Wilson and Udall 1982:7). Because the term "folk" has been used so indiscriminately, some folklorists prefer to speak of "traditional" arts:

they argue that “an authentic folk artist seldom uses such a term [folk artist] in describing himself” and note, in contrast, that revivalists use the term *folk* very freely (Wilson and Udall 1982:182). In their handbook for organizing folk festivals, Wilson and Udall offer an elaborate taxonomy of performers on a continuum from the most to the least traditional (1982:20–22). Two decades earlier, Gershon Legman (1964a) had identified the distinguishing characteristics not only of “fake folk-singers,” but also of “fake folklorists.”

There are no easy answers to how priorities should be set, particularly given that folk arts, as defined here, have only recently achieved recognition as a separate program within funding agencies and compete for limited resources. Such guidelines express the desire to identify and strengthen the work of traditional artists, who struggle, and not always successfully, to keep going in the face of a powerful culture industry, to which revivalists generally have easier access. Such guidelines also express a tension between a proprietary approach to folk traditions (the first priority is to support those to whom the traditions “belong” by right of heritage) and the notion that folk arts belong to everyone. This tension underlies the dual aims of so many folk arts funding programs: namely, to strengthen traditions within a particular community and make them visible beyond that community, a special concern when spending the taxpayer’s dollar. The NEA Folk Arts Program’s goals “to help enrich the lives of all Americans by making more visible the sophistication, vivacity, and meaningfulness of our multicultural heritage” (1981:3) has an unintended consequence—funding supports insiders to do and outsiders to watch. Our heritage is “multicultural” only insofar as we are allowed to watch what others do, to consume what others produce.

Other questions pertain to the style and tenor of public sector folklore. Lobbying for funding contributes to a consensual and celebratory view of folklore, which is intensified by the media we use—festivals, which by their nature are celebratory; museums, which inevitably enshrine and valorize; and mass media, which bring publicity, celebrity, and money. And perhaps most important, our celebrations of heritage have profound implications for the implicit primacy we thereby give to descent, to the inheritance of culture, and to the status quo.

German folklorists know all too well that folkloristics has often been “an applied science in the service of the state” (Dow and Lixfeld 1986:8). And we have seen where arguments based on descent can lead. British social theorists have offered important alternative perspectives on folklore as the site of resistance to the centralization of power, whether in the culture industry or in other institutions. We need to be more aware in our work that the very forces that overpowered traditional cultures return in a new guise to redeem through cultural conservation what was lost through land treaties, slavery, missionizing, gentrification, suburbanization of the rural landscape, assimilatory educational practices, and related forces. Without such consciousness, applied folklore plays into the notion that “Folklorism is an aesthetic compensation for economic backwardness” (Jeggle and Korff 1986:136).

Cultural objectification, which is at the heart of what we do, is a complicated process with unpredictable results, one of which is the canonization of particular traditions, individuals, and forms (Handler 1984). There is a reciprocity that must be accounted for: "the observed object changes during and because of observation" (Scharfe 1986:90). Enshrinement, the result of much public sector work, also changes that which is enshrined. This is what several German folklorists have characterized as the folklorism effect. Here too there is an important cooperative role for the academy in relation to applied folklore—an ethnographic approach to the public sector itself and to the impact of particular projects and activities on those involved.

Conclusion

Perhaps the split between theory and practice, the academy and the public sector, is a peculiarly American problem and one not limited to folklore. An American interviewer once asked Umberto Eco how he reconciled his work as a scholar and university professor with his journalistic activities, to which Eco answered:

This habit is common to all European intellectuals, in Germany, France, Spain, and, naturally, Italy: all countries where a scholar or scientist often feels required to speak out in the papers, to comment, if only from the point of view of his own interests and special field, on events that concern all citizens. And I added, somewhat maliciously, that if there was any problem with this it was not my problem as a European intellectual; it was more a problem of American intellectuals, who live in a country where the division of labor between university professors and militant intellectuals is much more strict than in our countries. [Eco 1986:ix-x]

The time has come for folklorists to reassess their division of labor, to reexamine the split between the academic and applied traditions, and to close it.

Notes

A shorter form of this article was presented at the forum "Practice—Public Sector Folklore in Retrospect," during the 1987 American Folklore Society Meetings in Albuquerque. The forum was part of a series of sessions organized by Robert Baron and Nicolas Spitzer to address the subject of folklore in the public sector. I am indebted to Robert Baron, who over the years has stimulated me to think about many of these issues, and to Edward M. Bruner, Shalom Staub, and Steven Zeitlin for a lively and ongoing dialogue.

¹See also Lauri Honko's reports on the UNESCO Committee of Governmental Experts on the Safeguarding of Folklife during the 1980s in *NIF Newsletter*, published by the Nordic Institute of Folklore in Turku, Finland.

²One can only hope that lessons will be learned from the commercialization of the South Street Seaport Museum complex in Manhattan. A provocative recent example of highly sophisticated efforts to develop the cultural industry of a city is the Lowell Cultural Plan in Massachusetts, which incorporates "community arts" and "folklife."

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