

So much for autobiographical background. The one point I would underscore is that I stumbled into folklore from a training in American cultural and intellectual history, and that no other folklorist at that time had entered our common field through that particular door. Stith Thompson came to folklore through English literature, Archer Taylor through Germanics, Ralph Steele Boggs through Spanish. Consequently the folklore scholars of the '40's were comparative, or literary, or ballad, or anthropological folklorists. But they were not American folklorists; that is, although Americans, they were not Americanists.

Then in 1944 Benjamin A. Botkin published his *A Treasury of American Folklore*. This fat volume of over six hundred pages, which sold at the time for \$ 3.95 (today it would sell for at least \$ 12.50) proved an immediate and enormous success, both commercially and critically. It received feature reviews in the *New York Times* and *New York Herald Tribune* weekly book sections and in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, and was adopted by the Book of the Month Club as a bonus dividend. Millions of Americans came to know the subject of American folklore through this book and its successors. The first treasury has gone through more than twenty editions and remains in print up to today. Its popularity led Mr. Botkin to resign his position as Curator of the Archive of Folksong in the Library of Congress and to become a free-lance writer and compiler of subsequent treasuries, covering the geographical regions of the United States. It was directly as a consequence of these treasuries and their influence that I publicized the word "fakelore".

My personal reaction to these treasuries was one of shock, or actually double shock, first as to the method of their compilation, and second, at the approval they received by professional folklorists. The method, in a word, was that of the scrapbook. The treasuries were in the most literal sense a scissors and paste job, with no philosophic unity and a wide discrepancy of sources. Yet the reviewers in the folklore journals – Wayland Hand in the *Journal of American Folklore*, Levette J. Davidson in *California Folklore Quarterly*, and Arthur Palmer Hudson in *Southern Folklore Quarterly* – uniformly praised *A Treasury of American Folklore*. It is noteworthy that Hand was a professor of German and Davidson and Hudson were professors of English. But since no academic specialists in American folklore then existed, these reviewers were as qualified as any.

These uncritical encomiums seemed to me seriously to injure the cause of the serious study of American folklore. It was clearly a commercial rather than an intellectual venture, cleverly packaged for the American mass audience: a lot of book for little money, selections chosen for light bedside reading and appeal to superficial American nationalism. Fur-