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9

Elizabeth Hickox and Karuk Basketry

A Case Study in Debates on Innovation and Paradigms of Authenticity

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This essay considers the production and reception of baskets woven for sale as curios in the early twentieth century by Elizabeth Conrad Hickox (1872–1947) of the Karuk region in northwestern California (fig. 9.1). Hickox specialized in the lidded trinket basket, a form developed for the curio trade.[1] Between 1908 and 1934 her works were purchased by Grace Nicholson, a curio dealer in Pasadena, California, who specialized in basketry. Nicholson's records provide almost unparalleled documentation of the work of a single weaver.[2] Until 1926 Nicholson recorded her purchases of baskets by Hickox and others in a ledger and also photographed Hickox, her baskets, and those of other weavers.[3]

Although the Lower Klamath basketry style is so homogeneous that neither weavers nor non-Native experts can judge ethnic origin (Wiyot, Tolowa, Hoopa, Yurok, or Karuk) for undocumented pieces, Hickox's baskets are immediately identifiable. They display unique characteristics of shape (the high, narrow knob), technique (superfine stitching with limited color scheme), and design (complex interrelation of primary and secondary motifs). Anthropologist Lila O'Neale, who interviewed Hickox extensively in 1929, attributed Hickox's individuation to the demands of her patron, Grace Nicholson, although this view refutes both documentary evidence and Hickox's own words as preserved in O'Neale's notebooks. Elizabeth Hickox's development of a signature style thus serves as a well-documented case study for examining debates about tradition and innovation in judgments of authenticity.

Hickox's baskets participated in the Native American curio trade that climaxed between 1880 and 1920. This trade formed part of a globalized commoditization of ethnicity dominated by the expanding Victorian bourgeoisie in English-, French-, and German-speaking countries in Europe and North

Figure 9.1. Elizabeth Hickox seated next to her baskets, 1913. Photograph by Grace Nicholson. Grace Nicholson Papers, Huntington Library. Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

America (Howe 1976). These forms of ethnic curio consumption were not uniform either in their specific features or in the meanings applied to them; issues of authenticity and tradition were, in particular, inconsistently weighted. "Tradition" and "authenticity" continue to be slippery notions, imposed on Native American products (along with those of other colonized peoples) as part of the process of subordination and exploitation. They have

both changed and been resisted throughout the twentieth century, the period during which they have been most extensively applied. Some of the debates are illustrated by both the production of Elizabeth Hickox's trinket baskets and their changing meanings to Euro-American consumers.

THE MODERNIZATION PARADIGM AND ITS AUTHENTICITY BOUNDARY

The evolutionary paradigm dominant during the second half of the nineteenth century constructed a set of sequential links among peoples and their objects that formed a linear trajectory of social and technological progress. During the late nineteenth century a crucial shift began to occur. The evolutionary paradigm was gradually replaced with a relativist construct that Richard Wilk (1991: 3) has termed the "modernization paradigm," a polar opposition of the *modern* (characterized by technology, progress, capitalist commerce, industrialization, alienation from nature, materialism) and the *premodern* or *primitive* (characterized by precapitalist forms of production and exchange, adherence to tradition, closeness to nature, spiritualism). The modernization paradigm constructed temporal gaps, dividing the contemporaneous lifestyles and practices of the world's peoples into categories relevant either to the past (premodern) or to the future (modern).

Peoples considered to represent the modern and premodern poles were not, in fact, divided by a spatial, temporal, or even an economic gap but were related through capitalism—as capital to labor and colonizer to colonized. The gap was ideological: constructed in discourse to mystify exploitative relations of production. Touristic consumption both arose from this conceptual distance between modern and premodern and served to maintain and reproduce the ideological gap by transforming ethnically marked objects and practices of the colonized "fourth world" into leisure-time entertainments that obscured exploitation in labor.

Promulgation of this ideological polarity led to shifts in the ways that Native basket curios were appraised. Earlier, curios made with Euro-American materials (threads or dyes) or with overt paraphrases of Euro-American forms (including shapes such as cups and saucers and motifs such as letters and numerals) were appreciated by some as evidence of progress and hence of the evolutionary potential of Native Americans. This valorization of change was often connected to women's philanthropic activities aimed at Native assimilation, and it supported parallel federal land-ownership and education programs. The development of an opposed relativist paradigm in the late 1880s was closely associated with the growth of international corporate and finance capitalism. The new economic elite in North America, allied with the expanding bourgeoisie, began to adopt Native Americans as their premodern ancestors, a construction designed not only to define individual Canadian or

American identity within a community of industrialized nations but also as a tool in the exploitation of immigrant non-Anglo laborers. Under the modernization paradigm, innovations in basketry that had earlier been appreciated as evidence of progress came to be rejected as evidence of contamination and degradation. Fearing what seemed the imminent doom of Native American societies (and their availability to ideological appropriation), the new capitalist elite financed expeditions of salvage anthropology to collect objects, myths, and descriptions of technologies and ceremonial practices.

These salvage practices involved attempts to erase evidence of change related to modern capitalist interventions. Such changes were classified as the loss of "traditional culture" and hence "acculturation." These assessments carried negative connotations because of the dichotomous character of the modernization paradigm, which constructed change as a virtue and a sign of progress when associated with dominant Euro-American groups, but as a threatening vice when associated with subordinated groups such as Native Americans.

Privately supported policies of preservation based on relativism were, however, as unsuccessful as those governmental, evolution-based policies of assimilation they were developed to resist. Native Americans, on the one hand, refused to surrender their identity as the original human occupants of the New World while, on the other, they intermarried (particularly with Euro-Americans and Mexican Americans), adopting the practices of Euro-American groups (food, clothing, technology, substance abuse, religion), and actively sold their labor, goods, resources, and often land. These practices rendered the premodern/modern boundary between Natives and Euro-Americans increasingly hard to define.

Increasingly, too, judgments of authenticity became an ideological tool for reinforcing this permeable boundary. In processes of industrializing production, notions of authenticity had proven useful for constructing a premodern/modern boundary between the unique, handmade crafts and "spiritualistic" art, sharing signs of individuality associated with the bourgeoisie and the mechanically mass-produced commodities associated with the laboring classes. "Authenticity" also measured the degree to which Native American objects and practices could operate as metonyms for the premodern, constructing a purified, ostensibly precontact past. The constructions of "authentic tradition" imposed on indigenous peoples of North America were disempowering because they were descriptions of an imaginary past lifestyle that no living Native American could attain.

Many Aboriginal peoples contested such judgments, forcing dominant groups constantly to reinforce the boundaries of the modernization paradigm and their use of tradition and authenticity as its defensive fortifications. In sum, authenticity is not an essential trait of objects or practices but a discursive boundary-marking construction specifically associated with late-Victorian anthropological imaginings of "primitive" societies and contemporaneous curio market valuations. Through its construction of alterity, it served to maintain the modernization paradigm as an ideological component of the subordination and exploitation of colonized societies.

AUTHENTICITY AND OBJECTS: COLLECTORS' FINE ART AND TOURISTS' SOUVENIRS

Daniel Miller (paraphrasing Barthes) has written that an important function of material objects and other signifying practices is to provide "artificial resolutions to real contradictions in society," utilizing "the ambiguities and tendencies of the process of signification itself in order to effect its apparent closures" (1987: 145). Virginia Dominguez (1986) foregrounds the ethnographic museum collection in late-Victorian North America as the site of such closures, which could constitute and reproduce the myth of Native/white separation. Dominguez shows how objects produced in contexts of Native American (and other non-Western) societies could be appropriated, reclassified, and displayed in museums as metonyms of an imagined precontact lifestyle in order to reify the West's reductive definition of a "primitive" Other and thereby its self-definition as "modern." Jean Jacques Simard (1990) argues further that inferred representations of the "modern Western self" in texts and object displays were as reductive as representations of the "primitive non-Western other." He writes that "the much-favored modern definition of the Whiteman as a morally delinquent, environmentally estranged, socially alienated and materialist creature is historically emergent, and cannot make sense without reference to the opposite traits of the true Indian" (1990: 354).

As Ruth Phillips (1995) details, one of the most important processes by which museums reinforced the boundary between the modern and the premodern was in judgments of authenticity applied to objects they actively collected as well as to those donated by private patrons. Museum curators claimed to define the premodern/modern division on the basis of production, judging as authentic those objects produced for indigenous use—or replicas of such produced for anthropologists—and dismissing as inauthentic souvenir objects produced explicitly for sale. In practice, however, objects that *appeared* "traditional," whether or not they were made for sale, could be authenticated and recontextualized within the museum setting and analyzed as evidence of precontact technology or religion.

Museums were not the only or even the major sites of boundary construction through object display. Rather, private consumption for household decor dominated the curio trade at its peak. In late-Victorian bourgeois ideology, the modern/premodern distinction between "progressive" material change and "traditional" spiritual or moral values also defined the discursive split between public and private spheres. Bourgeois households were

maintained as premodern preserves through the matriarchal cult of domesticity, which was articulated symbolically through women's task of decorating reception spaces (front halls as well as parlors). Objects were chosen for display not only to articulate the household's class position (through judgments of taste), to define nationality (by celebrating premodern antecedents), or to create a hierarchy of gender (by defining the home as a place of male leisure) but also, through chains of signification, to reinforce the household as a premodern space protected from capitalist materialism.

Native curios were privileged in bourgeois parlor decoration as metonymic representations of the premodern, their significations enhanced by handmade production and utilitarian function, two aspects of the premodern also valorized in the contemporary American Arts and Crafts Movement. Bourgeois women philanthropists, especially those operating through settlement houses, included the textile work of immigrant women in the category of crafts; hence debates over assimilation or preservation of Native American societies were linked with conflicts over whether women's needlework was modern industry or premodern craft. All these categories (curios, crafts, the invented Indian, the cult of domesticity) exemplify the premodern component of the late-Victorian modernization paradigm. As Hobsbawm (1983) shows, characterizations of the premodern as a traditional past were constructed on the basis of present rather than past conditions and thus were actually "invented traditions."

In the literature on basketry curios from the end of the nineteenth century, the authentic/inauthentic dichotomy was also directed explicitly at the construction of the consumer's economic class. Purchases of unique and expensive fine-art curios characterized high-class collectors as persons of knowledge and taste gallantly engaged in the preservation of Native tradition, whereas acquisitions of mass-produced and inexpensive souvenirs constructed their purchasers as ignorant, crass tourists unwittingly encouraging the degradation of the Native. The consumer's ability to discriminate relied on visual examination, since both categories of objects were made for sale to suit Euro-American tastes, and in some cases both were made by the same individual. Some objects resisted classification by sharing characteristics of both categories. The trinket baskets of Karuk weaver Annie Super, for example, combined "authentic" fine technique with "inauthentic" animal designs.

The dichotomy of fine art and souvenir thus subsumed a continuum of goods developed to meet the diverse taste requirements of consumers as well as practices of consumption that ranged from occasional tourism to financial investment. More recently, this dichotomy has been contained within a generalized category of "tourist arts," a term that in early basketry literature would have been an oxymoron. Its acceptance today demonstrates that while racialized judgments of authenticity (based on indigenous use versus commercial production) have become entrenched throughout North American society, class divisions that previously distinguished categories of "art" and "souvenir" have been elided.

AUTHENTICITY AND CHANGE AMONG BASKETRY PRODUCERS

Twentieth-century practitioners of cultural relativist anthropology (along with other consumers of the premodern) learned to reconfigure textually colonized non-Western societies in an allochronic framework that removed them from history and the present (Fabian 1983). They developed a theory of "primitive cultures" as societies with homogeneous value systems resulting in universal adherence to "tradition," rather than individual innovation. Native curio producers continuously negotiated the ambiguous and shifting Euro-American boundary between "tradition" and "innovation," adapting creatively to Western tastes and changing definitions of their own "authenticity" while avoiding overt signs of innovation that would jeopardize the value of a curio product as metonym for the premodern. Museum authentication of innovative curio objects was facilitated by the very flexibility of a boundary that was discursive rather than tangible.

When preservationism was taken up as a popular cause in opposition to federal assimilation policies, the authenticity of curio baskets became an important issue for upscale collectors and dealers because only a "traditional" piece—its connotations of belonging to the past contributing to a presumption of rarity—could be expected to increase in value. Private dealers and collectors also judged value according to fineness of weave, which indicated exceptional skill and labor investment. Although technical quality increased with the use of metal tools, assumptions that the true relevance of indigenous life was in the past and that Euro-American influence contaminated Native society and therefore degraded object production allowed dealers and collectors to invert technical quality as a marker of past tradition. Works that combined high quality with an absence of overt paraphrases of Euro-American form or design were accepted by dealers and collectors as traditional, allowing them to function both metonymically as signifiers of a purified precontact past and financially as investments guaranteed to appreciate.

Consumers also expected authentic curios to be produced in premodern settings—by poor Native women living in indigenous shelters and engaged in precontact modes of subsistence. Dealers rarely disenchanted their clients about the facts of production; rather, it was characteristic of "dealer lore" to manufacture an "authentic" premodern context of production to satisfy the touristic desires of consumers (Spooner 1986). Indeed, the most expensive of all curio baskets were those by Washoe weaver Louisa Keyser (Dat so la lee), whose patron Amy Cohn hid the actual circumstances of her innovative curio production behind an elaborate lore, manufacturing a store of significations that attracted purchase as much as the physical basket (Cohodas 1992).

Similarly, Grace Nicholson did not reveal to her clients that the Hickoxes were a mixed-race family of considerable economic status and social influence in their region. Elizabeth's husband, Luther Hickox, owned a gold mine and was part owner of a sawmill. In 1916 he also became a justice of the peace, and around that time he purchased what may have been the first automobile in the locality. He drove the car on official business, taking his stepdaughter, Jessie Merrill (who was educated at the Sherman Institute in Riverside, California), as secretary, and his daughter, Louise Hickox, as translator. He also used the car to take gold to the mint in San Francisco and to mail Elizabeth's baskets to Nicholson in Pasadena. When Elizabeth came along she used her basket-weaving income to shop for more fashionable clothes than she could obtain locally.

Furthermore, although Nicholson classified Hickox's baskets as Karuk because the family lived in the Karuk area, neither Elizabeth nor Luther had Karuk ancestors. Both had Euro-American fathers who brought Native women into the area to serve as wives and housekeepers—Elizabeth's mother was Wiyot, and Luther's was Hoopa. Accurate information about the Hickox baskets would have frustrated consumers' demand for curios to be authentically premodern in form and mode of production and stylistically characteristic of a particular "tribe."

As Euro-Americans strove to recontextualize these objects, selecting and distorting information in order to reinforce a strategic boundary, many Native producers endeavored instead to create curios that gave material expression to the growing interrelationships and interdependencies of Native and Euro-American societies. Synthesizing indigenous techniques and designs with a modern form adapted to Euro-American display produced an object that, although hybrid, was designed to be interpretable in Euro-American environments as an indigenous form. Thus consumers, associating "past tradition" with fine quality and a lack of overt Euro-American borrowings, authenticated Hickox's lidded trinket basket, even though it had been designed specifically for Euro-American interior settings such as mantels or bric-a-brac displays. Hickox went further than many in adapting the trinket basket to its curio function, undermining its associations with storage. She wove an elegant but fragile knob, she made the object small and light to encourage viewers to pick it up, and she put designs on the interior to discourage owners from placing objects inside and to encourage them to open the basket for appreciative examination.

INNOVATION AND AUTHENTICITY

To function as a sign of premodern "tradition," the curio object had to suggest the past and absence of change, but to function as fine art it also had to manifest individual genius. Many private collectors of Native American

curios were willing to pay higher prices for objects of known and distinguished authorship because the more expensive "fine-art" curios could be expected to appreciate more in market value. Because of the greater financial and social rewards, some Native American producers such as Elizabeth Hickox strove to meet the taste requirements of this upscale fine-art market. Curio dealers like Nicholson mediated between Native producers and wealthy Euro-American consumers, facilitating the circulation of objects as well as information about origin and authorship. Nicholson continually promoted Hickox (together with Pomoan weavers Mary and William Benson) as unique artists, elevating prices on their baskets accordingly.

A contradiction thus arose within the notion of the authentic: homogeneity and traditionalism were expected for ethnographic classification as artifact, but individuality and uniqueness were expected for aesthetic categorization as fine art. Dealers specializing in the high-end market probably first worked out the solution to this contradiction around 1900 by separating innovation from individuation. Basketry dealers like Nicholson and the Cohns maintained that in this era of commercialized trinket production the highest quality and most individualized baskets were the most traditional (Cohodas 1992: 104–8). The superior weaver's individuality as artist was thus constructed as her unique preservation of—not departure from—tradition.

These dealers then promoted particular women, generally no more than one for each "tribal" division, as "the last of the great weavers." For example, Nicholson wrote that Elizabeth Hickox was "the greatest weaver, who ever lived of these people" and attempted to authenticate the individual character of her baskets by claiming falsely that "old designs and old forms were obtained by research."[4] These dealers thus added to the metonymic use of curio objects as signifiers of the premodern the synecdochal use of a single, supposedly more "traditional" producer to stand in for the precontact "tribal" group. This synecdoche also had economic ramifications; works by the "last of the great weavers" increased in rarity-value not only because these weavers were considered unique but also because, with their inevitable demise, there would presumably be no superior "traditional" weavers remaining to produce such "authentic" objects.

PROFESSIONALIZED ANTHROPOLOGICAL DEBATES ON AUTHENTICITY

Although the emphasis on quality and the unique contributions of individual weavers dominated popular and academic discourse on Native basket weaving for a time, both were eventually rejected by (university-based) professionalized relativist anthropology. This newer approach to Native basketry was formulated primarily by Alfred Kroeber and his colleagues and

students at Berkeley between 1901 and 1908, when their collecting and publishing activities were financed by Phoebe Apperson Hearst. Most of the baskets Kroeber and his associates were shown in the field had been made for sale and incorporated designs made bolder or more complex to attract the attention of potential buyers. Following standard relativist divisions of contemporary phenomena into traditional or acculturated categories, Berkeley anthropologists generally selected from these wares only those forms associated with indigenous use (mainly food processing) and rejected those, like the lidded trinket basket, that had been adapted to function as curios. Hence, although Kroeber wrote his monumental *Handbook of the Indians of California* at the height of the curio trade[5]—and the period of Hickox's most intense production for Nicholson—and although he gave extended space to the Lower Klamath, his area of special interest, he excluded both the commercial market and the resulting adaptations and innovations of curio baskets.

Many museums did not take a similarly hard line; several accepted donations that included baskets made by Hickox, including Harvard's Peabody Museum (in 1908 and 1913), the University of Pennsylvania Museum (in 1918), Chicago's Field Columbian Museum (in 1920), and later the Southwest Museum of Los Angeles (several times during the 1930s). These museums' more relaxed approach, required by their public constituencies, involved active recontextualizations in museum displays that reinstated the authenticity boundary to maintain the modernization paradigm.

For example, when the collection of an important Nicholson client, Patty Stuart Jewett, was donated to the University of Pennsylvania Museum upon her death in 1918, curator B. W. Merwin described some of its more striking pieces in an article for patrons in the *Museum Journal*. Choosing from among many Lower Klamath baskets in Jewett's collection, Merwin selected for comment only the two woven by Hickox: "The Karok Indians of northern California are represented by a pair of the most graceful miniature storage baskets. Both specimens show the same beautiful workmanship and painstaking care in the selection of the materials. They are almost identically the same size and form, and even the lids with their graceful handles are very similar" (1918: 237).

Merwin's recontextualization required two separate operations. First, Merwin authenticated the lidded trinket basket form (rather than dismissing it entirely, as Kroeber did) by constructing these examples as miniatures or models of functional storage baskets. Second, Merwin ignored the striking difference of these pieces from other Lower Klamath baskets in the collection in order to construct them as exemplars defining an unchanging and shared tribal style. To transform heterogeneity into a relativist homogeneity in this way, Merwin must have actively suppressed the information on authorship that would have come with the baskets, since

they had been packed and sent to the museum by Nicholson herself. In contrast to the importance of individuation in marketing curio baskets and in much of the accompanying literature,[6] even the moderate relativist approach of museums required curators to erase evidence of individuality and thereby to maintain a construct of "culture" involving shared values that avoided conflict and maintained tradition as changeless. As Richard Handler explains:

> Much scholarly writing on these societies posits individuality at the level of the social whole rather than the human individual. There is even an elaborate theory of social evolution which asserts that in "primitive" societies—in contrast to the modern west—persons are imprisoned by hide-bound traditions which block the emergence of creative individuality. Much, though by no means all, ethnographic writing omits reference to individuals and posits instead generic social actors. (1992: 24)

However, requirements for changelessness also depended in part on the medium. The gendered Western hierarchy of art and craft generated greater expectations of "hide-bound tradition" for women's products such as basketry.

After the Second World War, baskets made by Elizabeth Hickox were purchased directly from Nicholson or her estate by several museums, including the Denver Art Museum (in 1946), the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History (in 1951), and the Heye Foundation (in 1956). One of the Heye Foundation baskets, the largest and perhaps the most spectacular of her works on display at the Museum of the American Indian in New York, where Dover Publications is headquartered, was used for the cover of its 1976 reissue of Kroeber's *Handbook of the Indians of California* (fig. 9.2). This ironic juxtaposition highlights the contradictions in museum and academic positions on authenticity. As we have seen, Kroeber had refused to consider Hickox's baskets despite their contemporary valorization in museum settings. And although her authorship was well documented in Heye Foundation correspondence with Nicholson's secretary, it was suppressed both in museum displays and on the Dover book cover so that her baskets could exemplify precontact tradition.

Through such recontextualization, curators enacted a taxonomic shift, but one opposite to that defined by James Clifford (1988). Clifford describes a process whereby objects made for indigenous use were aestheticized and recontextualized as art within a museum framework. Here, in contrast, objects originally made for sale and display as art were instead de-aestheticized and recontextualized as functional ethnographic specimens or their authentic replicas. In numbers, this ethnographic recontextualization may far outweigh the aestheticization of objects that Clifford decries. Ethnographic collections are bursting with such objects, many purchased by museum eth-

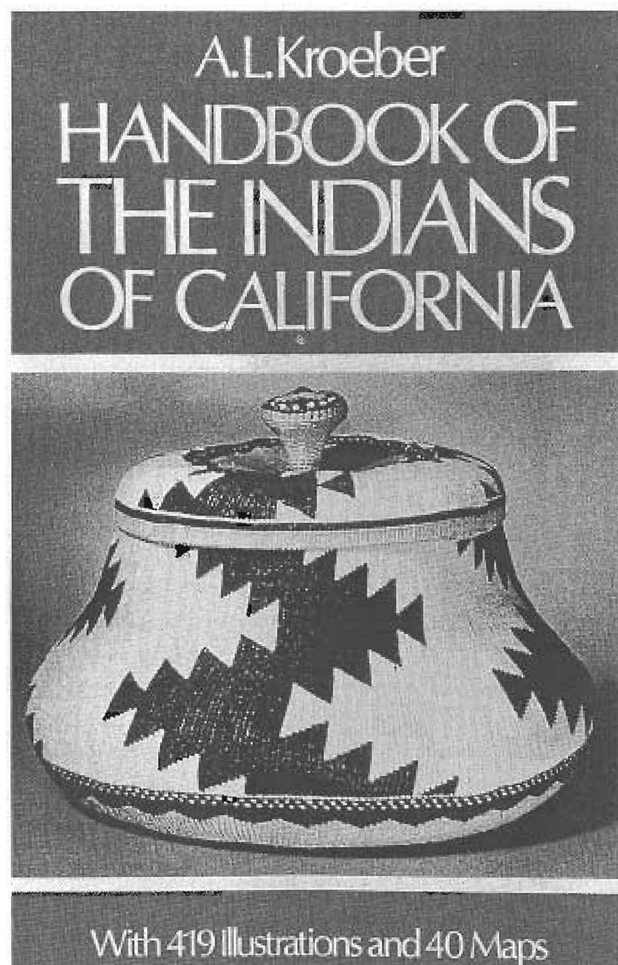

Figure 9.2. Cover of 1976 Dover reprint of Alfred L. Kroeber's 1925 *Handbook of the Indians of California*. Reproduced by permission of Dover Publications.

nographers or their agents from curio dealers such as Nicholson. The fact that most baskets in museum collections were not used did not jeopardize their usefulness in constructing an image of a timeless, premodern society. Instead, these innovative responses to Euro-American ethnographic and touristic consumption (the two are hard to separate) have been studied and presented textually as exemplifying unchanging tradition, the necessary result of an allochronic discourse of alterity.[7]

LILA O'NEALE AND HICKOX'S INDIVIDUATION

The individuation of Hickox's basketry was given its most extended treatment and interpretation by Lila O'Neale in her dissertation on Yurok-Karok basket weaving, written under Kroeber and published in 1932. Although O'Neale interviewed more than forty Lower Klamath weavers, Elizabeth Hickox appears to have been her primary informant. She wrote of Hickox: "Her opinions on standards and conventional proportions are valuable; her own feelings with regard to quality were apparent in the discussions of each phase of basketry; she knew each from the angle of the best way to do things for the highest quality result" (O'Neale 1932: 175).

Following the work of Boas's team on Salishan weaving, O'Neale intended to investigate ethno-aesthetics as a means of (1) differentiating what she considered the timeless tradition of indigenous weaving from the acculturation of contemporary curio adaptations, (2) demonstrating the limits that tradition imposed on weavers by examining objects that both adhered to and broke these conventions, and (3) determining how weavers promulgate shared tradition over time. O'Neale did not question weavers about the aesthetics of currently produced works but instead brought a set of photographs of Lower Klamath baskets collected a quarter-century or more earlier, which, although they came from the earliest documented and institution-based collections from this region, also showed significant curio-trade modifications.[8] A part of O'Neale's mission was to use weavers' identifications of good and bad taste to differentiate "authentic" from commercial traits in these early collections.

O'Neale incorporated information on commercial weaving not to give it currency but to construct it as acculturated and thereby to define as traditional any weaving for Native use. Considering the trinket basket an adaptation of indigenous form, O'Neale included discussions of it (thus exceeding Kroeber's narrow limits), but she excluded forms developed for the curio trade that lacked indigenous precedent (covered bottles, napkin rings, place mats, wall hangings, etc.), referring to these as "freak baskets" or "aesthetic atrocities." O'Neale's preference of tradition over innovation was not shared by many of her informants, who were especially appreciative of Karuk weaver Nettie Ruben's souvenir innovations (fig. 9.3):

> She is better known and more often spoken of than any other one weaver on the Klamath river. She has made every sort of basket but the Jumping dance basket, besides novel shapes and fancies for sale to tourists. . . . She makes clothes and market baskets of all sizes from the two-inch gift sizes up. . . . She has tried her hand at crocheting, has made arrows, paper flowers, and other non-basketry objects. According to general opinion, whatever [Nettie Ruben] attempts is well done. (1932: 173)

O'Neale's conclusion on the promulgation of tradition was that Lower

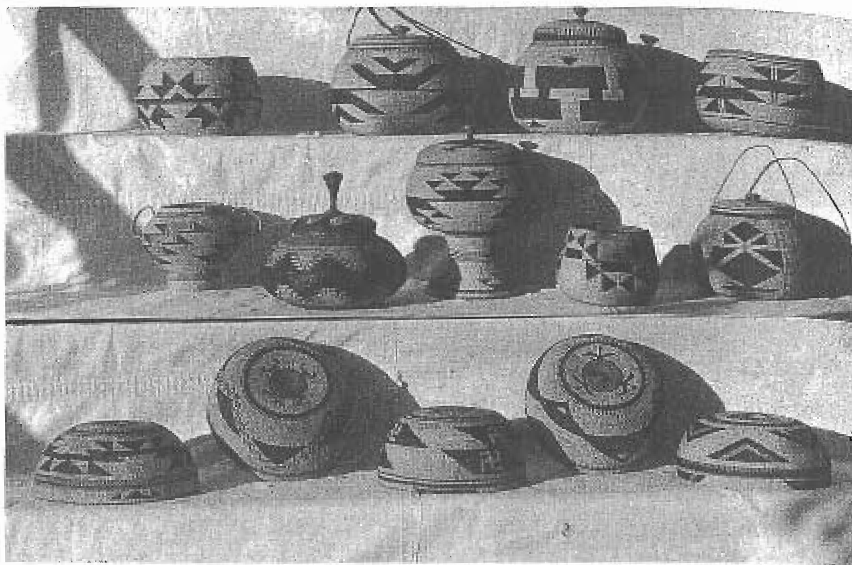

Figure 9.3. The Young (now Hover) collection of Karuk baskets, 1929, including lidded trinket basket by Elizabeth Hickox (middle row, second from left) and sugar bowl probably by Nettie Ruben (middle row, left end). Photograph by Lila O'Neale. Courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Klamath weavers habitually took the easiest route—for the present acceding to debased demands of the market but destined to fall back into traditional grooves when commercial production ceased. Strikingly, Hickox's interview became the cornerstone for O'Neale's arrogant argument, perhaps because she was her primary and most articulate informant, and also because the quality and individuality of her work represented the greatest challenge to anthropological constructs of shared values and style. O'Neale thus devoted her section on innovation to Hickox, but robbed her of agency by ascribing the individuation of her approach to the sophistication of her patron's tastes:

> One of the best, if not the best, Karok weavers in the territory today has never made freak baskets nor copied foreign shapes. [Hickox] cannot be considered typical. She and her family have had more contact with white people than is usual, and for a long time her tastes have been molded, perhaps unconsciously, by the likes and dislikes of a patroness who contracts for the family's entire output. (1932: 158)

To substantiate weavers' passive submission to market forces, O'Neale probed Hickox further. Instead of questioning Hickox about trinket basket weaving, she asked her repeatedly whether she would accede to any demand of her patron, even for crass objects like placemats. Three times Hickox replied that she would not, but once she replied that, yes, she would even follow a demand for a particular color. Note that Hickox was at that time weaving all her curio baskets in the same color scheme (yellow on black) on which Nicholson claimed no influence and that Nicholson was satisfied with Hickox's limitation to the lidded trinket basket shape. Note also that Hickox's final and most complete response to this insistent line of questioning was negative: "Even if Miss N. wanted it, I'd hate to do it. Hard, and not real Indian idea. Never made them. Not good taste."[9] Then observe that O'Neale privileged Hickox's single affirmative response as the foundation for her general argument on the passivity of Lower Klamath weavers:

> And yet, No. 28 admitted, so strong is the feeling that the craft must be profitable as well as pleasurable, and much as she might dislike to, that she would accept even a commission to make table mats. If her patroness asked for them, she would execute the order as if it were a detail like color arrangement. Basketry is a business with the Yurok-Karok women, molded by their traditions and conventions, to be sure, but yielding in all but technique to the demands of trade. (1932: 158)

As brutal as we now perceive these distortions to be, they were not exceptional in O'Neale's time; they represented the effects of anthropology's requirement to conform to and reproduce the modernization paradigm by constructing "primitive" societies as changeless, belonging to the past, and subordinate.

BOURDIEU'S MODEL OF HOMOLOGY

I first began noticing the Hickox baskets while researching Washoe weaving in museums and private collections, taking advantage of opportunities to photograph works from other regions for teaching purposes. The Hickox pieces' elegant form, superfine texture, small scale, and fragility stood out. Looking into Nicholson's records of her relationships with basket weavers, I accepted O'Neale's explanation that patronage was responsible for the uniqueness of Hickox's baskets. Nicholson's photographic documentation added further support to the patronage explanation. Compare, for example, the photograph of Elizabeth Hickox taken in 1913 (fig. 9.1) with that of another weaver identified as Oak Bottom Jack's wife (fig. 9.4). Like many other Lower Klamath curio basket weavers depicted in photographs, Oak Bottom Jack's wife has spread on the ground an array of basket types using the full range of decorative materials to attract maximum attention from potential consumers. In contrast, Elizabeth Hickox, seated on a bench in her garden and elegantly dressed and relaxed, is posed with baskets extremely

Figure 9.4. Oak Bottom Jack's wife, c. 1911–17. Photograph by Grace Nicholson. Grace Nicholson Papers, Huntington Library. Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

limited in shape and color scheme because, as here recorded, her patron returns annually to acquire all she makes.

However, further research revealed that Hickox had chosen to specialize in weaving for the "fine-art" or high-priced end of the curio market before meeting Nicholson in 1908, when Nicholson noted in her diary that Hickox's were "the finest baskets of all."[10] Examination of baskets collected at this time demonstrated further that Hickox had already developed most of her distinctive weaving characteristics. The patronage explanation thus fell apart.

Searching then for an explanation that would grant agency to Hickox while still incorporating commercial production for non-Native consumption, I pursued a correlation between the unique elegance and refinement of Hickox's weaving, in contrast to works by other weavers, and the extremely high economic and social status of the Hickox family, which created a social gap between them and many other full-blood and mixed-race Karuk.[11] This correlation found theoretical grounding in Pierre Bourdieu's model of homology among objects, producers, and consumers, which asserts that "producers are led by the logic of competition with other producers and by the specific interests linked to their position in the field of production" to produce "distinct products which meet the different cultural interests which the consumers owe to their class conditions and position" (1984: 231). Bourdieu argues further:

> The functional and structural homology which guarantees objective orchestration between the logic of the field of production and the logic of the field of consumption arises from the fact that all the specialized fields . . . tend to be governed by the same logic . . . and from the fact that the oppositions which tend to be established in each case . . . are mutually homologous . . . and also homologous to the oppositions which structure the field of the social classes. . . . The correspondence which is thereby objectively established between the classes of products and the classes of consumers is realized in acts of consumption only through the mediation of that sense of the homology between goods and groups which defines tastes. Choosing according to one's tastes is a matter of identifying goods that are objectively attuned to one's position and which "go together" because they are situated in roughly equivalent positions in their respective spaces. (1984: 232)

Correlation of the position of the Hickox baskets within the field of Lower Klamath basket production with the position of the Hickox household in the field of local social relations must be expressed as homology rather than analogy because of the complex circumstances and strategic choices that enable the range of objects produced to approach the range of social relations structuring the field of production. Strategic choices often serve not to retain class position but to elevate it; hence Hickox's production of baskets in an elevated style must be considered not as objectively reflecting her family's status but as contributing to the active construction of that status. Furthermore, the homologous relationship of objects, producers, and consumers in their respective fields should be expanded to include the dealer—in this case Nicholson, who stood at the top of the basket-dealing trade during the years of her most intense relationship with Hickox (1911–1917).

Although Bourdieu does not clarify how homology is attained, but instead invokes the objective logic of field structures, the trajectory of the Hickox baskets provides one example of this process as economic and social action. Hickox's invention of baskets with superfine technique and her innovative approach depended on her ability to devote considerable time to the enterprise and to wait for long periods (often a year) to be remunerated. In contrast, it appears from O'Neale's descriptions of her informants that weavers in worse economic circumstances, who depended on basket sales for continuous cash flow, were more likely to adopt time-saving devices or simpler curio forms in order to produce baskets more rapidly and in higher volume. For weavers like Hickox, who had sufficient income from other sources to invest in long-term production, the financial rewards were exponentially greater. Hence Hickox's manufacture of the most labor-intensive basketry product on the Klamath River was enabled by, commensurate with, and par-

tially constructive of her social and economic position within the region. Similarly, in the field of exchange, Grace Nicholson had sufficient economic standing to gamble on the higher exchange value of labor-intensive products over the long term. And, in the field of consumption, collectors interested in sound financial investment could afford the higher price and longer wait for a significantly higher rate of appreciation, and others interested in museum donation could invest in the exchange of significant economic for social capital.

POSTSCRIPT AND CONCLUSION

Bourdieu's model of homology facilitates investigation of Native American and other interethnic curio objects without imposing primitivizing judgments of authenticity. Other methods that avoid such judgments include Arjun Appadurai's (1986) tracing of objects' trajectories as they move from production through exchange to consumption, and as they reenter the commodity phase in later instances of exchange, and Nicholas Thomas's (1991) focus on identifying the changing meanings of objects as they move through a sequence of exchange events. These are but three examples of current critical rejection of conventional anthropology's discourse on alterity; all three provide members of powerful academic establishments with a satisfying sense of righting historical wrongs and of fostering emancipation rather than subordination.

However, many Aboriginal American peoples are threatened by this process. Adopting Euro-American definitions of their authenticity can help produce a secure livelihood for producers of curios and "cultural performances"; it can also provide a positive image within popular discourse on environmentalism and for some a path toward recovering pride in Native identity that assimilative and abusive educational programs attempted to destroy. For example, in the 1990 exhibit of Hickox baskets curated by Ron Johnson of Humboldt State University, Karuk historian Julian Lang and Karuk weavers Nancy Richardson Riley and Josephine Lewis provided opportunities for strengthening positive Karuk identity on many levels, including showing respect for elders in attendance and for a heritage now represented by Hickox (Reese Bullen Gallery 1991). Hickox's example also thereby inspired current weavers.

Many Aboriginal American groups have also found that, in the context of continued Euro-American domination, asserting their own definitions of Native authenticity is a productive route to legal self-determination. Egyptian-American anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod refers to this form of indigenous resistance as "reverse orientalism," but warns that while "this valorization . . . of the previously devalued qualities attributed to them may be provisionally useful in forging a sense of unity and in waging struggles of empowerment, . . . because it leaves in place the divide that structures the experiences of selfhood and oppression on which it builds, it perpetuates some dangerous tendencies" (1991: 144–46). Like Abu-Lughod, Canadian First Nations artist Paul Chat Smith calls upon anthropologists to tell individual and fully implicated lives rather than manufacturing authenticity through generalization and alterity (1994).

Authenticity, including relations between individuation and innovation, thus remains a topic of debate among Aboriginal Americans as well as anthropologists and art historians, who have long appropriated the right to speak for them. Today's academics, like Native peoples, are faced with a choice of imperfect methods of fostering Native sovereignty. Whichever choice is made, it is important that the agenda be explicitly stated. For example, I have rejected certain notions of authenticity because they have been imposed to ensure Euro-American domination; I hope that their rejection will enable Native Americans to define the meaning their history will have for them—but I also recognize the validity of opposing Native views.

I believe that it is even more important for those academics still using notions of authenticity to be explicit about their methods and agendas. My point arises from the reinscription of the authenticity paradigm in recent literature on interethnic curios. For example, labeling all these works "tourist arts" foregrounds a particular circumstance of consumption that not only denies the importance of dealers in constructing the authenticating significations and relational values on which market valuation and ethnographic classification are often based, but also invokes all the notions of the inauthentic the term "tourist" has come to entail. Judgments of authenticity are also inscribed in subtler ways. Many current studies investigate contexts of curio *production* to *demonstrate* authenticity, by searching for precontact roots or meanings that presuppose authentic and timeless traditions. At the same time, studies that investigate contexts of *consumption* frequently *deny* the authenticity of objects made for sale in order to authenticate relationally those objects thought to be made for indigenous use. Current debate over whether intersocietal arts must necessarily be reduced in semantic content provides a prominent example (Jules-Rosette 1984: 219).

The choice to retain or abandon the authenticity paradigm thus has important political and economic as well as intellectual implications. For non-Native academics, a decision to perpetuate notions of authenticity in literature on interethnic curios requires clarification of purpose: is it to support the political goals of producing peoples, or perhaps to support their curio market? If not so clarified, in defining the "authenticity" of others for whom we have no right to speak, we perpetuate colonialist practice.