

From the Editors

This project has been in the works for a while, and we are pleased to see it come to fruition. Inspired by Dell Hymes's oft-referenced 1974 Presidential Address to the American Folklore Society (published in *JAF* 88, 1975), this issue of *Forum* takes on what we feel to be the least pursued of the five key elements in the discipline of folklore that Hymes outlined: creativity. The other four—genre, performance, tradition, and situation—have received extensive treatment in a wide range of studies, while creativity has hovered on the outskirts of academic attention. Creativity, then, serves as the unifying theme of this issue, but the variety of opinions and interpretations that emerges in the following pages indicates it is a multivalent concept with extensive horizons of usefulness. Ideally, the range of opinions will provide fuel for further thinking.

We are grateful to Dr. Hymes for taking the time to produce the essay that kicks off the issue. In it, he revisits the myth that informed his 1974 address and teases out the creative processes and circumstances that inform its existence as a unique work of verbal art. We realize after reading Hymes—both the piece included here and other works—that creativity is certainly not limited to the stuff we study in folklore, but simultaneously flows through the ways we study. To maintain such consistently penetrating and reflective thought on a concentrated body of data exhibits the intensely creative intellectual engagement that Hymes has had, and continues to have, with the subject matter of folklore.

Open Forum reappears in this issue with a piece by William “Bert” Wilson that was originally published in the newsletter of the American Folklore Society, *AFSNews*. Addressing instances of selective (mis)quoting of his words and thoughts on folk arts, Wilson argues strongly for the need to explore creativity in all facets of social life. He provides a good dose of inspiration and justification for supporting folk arts programs and research, and his essay is an appropriate prelude to the interviews that follow.

Bill Ivey and William Ferris currently hold U.S. federal offices as chairs of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) respectively, enabling them to work on the “inside” for the support of creative practices. The two folklorists took the time to talk with former *Folklore Forum* staff members Matt Bradley

and Stephen Olbrys last year. Both interviews explore the relationships between the Endowments, concepts of creativity, and the practices of folklore, giving two pictures of the national scene that at times overlap, at times diverge.

Following on the heels of the interviews are responses to them by Dr. Sandra K. Dolby and Dr. Sam Rushforth. Both authors graciously agreed to read over the interviews and generate critical feedback. In conjunction with the interviews, these comments and thoughts emphasize an involved engagement with the nexus of creativity, folklore research, national arts funding, and the social-cultural arena. We hope that the issues raised will inspire further reflection and discussion at conferences, dinner tables, park benches, and congressional meetings.

The **Perspectives** section of *Forum* resurfaces in this issue, featuring four answers to the question “What is creativity in everyday life?” Each author takes us in a different direction: the creative processes of public folklore work; a review of a city-run senior citizens craft store in Ohio (originally published in an art journal); a reflection on lexical underpinnings of concepts of creativity; and a look at metaphorical thinking. We get a taste not only of each author’s background, but also of the productively varying interpretations of the notion of creativity that infuse our daily thinking.

A concrete set of examples of creative practice in everyday life comprises the **Collectanea** section. Danille Christensen Lindquist examines several examples of a *bricolage* aesthetic, from vegetable arrangements to scrapbooks to sidewalk gardens. Through a combination of photographs and analysis, she traces the everyday creative urge to juxtapose and reposition objects in order to generate meanings.

You may notice two new things about the journal in this issue: the cover and the content. The cover is an experiment, as we on the staff felt it was time for a change. The content is also an experiment, and a return of sorts to the principle with which this journal began thirty years ago: a forum for ideas. Cutting back on articles and including interviews and shorter opinion pieces is our effort to encourage dialogue. The journal should be a catalyst for thinking rather than a repository of knowledge. We will continue this format with our next issue on public folklore and hope that it sits well with readers. If it doesn’t, you are invited to write in and let us know, which will, at the very least, get the dialogue started.

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