

It would seem that the FOLKLORE FORUM can serve not merely as an informal ground for exchanging ideas and interests, but can be valuable also as a place to publish items which are of interest but too minor to bother printing elsewhere without working them up into overblown notes; as a place to ask questions not quite worth writing up a "query" about; as a place for publishing queries when a quick answer might be desirable. In regard to the last of these the FORUM, with its informal publishing methods (articles generally need not be submitted more than two weeks before going to press) and relatively frequent appearance (bi-monthly rather than quarterly) has an advantage over journals with tighter schedules and backlogs of materials.

To cite examples of these three possibilities for short contributions:

(1) Eric Partridge, in The Shaggy Dog Story (London, 1953), gives a particular story as the "first" of this genre he ever heard; he dates the hearing as in 1929. The joke involves the young poet who smears cauliflower in his hair (Brunvand B651). Yet Freud printed almost precisely the same joke in the notes to the 1912 edition of Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious (see Strachey translation, pp. 138-139), as well as another joke clearly more than a mere prototype of the genre. This certainly indicates that shaggies may have arisen earlier than commonly assumed (between 1905 and 1912?) and perhaps in the Germanic countries, not Britain or the United States, as thought by Partridge and others.

(2) Does anybody know what ever happened to the Great Proverb Collecting Project sponsored by the American Dialect Society? One has visions of boxes full of 3x5 cards resting under someone's kitchen table. A few queries, including one to the (defunct?) ADS, have elicited ignorance or no reply.

(3) Now I am not so deluded as to imagine that folklorists need to communicate with the speed of astronomers discovering new comets. But take one area as an example: it is generally conceded that a number of "modern" or "urban" legends have sprung up in the post-war period. In all probability more of these will come into existence and become rapidly popular, like joke cycles. It would be of use in dating, collecting and studying these forms if they were called to the attention of folklorists as soon as they are encountered in tradition. Of course the same is true of other genres. Why publish a collection of elephant jokes two years after most of us began to hear them? If someone elsewhere has collected and published a fairly unique item we will be all the more ready to deal with the inception of a new tradition, however minor, when we ourselves encounter it; we shall be collectively in a better position to watch its growth; and we may have less of a hassle when later determining when and where it started. There is no need to publish a text or, in the case of very short items, more than a few samples, probably no need for informant data and the like at this stage.

For example, while in New York recently I was told the account a synopsis of which follows:

In a certain area of Queens one morning the local residents awoke to find that their houses had changed color. One recently painted house changed to a sickly

(continued p. 31)

Good Luck.

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Editor's note: The author of this article recently produced a record album, Stone County Singing, which illustrates three Arkansas singing styles and is available for four dollars from his company, Shoestring Tape, R.R.#1, Clifton Hill, Missouri 65244.

A MODEST PROPOSAL (continued from p.29)

yellow and one house changed not at all. The "reason" assigned for this phenomenon by the local residents was "air pollution".

Is this indeed a new legend occasioned by anxiety over the pollution given so much attention recently by the mass media? Possibly. It would be interesting to see if similar accounts pop up in other congested cities.

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NOTES for QUERIES

The tentative date and time for the student panel session at the A.F.S. meeting have been set. This discussion section, entitled "Problems in Studying Folklore: A Student Panel," will run from 9:15 to 10:45 A.M., on Saturday, November 9. Four general areas will be covered by the panel: pedagogy, university folklore programs, job opportunities after the M.A. and Ph.D. in folklore, and student organizations and activities in folklore. Panel participants include Lucy Turner, Berkeley; M. June Bigger, Penn; Tom Burns, Indiana; George Lyon, Texas; and Jay Anderson, Penn. Co-chairmen of the panel are Larry Danielson, Indiana, and Neil Rosenberg, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Articles in non-folklore publications of possible interest to folklorists: David Bakan, "Is Phrenology Foolish," Psychology Today, 1, 12 (May, 1968), 44-50, traces the development of this pseudo-science, mostly in America, pointing out correspondences to modern psychological theory; William Melvin Kelley, in "Black Power: A Discussion," Partisan Review, XLIV, 2 (Spring, 1968), 216-217, indicates the relevance of African and New World Negro oral traditions to the gulf separating blacks and whites in the United States today.
