INTRODUCTION

In the Fall of 1974 I decided that a special Folklore Forum issue devoted to concepts of particular interest to folklorists would be useful. The Forum staff graciously allowed me to pursue the idea. At the 1973 American Folklore Society meeting in Nashville I mentioned our plan to a number of people and began to solicit contributions. Following the meeting letters describing our projected issue were sent to professors at the major university folklore centers and to the Forum's corresponding editors. In these letters I suggested the kinds of concepts contributors might want to discuss. These included aesthetics, art, folk, folklore, folklife, genre, ethics, function, structure, process, style, poetics--in short, any concept which we often confront in our folklore teaching or research. I asked that each potential contributor limit his paper to about ten pages. We felt that by keeping the papers short we could include more in the issue.

The germ of the idea that resulted in this collection of articles came from my feeling that too often we attack problems in our study of folklore without having first provided the solid theoretical or conceptual foundations necessary for legitimate research. Too often we attempt to communicate with each other from dissimilar conceptual frameworks. This results in non-communication. What we need, and Thomas Kuhn has pointed out its necessity for all disciplines, is a solid metalanguage. I'm not suggesting that we should compile, as has been done for the concept of culture, 168 definitions of folklore. What we might do, however, is seek conceptual foundations for the discipline that would be broadly acceptable to all folklorists no matter what their interests or inclinations--literary, historical, material or whatever. Literary and anthropological folklorists ought to be working from similar, if not the same, conceptual bases. Attacking our conceptual differences, which are likely more rhetorical than real, may help us to arrive at some agreement on the subject of our study, our field and library research methods, and the kinds of analyses of our data that are unequivocally folkloristic. Such assaults on our disagreements must of necessity illuminate our agreements and thus help us reach the firm theoretical basis on which the discipline should rest. Whether or not the papers in this volume offer answers that are satisfying, we feel that they will put a new idea or two in your head. If this happens, the volume will be successful.

Our contributors are a diverse group with varied interests as their papers indicate. Their articles appear alphabetically by author. In the first paper Tom Adler introduces the idea of nidus as a set of locations and circumstances wherein a particular item or aspect of culture is found. He describes the nidality of an item as the common factor or factors which govern and generate the set in a given cultural context. Adler uses the example of bluegrass music in the rural South, of the 1960's folk music revival in cities and on the college campus, and of the more recent bluegrass music played by Japanese groups to explain his thinking. Michael E. Bell's paper hits exactly on the theme of this volume. He calls for better communication among folklorists and says this will happen when we begin to explain the terms we use. He hones in on 'style' to make his point that when scholars assign various meanings to the same term communication is impaired. Beth Blumenreich and Bari Lynn Polonsky, in a discussion that

generated some sparks at the 1972 meeting of the American Folklore Society in Austin, criticize the concept of group that often characterizes both the temporal and spatial boundaries of folklore research. They introduce the notion of ICEN--interactional, communicative, and experiential networks--as an alternative to the usual idea of group. Eddie Bullard suggests that theoretically-oriented studies of beliefs, which constitute a large part of folklore, can lead us to the development of a theory which will reflect the working of the mind. He outlines the way in which a theory is constructed and describes how such systems can be used in folklore research. In my own paper, I ask that a triadic approach to the study of folklore--in its oral, kinesiological, and material manifestations, a complex whole--be considered. The key to this focus is the concept of folklore itself, the very organizing principle of our discipline.

The papers of Robert Cosbey and Neil Grobman, on a different tack, deal with folklore and history. Cosbey's proposal for an oral history project in the Province of Saskatchewan describes the differences between the approach of the historian and that of the folklorist working with oral and other kinds of traditions. Not only interesting for its discussion of the theory and practice of oral history, Cosbey's paper is perhaps more important because it provides a model, from A to Z, that any of us can use to start a similar project. Cosbey's project proposal is admirably put together. Neil Grobman is also concerned with history--the history of folklore scholarship. Grobman laments the lack of study that has been directed to what he calls proto-folklore scholarship and, making a point quite fitting for the conceptual theme of this volume, states that attention to the philosophical precursors of fieldworkers in folklore can help us formulate both the historical and contemporary philosophical basis of the discipline.

Lee Haring, citing the anthropological stocktaking that constitutes the Dell Hymes-edited Reinventing Anthropology, questions our notion of the folk as "other" and mentions his own Irish heritage in pointing out that professional folklorists also bear traditions that have been transmitted to them. Need we go among the Bororo, the Amish, the Poles of Chicago, or into the Southern Highlands to conduct meaningful field research? Haring's message: our best informants may be ourselves.

A particularly important concern for us is ethics and Tom Ireland examines some of the ethical problems that often confront the folklorist. He describes how anthropologists and psychologists have dealt with such problems and outlines the American Anthropological Association's "Statement on Ethics" which sets forth six basic responsibilities of researchers. Ireland and Jim Stovall provide a brief overview of phenomenological concepts and methods, how they are utilized in such disciplines as anthropology, psychology, sociology, and linguistics, and suggest how such concepts and methods might be used in folklore research. They also contrast the phenomenological approach with that of other methodologies and have included a list of sources which should be helpful to those of us not entirely familiar with phenomenology

Michael Owen Jones presented his paper at the Austin meeting and I liked it and asked if it could be included in this volume. Jones notes that art is not exhibited only by the artifact, but is inherent in the production of the

work as well. He suggests that we should no longer think of folk art as material object. Art is exhibited in storytelling and in most of the forms of folklore we study. Because he questions some of our basic concepts such as art, folk, and lore, Jones' discussion fits well with the other papers here. Kenneth Ketner's paper is a revision of the one he presented at Nashville. His concern is with the concept of 'folklore' which, Ketner writes, has so many meanings, mostly pejorative, that perhaps it ought to be discarded as the core concept of our discipline. In its place he posits hominology. John McDowell discusses two aesthetic concepts, coherency and delight, in his examination of informal narrative and the standards which listeners may apply to narrators. He cites the importance of the social situation, which generates competitive interaction, to illustrate how the two concepts may be structurally applied to small-group informal narrative.

The use of filmmaking as a teaching and research tool for folklorists is the subject of Sharon Sherman's paper. Sherman looks at several films either made by folklorists or dealing with a folkloristic context and evaluates their usefulness. She points out that an important criterion for both filmmaker and critic is the concept of folklore exhibited by the film.

Some final notes. Editorial policy in this issue has been one of restraint. Manuscript changes were made only when it seemed necessary for clarity. As such, most of what you read is the work of the authors and not an editor. This of course does not apply to the inevitable errors in typing and printing that are attributable to the Forum. You will note that this issue contains papers written in both the Chicago and the Anthropological style. This is by design although future contributors should note that the Forum generally prefers the Chicago style. I should mention also that the petroleum crisis has affected the Folklore Forum as well as all of you. We have not been able to get our usual quick drying ink which allows us to clearly mimeograph both sides of a sheet of paper. The result is evident in the visual appearance of this issue. Lastly, the Forum is indeed intended to be a forum for folklorists. We invite your response to these papers.