

POLITICAL AND THEORETICAL FEMINISMS IN AMERICAN
FOLKLORISTICS: DEFINITION DEBATES, PUBLICATION
HISTORIES, AND THE *FOLKLORE FEMINISTS COMMUNICATION*¹

What role does feminist theory play in American folkloristics, and which versions of feminism have become mainstreamed in the nearly forty years since folklorists first became attuned to the promises and premises of feminism? By attending to these issues, I hope to at least partially answer the question Alan Dundes asked in his 2004 Invited Presidential Plenary Address to the American Folklore Society: "What precisely is the 'theory' in feminist theory?" (2005, 388). In lamenting the lack of grand theory in folkloristics, Dundes remarks, "Despite the existence of books and articles with 'feminist theory' in their titles, one looks in vain for a serious articulation of what that 'theory' is. The idea that women's voices and women's roles in society have been adversely impacted by male chauvinism and bias is certainly true, but does that truism constitute a proper 'theory'?" (388–89). I believe that Dundes's notion of feminist theory is overly simplistic and that a careful overview of feminism in the academy, and specifically in folkloristic discourse, will not only reveal complexities and nuances within feminist practices but also contribute a necessary historical perspective on the evolution of our discipline.

The formation of the women's section of the American Folklore Society in the early 1970s and the publication of the first issue of *Folklore Feminists Communication* in the fall of 1973 mark the beginning of increased attention to women's positions both in folklore, the material, and in folkloristics, the discipline. The *Folklore Feminists Communication* was the first of many folklore publications to invoke the name and notion of feminism. Notable subsequent publications include the special issue of the *Journal of American Folklore* devoted to the topic of folklore and feminism (1987), which in turn spawned two edited books—*Feminist Messages: Coding in Women's Folk Culture* (1993) and *Feminist Theory and the Study of Folklore* (1993). Individual articles discussing the intersections of folklore and feminism also appeared in folklore journals, yet in many of these publications it is unclear what each author means by the terms *feminism*, *feminist*, or *feminist theory*.² Because these interrelated terms have slowly gained intellectual currency

in folkloristics, one important project is to determine what folklorists mean when they refer to feminism and feminist theory.

The two main issues I address in this paper are (1) how folklorists understand feminism and (2) how they incorporate it into their work. To accomplish this first goal, I must take into account how feminist theorists conceptualize feminism; how feminist scholars in other disciplines characterize feminism for academic purposes; and how folklorists define feminism, when they do at all. Folklorists including and utilizing feminism, however, is such a complicated matter that I have created a model in order to classify and analyze these folkloristic works. I distinguish between political and theoretical feminisms, using as my main subjects articles appearing in the *Journal of American Folklore (JAF)* and in publications related to the American Folklore Society (AFS), though I will bring in other publications where relevant. The reason for this narrow scope (which already encompasses numerous articles) is partially to make the amount of material manageable; the application of feminist theory to fairy tales, for instance, would comprise a separate study because this subfield has expanded so rapidly.³

I begin with an overview of definitions of academic feminism and then discuss folklorists' inclusion of feminism and feminist theory in three modes: critical introductions to feminist folklore publications, reviews of essays connecting folklore and feminism, and rhetorical strategies linking folklore and feminism. I then define and propose my classificatory terms—*political feminism* and *theoretical feminism*—and conclude with case studies from the *Folklore Feminists Communication*.

Defining Academic Feminism

Numerous books and essays have been written on the definition of feminism, and the same seems true of folklore as well. As Barbara Babcock states, "One of the problems in talking about folklore and feminist theory is defining not only feminist theories but folklore itself" (1987, 390). Folkloristics and feminism both have origins in various nations and both have public and academic spheres of action. Yet where feminism has an aggressively political agenda—being "usually defined as an active desire to change women's position in society" (Delmar 1986, 13)—mainstream folkloristics rarely connotes political action. Many feminist folklorists emphasize similarities between folklore and feminism in an attempt to legitimize their academic

pairing; however, I would argue that the compatibility of folklore and feminism depends on how feminism is being defined. Tracing the different definitions among feminist theorists, other scholars who apply feminism to their work, and feminist folklorists in particular will illuminate some of the challenges in applying the label of feminism to scholarship.

Feminist theorists acknowledge the complexity of their domain in various ways. There are many schools of feminism, some bound to discrete time periods and theoretical stances. One basic way of thinking about feminism appears in the essay, "What Is Feminism?" by Rosalind Delmar, "Within contemporary feminism much emphasis has been laid on feminism as consciousness" (1986, 12). In *What is Feminism, Anyway?* Chris Beasley asserts, "Feminism has boundaries which may be permeable, but this scarcely implies that feminism is no different from any other form of thinking" (1999, xv).⁴ Beasley is able to succinctly suggest the following number of elements that "the field of feminism attends to or includes":

(1) a critique of misogyny/sexual hierarchy; (2) a focus on consideration of women as the subject of analysis . . . ; (3) an expanded account of and altered orientation to what may be discussed within analysis of social and political life—compared with traditional thought; (4) diverse perspectives, manifestly represented by certain forms of debate . . . ; (5) some recourse to a normative imperative at least in relation to challenging sexual hierarchy . . . ; (6) some, at least minimal, element of collectivism; (7) an inclination to view feminism as particularly relevant to or resonant with women, though men may also be seen as benefiting from and (by some) as party to some of its concerns. (1999, 36)

This extended list is helpful for getting a sense of the shared traits of most movements that would identify as feminist. Beasley further identifies seven schools of feminism (as well as their interconnections): liberal, radical, Marxist/socialist, Freudian, Lacanian, postmodern/poststructuralist, and race/ethnicity. Some of these schools, possibly due to the chronological order in which they developed, exert more influence on folklore studies than do others.⁵ Another way of envisioning schools of feminism postulates a divide between feminism and postfeminism. The term *postfeminism* signifies a shift in feminist theory, according to the authors of *Introducing Postfeminism* (Phoca and Wright 1999, 3). Postfeminism began in 1968—before feminism even reached folklorists—and signaled new developments "informed by the key analytical strategies of contemporary thought—psychoanalysis,

poststructuralism, postmodernism, and postcolonialism" (1999, 3). Although postfeminism paints itself as more densely theoretical than feminism, the overlap between Beasley's list of feminist concerns and schools, and Phoca and Wright's list of influences on postfeminism demonstrates that feminist thought does have a common, if fluid, core.

Scholars in other disciplines who utilize and analyze feminist thought have provided useful paradigms that in many cases mirror the trends in feminist folklore scholarship. Some varied tasks of women's studies in different disciplines include "the critique and revision of existing research; the development of underused or unused categories, such as gender, and the applied demonstration of their value in disciplinary research traditions; and, last, the critique and re(de) finition of categories, methodologies, and paradigms" (Stanton and Stewart 1995, 7). Feminism, then, is seen as a critical lens that affects the formations of disciplinary thought as well as disciplinary subjects. Two fundamental causes for feminist responses that occurred both in politics and in the academy were "the systematic exclusion of women from history and the fact that men's activities were overvalued while women's activities were undervalued," which has led to programs meant to overcome exclusion (Tomm 1989, 5).⁶ These cross-disciplinary perspectives, like feminist definitions of feminism, contribute to the idea that there is some common ground to what feminists do, which will be seen below in the ways that folklorists have adapted feminism.

Scholars working with materials that overlap with folklore topics provide another definition of feminism. The Personal Narratives Group, affiliated with the Center for Advanced Feminist Studies at the University of Minnesota, is not overtly folkloristic in its approach to personal narratives, though the subject matter is partly folkloric. It is interesting to note that the group has a comprehensive, if flexible, definition of feminist theory, which "postulates as a central tenet the reality of a socially structured gender hierarchy" (1989, 6). Feminist theory requires both "attention to systems of relationships in which individuals are embedded and whose boundaries go beyond the individual and her realm of vision" and attention to "individual agency . . . because it provides both the source of insight and the means of action which lead to social change" (6). The tension between group relationships and individual actions speaks to the concerns of folklorists as well as feminists.

Folklorists who identify themselves as feminists and their works as feminist, however, do not consistently define feminism's methodological and theoretical foundations. Evidence for folklorists' knowledge of feminism can

be deduced not only from explicit statements within their works, but also from the information in their bibliographies. The most coherent explanations of feminism often appear in works intending to introduce a collection or panel on feminism, or in review works proposing to explicate the relationship between folklore and feminism.

Critical Introductions to Feminist Folklore Publications

Earlier folkloristic works seem less concerned with defining feminism. Claire Farrer's 1975 introduction to *Women and Folklore* states that feminist literature is involved with "exploding the contemporary 'myths' of women being by nature secondary and servile to men" (1975, xiii), and Rosan Jordan and Susan Kalcik's introduction to the 1985 collection *Women's Folklore, Women's Culture* does not mention feminism at all—it only alludes to "sexist preconceptions about appropriate gender roles" (1985, x). Neither of these introductions mentions feminists in their bibliographies; however, within a couple of years, folkloristic definitions of feminism grew more prevalent in critical introductions.

Barbara Babcock's paper "Taking Liberties, Writing from the Margins, and Doing It with a Difference" opened both the Folklore and Feminism Symposium at the 1986 AFS meeting and the 1987 Folklore and Feminism special issue of *JAF*. Babcock pithily states that feminism's many and sometimes contradictory voices share the premises that gender organizes experience, sexual inequality is a cultural construct, and male perspectives dominate many paradigms (1987, 391). Beverley Stoeltje, in her introduction to a special issue of the *Journal of Folklore Research* on feminist revisions, asserts, "As a social movement and as scholarship, feminism encompasses significant differences, reflecting the diversity and energy of the women committed to its goals. At its most fundamental level, however, it argues for scholarship that takes full account of women" (1988, 141). These two definitions share the recognition that feminism encompasses many diverse perspectives but focuses on a consciousness of the significance of understanding gender. Babcock and Stoeltje both demonstrate their knowledge of feminist theory by quoting well-known feminists in their essays and citing them in their bibliographies. Stoeltje and Babcock both cite renowned feminists Sandra Harding, Catherine MacKinnon, and Hélène Cixous, and Babcock also refers to the works of Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Adrienne Rich, and Toril Moi.

The two 1993 anthologies, *Feminist Messages* and *Feminist Theory and the Study of Folklore*, provide contrasting examples of attention to the meaning(s) of feminism. Joan Radner's preface to *Feminist Messages* discusses developments in feminist folkloristics, merely alluding to how feminist theory offers folklorists "models of understanding social relations as (gendered) relationships of power" (1993, ix). The preface to *Feminist Theory and the Study of Folklore*, in contrast, explicitly discusses the book's origins in the authors' concerns that "feminist theory was not being adequately addressed or developed within contemporary folkloristics" (Hollis, Pershing, and Young 1993, ix). Yet Hollis, Pershing, and Young do not define feminist theory in their preface, implying rather that they and the three other women who proposed the symposium on folklore and feminist theory that took place at the 1986 AFS meeting were concerned that the unconscious gender biases pervading folkloristics "may be reflected in an absence of the female and/or dominance of the male or they may appear as the denigration of female experience, all of which serve the interest of male privilege" (ix). Hollis, Pershing, and Young cite radical feminist bell hooks in their preface, whereas Radner cites no feminist theory beyond feminist folklorists.

Folklore and Feminist Connections in Review Essays

Folklorists who set out to explicitly discuss the relationships between folklore and feminist theory seem markedly more versed in feminist theory than folklorists who simply employ some of the terms in their writing, or even some of the folklorists discussed above who wrote critical introductions. Three of the most representative essays include those by Joyce Ice, Margaret Mills, and Nicole Kousaleos, and their dates of publication—1989, 1993, and 1999—provide sufficient interval to allow some analysis of how folkloristic understandings of feminism have progressed.⁷ In her review essay of *Women, Folklore, Feminism, and Culture* (1989) and the Folklore and Feminism issue of *JAF*, Joyce Ice demonstrates ample knowledge of feminist theory in the introduction to her comprehensive review. Utilizing extensive citations, she characterizes early feminist studies as concentrating on "structural oppositions, such as male/female, culture/nature, public/private" and later studies as "concerned with issues of difference, epistemology, empowerment, reproductive models, and cultural scripts" (1989, 121). Ice discusses the other disciplines in which feminist theory has evolved—literary criticism, anthropology, psychology, and

history—and she observes that while folklore studies are informed by feminist scholarship, “folklore has lagged behind other fields in feminist scholarship” (122). Feminist perspectives “call into question the very foundations and methods of disciplinary studies” and contend that “new modes of questions and new forms for conceptualizing and presenting research need to be realized” (122). Ice’s grounding in feminist theory is evident in these assertions of feminism’s critical orientations and also in her bibliography; she cites key feminist works such as Teresa de Lauretis’s *Technologies of Gender* (1987); Gayle Green and Coppelia Kahn’s *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism* (1988); Elaine Showalter’s *The New Feminist Criticism* (1985); and essays from the feminist journals *Signs* and *Feminist Studies* as well as from the feminist anthropological anthology *Woman, Culture, and Society* (1974).

Margaret Mills refrains from explicitly defining feminism in her “Feminist Theory and the Study of Folklore: A Twenty-Years Trajectory toward Theory,” though this seems symptomatic of her theoretical involvement with postmodernism (Linda Nicholson’s *Feminism/Postmodernism* is one source she quotes). Mills notes that “trajectories can be hard to generalize for projects such as feminist social documentation, which themselves seek to undermine monolithic position statements and grand generalizations” (1993, 173). Moreover, she characterizes the recent strain of feminist theory as “anti-essentialist, social-constructionist,” given their focus on historical specificities and differences (173). To avoid giving a specific definition of feminism, Mills rejects totalizing theoretical statements, instead sprinkling her essay with various feminist theories that are relevant both to folklore materials and to folkloristic theory building. Mills discusses the “relative nonabsorption of some of French feminist theory into feminist folkloristics” as part of a doubled noncommunication: “the non-meeting of folklorists with other feminisms” as well as the “noninvolvement of feminist folklore’s critique in other critical models within folklore” (180).

The five-page bibliography qualifies Mills to make these theoretical assessments. She cites such feminist superstars as Judith Butler, Teresa de Lauretis, Micaela di Leonardo, Sandra Harding, bell hooks, Elaine Showalter, and others appearing in publications such as the journal *Signs* and critiques of French feminism. Mills reflexively comments on the importance of bibliographic projects, noting, “the fact that the names being cited in this paper were conspicuously absent in the theory panel sequence

from which this paper derives,” referring to the 1986 AFS meetings and the 1987 *JAF* special issue (1993, 183).

Nicole Kousaleos, in her essay “Feminist Theory and Folklore,” declares, “In order to discuss the various relationships folklore has had with feminist theory it seems necessary to first explore two fundamental questions—what is feminism? And is there a feminism?” (1999, 19). Kousaleos states that basically all feminists posit gender as a significant structuring category for individuals, groups, and societies. She concedes the complexity of feminist theory in a brief overview of some of its main trajectories, saying that from their emergence, “feminist theories have developed, spread, and become increasingly more complex until today it is difficult to identify one system of thought that could be called feminist theory” (20). Most important for the coherence of feminist theory, however, is recognizing that “the different branches of feminist theory construct, argue, and analyze gender as a significant category in a variety of ways” (20). It is this preoccupation with gender that seems to have captured the fancies of most folklorists who employ the terms *feminism* and *feminist theory* in their writing. Kousaleos’s bibliography is quite extensive, as she cites early feminists Simone de Beauvoir (author of the groundbreaking *The Second Sex* [1949]) and Betty Friedan (author of *The Feminine Mystique* [1963]), as well as more recent feminists Elizabeth Grosz, Sandra Harding, Toril Moi, and Elaine Showalter. She also includes a list of suggested readings, containing twenty-one important feminist works.

Rhetorical Links between Folklore and Feminism

Many folklorists undertaking self-identified feminist projects, not limited to those that attempt definitions of feminism, emphasize the compatibility between feminism and folkloristics. While these parallels sometimes elide any attempt to define feminism, this legitimating strategy precludes that task by claiming that folkloristics and feminism are already kindred endeavors. Feminist folklorists make this claim in two ways: comparing the methods and aims of folkloristics and feminism, or asserting that folkloristics can make important contributions to feminism (the reverse claim, that feminism can make important contributions to folkloristics, being assumed or implied).

Two of the essays in *Feminist Theory and the Study of Folklore* articulate the connection of folklore and feminism, one in a positive light and the other in a critical light. M. Jane Young and Kay Turner claim that “both folklore

and feminism conjoin in their mutual validation of the regenerative and regenerating aspects of social and cultural life" (1993, 20), and Kay Turner and Suzanne Seriff state that "folklore and feminism conjoin in the critical attention to forms of women's symbolic expression that are hidden from, or considered unimportant to, the majority culture" (1993, 88). The former statement links folklore and feminism in their affirmation of the creative and expressive aspects of life, while the second statement focuses on folklore and feminism's attention to neglected and marginalized forms of culture. These assertions of disciplinary kinship can take on a symbiotic flavor, such as when Turner and Seriff describe how the combined efforts of feminism and folklore contribute to "our understanding of the way in which women create or use symbolic modes within the dominant culture of the patriarchy. Folklore provides a unique database of the traditional artistic means women have employed to express their own views of the world, and feminism offers a theoretical handle on that expression" (88). In this view, folklore functions as information and feminism as theory—a proclamation that renders folklore atheoretical and feminist theory divorced from a single discipline.

Other statements of the similarities between feminism and folklore do not set up as neat a division between material and theory. Carol Mitchell's section introduction "Feminist Lenses and Female Folklore" in *Feminist Theory and the Study of Folklore* does not differentiate between feminism and women's studies, stating, "Women's studies in general, and this book in particular, are concerned with eliminating distortions in our cultural lenses, with reviewing our culture from new angles, and in taking off our cultural blinders in the study of women's folk culture that forms such an important part of human culture" (1993, 278). Similarly, Joyce Ice claims that the "aims and goals of feminist scholarship share a number of characteristics and perspectives with folklore studies," including interactive research processes, an emphasis on holistic and interdisciplinary approaches, reflexive scholarship, and a recognition of diversity and women as subjects (1989, 134). These two linking statements, rather than claiming folklore as the subject and feminism as the theoretical approach, make women and women's folklore the subjects, giving folklore and feminism equal methodological status.

The other claim to compatibility between feminist theory and folklore is established by declaring that folklore can enhance feminist studies. Radner states in her introduction to *Feminist Messages* that folklore has much to offer other disciplines because of its attention to the "broad range of traditional artistic

creation including even the most domestic, private, and ephemeral cultural expressions of women” and because of its “rooted aversion to essentialism” (1993, viii). This statement mainly focuses on folklore, the material, rather than the body of theory associated with folkloristics, excepting its penchant for cultural relativism. One of the concerns Hollis, Pershing, and Young articulate in their preface to *Feminist Theory and the Study of Folklore* is “how folklorists can contribute to the growing body of feminist scholarship that is developing in many disciplines” (1993, ix–x). This contention also emphasizes folklorists’ disciplinary ties, which feminist theory transcends by its very nature.

Other folklorists call attention to the specific contributions folklorists can make to feminist studies due to the very nature of their disciplinary knowledge. In Margaret Yocom’s section introduction to *Feminist Theory and the Study of Folklore*, “Waking Up the Dead: Old Texts and New Critical Directions,” she states, “Another contribution that folklorists make to feminist scholarship lies in their continual refinement of fieldwork strategies as they work with women who are alive today” (1993, 127). In addition to fieldwork strategies, folklorists can add an appreciation for tradition to feminist thought. Beverley Stoeltje demonstrates a desire for two-way dialogue between disciplines, introducing the feminist revisions *Journal of Folklore Research* essays

in the hope that the revelations and processes, the analyses and conclusions contained in them will contribute significantly to the recognition of women’s folklore and feminist perspectives as a productive and legitimate topic of folklore inquiry. Equally important, we hope that these feminist revisions of folklore topics will constitute a contribution to the larger body of feminist scholarship, demonstrating the importance of the study of tradition, in all of its guises, to the growing body of theory concerning women. (1988, 152)

Whether feminism is defined or conceived of as having the theory that folklore lacks, the aspiration to link folklore and feminism as twin projects permeates work by feminist folklorists. This yearning for connection could be linked to the general anxiety about theory in folkloristics, but more plausibly, it is linked to the general confusion surrounding the meaning(s) of feminism. Hence, we need a model for distinguishing between the two main ways of understanding the uses of feminism in folkloristics.

The Proposed Terms: Political and Theoretical Feminisms

Because feminist folklorists so inconsistently define feminism, yet frequently refer to the term and at least some associated ideas, folklorists ought to have a method for differentiating between the distinct intentions with which the terms *feminism* and *feminist* are used. To this end, I propose a distinction between political and theoretical feminisms, a distinction that has its roots in various expressions of feminist theory and is manifested in feminist folklore scholarship.

Feminist scholars have acknowledged political and theoretical expressions of feminism as a fundamental dichotomy that characterizes feminism. The authors of *Feminist Scholarship* concede that “the essential duality of feminist scholarship . . . is rooted simultaneously in the disciplinary structures of contemporary intellectual inquiry and in a social movement” (DuBois et al 1985, 2). The intellectual and social branches of feminism connote varying degrees of theoretical involvement. The author of “What Is Feminism?” states, “There are those who claim that feminism does have a complex of ideas about women, specific to or emanating from feminists. This means that it should be possible to separate out feminism and feminists from the multiplicity of those concerned with women’s issues” (Delmar 1986, 13). This description distinguishes between a theoretical body of ideas particular to feminists or rigorous thinking about women’s issues, and a general concern with women’s issues. Thus, it is not unreasonable to posit a division between ways of thinking about women and women’s issues, sometimes characterized as a feminist orientation versus a women’s studies orientation. This leads, however, to problems with implied hierarchy. One way of conceiving the issue broadens the meaning of feminism: “The problems with feminist versus nonfeminist as a typology for contemporary scholarship led us to reconceptualize feminism less as a subcategory of research on women than as the context within which virtually all scholarship on women is currently being developed” (DuBois et al 1985, 8). This paradigm expands feminism to include scholarship that might be “just about women,” albeit that is not discernibly feminist from a theoretical viewpoint.

Rather than labeling folkloristic work that deals with women in different ways—“feminist” and “nonfeminist,” or “feminist” and “just about women”—I propose the terms *theoretical* and *political feminism*. These two

terms still imply a duality; however, I do not intend them to be mutually exclusive but rather to organize thinking about the goals and methods of feminist folklorists. Nor should the terms ossify feminist practices in folkloristics, as Babcock says: "Feminist analytical categories should . . . be unstable" (1987, 395). This paradigm, or perhaps spectrum, will help clarify what feminist folklorists are doing when they refer to their projects as "feminist," regardless of whether they define feminism or refer to feminist theory in their work.

Political Feminism

The first term I propose is *political feminism*. Political feminist work falls into Beasley's explanation of feminism as "consciousness," or attention to women's issues. An example of this would be the early movements in feminist folklore scholarship that sought to draw awareness to previously neglected forms of women's folklore. This was the mission of both *Women and Folklore* and *Women's Folklore, Women's Culture*. As Ice says in her review essay, both of these books illustrate "what has been called compensatory scholarship on women. In general, while it adds to the body of knowledge, the case studies do not deal explicitly with feminist theory and are isolated, for the most part, from the larger field" (1989, 123). Again, the term *political feminism* is not intended to demean these studies, though they are largely lacking the emphasis on theory present in other works identified with feminist theory. Perhaps one reason for Radner's and Hollis, Pershing, and Young's lack of extensive definition or discussion of feminism in their books containing "feminist" in the titles is that their projects are related to political feminism—projects that are validated as feminist mainly by their attentiveness to women's folklore.⁸

One difficulty with the term *political feminism* is that, in some views, all feminism is automatically political, whereas in other views, there is such a thing as being too political. Polly Deemer, in her response to the Women and Folklore Symposium issue of *JAF* (the essays that were later published in *Women and Folklore*), claims that some of the essays, such as Kay Stone's, were too political (Deemer 1975). However, other scholars (folklorists and others) argue that political intent is inherent to feminism. Winnie Tamm, editor of *The Effects of Feminist Approaches on Research Methodologies*, asserts that even academic feminist research is not "independent of political

interests; on the contrary, the implications of feminist research are necessarily political" (1989, 5). Amy Shuman agrees, stating, "Feminist readings begin from the thesis that a neutral text is impossible"—hence feminist works also cannot be politically neutral (1993, 74). Lanser's essay "Burning Dinners: Feminist Subversions of Domesticity" advocates a political approach to interpreting women's folklore, in that "this kind of analysis is, of course, also one task of feminist folklore: to gather and analyze individual moments, decoding and renaming them as political acts" (1993, 50). This essay and many others in *Feminist Messages* focus on the political implications of women's coded forms of communication.

Francis de Caro's 1983 *Women and Folklore: A Bibliographic Survey* is an excellent example of political feminism. De Caro states that women's studies include "catch-up activity in various fields of study, an attempt to fill in some vast gaps in our records of knowledge" (1983, ix). This type of "catch-up activity" fits the description of political feminism as (newly) attentive to women's issues. Moreover, de Caro's emphasis on the innovative aspect of women's folklore is characteristic of political feminism because it is the consciousness about women's folklore (or general condition) that matters: "The realization that women's folklore exists has revolutionary implications for folklore studies in many instances, raising questions about the contexts in which folklore is performed, about genres, and about what folklorists, usually male, have considered 'important' and 'unimportant'" (xi). The 1986 review essay in *Signs* on women and folklore, by de Caro and Jordan, covers much of the same ground as de Caro's bibliography. However, because de Caro and Jordan categorize the growing body of folkloristic literature on women and folklore in three ways—images of women in folklore, women's genres and performances of folklore, and female folk performers and artists—their essay borders on the theoretical because it suggests a paradigm.

Related to basic consciousness, the notion of a different valuation of women's folklore is also present in political feminism. Claire Farrer says of the initial impulse behind the papers that appear in *Women and Folklore*, "We were stating that women's lives were not simply derivative and reproductive but were strongly active and productive. Our papers indicated as well that women's folklore was often responsive to a different aesthetic than the male pattern that ruled" (1986, ix). Rosan Jordan and F. A. de Caro praise those papers in their "Foreward!" to the first issue of the *Folklore Feminist Communication*, commenting that "a number of them deal[t] with

relatively new areas of study or with the less frequently analyzed [*sic*] genres (for example, costume, food preparation, and forms of women's narratives) and others [brought] a new (feminist) perspective to conventional subjects" (1974, 2). This new perspective, usually meaning a basic acknowledgment of women's lore, is key to political feminism.

Rayna Green characterizes the orientation of early feminist folklorists as corrective: "The first studies of women's expressive behavior were, of course, primarily corrective simply in their focus on women's expression, but that focus, in turn, shifted studies to an increasingly revisionist examination of the kinds of materials and contexts operative in female repertoires" (1993, 3). However, it would be an imperfect parallel to associate political feminism with the early women's movement and theoretical feminism with later feminist theory. Even some essays in the more recent folklore and feminism issue of *JAF* (1987) demonstrate a political awareness of women's folklore rather than a theoretical desire to examine folklore and folklore theory's gendered underpinnings. Some examples include Faye Ginsberg's "When the Subject is Women: Encounters with Syrian Jewish Women," which is mostly ethnographic and focuses on how women construct rituals to express their experiences of being female; Ellen Stekert's "Autobiography of a Woman Folklorist," which examines gendered inequalities in her own life; and Yael Zerubavel and Dianne Esses's "Reconstructions of the Past: Syrian Jewish Women and the Maintenance of Tradition," which discusses the private elements of feminine discourse. None of the above essays refer to any feminist theory, but their undertakings are identifiably feminist nonetheless.⁹ In fact, many of these essays, as well as other works belonging to political feminism, incorporate concepts presented by early feminist work, such as the private/public dichotomy and the female/male, nature/culture pair.¹⁰

Theoretical Feminism

Theoretical feminism has many of the same aims as political feminism but with the additional concerns accompanying an explicit rethinking of patriarchal ideology as well as many of the theories and methods spawned by patriarchal thinking. Carol Mitchell portrays feminism (inclusive of both feminist scholarship and the women's movement/women's studies, or in my terms, *theoretical* and *political feminism*) as a means of questioning and transcending male-specific modes of thought:

Western patriarchal ideology has created cultural lenses that emphasize males, hierarchy, dualism, and linear/logical ways of knowing, and the cultural lenses of the patriarchy have been very useful in analyzing certain facets of our world. Feminist scholarship, in conjunction with the women's movement, is helping us to create new lenses for viewing that world with an emphasis on females, egalitarianism, and multiplicity, and the recognition of other ways of knowing, such as emotional and spiritual ways of knowing. Women's studies has helped to make us conscious that patriarchy has been an unconscious ideology, not just a mode of social organization. (1993, 281)

Other theoretical feminists concur. Debora Kodish includes the consciousness, or political, step of feminism in her notion of feminist scholarship, saying, "One purpose of feminist scholarship is to deconstruct male paradigms; a second is to reconstruct models attentive to women's experiences" (1993, 44). Linda Pershing points out that in addition to folklore theories needing to take account of women, many feminist theories have become attuned to folkloric materials, as in feminist scholars' use of needlework metaphors, as well as their orientation toward process as an important part of understanding women's lives (1993b). Significant facets of theoretical feminism in folkloristics include reconsiderations of folklore theories and methodologies from a feminist perspective, the incorporation of the feminist notion of difference, and the extension of feminist tools to new areas.

Some feminist folklorists conceive of theoretical dimensions as intrinsic to feminist folklore projects. Babcock suggests that there must be a theoretical dimension to political feminist projects: "The retrieval of women's lore and its addition to the canon is meaningless unless it is accompanied by a revision of our interpretive practices and of the structures of dominant discourse in the direction of openness and plurality" (1987, 395). Amy Shuman, in "Gender and Genre," states that one major question folklorists must address is who determines generic boundaries, and why genres are so often assigned by gender. She concludes, "A feminist approach to genre (as one aspect of a feminist folkloristics) is concerned with identifying the gendered instabilities in classification systems through which women can negotiate and thereby appropriate traditional forms for their own purposes" (1993, 83–84). Here political and theoretical aims intertwine.

One orientation of theoretical feminist folklorists has been toward refining the role of women in fieldwork and ethnography. Miriam Camitta in "Gender and Method in Fieldwork" formulates the feminist approach to fieldwork as

a "remodeling of methodology and technique," advocating that folklorists "should begin by questioning the gender-related biases and assumptions that underlie binary distinctions and proceed by examining the historical basis for making those distinctions, thus exposing the bias that has been responsible for privileging one style of inquiry over another" (1990, 29). This process would "remodel the relationship of the knower to the known from exclusively rational to partly sensory and would recast distance and intimacy as equally valid and interdependent ways of knowing" (29–30). Camitta also cites feminists Simone de Beauvoir, Hélène Cixous, and Julia Kristeva in her essay, demonstrating her familiarity with feminist thought. Debora Kodish's "Absent Gender, Silent Encounter" likens fieldwork accounts to the gendered constructions of fairy tales, in which "male collectors appear as powerful, magical outsiders, folktale heroes initiating action and reestablishing value. Female informants appear as passive vehicles, unwitting receptacles of knowledge, silent, unspeaking, to be wooed and won into speech" (1993, 43). Kodish concludes by suggesting that both folk and folklorists learn to imagine and inhabit roles "allowing equity, pleasure, and satisfaction in good measure" (48). Camitta's feminist epistemology and Kodish's feminist ethics both provide additional dimensions to theoretical feminism.

One of the key areas of theoretical feminism in folkloristics involves the revision of scholarly paradigms. Jennifer Fox's essay, "The Creator Gods: Romantic Nationalism and the En-genderment of Women in Folklore," discusses women in the founding paradigms of folklore, using Herder's work as her main example. Because Fox critically examines how "there are three interwoven themes in the Herderian framework that operate explicitly and implicitly to the detriment of women: tradition, patriarchalism, and unity," her work can be classified as a theoretical feminist revision of the founding scripts of folklore research (1993, 33).¹¹ Similarly, Katherine Neustadt in "The Nature of Woman and the Development of American Folklore" analyzes the beginnings of folklore in the United States and folklore's initial association with feminized subject matter. Though Neustadt uses little feminist theory in her analysis, her essay falls into the category of theoretical feminism because she examines the subtleties of gender in the constructed nature of folklore and women. For Stoeltje, "Beyond simply questioning absence or presence, issues raised by feminist work have revealed the need for critical evaluation of scholarly models" (1988, 141). An important work in this area of theoretical feminism is M. Jane Young and Kay Turner's "Challenging

the Canon: Folklore Theory Reconsidered from Feminist Perspectives.” The authors review sexist biases in the study of expressive culture and discuss how “feminist epistemology invites a broader conception of the knowledge, practice, and beliefs that constitute women’s own understanding of their experience and labor” (19). This type of critical evaluation is a key part of theoretical feminism.

Another important part of theoretical feminism is the notion of difference—that there is no universal category of “woman”—which Nicole Kousaleos discusses as a basic organizing principle in feminism (1999, 20). This distinction is important for folkloristic expressions of feminism because of the way folk groups are composed. Feminists indeed compose their own folk group, as Mary Ellen B. Lewis notes in her discussion of how feminists have used folklore that stereotypes women for political goals (1974), but this does not mean that all women are feminists. Babcock cautions folklorists that

feminist anthropologists have been rightly cautioned both against projecting our own political concerns and theoretical models into our analysis of the position of women in other cultures and against simply using data about women in other cultures to buttress arguments about women in our own. But if we are not attuned to gender dynamics and the politics of discourse in the cultures we are studying as well as in our own, we will perpetuate masculine idealistic and projective distortions of others . . . and continue to represent women as muted and devalued rather than hearing the different voices in which they fashion and re-fashion themselves. (1987, 394)

Projection of feminist ideals and labels is a danger that many feminist folklorists have noted. Joanne Mulcahy, in her study of Kodiak women healers, says, “While women on Kodiak would not likely characterize themselves as feminists, their statements clearly establish women’s historical power as healers and can be read as intended messages about that power” (1993, 185). Similarly, Linda Pershing describes her study’s gender-subverting quilters as reluctant to be labeled feminist: “The Bee There quilters are middle-class, suburban women who do not use the word *feminist* to describe themselves and are not actively involved in the women’s movement” (1993a, 117). Theoretical feminism, then, like certain branches of feminist theory, emphasizes differences between women as an integral part of analysis.¹²

Finally, the tools of theoretical feminism have been borrowed for analytical use outside their original contexts of making sense of women’s life

experiences. Many of the essays in the 2005 anthology *Manly Traditions: The Folk Roots of American Masculinities* utilize terms and concepts from feminist theory; some of these assume gender is constructed and contingent (whether masculinity or femininity), avoid essentialist statements about gender and sexuality, and, especially in the case of Jay Mechling's essay, rely on feminist-psychoanalytic descriptions of gendered socialization. Theoretical feminism clearly does not apply only to women, nor are scholars who utilize feminist theory exclusively women. One of the interesting aspects of *Manly Traditions* and other works in the vein of masculinity studies, however, is how the authors employ theoretical feminism while neglecting political feminism—many of the contributors to *Manly Traditions* incorporate facets of feminist theory that do not critique privilege or accountability, but merely describe masculine socialization and folk groups. The fact that a theoretical feminism can be extricated from political feminism thus proves the division of the two categories, though they frequently co-occur.

Examples from the Folklore Feminists/Women's Communication

Having distinguished between political and theoretical feminism in folkloristics, it is now possible to productively discuss the activities of the women's section of the American Folklore Society in this light, as represented in the dialogues published in the *Folklore Feminists Communication* and the *Folklore Women's Communication*. I consider the newsletter in its printed run, from 1973 until 2000, when it went digital.¹³ The primary agenda of the newsletter is linked to political feminism, promoting an awareness of women's positions in folklore and in folkloristics. I have narrowed down the newsletter's extensive range of topics to a few representative examples of feminist activity. The main areas of relevance include the publication's name change, the perceived ethical and political dimensions of feminism in academic folklore, and increasing discussions of feminist theory through calls for papers, course syllabi, and regular columns.

What's in a Name

First, there is the issue of the newsletter's name. As Rosan Jordan, one of the initial editors of the *Folklore Feminists Communication*, says, "The

original title was conceived out of an awareness that our discipline (including its prestigious inner circle, the Folklore Fellows) is all too literally a male preserve. Using the same initials as FF Communications, published by the Folklore Fellows (FFC), but using lower case (ffc), was a small joke which nevertheless made the point that women folklorists want to be represented and heard as folklore scholars" (1981, 1). The original impulse behind the newsletter's name, then, was a political one, meant to correct perceived erasures of women folklorists. One of the reasons for changing the name to *Folklore Women's Communication* was also political. The name change occurred in 1978, partly as a response to the politics surrounding the 1978 AFS meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah. Some of the feminist folklorists were upset by the AFS Board's decision to meet in Utah despite Utah's rejection of the Equal Rights Amendment and by the board's booking of a Mormon-owned (hence sexist) hotel; Rayna Green notably suggested boycotting various events and memberships associated with the meeting, and generally "raising hell" (1978, 4).

Marta Weigle, then editor of *Folklore Feminists Communication*, initiated the name change "as a way (albeit minor) to diffuse some of the hostility while assuring that enough people found useful material and means of communication in the newsletter-notes to assure its continuing" (1981, 2). The response to the name change was ambivalent, but the newsletter did indeed continue. One person commented, "I was against the name change, but I guess I believe we should stick with the new name, despite the bland, no-stand implication of it" (Anonymous 1981, 1). Though "feminist" seemed to imply a political stance, I would argue that the newsletter's endeavors, as defined by Rosan Jordan's description of its goals, remain within the realm of political feminism. Jordan states,

The word '*feminist*' helped to define the nature of our publication's concerns. Folklore Feminists Communication was created partly to provide communication among women scholars, but also and perhaps more importantly, as a means of sharing information in the rapidly developing area of women and folklore studies. These feminist concerns, scholarly and/ or political, are not limited to women. (1981, 1)¹⁴

In 1993, the women's section voted unanimously to change the newsletter's name back to *Folklore Feminists Communication*. This date, marking the twentieth anniversary of the newsletter's publication as well as the publication

of *Feminist Messages* and *Feminist Theory and the Study of Folklore*, signals greater acceptance of the political feminism inherent to the newsletter's project.

Ethical Dimensions of Feminism

The second aspect of feminism (mostly political) evident in the *Folklore Feminists/Women's Communication* is the concern with ethical and activist dimensions of feminisms. Many of the contributors seem genuinely concerned with receiving unbiased treatment despite the political nature of their work, and some go so far as to suggest challenging the masculine paradigms that enforce certain biases. Jordan laments the extreme caution Barre Toelken displayed when he edited the Women and Folklore special issue of *JAF*; apparently he felt the need to append a critical response because the author's approaches were so innovative and speculative, despite there being no precedent for this type of editorial action in special issues of *JAF* previously. The implication, according to Jordan, is that special allowances were made for the book (Jordan 1976). Similarly, Diane Christian's "Not One New Truth and All the Old Falsehoods" is a critical response to the Turner and Seriff essay in the folklore and feminism issue of *JAF*, one that harshly accuses the authors of writing their material into an "ideological corset [that] warps the folk practice and is simplistic and reactive as feminist theory" (1988, 53). There is some discussion in the *Folklore Women's Communication* about the negative and nonproductive character of that review, since apparently it had been written in the journal's prepublication period when revisions could have been made (1988).

This desire for more consistently ethical publication standards also applies to a desire for change in other academic interactions. Rayna Green critiques the 1979 Women and Folklore conference at the University of Pennsylvania, stating,

This meeting was, after all, just like every other folklore meeting I've ever been to. People gave papers and people talked. While they gave papers and talked about women; while the films shown were about women; while the largest number of participants were women—the meeting was just like an all-male scholarly convention. The same old theories, methodologies and approaches were there along with the same arrogance in delivery of 40 minute papers that should have taken 10 minutes. The same impossibly crowded program with little seeming critical authority exercised—in folklore anything goes and passes for folklore scholarship. (1979, 4)

Moreover, Green noticed too much reliance on male theory and obeisance to founding fathers of the discipline. To her, the biggest missing part was any political agenda about ethics, the discipline, and women's equal access. These concerns belong to political feminism, and represent a necessary step in normalizing feminist discourse even while recognizing that feminists may prefer modes of operation that privilege women's visions of ethics and politics.

Trends in Theoretical Feminism

The third and final area of feminist discourse I shall discuss in the *Folklore Feminists/Women's Communication* is a transitory one, shifting from political feminism to theoretical feminism. Again, the two are not mutually exclusive nor in a hierarchical relationship, but often the activities of political feminism precede those of theoretical feminism. Margaret Mills's observation in 1993 of the "relative nonabsorption" by folklorists of more advanced feminist theory (180) had previously begun to change with the inclusion of regular discussions of feminist theory in the pages of the *Folklore Feminists/Women's Communication*. Two of the 1985 newsletters (one a special supplement) contain extended essays as part of the call for papers for the special panel on Feminism and Folklore planned for the 1986 AFS meeting. Both essays tend in the direction of theoretical feminism: the first for its attention to "the differences which define women's culture" and the second for its extended consideration of feminism and its six-page bibliography bursting with feminist theory (Pershing et al. 1985a, 6; Pershing et al. 1985b). The same (nonsupplement) 1985 *Folklore Women's Communication* newsletter contains notes from the Women and Curriculum meeting held at the 1984 AFS meeting, and the discussion is indicative of trends found in the other syllabi that appear in the pages of the *Folklore Feminists/Women's Communication* in that the authors consider not only how to teach more women's folklore courses (political feminism) but also how to incorporate more feminist theory and combat patriarchal stereotypes and ideologies (theoretical feminism).

Liz Locke's "Questions of Folklore and Feminism" column in volume sixty-five of the *Folklore Feminists Communication* represents the pinnacle of theoretical feminism in the newsletter's pages. She states how feminism "in its various guises . . . constitutes a philosophy, a method, and a practice. . . . Feminism reaches beyond theory and method to become a worldview" (1997, 8). Locke discusses assorted strands of feminism, from highly

theoretical branches to practical applications, concluding, “The fact that feminism conceives of multiple foci for the humanities, sciences, and social sciences indexes is an inherent strength in feminist philosophy for Folklore: The polyphonic choir of actual human experience is more compelling for us than will ever be the monologic voice of any single theory” (1997, 9). She asserts and proves that theoretical feminism does not signify the erasure of political feminism but rather that the two are complementary projects.

Conclusions

From deciding or declining to define feminism to using feminism in folklore titles and works, feminist folklorists have shown their willingness to engage in feminist ideas at various levels, some more theoretically rigorous than others. Yet rather than suggest a hierarchical division between high-theory and low-theory feminism, I have proposed a complementary model of political feminism and theoretical feminism as a way of understanding what folklorists mean when they refer to “feminism” and “feminist” ideas in their work. Though not all folklorists working under the label of feminism have embraced the diversity of feminist theories, theoretical feminism has grown into a part of the feminist folklorist endeavor. As Mills says, “A high-theory feminist critique does seem to have gotten itself born in American folkloristics, in the last fifteen years or so” (1993, 186). Yet celebrating high-theory feminism should not erase the issues central to political feminism or the need for continuing efforts to be attentive to women’s issues and to lobby for change and inclusion where relevant. Feminism as consciousness and feminism as revising patriarchal ideologies both play an important role in folkloristics, as demonstrated by the wealth of work by feminist folklorists. A potential sequel to this project would be to trace which feminist theories have influenced feminist folklorists and which have not, as well as why—for instance, if performance theory is popular in folkloristics, why has the notion of gender performativity made little impact?¹⁵

To return to the quotations from Alan Dundes with which I opened this paper, it should be clear that Dundes’s critique of feminist theory (as merely being concerned with rectifying patriarchal biases) is attuned to the political dimensions of feminism rather than its more nuanced theoretical dimensions. As my review of the academic definitions of feminism, the publication

histories and bibliographies of feminist folklorists, and the activities of the AFS women's section and its *Folklore Feminists Communication* has demonstrated, political feminism has been more prevalent in the activities of American feminist folklorists, though theoretical feminism plays an increasingly important role as well. The distinction I make between political and theoretical feminisms in American folkloristics should help clarify the terminological and conceptual dimensions of the incorporation and evolution of feminism in American folkloristics, contributing a more accurate understanding of our discipline over time.

Notes

1. I used the FWC texts as primary data to draw my conclusions. See Pershing et al. (1985a) and Pershing et al. (1985 b).

2. To give a concrete example of the appearance of feminist concepts in folkloristic scholarship, I searched the JSTOR archives of *JAF* from 1888 to 1999. A search for the term "feminist" yielded 161 results: 38 occurrences in back/front matters and volume information; 58 occurrences in reviews; 2 occurrences in editors' notes; and 63 occurrences in articles. A search for the term "feminism" yielded 65 results: 19 occurrences in back/front matters, volume information, and editorial matters; 13 occurrences in reviews; 1 occurrence in an introduction; and 32 occurrences in articles. Clearly, feminism and feminist concerns are not merely tangential to what folklorists are doing, as represented by their readings and research found in the *Journal of American Folklore*.

3. Additionally, Donald Haase has already admirably tackled this project in his bibliographic review of feminist fairy-tale scholarship (2000).

4. Margaret Mills is but one feminist folklorist to applaud the "decentering" effect feminist studies has had on folklore studies (1993, 178). Indeed, it seems that Bruce Jackson misses the point that feminism is supposed to call into question all other theoretical assumptions: "Feminism will provide but one of the perspectives folklorists will use to examine . . . events and situations and genres and processes" (1987, 388).

5. For instance, psychoanalytic feminist research (e.g., that of Carol Gilligan and Nancy Chodorow) informed several of the essays appearing in *Feminist Messages and Feminist Theory and the Study of Folklore*, such as those by Goodwin, Gordon, Green, Hughes, Langlois, and Lawless.

6. Feminist academics themselves fall into a wide range of theoretical stances and departments, for the disciplinary bounds of feminism continue to be fluid. The authors of *Feminist Scholarship* point out that, while many prominent journals in feminist scholarship are multidisciplinary, they "publish research from disciplinary as well as interdisciplinary perspectives" (DuBois et al 1985, 5).

7. One of my criteria for selecting these essays is the fact that Alan Dundes assigned them as representative samples of folkloristic assessments of feminism in his graduate seminar, Anthropology 250B, spring 2003, at the University of California, Berkeley. Another good yet unpublished example is represented by an abstract from *Folklore Feminists Communication* of a paper titled "Feminist Working as Folklorist: Some Questions of Ideology, of Theory, of Methodology," which demonstrates an explicit concern with discussing what feminism means to folklorists. The author states, "Feminism is an ideological perspective which loosely shelters several disparate theoretical issues and emotional commitments" (Bromberg-Ross 1975, 9).

8. Of the essays in Radner (1993), Babcock's, Bourke's, Gordon's, Keyes's, Lanser's, Pershing's, Stewart's, Stone's, and Yocom's contain little reference to feminist theory in the body and bibliography, whereas Langlois's, Mulcahy's, and Radner's refer to and include feminist theory. Of the essays in Hollis, Pershing, and Young (1993), Davis-Floyd's, Goodwin's, Green's, Hollis's, Hughes's, Ice's, Levin's, Miller's, and Young's contain little reference to feminist theory in the body and bibliography, whereas Fox's, Kodish's, Lawless's, Mark's, Mitchell's, Pershing's, Phillips's, Saltzman's, Sawin's, Shuman's, Turner and Seriff's, Yocom's, and Young and Turner's refer to and include feminist theory. The fact that some authors fall in more than one division in both anthologies is one reason that I maintain the common term feminism for all of these projects, distinguished mainly by the degree of theory they use.

9. In fact, even Alan Dundes could claim to be a part of the feminist project in the political sense; in his essay on the walled-up wife, he proposes "a feminist reading of the ballad which argues that the plot provides a deadly metaphor for marriage from India to the Balkans in which a wife is forced to give up her freedom and mobility by the demands of her husband and his family (e.g., in patrilocal residence)" (1995, 50). The fact that Dundes clearly displays sympathy for women's issues, even if he does not care to use feminist theory, is ironic given the feminist vitriol that some of his work has inspired. For instance, Deb Dale Jones, in a coauthored review of his Easter Bunny essay, claims, "The article is an excuse for Dundes to parade all of his favorite sexist folklore, to point out his favorite phallic images, and above all, to capitalize on the pain and anger of women to enhance his career" (Stekert et al. 1985, 17).

10. For overviews of these structures in early feminist thought, see Joyce Ice's review essay.

11. The three themes Fox discusses in depth are tradition as masculine and passed from father to son; patriarchalism as a perfect, natural family structure; and unity subsuming (feminine) diversity. The large number of French feminists in Fox's bibliography, and the fact that Fox mentions French feminist theorists in the body of her paper (to make the point that discourse creates experience and thus can contribute to the oppression of women), also lends support to my classification of Fox's work as theoretical feminism.

12. Still, even theoretical feminism lags behind feminist theory in many

ways; Elaine J. Lawless in her 1998 essay on lesbian communities is one of the only folklorists I've seen engage the more cutting-edge queer theory (e.g., *Gender Trouble* by Judith Butler) in addition to developments in feminist theory.

13. I drew on the newsletter as a primary source to help me understand what was going on with the phenomenon of folklorists referring to feminism in their publications, especially those of the Women's Section of AFS.

14. Claire Farrer's assessment of the purpose of the newsletter's original name agrees with Jordan's: "We decided upon *Folklore Feminists Communication*—partially as an identification of selves and audience and partly as a (hoped for) antidote to the original *FFC*" (1981, 2).

15. One notable exception is Patricia Sawin's incorporation of Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, in Sawin's essay in the 2002 special issue of *JAF*, "Performance at the Nexus of Gender, Power, and Desire: Reconsidering Bauman's *Verbal Art* from the Perspective of Gendered Subjectivity as Performance."

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From the Editor

Greetings,

With this volume, I begin serving as editor of *The Folklore Historian*. The articles between the familiar gray covers have been part of my research for almost twenty years. And, as noted now on the back cover, the journal has been published by the Folklore and History Section of the American Folklore Society since 1983.

I inherited two of the articles in this volume from former editor Nan McIntire and appreciate her continuing contributions to the journal. Simon Bronner provides unflagging support as section leader and an advisory editor. Bridget O'Rourke's submission arrived early in my editorship, and I regret the delays in getting this volume to print.

The articles in this volume suggest the journal's range with an institutional history of the Chicago Federal Writers Project and industrial lore, a biographical piece on notorious folklorist Gershon Legman, and a theoretical review of the history of folklore and feminist scholarship.

I am pleased to update the look of the journal with design help from Mel Thorne, director of the Humanities Publication Center at Brigham Young University (BYU), and student editor extraordinaire, Caitlin Schwanger. Mel, Caitlin, and other editing assistants at the center (including Alissa Strong, Rachel Stauffer, Angela Carter, Katie Newbold, Dustin Schwanger, and Laura Rawlings) have provided extensive copyediting, source checking, and formatting. I also thank Dean John Rosenberg of the BYU College of Humanities for his support of my citizenship opportunity to edit the journal.

Submissions and inquiries are always welcome at jill_rudy@byu.edu.

Jill Terry Rudy