

The following is a reply to a letter which the Folklore Forum printed last year, Vol. 4 (1971), 127.

Dear Sir:

I am curious about the letter in your recent edition citing the ills of folklorists who lean too heavily towards scatology, smut, pornography, filth, nastiness. The writer, who remains nameless -- is it a he, a she, a eunuch, or just a dirty old man? -- claims to be continually put off by "virtually every" folklore journal for they all print such foulness that they can't be left around the house anymore. Yet the writer gargles up several alarming neologisms of his own (try the "scholarshit of fucklore") before landing on an article of mine in the Journal of the Folklore Society of Greater Washington as being the nadir example of this sort of thing.

It pisses me off that I take the time to answer someone who doesn't even have the visceral dimensions to sign his or her name to a letter, but I cannot help but remind that shadowy figure out there in Greater Washington that folklore studies have come a long way since Archer Taylor (rightly cited as one of the giants in the field). But Taylor, believe it or not, printed only the answers to the pretended obscene riddles in his monumental collection and study of that genre. And if I am not mistaken, it was another fine scholar, Guy B. Johnson, who decried the editor's pen which scratched out all the off color materials in his compilations of Negro folksongs. They were, he contended, often the best part. And imagine how splendid and much more humanly truthful the early collections of sea chanteys might have been had collectors been able to print what was really sung.

As for the modern vein, is our nameless censor to discard the excellent studies of Gershon Legman on the dirty joke and the limerick or the provocative interpretations of Allan Dundes and the sociological insights of Roger Abrahams because they include dirty words or mention the phallus? I fear the field would droop limply.

Come on, whoever you are. Gird up your loins! Folklore inscribes a big orb. There's room in it for a couple of perverts like me. You just read your Mother Goose and I'll peruse my Mother Goose Vice Verse. By the way, I'm George G. Carey, fucklorist, if you will, but not in the least ashamed of my genitalial package.

Yours sincerely,

George G. Carey
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Maine