Introduction

THE FOLKLORE ASPECTS of names and naming have received notice in American scholarly circles only through a scattering of articles in random journals, a sprinkling of folklorists in the American Name Society, and a few onomastic specialists in the American Folklore Society. Neither the folkloristic nor the onomastic establishment, however, has taken any official notice of this borderline subject: name studies either are lumped with "folk speech" or become "lost" in the AFS bibliographies, while folklorists must write-in their specialty for it to appear after their names in the membership roster of the *ANS*. Nor does the total number of publications or of scholars suggest that this is a significant area; only about 50 pertinent articles have appeared in the past 20 years, and the latest *ANS* roster, in *Names*, 14: 4 (December, 1966) contained but three members whose special interest was designated as "folklore." These were the present guest editor, the author of the lead article of this special issue of *Names*, and Professor Marie Campbell of the University of Massachusetts. Perhaps another 18 or 20 listed members may be identified as folklorists on the basis of their publications; among them is Francis Lee Utley, who was president of the American Name Society in 1966 and of the American Folklore Society in 1951 and 1952. With an acute awareness that Professor Utley has a far better right to wield the editorial pencil than he himself does, your special editor is grateful to the American Name Society for making this issue of *Names* available so that an almost invisible speciality may now manifest itself.

Briefly defined, "folklore" usually means the oral and customary traditions of a literate culture. Folklorists are concerned with the collection, classification, and analysis of traditions in order to understand their origin, dissemination, variation, meaning, function, and structure, as well as their relationships to the other aspects of culture. A student of oral and customary namelore – whether an onomastic folklorist or folkloristic onomastician – might pursue four lines of research. He could study (1) *the applications* and (2) *the explanations of names* according to custom, popular usage, and word of mouth, rather than according to legal, religious, busi-

ness and other formal criteria; he could study (3) *the names that occur in traditional texts*, such as proverbs, rhymes, folktales, and folksongs; and he could investigate (4) *the names for traditional artifacts and activities* (quilts, fences, toys, gestures, games, customs, etc.). Since published studies in these four areas are scarce, it may be useful to scan some of the previous and potential topics, restricting this review (since space is limited) to selected American and mostly recent publications.

I. FOLK NAMING: NAMES AND NICKNAMES TRADITIONALLY APPLIED

Names for any person, place, or object may be traditionally applied, that is, may follow customary practice rather than dictates of law or pressures from institutions. "Ordinary" naming, however, seldom claims the folklorist's attention; instead he takes note of "Names, Novel and Nonsensical,"[1] or "The Folklore of Curious and Unusual Names."[2] Nicknames in particular attract him, whether personal names in an occupation,[3] region,[4] or a religious group,[5] or even such esoterica as nicknames applied to dwellings.[6]

Unfortunately, most of the name studies produced by folklorists tend to be merely collections of such items, or else brief speculative essays calling for deeper studies. Infrequently someone queries a folklore journal about a naming practice in order to gather material

[1] By Paul G. Brewster, *Hoosier Folklore*, V (1946), 157–161.

[2] By Robert M. Rennick, *New York Folklore Quarterly*, XXII (1966), 5–14; the article is subtitled "A Brief Introduction to the Folklore of Onomastics." Another introductory essay written to acquaint folklorists with onomastics is Chapter 4, "Folk Speech and Naming" in Jan Harold Brunvand, *The Study of American Folklore* (New York, 1968).

[3] See the Idaho lumberjack nicknames in *Hoosier Folklore Bulletin*, I: 3 (1942), 103, and *California Folklore Quarterly*, IV (1945), 239–243.

[4] See Hector Lee, in collaboration with Royal Madsen, "Nicknames of the Ephramites [Utah]," *Western Humanities Review*, III (1949), 12–22, and Mary E. Williams, "Welsh Nicknames, Malad, Idaho," *Western Folklore*, XVIII (1959), 165–166.

[5] See Maurice A. Mook, "Nicknames Among the Amish," *Names*, XV (1967), 111–118.

[6] See Elli Kaija Köngäs, "Nicknames of Finnish Apartment Houses in Brooklyn, N.Y.," *JAF*, LXXVII (1964), 80–81.

for a larger project, but hardly ever are any responses printed; if they are, the subject generally trails off in a loose series of unassimilated notes through several years of the journal. For instance, in 1905 Charles Peabody inquired in the *Journal of American Folklore* about variant shapes and terms for doughnuts, listing *gingernut, cruller, crumpet, jumble, pancake, apee, olykoek, cookie,* and *pretzel* as names in use for these (as he termed it) "esculent objects."[7] One wonders where *fried cake* and *sinker* are, and where the replies were to his query. None was ever published. In 1946 Wendell S. Hadlock and Anna K. Stimson considered "Traditional Cat Names" for a couple of pages in the same journal,[8] but except for an illuminating comment from Archer Taylor the following year[9] nothing further seems to have come of it. Yet we read of a pet survey showing that the most popular American canine names in order of preference are *Lady, Tiny, Tippie, Mickey, Rusty, Blackie, Susie, Duke, Queenie, Sandy, Skippy, Butch,* and *Lassie.* The name *Fido* stands a poor eighteenth place, while *Rover* and *Prince,* the other two favorites in cartoons and comic strips, do not even place high enough to be reported.[10] Whence these traditions, and whence these popular, but mistaken, ideas of what is traditional? What about folk names for other pets, persons, objects, foods, tools, hobbies, and so forth? Few scholars have asked such questions, let alone provided any answers.

Studies of folk naming must become systematic at the collecting and classification stage before any significant analysis can take place. Occasionally something like this seems to be starting, as in 1892 when Fanny D. Bergen began methodically documenting "Popular American Plant-Names" and grouping them according to Latin botanical terms.[11] But once her series of reports was completed, it was half a century before another folklorist in another journal again took up the subject.[12] (Just to suggest one further possibility

[7] "The Doughnut," *JAF,* XVIII (1905), 166.

[8] *JAF,* LIX (1946), 529–530.

[9] "Traditional Names for Cats Once More," *JAF,* LX (1947), 86.

[10] Undated and unidentified newspaper clipping from a student, "Million Dogs Come to 'Lady'."

[11] See *JAF,* V (1892), 89–106; VI (1893), 135–142; VII (1894), 89–104; IX (1896), 179–193; and X (1897), 49–54.

[12] Lalia Phipps Boone, "Folk Names for Blooming Plants," *Southern Folklore Quarterly,* XIX (1955), 230–236.

for such research, Professor Warren E. Roberts of The Folklore Institute, Indiana University, proposes investigating the popular plant names which allude to usefulness in folk medicine, names like *Eyebright, Goutweed, Feverfew, Horseheal, Heartsease, Viper's bugloss,* and *Healall.*[13]) It is only a rare folk-naming project, such as that reported in Katharine T. Kell's "Folk Names for Tobacco,"[14] which is logically conceived, based upon a large well-organized collection, and fully documented. Other good ideas may never reach such fruition, although one would hope, for instance, that a recent interest in traditional car names will not run out of gas now, to be revived as an historical curiosity only after the automobile is obsolete, say in a decade or so.[15]

The first three articles in this issue were selected especially for their pioneering subject matter which may suggest further studies of folk naming and folk attitudes towards names. Robert M. Rennick's discussion of obscene names and naming strides boldly forth where even the American Folklore Society feared to tread until only a few years ago. The article effectively demonstrates the importance of studying those "unprintable" traditions of names which are indisputably a major part of widespread and vigorous folklore. J. L. Dillard's approach in the next article is to apply a rigorous linguistic methodology to a group of characteristic texts from a particular folk community, that is, the names of store-front churches of American Negroes. (A sidelight on this concise and revealing article is that the editorial correspondence regarding it extended from Mr. Dillard's home base in Washington, D.C., to his position this year with the Official University of Bujumbura, Burundi, so that corresponding with him provided the guest editor with several very exotic stamps for his son's collection.) Together these first two articles resemble certain innovative research going on now in folklore circles concerning both obscene folklore and minority groups; Roger D. Abraham's book *Deep Down in the Jungle: Negro Narrative Folklore from the Streets of Philadelphia* (Hatboro, Penn-

[13] Personal letter dated August 9, 1966.

[14] *JAF,* LXXIX (1966), 590–599.

[15] See Jan Harold Brunvand, "A Note on Names for Cars," *Names,* X (1962), 279–284; Ed Cray, "Automobile Names from Los Angeles," *WF,* XXIII (1964), 43–44; and Brunvand, "More Car Names from the West," *WF,* XXIII (1964), 264–265. A related item is David DeCamp's "Cart Names in Jamaica," *Names,* VIII (1960), 15–23.

sylvania: Folklore Associates, 1964) comes to mind at once as a work which Rennick's and Dillard's studies would complement.

Professor Ashley's article should inspire some American folklorist to answer Peabody's doughnut query at last, and then proceed to survey the rest of our folk names for food and drink.[16] Ashley's adroit serving of a feast of traditional data and a veritable smorgasbord of scholarly documentation should be a model for further studies along this line; these studies will commence, no doubt, from the mouth-watering tax-beating suggestion in the thirty-first footnote. The international character of this article deserves notice: Professor Ashley is a native of Canada, teaches in the United States (in Brooklyn, at least), and this year is doing research in England.

II. FOLK ETYMOLOGIES:
NAMES AND NICKNAMES TRADITIONALLY EXPLAINED

Here we are on very familiar ground, for the myriad folk etymologies in circulation are the bane of place name studies, and the delight of amateur folklorists. Many folk etymologies get recorded in name studies, and some of these are even recognized as such; curiously, however, not many have been the subjects of such individual studies as those in *Western Folklore* on the names *Mormon*,[17] *Webfoot*,[18] and *Hootenanny*.[19] This is not to say, of course, that folk etymologies have not been the concern of placename specialists, any more than we could say that folk naming has not been studied by linguistic geographers. But we are considering here the folklore specialist in particular and the insights his theories, techniques, and reference works may bring to bear on the same data.

Several contributors offered articles for this special issue discussing folk etymologies from states, and regions or pertaining to a

[16] Examples of such terms and suggestions for studies are given in Chapter 19, "Folk Costumes and Foods," in my *The Study of American Folklore*, (New York, 1968).

[17] Stuart A. Gallacher, "Mormon: An Example of Folk Etymology," *WF*, VIII (1949), 22–24.

[18] Hazel E. Mills, "The Constant Webfoot," *WF*, XI (1952), 153–164.

[19] Peter Tamony, "'Hootenanny': the Word, Its Content and Continuum," *WF*, XXII (1963), 165–170.

certain kind of source. However, the grand sweep over time and place that might best inspire a host of new studies was provided by Professor Utley; who else could begin with the founding of Rome and the book of *Genesis* and conclude with Marcel Proust and the Big Horn Mountains, carrying in his wake Irish myths, Chinese legends, and American regional tales?

III. NAMES IN TRADITIONAL TEXTS

The significance of names that occur in texts of verbal folklore has barely been suggested in published articles, and mostly personal names and those from proverbs and folktales have been examined. (The exception to the rule is W. Edson Richmond's article "Ballad Place Names."[20]) However, a broad survey of "Naming: in Custom, Beliefs, and Folktales"[21] holds scores of other research possibilities from ancient through modern folklore, and including customs of naming as well as names themselves in folk texts. In proverb scholarship these studies have been most active, and the results have been good, though limited so far: O. Paul Straubinger has called for and demonstrated the pursuit of name clues in sayings and proverbs,[22] while Archer Taylor has studied proper names in Wellerisms,[23] and also the history of the proverbial phrase "every Tom, Dick, and Harry."[24] It was Taylor too who in a brief but suggestive note on "Names in Folktales"[25] showed with several examples how "... investigating the use of proper names in folk-literature and especially in folk-narrative ... seems likely to throw new light on the nature of genres and to illuminate their changes and developments in the course of their long history."

The role of naming in folk-literature and the variety of types and topics still to be treated may be suggested briefly by a half-dozen references to studies that have quite other emphases. Nicknaming

[20] *JAF*, LIX (1946), 263–267.

[21] By Byrd Howell Granger in *WF*, XX (1961), 27–37.

[22] See "Names in Popular Sayings," *Names*, III (1955), 157–164, and "Name Clues in Proverbs," *Names* IX (1961), 112–116.

[23] See *WF*, XVIII (1959), 287–293.

[24] See *Names*, VI (1958), 51–54.

[25] Pages 31–34 in *Märchen, Mythos, Dichtung. Festschrift zum 90. Geburtstag Friedrich von der Leyens am 19. August 1963* (Munich, n.d. [1963]); Professor Taylor very kindly sent me a copy of this article when I was unable to obtain it locally.

of unpromising heroes of the "male Cinderella" type to identify their lowly role in the household is only one kind of meaning that may be borne by personal names in folktales.[26] "Lore concerned with people's names" is an index heading in Iona and Peter Opie's book *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren* (Oxford, 1959) which refers to several pages of traditional sayings, retorts, rhymes, nicknames, and divinations collected from Great Britain but often known, sometimes in variants, by American children as well. L. C. Wimberly's 1928 study *Folklore in the English and Scottish Ballads* (University of Chicago Press) refers to instances of name change, secrecy, enchantment and other magic, and to customs of naming in British balladry; all of these themes should be pursued in the many new traditional texts collected in the last 40 years, as well as in broadsides, native American ballads, and in folksongs. Names in riddles, though not numerous, occur in some of the classic English examples of fully-structured types: there is Little Nancy Eddicote (a candle), Humpty Dumpty (an egg), Dick Red Cap (a cherry), Old Mother Twitchet (a needle), and so forth. Furthermore, there is one group of riddles with the asnwer "name," based on such conceptions as "You have it, others use it" or "What does a tea-kettle have that everyone has?"[27] The role of names and naming in folk beliefs may be suggested by the numerous examples provided in such standard collections as Hyatt's *Folk-Lore from Adams County, Illinois*,[28] which includes items like "Write someone's name on each egg of a setting, and every egg will hatch" (item 1628), and Frank C. Brown's *North Carolina Folklore*,[29] where we learn that "If the initials of your name spell a word, you will be rich" (item 3349).

A glance at urban contemporary oral tradition hints at further namelore circulating in joke form which deserves more collection and study. For instance, in Salt Lake City, where the Mormon hierarchy must confront influences from the outside world now and then, the Church's dilemma concerning its doctrine and the Negro question is expressed in the story of a reporter who asks the

[26] See Jan Brunvand, "Norway's Askeladden, The Unpromising Hero, and Junior Right," *JAF*, LXXII (1959), 14–23, esp. p. 15 and note 8.

[27] See Archer Taylor, *English Riddles from Oral Tradition* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1951), under "Name" in the Index of Solutions.

[28] (New York, 1935).

[29] "Popular Beliefs and Superstitions," vols. VI–VII, edited by Wayland D. Hand (Durham, N.C., 1961, 1964).

Latter-day Saints' president David O. McKay when the Church is going to come to grips with this problem and try to resolve it. "We have already begun," the prophet replies; "I now have one First Counselor named *Tanner* and another named *Brown.*" In a counterpart story from Michigan, a Negro Civil Rights leader demands that an automobile manufacturers' association cause a car to be named for some prominent Negro, just as has been done for whites (i.e., *Ford*) and Indians (i.e., *Pontiac*). "What do you mean ?" is the response, "You already have two – the *Jigwar* and the *Falcoon.*" In both of these jokes the symbolic power of a name is acknowledged, and the delaying tactic of tokenism is implied. Other devices which project social attitudes are demonstrated in such racial folk slurs as the questions "What do you call a Negro astronaut ?" (Answer: "You still call him a nigger.") or "What do you call a six foot Negro carrying a switchblade knife ?" (Answer: "Sir!") Each of these jokes disappoints the hope that is at first extended for a correct name to apply to a new and perhaps upsetting situation. We may also note a punning brand name in jokelore for a product supposedly introduced to re-darken the skin and re-kink the hair of Negroes who had chemically changed their appearances before the Black Power movement gained momentum; it's to be called *Renig.* Derisive folk phrases based on ethnic or place names have circulated for generations (i.e., *Indian giver*), but only recently have folklorists begun to collect them; at the time of this writing the subject has engaged the attention of four writers, for one journal over a seven year period, who have accumulated 164 terms that some future investigator may analyze.[30]

For the present issue of *Names* only Maurice A. Mook submitted a note pertaining to the subject of names in folk-literature. However, even this single short piece has considerable interest, presenting as it does an example of a highly stereotyped traditional form – the

[30] See Ed Cray, "Ethnic and Place Names as Derisive Adjectives," *WF*, XXI (1962), 27–34; Jerry MacMullen, "Derisive Ethnic Names," XXII (1963), 197; Cray, "More Ethnic and Place Names as Derisive Adjectives," XXIV (1965), 197–198; Kenneth Porter, "Still More Ethnic and Place Names as Derisive Adjectives," XXV (1966), 37–40; Porter, "More and Still More Ethnic and Place Names as Derisive and Jocular Adjectives," XXVI (1967), 189–190; Cray, "And Still More Derisive Ethnic Adjectives," XXVI (1967), 190–191; and George Monteiro, "And Still More Ethnic and Place Names as Derisive Adjectives," XXVII (1968), 51.

Spanish-American *décima*[31] – phrased entirely in personal names, a device occasionally approached in Anglo-American folksongs, as the appended note indicates.

IV. NAMES FOR TRADITIONAL ARTIFACTS AND ACTIVITIES

We have few published articles on names for folk artifacts and activities and no new study to present in this issue. This reflects the general dearth of folklife studies in the United States; also, it reminds us that even when such studies have been made, names have only been a side issue. Traditional quilt patterns, for example, have attracted some researchers, mostly amateurs, who have employed the colorful names for quilts known to them without trying to collect further variants or studying their origin and symbolism. Professional folklorists have barely noted quilt names,[32] although, in Austin E. Fife's words:

> The names of quilt patterns ... should be systematically studied. They are descriptive (star, plates, chains, pin wheels, bear's paws, ocean wave, etc.); romantic (Love Apple, Steps to the Altar, Wedding Ring, Dove in the Window, Honeymoon); biblical (Cross and Crown, Jacob's Ladder, Rose of Sharon); ancestral or nostalgic (Grandmother's Fan, Cross or Flower Garden, Double Irish Cross, Triple Irish Chain, English Flower Garden); exotic (Arabic Lattice, Drunkard's Path, Milky Way, Old Maid's Puzzle); or evocative of the pioneer experience (Star of the West, Road to California [Oklahoma], Indian Hatchet, Crossed Canoes, etc.).[33]

A somewhat better situation exists for an artifact like the homemade traditional fence: we have good survey articles[34] and a glossary of names[35] to help preserve a record of what will eventually be lost to the field collector.

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[31] Another good characterization of this form is in Américo Paredes, "The *Décima* on the Texas-Mexican Border: Folksong as an Adjunct to Legend," *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, III (1966), 154–167.

[32] For a query, a list of 55 names, and a brief response, see Paul Brewster, "Names of Indiana Quilt Patterns," *California Folklore Quarterly*, III (1944), 61; and Wayland Hand, "Quilt Patterns," the same source, pp. 151–152.

[33] Quoted from Fife's review of *One Hundred and One Patchwork Patterns*, in *WF*, XXIV (1965), 125.

[34] Such as H. F. Raup's "The Fence in the Cultural Landscape," *WF*, VI (1947), 1–12.

[35] Mamie Meredith, "The Nomenclature of American Pioneer Fences," *SFQ*, XV (1951), 109–151.

As usual, the possibilities far outrun the present publications; whatever people make and do traditionally, the tend to name traditionally. String figures we call *Cat's cradle*, but why? And what variant names have similar string patterns acquired in different cultures where they are known?[36] From paper, children fold *Cootie Catchers*, *Jacob's Ladders*, or simply *Airplanes*. A game played in one region as *Lemonade* shows up elsewhere called *The Dumbies' Trade* or *New Orleans*. Log cabin designs include *Saddlebag* and *Dog-trot*, while frame houses with two stories in front and one in back are *Salt box* or *Lean-to* style. A traditional fiddle tune may have a local name with an historical sound to it like *Buffalo Nickel* or *Bonaparte's Retreat* but actually be a tune several hundred years older (or even younger) than its apparent referent.[37] Play party games have names like *Miller Boy*, *Cincinnati Girls* and *Buffalo Gals*, while square dance movements include *Grapevine Twist*, *Dip For the Oyster*, and *Grand Right and Left*. Such lists could go on and on, so perhaps it is best to stop here, about where we began, with names traditionally applied. Their study still lies largely before us, whether we call ourselves *folklorists* or *onomasticians*.

Besides the several individuals whose names have already been mentioned for help with the introduction to this special issue, I would like to acknowledge help from the following people who either submitted articles and notes or responded with friendly and useful advice when I wrote to them: Ralph Steele Boggs, Lalia Boone, Austin E. Fife, Jesse Harris, John McNamara, Hildegard Must, Don L. F. Nilsen, Américo Paredes, T. M. Pearce, Allen Walker Read, J. Russell Reaver, Virgil J. Vogel, and Butler Waugh. My special thanks go to Kelsie B. Harder, who encouraged and supported the project from the beginning and was patient and helpful to the end.

Jan Harold Brunvand

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[36] Caroline Furness Jayne's 1906 book *String Figures* was reprinted in a Dover Books Paperback (New York, 1962) as *String Figures and How to Make Them: A Study of Cat's-Cradle in Many Lands*; native terms for making string figures are discussed on pages 2–3, and variant names for patterns are given throughout and indexed.

[37] Ethnomusicologist Judith McCulloh described such situations in a personal letter dated July 18, 1966; she discussed names of fiddle tunes in her introduction to the new edition (Hatboro, Pennsylvania: Folklore Associates, 1965) of Ira W. Ford's 1940 book *Traditional Music of America*.