

Review article
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ON MODERN ANGLO-AMERICAN PROVERBS: TWO RECENT PAREMIOLOGICAL VOLUMES COMPOSED BY WOLFGANG MIEDER

Wolfgang Mieder is considered to be a famous paremiologist in studying Anglo-American and German proverbs and anti-proverbs. His initial research about anti-proverbs started in the early 1980s with a collection of German anti-proverbs. Later, the term “anti-proverb” was accepted and applied by various scholars on the global level (e.g., T. Litovkina, 2005; 2006; and 2007; Mieder, 1983; 2004; T. Litovkina, and Vargha, 2005; 2006 and 2012; Barta, 2006; among others).

Recently Wolfgang Mieder wrote two books about Anglo-American proverbs, “The Worldview of Modern American Proverbs” (2020) and “‘There’s No Free Lunch’. Six Essays on Modern Anglo-American Proverbs” (2021). These current works are centred around the meanings and origins of Anglo-American proverbs and anti-proverbs.

Wolfgang Mieder. *The Worldview of Modern American Proverbs*. Peter Lang Publishing, 2020, 254 p. ISBN 9781433181931

The first book “The Worldview of Modern American Proverbs” (2020) comprises nine independently written chapters of which five had been previously published in Portugal, Russia, Spain, and the United States (p. IX). According to Mieder, proverbs have a significant part in understanding American culture and different aspects of American life.

Chapter 1 “‘Think Outside the Box’: Origin, Nature, and Meaning of Modern Anglo-American Proverbs” was first published in *Proverbium*, 29 (2012) as an independent paper. The idea of this chapter is to present some of the proverb collections and the most popular syntactical patterns of the listed proverbs.

Chapter 2 “‘The Journey Is the Reward’: Worldview of Modern American Proverbs” deals with the interpretation of the American proverbs that ‘are used in other societies as well and do not necessarily say that much about the American culture or worldview’ (p. 54). In other words, the presented proverbs reflect the American way of life.

Chapter 3 “‘Life Is Not a Spectator Sport’: Proverbial Emotions about Modern Life” consists of “life”-proverbs that indicate common sentiments (p. 92).

The following Chapter 4 “‘Age Is Just a Number’: American Proverbial Wisdom about Age and Aging” discusses proverbs and anti-proverbs related to the concept of age in American culture, such as “Life begins at forty”, “You are never older than you think you are”, “You are as old as you feel”, “A man is as old as he feels and a woman is as old as she looks”, etc.

Chapter 5 “‘No Body Is Perfect’: Somatic Aspects of Modern American Proverbs” examines the concerns of the modern generation about the human body and illustrates the positive and negative aspects of this obsession with proverbs and anti-proverbs.

The next Chapter 6 “‘Time Spent Wishing Is Time Wasted’: Temporal Worldview in Modern American Proverbs” reviews ‘authentic modern American proverbs about temporal matters’ (p. 148).

Chapter 7 “‘Money Makes the World Go ‘Round’’: The Pecuniary Worldview of Modern American Proverbs” studies ‘what worldview [...] American proverbs about monetary matters express’ (p. 160).

In the following Chapter 8 a list of authentic American proverbs from literary works and the mass media is presented. The chapter entitled “‘Dogs Don’t Bark at Parked Cars’: Zoological Messages in Modern Anglo-American Proverbs” talks about animal proverbs that ‘can be seen as generalisations referring to animal-like behaviour as such or as metaphorical or symbolic statements of human interaction as social beings’ (p. 188).

The main idea of the last Chapter 9 called “‘Love Is Just a Four-Letter Word’: Sexuality and Scatology in Modern American Proverbs” appears to be tightly linked to the concept of “love” as a whole, and proverbs related to sexuality, lust, sexual desires and sexual conduct, marriage, sexism, and so on.

Based on the ideas elaborated in the chapters mentioned above, it can be concluded that discussed proverbs provide a verbal and visual image of modern American culture. However, Wolfgang Mieder realised that ‘there is a lot more that could be said about the modern proverbs that we had already assembled over the past years. It is due to the fact that I have written six additional essays’ (Mieder, 2021, p. VI). According to Mieder, the new book “‘There’s No Free Lunch’. Six Essays on Modern Anglo-American Proverbs” (2021) also includes proverbs which happen to be of British origin.

Wolfgang Mieder. “*There’s No Free Lunch*”. *Six Essays on Modern Anglo-American Proverbs*. The University of Vermont, 2021, 244 p. ISBN 9781737202905

Chapter 1 of the book has the title “‘There is no Such Thing as a Free Lunch’: New Structures for Modern Anglo-American Proverbs”. It discusses the common structures of the proverbs with the most frequent formulas, such as *Better X than Y*; *Like X, like Y*; *No X without Y*, etc.

The following Chapter 2 “‘A Miss is as Good as a Male’: From Anti-Proverbs to Modern Anglo-American Proverbs” demonstrates numerous examples of proverbs and anti-proverbs and it gives a detailed description of the history anti-proverbs and the term counter-proverbs.

Chapter 3 “‘A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste’: Knowledge and Ignorance in Modern Anglo-American Proverbs” mentions proverbs related to ‘knowledge and ignorance, intelligence and stupidity, wisdom and folly’ (p. 79).

The next Chapter 4 “‘God and the Devil are in the Details’: Secularized Religion in Modern Anglo-American Proverbs” discusses proverbs that originate from the Bible and have become part of the daily discourse, for instance, ‘An eye for an eye, and

a tooth for a tooth'; 'Eat, drink and be merry'; 'Everybody Wants to Go to Heaven', etc.

Chapter 5 "'Eat Right, Stay Fit': Gastronomical Tidbits in Modern Anglo-American Proverbs" studies proverbs about food, traditional meals in Anglo-American culture, the aspects of cooking and eating. For instance, in the chapter we could find such examples as 'There'll be pie in the sky when you die'; 'Keep your eye on the donut and not on the hole'; 'You've got to eat', etc.

The last Chapter 6 entitled "'You Win Some, You Lose Some': Sports and Games in Modern Anglo-American Proverbs" provides a thorough review of Anglo-American cultural passion for sports and sport-oriented proverbs, e.g., 'The bigger they are, the harder they fall'; 'No body is perfect'; 'My game, my rules', and so on.

Conclusion

These current books appear to be original and up to date. It is worth mentioning that Wolfgang Mieder has performed a well-structured analysis of Anglo-American proverbs and anti-proverbs. Hence, his research provokes genuine interest and brings attention to certain social and cultural changes that occurred during the last century and can be spotted by native speakers. The books will be of interest to phraseologists and paremiologists, humour researchers, ethnolinguistics, and scholars specialising in cultural and contrastive linguistics.

To sum it all up, these two recent books by Wolfgang Mieder demonstrate how proverbs as being part of Anglo-American cultural heritage can be analysed cross-linguistically and cross-culturally. Furthermore, the monographs can be found motivating and encouraging for researchers to write analogous papers in other languages. Therefore, they establish an essential framework that enables other scholars to develop their own methodology of proverbs-related research.

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