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“Right Makes Might”: Proverbs and the American Worldview. By Wolfgang Mieder. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2019. Pp. 375.

The author of this new book on proverbs does not need to be introduced as he has long been one of those extraordinary men, who have even during his lifetime managed to become a living classic in his field, universally known, hailed and admired by practically thousands of proverb scholars all over the world. I feel truly grateful and honored to be given the opportunity to write this review, and happy and proud that we international proverb scholars see how after five decades of steady and untiring creative effort Wolfgang Mieder has offered us yet another outstanding contribution to proverb studies and, in particular, to one of its very important aspects: how proverbs have helped shape and still continue to shape the worldview of a people, i.e. their culture. The title of the book, chosen once again with the correct mixture of precision and inspiration, sums up the passionate plea the book as a whole puts across: the author’s desire, wish and belief that now that we are at the end of the second decade of the third millennium AD, America, “the land of the brave and the home of the free”, will remain true to its original great aspirations and ideals of freedom and justice for all, epitomized by one of its greatest nation builders, Abraham Lincoln, whose picture we see on the book cover. Being a committed scholar of American culture for quite long, I can think of no better way of designing the cover of a book with such a title. If in the present day and time that America is so deeply torn and divided by social and economic conflicts there still exists a powerful and meaningful symbol recognized and admired by all and a figure that is still able to unite the nation, it is no doubt the figure of Abraham Lincoln.

This hefty book of 375 pages is structured along the lines of several previous equally large and exhaustive books on the same topic, published by Wolfgang Mieder over the last thirty years:

PROVERBIUM 37 (2020)

American Proverbs: a Study of Texts and Contexts (1989), *The Proverbial Harry S. Truman: An Index to Proverbs in the Works of Harry S. Truman*, authored jointly with George B. Bryan (1997), *The Proverbial Abraham Lincoln* (2000), *Proverbs. A Handbook* (2004) (which notwithstanding its broad, international grasp is understandably largely centered on the American worldview), *Proverbs are the Best Policy: Folk Wisdom and American Politics* (2005), “Yes, We Can”: *Barack Obama’s Proverbial Rhetoric* (2009), “Making a Way Out of No Way”: *Martin Luther King’s Jr.’s Sermonic Proverbial Rhetoric* (2010), “All men and Women are Created Equal”: *Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s and Susan B. Anthony’s Proverbial Rhetoric Promoting Women’s Rights* (2014a), and “Behold the Proverbs of a People”: *Proverbial Wisdom in Culture, Literature, and Politics* (again largely oriented towards the American worldview) (2014b), not to mention the multiple studies and articles that deal with some more specific aspects of the same theme. As can be seen at a glance, this incredible, almost non-human creative output can have no other motive but the passionate desire of the author to promote what he firmly believes are the greatest ideals that have made America the haven of freedom and hope it has been since its inception about four centuries ago for several generations of people on earth.

Placed in the context of the other books on this topic, the present volume is at the same time an extension and a contribution to it, as it includes many essays that have already been published, but also adds some important new subject content to its main theme. As Wolfgang Mieder explains in the *Preface* (pp. vii–xvii), the book includes ten earlier articles, published in journals and conference proceedings in the period between 2008 and 2015, but there are also three entirely new chapters, *Introduction: Rumination on Authentically American Proverbs*, (pp. 1–33), Chapter 8, “*The Rich Get Richer, and the Poor Get Poor*”: *Bernie Sander’s Proverbial Rhetoric for an American Sociopolitical Revolution*” (pp. 230–262), and Chapter 12, “*To Be (All) Greek to Someone*”: *Origin, History, and Meaning of an English Proverbial Expression* (pp. 334–351). The main idea uniting all of the chapters is the socio-political history of America placed in a specific, proverbial context, from the adoption of the Declaration of Independence in the eighteenth century on until the last presidential elections in 2016, which covers a period of roughly two and a half centuries.

The last period of three years from 2016 until 2019 covering the current Trump-Pence administrations is naturally left out as there hasn't been enough time for the author to distance himself from it and to allow of a sufficiently detached, balanced and objective evaluation: we know that true scholars generally tend to not get embroiled in all of the distracting passions and prejudices of current politics, which may inevitably influence his or her unbiased judgment, and that in the present election period, which is again rife with high passions, great expectations, and inordinate ill will towards the rival party it will serve everybody well if the wisdom of the proverb "Time heals all wounds" were taken into account.

The focus of the book is on what the author believes are the most important sociopolitical figures and trends that according to him have had the greatest say in shaping America's unique and very specific worldview and its national character. Going through the chapters one by one, the reader can witness firsthand both the steady flow and the dramatic dynamics of this process. The last, twelfth chapter, which deals with a topic that is outside of the general theme of the book, comes to remind us that the political landscape may change, but there are certain aspects of life which can be relatively stable, detached and self-contained, like scholarly research "for its own sake", which does not and should not always have to deal with topical issues and actual politics. This chapter is another of Wolfgang Mieder's masterpieces of painstaking, meticulous, historical, superbly documented research into the multifaceted, long and exciting history of the expression "something is (all) Greek to me".

What is particularly striking about this book is that it is written entirely from the heart. It doesn't quite read like a "scientific" book, but more like a personal account, even a confession. All chapters tell of something that has deeply moved the author, which he wants to openly share with his readers. I was particularly moved for example by the many heart-felt autobiographical details in the chapter about the implementation of the Marshall Plan (Chapter 3) and especially where it details how it helped so many families in Germany to survive the terrible hunger and post-war devastation, and more particularly by George Marshall literally asking in his open address on the radio on October 5, 1947 all American families to "avoid waste of food and economize on food

consumption. We can tighten our belts – clan our plates – push ourselves away from the table” (p. 111).

The individual chapters have their own literature sections and this kind of approach makes the book a very convenient teaching tool, as the author himself explains. They can be used separately in a wide range of classes like American Literature, American History, American Folklore, American Politics and Culture, American Studies, or Academic / Scholarly writing (English Composition). At the end of the book there is an expertly structured index, which is one of its most valuable parts. I, being a proverb scholar for more than twenty years, have always wished for the editors and authors of books on proverbs to supply such indexes instead of only the traditional ones of words and names, because they give the proverb scholar the excellent opportunity to see each and every proverb used in the book in its proper historical and cultural context, supplied with the necessary comments; we are all aware that there are not very many proverb dictionaries available that provide definitions of proverbs, a particularly vexing problem for researchers into the semantics of proverbs, so this index will certainly be of great help for all those dealing with this very important issue.

The *Preface*, which is a good ten pages long, lays out the subject content of the book in its proper sequence. It starts with an explanation of the choice of chapters with regard to what the author believes are the most important sociopolitical aspects of American culture (p. vii), to later dwell briefly on each particular chapter by way of a concise summary, which always includes a large number of examples and illustrations. In this way, right from the start of the book the reader is immersed into a wealth of genuine “words of wisdom”, each in its proper place, a foretaste of the exciting journey he or she is about to take. Furthermore, the *Preface* discusses the thematic distribution and chronological sequencing of the different topics that are related to the main message of the author. The approach that is generally adopted is chronological, which is another very good choice, as it allows the reader to see at a glance the dynamics of the sociopolitical situation in America together with the spatial and temporal interdependence between the specific events, figures, trends and ideas. At the end of the *Preface* (pp. xvi – xvii) we see placed the heartfelt thanks to the people that have been instrumental in making

this book published, and a dedication to the leaders of the University of Vermont, whom Professor Mieder has known and worked with for close to fifty years. I can sense a note of nostalgia for the great times my great friend and mentor has had during this half century, but also an optimistic belief that the university will continue developing its excellence and will always be “hitching its wagon to a star” in the words of the American transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson.

The *Introduction* is new to the book, but it deals with a problem that has very long been in the center of Professor Mieder’s attention: “What is an authentic American proverb?” He starts his disquisition on this complicated and rather controversial issue by meticulously tracing the history of the problem, illustrating each and every step of his argument with a plethora of examples and plenty of references, as is his wont (I wish I had known Professor Mieder earlier to learn at the very start of my scholarly career how to conduct etymological research into individual proverbs). From this chapter we learn that even today most paremiographers do not differentiate between English and American proverbs, with one exception, Wolfgang Mieder himself, who was the first ever to explore and prove the true American origin of 1,250 proverbs that really deserve the label “American proverbs” (Mieder 2015) (p. 2). Indeed, etymology, this demanding branch of linguistics that deals with solid evidence of the place and time of origin of a linguistic item and the human community that created it, preserved it and kept using it, should be acknowledged as the most important, even single defining factor in labeling an ethnonym, and not so much its dissemination, distribution or some other aspect. As a longtime scholar of linguoculturology I find this groundbreaking contribution to proverbbiology of exceptional value, because such an approach not only legitimizes linguistically America as a nation in its own right (and not just a mixture of immigrants who happen to be inhabiting the same continent and to be speaking the same lingua franca, American English), but also provides prospective scholars with the right conditions for conducting linguocultural studies of its uniqueness, based on this particular proverb corpus, as well as contrastive studies involving proverbs of other nations.

Further in this opening chapter, Wolfgang Mieder provides plenty of examples to show the right origin of some proverbs that

have been translated into another language, e.g. German, like, for example “Der frühe Vogel fängt den Wurm” (‘The early bird catches the worm’), “Ein Apfel pro Tag halt den Artz fern” (‘An apple a day keeps the doctor away’) and several others (p. 4), brilliantly illustrating the dynamics of the processes of proverb dissemination and distribution via loan translations. This chapter also deals with the structure of proverbs and, in particular, with their most productive patterns (pp. 10–15), as well as with the more recent subgenre of antiproverbs (pp. 15–16). The author then illustrates how proverbs usually originate, first by presenting several of them that are still associated with certain historical figures such as President Thomas Jefferson, President John Quincy Adams, civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., or authors (Mark Twain, Anita Loos, etc.), before looking at others associated with some other prominent figures (pp. 16–20). He then shows that some songs, advertisements and technology can also originate certain proverbs, e.g., “For every drop of rain that falls, a flower grows”, “When it rains, it pours” (which reminds us of the old English proverb “It never rains, but it pours”), “Trust in God, but lock your car”, etc. (pp. 20–21), until we finally reach p. 23, where Mieder lists the eleven most characteristic American proverbs, each with the year of its origin (e.g., “Paddle your own canoe” (1802), “This is a free country” (1848), “Think outside the box” (1971), etc.), which I find invaluable for scholars of American cultural history. The chapter closes with a brief discussion of the most typical American proverb, “Different strokes for different folks” (p. 24). Finally, the gigantic five-page list of secondary literature on the problem that is supplemented by an extremely important and exhaustive list of proverb collections (pp. 28–33), offers another treasure trove to the prospective researcher into American culture.

This introductory chapter thus gives a vivid, truthful, detailed and up-to-date picture of the origin, nature, and evolution of the American proverbs, proving that although they are much more recent than the proverb systems of other nations, they do make up a unique and fully legitimate part of the international treasure trove of traditional folk wisdom. It also serves as a perfect starting ground for important further research, opening new vistas for the ethnologist, anthropologist and linguoculturologist, as well as for the historian and political scientist.

Chapter 1, “*Let Us Have Faith that Right Makes Might*”: *Proverbial Rhetoric in Decisive Moments of American Politics* (pp. 34–62) has first appeared in *Proverbium 2008*. Its inclusion in a book centered on the American worldview is more than justified, although it is oriented towards politics rather than folklore, which is traditionally regarded as the true foundation of ethnic and national culture and its most defining manifestation. But with a young nation like the United States, the figures of various statesmen, social activists and especially presidents have more often than not come to epitomize the nation as a whole, because every four years they are being elected by the people themselves and can thus more easily become a focal point of the aspirations of very diverse individuals, classes and ethnic groups. Compared to similar figures in some other, older nations, these men and women have been much more influential and thus much more a defining factor in shaping the American worldview and culture. Especially in more recent times, with the massive influx of mainstream media, the Internet, and the social media into the lives of millions of people, it has become increasingly easy for American presidents and other prominent figures to inspire, unite or – sometimes – divide the nation with their speeches and addresses. Wolfgang Mieder starts his discussion of the rhetoric of these prominent individuals with an informative and elucidating historical account of the problem in the way it evolved from its inception in ancient Europe (Rome) and its continuation in later times, before tracing chronologically the proverbial rhetoric of specific American leaders like Benjamin Franklin, John Adams and Abigail Adams, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama. Each of these figures is made to stand out with his or her very peculiar rhetoric, vividly illustrated with the most characteristic examples. The chapter concludes with the fitting observation that “[p]roverbs permeate our sociopolitical life everywhere and at all times, and they are significant signs of the wisdom and worldview of an entire nation trying to uphold the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all its citizens, and – with the help of the United Nations – for all human-

kind” (p. 59), which points to the leading role American culture continues to play in today’s globalizing world.

Chapter 2, “*These are the Times that Try Women’s Souls*”: *The Proverbial Rhetoric for Women’s Rights by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony* (pp. 63–99), originally published in *Proverbium* 32 (2015), promotes the historical and authentic kind of feminism (very different from its modern perversions) via discussing the life, work and correspondence of two great nineteenth-century American activists, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, who each devoted nearly half a century of her life in the struggle for women’s social, economic, professional, legal and political rights. This chapter is a synopsis of a much larger book, which explores the vast correspondence between these two remarkable Victorian ladies and includes a glossary of their proverbial rhetoric (cf. Mieder 2014a). The first few pages of the chapter deal with the history of the problem. The very special, proverbial, focus of this study is thus made to stand out against the background of other similar studies of the lives of these two great women, which the author acknowledges and discusses with due respect and objectivity. Wolfgang Mieder’s detailed and enlightening analysis that makes up the body of the essay does not limit itself on proverbs only (e.g., “A burnt child dreads the fire”, “Judge not from appearances”, “The hand that rocks the cradle moves the world”, etc.), but includes a lot of phrases too. Typically, many of the examples discussed come from the Bible (e.g., “Let the dead bury their dead”, “Sour grapes will set teeth on edge”, “Eat and drink and be merry”, “the golden calf”, etc.), classical literature (“Nature abhors a vacuum”, “The mountain labored and brought forth a mouse”, “herculean efforts”, etc.) and various other sources. Another great asset of Wolfgang Mieder’s style of writing is its extreme vividness and the attention to specific detail. He never tires of quoting one example after another of how Stanton and Anthony used certain proverbs to fit their specific rhetorical intentions, and duly explains the situations they were placed in. One such example is the specific use of the proverb “The laborer is worthy of his hire” by Susan B. Anthony (p. 90), which Mieder discusses on p. 91: “It is of interest to note that in 1897, Anthony had no choice but to argue that the demand of “equal pay for equal work” would have no way of becoming law

as long as women did not have the right to cast their vote. More than a hundred years later, the struggle for equal pay for equal work is still going on, but great progress has indeed been made, and it behooves modern women to give considerable credit for these advances to Susan B. Anthony in particular.” This dispassionate comment immediately links this instant with the present situation in America and much of the world, where women are still paid less than men. Another case in point is the way the Golden Rule proverb [“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”] was used by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, which is shown on pp. 94–95: “...here is yet another passage with the Golden Rule where she shows herself as quite the scholar of comparative religions. She is absolutely correct in stating that the world’s religions all have the Golden Rule in one form or another, as has been shown by Albert Griffin in his *Religious Proverbs: Over 1600 Adages from 18 Faiths Worldwide* (1991, 67–69). Even though there are differences in these faiths, the common Golden Rule as the supreme moral guidepost should enable people everywhere to live in peace and enjoy their human rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

“Every race,” says a recent writer [Octavius Frothingham in his *The Religion of Humanity* (1873)], “above the savage has its Bible. Each of the great religions of mankind has its Bible. The Chinese pay homage to the wise words of Confucius, the Brahmans prize their Vedas, the Buddhists venerate their Pitikas, the Zoroastrians cherish their Avesta, the Scandinavians their Eddas, the Greeks their oracles and the songs of their bards,” the Christians believe the New Testament to be divinely inspired, the Hebrews of our day accept with equal reverence the Old Testament, and thus all along each nation has its own idea of God, religion, revelation; and each alike has believed its own ideas the absolute and ultimate. Much as these ‘Bibles’ differ in all that is transient and local, the texture of sentiment, the moral and religious principles are the same, showing a responsive chord in every human soul, in all ages and latitudes. All Bibles contain something like the Decalogue; the ‘Golden Rule,’ written in the soul of man, has been chanted round the globe by the lips of sages in every time and clime. This is enough to assure us that what is permanent in morals and religion can safely bear discussion and the successive

shocks of every new discovery and reform. (Stanton in Gordon 1997–2013, 3: 456–57; May 11, 1879).”

This comment together with the long quotation reinforces the message the author wants to put across: that the ideals these women were fighting for are truly enduring and of utmost importance for humankind as such.

By vividly presenting many similar cases, Wolfgang Mieder succeeds in depicting the images of two great matriarchs whose unwavering dedication and resolve made it possible for women in America and the larger world to enjoy the many rights and freedoms they have today, e.g., property rights, the right for education, the right to run for government office, and so many others. One is struck with their personal integrity and great self-sacrifice, which spring from the high moral principles with which they were raised and educated. It seems, then, that in spite of the universal suppression of women, there did exist in nineteenth-century America the right environment for such fine and respectable ladies to be born, live, work, and campaign freely, and, interestingly, be also able to afford this rather exorbitant hobby. Unfortunately, some women today, including very well-paid stateswomen, in spite of the much greater opportunities for self-education and personal advancement, not only seem to take all these important rights for granted, but often twist and abuse them to fit their own selfish agendas, completely forgetting the noble effort that went into the struggle for their promotion.

Chapter 3, “*The American People Rose to the Occasion*”: *A Proverbial Retrospective of the Marshall Plan after Seventy Years*, has also been previously (in 2017) published as an essay. It is approximately of the same length as the chapters that precede it and, like them, has its own reference section. It dwells on another typically American feature – the great generosity of its people and government shown to others in times of trouble, and, in particular, the work and dedication of one man, the then United States Army Chief of Staff George Marshall, in implementing the massive recovery plan that practically raised post-war Europe from the ashes on its feet. George Marshall’s powerful rhetoric rests on proverbs like “A little knowledge is a dangerous thing” (p. 105), “The proof of the pudding is in the eating” (p. 107), “Practice what you preach” (p. 109), “God helps those that help themselves” (p. 111),

“Man does not live by bread alone” (p. 115), and quite a plethora of proverbial phrases. Again, each case where a certain proverb has been employed in his famous speeches and addresses is provided with the appropriate communicative setting and explained in terms of the political objectives pursued by the post-war American government while promoting its interests and mission in Europe and the world. This chapter draws the image of a remarkable soldier-statesman, who deeply believed that in order to make the world a better place for all people to live, the principle of cooperation and empathy where rich countries help poorer nations as a matter of course contributes to true democracy much more than the dog-eat-dog principle of ruthless exploitation and competition for profit at all cost. We of course remember that America did not start the Second World War (which also applies to the situation with first World War), but it was America together with the USSR and their allies whose joint efforts and huge sacrifice won the war against Nazi Germany and Japan and finally ended it. But in order for America to be able to help the deprived nations of Europe and the Pacific and restore their economies, it itself had to become powerful and rich and openly and proudly assume its new role as the leader of the world.

In this chapter (and indeed in the whole book) Wolfgang Mieder frankly shares his informed opinion about many of the world’s leaders like Truman, Churchill, Stalin, or Molotov while discussing their true role in the process of designing the political map of post-war Europe. I myself, being a survivor of communism and living in a former Soviet Bloc country, Bulgaria, can think of no better way of laying out the hard facts which brought about the division of post-war Europe into the democratic West and the totalitarian, communist East. In the three decades of teaching my two-semester Anglophone Area Studies class and preparing for my DLitt dissertation, *The Axiosphere of America: A Linguocultural Study of Proverbs* (Petrova 2016), I spent a great deal of time studying history and political books, seeing many documentaries, traveling and talking to people who have witnessed some of these events. This all helped broaden my knowledge of the actual role played by some of these leaders in the history of Europe, the USA, and indeed the whole world. From this standpoint I can now confidently say that many of the portraits drawn by Wolfgang Mieder are true down to the tiniest detail.

Chapter 4, “*Making a Way Out of No Way*”: *Martin Luther King Jr.’s Proverbial Dream for Human Rights* (pp. 123–144), is a logical (and chronological) extension of the previous topics. It first appeared in 2012 and its inclusion in a book like this one is a must. This essay presents realistically and with much love and admiration the figure of the greatly acclaimed fighter for the civil rights of African-Americans, Martin Luther King, Jr., from the point of view of his very specific rhetorical style, which relied heavily on the unique American Gospel tradition. The chapter draws heavily on a large number of previous studies on Martin Luther King Jr.’s life and work, which are each incorporated into its argument. What makes it different from them is its focus on the proverbial nature of King’s rhetoric that had until recently remained largely unnoticed (pp. 123–124), notwithstanding the fact that diverse researchers into his style have always agreed that “[t]here is...hardly a page in King’s oeuvre that does not at least contain a reference to the Bible” (p. 127, cited from Stevenson 1949; Mieder 1990; Griffin 1991). Similarly to the previous chapters, in this one too Wolfgang Mieder explores the employment of each phrase that has become characteristic of King’s preaching for a non-violent struggle for equality and against racial segregation by placing it in its proper historical context and providing overwhelming relevant information. He demonstrates in great detail how King, being a Baptist preacher himself and a master orator, often made ample use of both Bible and secular proverbs, like “Love your enemies” (p. 126), “Man does not live by bread alone” (p. 127), “He who lives by the sword shall perish by the sword” (p. 128), “You can’t ride a man’s back unless it’s bent” (p. 129), “Last hired, first fired” (p. 129), “Time and tide wait for no man” (p. 130), “No pain, no gain” (p. 130), “No man is an island” (p. 131), “God will make a way for us where there seems no way (p. 137)”, and many others. King is surely best remembered for his famous “I have a dream” speech of August 25, 1963, which stirred the conscience of millions of people both in the USA and abroad. This powerful “mantra”, as Mieder explains (p. 140), continued to be used again and again as “I still have a dream” until 1967. This essay succeeds in showing that in the 1960s the American people still had a long way to go to attain the principles and ideals of the Declaration of Independence and make them part and parcel of their everyday lives.

Chapter 5, “*Keep your Eyes on the Prize*”: *Congressman John Lewis’s Proverbial Odyssey for Civil Rights* (pp. 145–181) is of a very similar kind. It dwells on the life and work of another famous and highly educated African-American social justice warrior, Congressman John Lewis. This essay was first published in 2014 and now, five years later, makes another truly integral part of this important book on the American worldview. The chapter centers on the rhetorical powers of this great leader, who was an ardent admirer of Martin Luther King, Jr. and most probably followed in his footsteps when writing his own speeches. Wolfgang Mieder writes of the numerous occasions, when this remarkable man used to energize his listeners with his sermon-like speeches, exacting from them constant vigilance and untiring determination to continue their non-violent struggle until they finally attain the noble goals of the American Declaration of Independence. He shares his own admiration for this hero by describing the moment when Lewis delivered a speech after receiving an honorary doctoral degree at the University of Vermont on May 20, 2007, when he spoke to a “spellbound audience of students, faculty, staff, parents, relatives and friends” (p. 151). As Lewis himself shares in a personal letter to Professor Mieder, he did indeed know in person both King and his father, also a Baptist minister, who during one of his son’s sermons, “would be sitting in the audience, and when the spirit began to move, Daddy King would say, “Make it plain, son. Make it plain.” Lewis too was of course very fond of Bible proverbs and phrases, such as “An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth”, “pie in the sky”, “between the cradle and the grave” (p. 156), “Blood asks (for) blood” (p. 158), “to be a thorn in the flesh”, “to have the scales fall from one’s eyes” (p. 160), or “to be a voice crying out in the wilderness” (p. 161), which he applied skillfully to attain the desired effect. The author also tells of how another favorite proverb of Lewis’s, this time an old African adage, was understood and employed by him: “There is an old African proverb: ‘When you pray, move your feet.’ As a nation, if we care for the Beloved Community, we must move our feet, our hands, our hearts, our resources to build and not to tear down, to reconcile and not to divide, to love and not to hate, to heal and not to kill. In the final analysis, we are one people, one family, one house – the American house, the American family” (p. 165).

The chapter traces all the trials and tribulations of John Lewis's hard and dramatic life supplying a great amount of relevant details, which help recreate a realistic, vivid picture of Lewis and his immediate surroundings in the American South. It is excellent for students of American cultural history and for all those who want to understand the real roots of the anti-segregation movement of the 1960s.

Chapter 6 is about another African-American figure, America's former president Barack Obama. Its title is formulated in the same characteristic way, with another proverb being mentioned in its first part, "*I'm Absolutely Sure About – The Golden Rule: Barack Obama's Proverbial Audacity of Hope*" (pp. 183–199). This chapter is somewhat short, only 16 pages (compared to the 38 pages of the previous one). It has been published twice, in 2009, and 2014, before making its way into this book. After tracing some facts about his life, education and the role models on which Obama claimed to have built his own political career, Wolfgang Mieder sets upon analyzing his proverbial rhetoric in his book *The Audacity of Hope* (2006), where Obama presents his personal and political manifesto. The main body of the chapter is conveniently divided into eight thematic parts, titled *Republicans and Democrats, Values, Our Constitution, Opportunity, Faith, Race, The World Beyond Our Borders, and Epilogue*, which follow closely the structure of the book. While I was going through the pages of this chapter, my attention was caught by several proverbs placed in their contexts with which both his two books and many of his speeches are replete, characterizing Obama's style of writing and speaking: "He that is not with me is against me", "War is hell", "The best-laid plans of mice and men often go astray" (p. 186), "Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing" (p. 187), "Talk is cheap" (p. 188), "Winner take all", "The rising tide lifts all boats" (p. 190), "Better isn't good enough" (p. 193), "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (slightly adjusted), "I am my brother's keeper", "E pluribus unum", and "Out of many, one" (p. 194); the last three were used in one of Obama's speeches of 2004, which closes in a memorable way: "Alongside our famous individualism, there's another ingredient in the American sage. ... A belief that we are connected as one people.... It's that fundamental belief – I am my brother's keeper, I am my

sister's keeper – that makes this country work. It's what allows us to pursue our individual dreams, yet still come together as a single American family. 'E pluribus unum.' Out of many, one". I will close this section with a quotation taken from p. 310 in the book *The Audacity of Hope*, which does not contain any proverbs, but reveals this president's balanced attitude to America's role as the greatest world power at the start of the twenty first century: "Why conduct ourselves in this way? Because nobody benefits more than we do from the observance of international 'rules of the road.' We can't win converts to these rules if we act as if they apply to everyone but us. When the world's sole superpower willingly restrains its power and abides by internationally agreed-upon standards of conduct, it sends a message that these are rules worth following, and robs terrorists and dictators of the argument that these rules are simply tools of American imperialism."

This chapter equips the prospective scholar of American culture with even more first-hand knowledge of the stable and enduring yet constantly changing profile of American society and the great intricacies and complexities of internal and international politics. While thinking about this president from the point of view of this chapter but also from the point of view of many other reliable and authentic narratives, studies and documentaries that present him in an entirely different light I keep reminding myself that it is quite impossible for anyone, including even for the greatest of scholars, to be completely unbiased when writing about a political figure they truly and deeply love and admire (or, vice versa, hate and despise). I for one have witnessed many times how even leaders like Lenin, Stalin and Hitler were admired and adored so completely and by so many people. In my country, for example, many people, including academics, still feel genuinely nostalgic about the days when we they ruled by the Communist Party, no matter how unhappy and indignant they used to be at the time. What we continue to see is that in the eyes of the ardent supporters even the most overwhelming evidence simply means nothing. Beauty does lie in the eye of the beholder. Fortunately, in democratic societies the balance of justice is always restored in the next presidential elections.

Chapter 7 is titled in the same manner, with a proverb in the beginning: "*Politics is Not a Spectator Sport*": *Proverbs in the*

Personal and the Political Writings of Hillary Rodham Clinton (pp. 215–229). It was first published in 2015 and now, four years later, is quite rightly included in this book about the American worldview, since it describes one of the most recent and most popular figures in the political history of the USA. Notwithstanding his great regard for Hillary Clinton, however, Wolfgang Mieder does not shy away from telling us openly right from the start that she has several times (during the attack on the American embassy in Benghazi and when she used her private server for conducting the confidential correspondence of the State Department) behaved in ways that have put the nation into jeopardy (p. 201). This chapter, again, is replete with many examples showing Hillary Clinton as a skilful politician who heavily relies on proverbs, especially in her books, but when conducting negotiations has generally deliberately preferred plain and direct language to avoid ambiguity. Some of these proverbs and phrases she heard from her parents, others from her teachers or her ministers at church, e.g., "Love your neighbor", "Love your enemies", "Don't put your lamp under a bushel basket but use it to light up the world" (p. 206), "Nature passes nurture" (p. 207), "If life hands you lemons, make lemonade", "What is good for General Motors is good for America" (p. 208), but she usually uses them in her own way and often in an altered form. What is particularly interesting about this chapter is that it discusses the subgenre of pseudoproverbs, i.e., adages most of which are on the way to becoming true proverbs, e.g., "Service is not a one-way street", "If women and girls don't flourish, families won't flourish", "Where women prosper, societies prosper", "There's no such thing as other people's children", "Security takes more than a blanket", "Honor the past, imagine the future", etc. (p. 211). Wolfgang Mieder discusses at great length the true origin of Clinton's "signature" proverb, which has become quite popular recently, "It takes a village to raise a child" (pp. 214–217). Another invaluable part of this chapter is the section dealing with the situational meanings of several proverbs: "Three strikes and you are out", "A candle loses nothing of its light by lighting another candle", "Don't ask, don't tell", "The devil is in the details", "The buck stops here", "Don't worry, be happy" and "Trust but verify" (pp. 223–224), which provides the proper context in which these meanings are played out. The author closes the chapter with the reminder, that "[t]he modern proverb "life is not a spectator

sport” from 1958 holds absolutely true to her [Hillary Clinton], but so does the antiproverb “politics is not a spectator sport” from 1963 that encourages citizens everywhere to play an active and responsible role in supporting democracies as Hillary Rodham Clinton has done through her lifetime” (p. 226).

Again, this chapter can be of great help for scholars of American history and political science, especially with its detailed and realistic account of the typical communicative strategies employed by modern politicians.

Chapter 8 has a title that immediately strikes the reader with its blunt and shocking message, namely, that capitalist, democratic America is undergoing a very dangerous change towards becoming an oligarchy, which, as it appears, can be reverted only by means of a sociopolitical revolution: “*The Rich Get Richer, and the Poor Get Poorer*”: *Bernie Sander’s Proverbial Rhetoric for an American Sociopolitical Revolution* (pp. 230–262). This is the second new chapter in the book, which has not been published before. Being a survivor of the socialist-communist regime in my country, Bulgaria, I must confess that the word “revolution” in the title and throughout the chapter immediately brought to me a host of associations that have to do with the French Bourgeois Revolution, its ideals of brotherhood and equality and the terrible massacres that followed it, the October Socialist Revolution in Russia and the pogroms, concentration camps, massive famine and utter destruction of Russia’s economy in its aftermath, and the Stalinist coup d’état in September of 1944 in my country, which was followed by a massive expropriation of the means of production, all of which became state-owned, opening a long period of ideological brainwashing and economic tyranny (called equality) from which many of us haven’t yet recovered. I of course have witnessed only some of these dramatic events, but many of the contemporaries that have managed to survive them and to write about them have left us their memories which tell us exactly how they took place. But let us go back to this fascinating chapter. It describes another very influential progressive politician, whom Wolfgang Mieder admires greatly and who is presently, at the time of my writing this review (in 2020) again running for president notwithstanding his rather advanced age (79 years). The chapter deals with the highly specific and very powerful rhetoric of Bernie

Sanders, who is known to write his own speeches, sometimes extremely long (which reminds us of Fidel Castro, another charismatic leader, who could also speak for hours on end before an enthralled audience). A whole book can be written on the peculiar socioeconomic conditions in the USA, including the cynical and short-sighted policy of the financial institutions and their supporters, which has brought about the near disappearance of that most valuable American phenomenon, the free, self-reliant, resourceful, proud and independent middle class and the subsequent emergence of the first ever politician in the history of the individualistic and competitive entrepreneurial culture of the USA to be an ardent proponent of democratic socialism who openly disagrees with the U.S. Constitution (p. 243), which together with the Bible and the Declaration of Independence have been the very soul of America as we know it, but I will leave that to other researchers and focus entirely on the linguistic aspect. The proverbs Sanders makes ample use of are not many. Here are the most characteristic ones: “Enough is enough” (p. 233–234), “The rich get richer and the poor get poorer” (pp. 235–239), “One man, one vote” (pp. 240–241), “A rising tide lifts all boats” (p. 248), “Equal pay for equal work” (p. 249), “Every vote counts” (p. 251), “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth” (p. 253), “Politics makes strange bedfellows” (p. 256), “Think big” (p. 259), and several others, each discussed in a variety of very specific contexts. The final sentence of the chapter sums up in a characteristically metaphorical and idiomatic way the unique personality of Sanders and his exceptional political role: “Above all, he touched a nerve that reawakened Americans to the fact that democracy is a work in progress and that it works best by way of active participation on a fair and square playing field” (p. 260).

This chapter, apart from drawing the proverbial portrait of another unique political figure, sends a very powerful and timely warning to the wealthy elite, whose demise, as history has repeatedly shown, is imminent if they refuse to assume their responsibilities.

Chapter 9, “*M(R)ight Makes R(M)ight*”: *The Sociopolitical History of a Contradictory Proverb Pair* (pp. 263–286), deals with a typical case illustrating a phenomenon that has long been researched by Wolfgang Mieder – the contradiction of proverbs.

Professor Mieder has long been among the very few paremiologists to discover that contrary to universal belief, proverbs do not always tell the truth, but, like the life they represent, are often contradictory. This chapter deals with just one pair of such proverbs, “Right makes might” and “Might makes right,” which are discussed historically. I find the whole chapter and especially the long list of examples on pp. 269–270 exceptionally useful, as it shows the dynamics of this process in the English language, starting with a proverb recorded in 1311 (“For miht is riht [...]”) and finishing with the last example recorded in 1992 (“Might is right”). Professor Mieder never tires of supplying practically heaps of relevant linguistic information to prove his point, an example which to my mind ought to be followed by all present and future researchers into proverbs. In this chapter, he proves that the proverb “Might is right” is historically older than its antipode, “Right is might”, which fact can be further interpreted by linguoculturologists with regard to the dynamics of some prevailing values and principles in the Anglophone culture. And, what is of extreme importance, he never tires of supplying his comments with a lot of context, where the true meanings of the proverbs immediately come out. Again, we see how they were used by some of the same prominent figures mentioned earlier (William Shakespeare, Abraham Lincoln, Harry S. Truman, John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and some others). Towards the end of the chapter Mieder draws an analogy between this proverb pair and the old sentence “Big fish eat little fish” and some other similar proverbs, proving without any doubt that such contradictory proverb pairs “mirror the dialectics of life, making them if not absolute, then most certainly apparent truths” (p. 283).

Chapter 10, “*All Men are Created Equal*”: *From Democratic Claim to Proverbial Game* (pp. 286–316), deals with one of the uniquely American proverb. Like the previous chapter, this one has already been published before (in 2015) and is now included in this volume on account of the American origin of the proverb under study. This master study of one of the greatest paremiographers in the world demonstrates very emphatically the need for the right paremiological resources when scholars determine the emergence and historical evolution of any given proverb text. In it, Wolfgang Mieder presents several extremely exhaustive lists of

paremiological resources (standard proverb collections and dictionaries of quotations and idioms) including texts from British English, American English, or both, that every responsible proverb scholar should have access to in order to come up with an informed decision about the origin of certain proverb texts. Some of the lists are almost five pages long (!) while others are almost as long, another proof of the great advance achieved today in the theory and practice of paremiography. A number of contextual examples with this proverb and its diverse variants is also supplied where its meaning is played out in various contexts. This chapter will be of exceptional help to all paremiographers and paremiologists that are particularly interested in the birth and evolution of proverbs. It is also invaluable for students of American culture.

Chapter 11, “*Laissez Faire À Georges*” and “*Let George Do It*”: *A of Case Paremiological Polygenesis* (pp. 317–333) is a superbly constructed and conducted comparative study, dealing with a very rare case of polygenesis of two proverbs, an old French one, and a more recent American one, which translates almost literary from French. By discussing and comparing various opinions of authoritative French, American and English scholars and by analyzing a large number of contextual references of the two proverbs, quoted in English and French respectively, Wolfgang Mieder concludes, that although they look very much alike they are in fact two completely different texts.

This chapter can be used by advanced students of English and French as well as by those who want to learn more about American history and culture, and, more specifically, about the history of the train service and the present-day bureaucratic machine in the United States.

Chapter 12, “*To Be (All) Greek to Someone*”: *Origin, History, and Meaning of an English Proverbial Expression* (pp. 334–351) is the third and last new chapter in this book. It is one of those in-depth case studies, which show at a glance the excellence and virtuosity of a great master. As I noted in the beginning, this study somehow does not belong thematically to the corpus and has very little in common with American culture or history, apart from the fact that the phrase it discusses, “It’s all Greek to me”, is current in America too. It abounds with fascinating detail related to a truly vast number of languages and cultures – English, American,

French, Italian, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Chinese, etc. and is sprinkled with a solid doze of humor. This study is dedicated to Professor Minas A. Alexiadis of the University of Athens, where Professor Mieder was awarded the “doctor honoris causa” prestigious title in December 16, 2014 (I remember this moment with great fondness and pity, as I did my best to organize a visit of professor Mieder and his wife Barbara Mieder to my own University of Rousse, which is just a couple of days’ drive to the north of Athens, but my university leaders sadly failed to cooperate).

The book as a whole gives an idea of the multifaceted American worldview and culture from a progressive point of view. With this book, Professor Mieder warns openly and with great courage and determination the people and the rulers of America that the American ideals of freedom and equality to the law are very seriously threatened. It demonstrates the power of a great master, who has dedicated all his professional life to the study of the proverbs, these generational gems of wisdom, as Professor Mieder is wont to call them. I together with many other international proverb scholars like me from several continents am personally deeply indebted to my great friend and mentor Wolfgang Mieder whom I have admired ever since I became interested in proverbs some twenty years ago and wish him and his wife many more happy years together and the energy to write even more books and studies like this one. This last book of his surely deserves to be read and studied by many, including American politicians and statesmen. They will certainly learn a lot from the wisdom stored in the proverbs, these best teachers of humanity.

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