

Obituary  
Received on 21 April 2022

WOLFGANG MIEDER

**AN OBITUARY, BIBLIOGRAPHY, AND LATE  
CORRESPONDENCE**



SHIRLEY L. ARORA (3 June 1930 – 23 March 2021)

Shirley L. Arora was a renowned folklorist and paremiologist with a national and international reputation. She was an expert on the *La Llorona* legend as well as other folk narratives, beliefs, and the folklore of birds. But paremiological matters informed her scholarly work throughout her long tenure at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) and throughout the rest of her long life. She investigated the rich appearance of proverbial comparisons in the works of the Peruvian writer Ricardo Palma (1966), and she published one of her invaluable books

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on *Proverbial Comparisons and Related Expressions in Spanish* (1977). It was based on actual field research among Spanish speaking citizens of the greater Los Angeles area in California. She authored numerous articles on various paremiological topics in the yearbooks *Proverbium* in the United States and *Paremia* in Spain. They appeared in English as well as Spanish, with the most important theoretical contribution being her essay on “The Perception of Proverbiality” (1984) that also appeared in Spanish translation as “El reconocimiento del refrán” (1997). It is one of the most cited publications on proverbs in the world. She was a beloved professor, a diligent administrator, and an engaging lecturer at conferences in the United States and elsewhere. There is no doubt that she had a major impact on modern proverb scholarship and will most certainly be remembered with respect and admiration.

When her life came to an end in March of 2021, the pandemic made it impossible to organize a special tribute to her. But such an event could finally take place on April 6, 2022, and it was my honor as her long-time friend to be invited to say a few words in her memory. I had edited volume 12 (1995) of *Proverbium* as a special *Festschrift* to my dear friend and dedicated volume 27 (2010) of *Proverbium* to her on her eightieth birthday. On the same occasion I published our letters as “*True Friends Are Like Diamonds*”: *Three Decades of Correspondence Between the Folklorists Shirley L. Arora and Wolfgang Mieder* (2010). It was natural that our mutual friend Julia Sevilla Muñoz, esteemed paremiologist at the Universidad Complutense in Madrid, asked me to write a necrology about Shirley Arora that appeared in the *Paremia* yearbook in 2021. Naturally I could draw on all of these materials for my remarks in California, also rereading the letters that we exchanged since 2010 to the time that she could no longer write. I wish that we could have recorded our final conversations on the phone.

In any case, I thank Hrisztalina Hrisztova-Gotthardt and Melita Aleksa Vargha, the editors of the electronic version of *Proverbium*, for the welcome opportunity to publish my short address – there were several other speakers – together with our additional correspondence and a list of Shirley Arora’s paremiological publications. As will be seen from the hitherto unpub-

lished letters, she and her sons David and Alan were strong financial supporters of *Proverbium*, ensuring that this *Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship* could be sustained as a print publication from 1984 until 2021. Our final letters are a touching testimony of the respect and admiration that we had for each other's work and of our special professional and deep personal friendship. They are, of course, also an invaluable part of what in German is called "Wissenschaftsgeschichte" (history of scholarship) in which Shirley L. Arora will forever occupy a distinguished place as far as international paremiology is concerned.

Here then are my remarks delivered on April 6, 2022, at the Luskin Conference Center on the campus of the University of California at Los Angeles:

In preparation of my words for the tribute being paid to Shirley Arora today I reread our many epistles that I published in 2010 in celebration of dear Shirley's eightieth birthday with the proverbial title "*True Friends Are Like Diamonds*": *Three Decades of Correspondence Between the Folklorists Shirley L. Arora and Wolfgang Mieder*. These letters and those that we continued to exchange for another decade are a heart-warming testimony of the personal and scholarly friendship between two dedicated and diligent proverb scholars. Here is her reaction upon receipt of the book on May 15, 2010:

My dear Wolfgang, I'm absolutely overwhelmed! I don't know what to say! (Can one be "speechless" via email?) The dedication to [our spouses] Harbans and Barbara is an especially warm touch. I've leafed through a good portion of the book, more or less at random, and it brought back so vividly the many years of our friendship and our shared interest in proverbial language. I shall treasure the book and turn to it again and again. And whenever I do, it will be like having another conversation with you.

Once we met in the late 1970s, our friendship together with our respect and admiration for each other's work continued to grow, and we stayed in touch all the way to the end of Shirley's long life. Her son Alan even arranged it that I could take part in the virtual birthday celebration that he organized when she turned ninety not too long ago. Our correspondence went on,

with my letters usually including the following *leitmotif* as for example on December 19, 2019: “Please know how often I think of you and how much my students like your publications.” Just three months before her death, my letter to my dear friend began with this sentence on December 29, 2020: “This morning on my way to the office I thought of you, Shirley, as I often do. Then when I came home, there was your most welcome Christmas card waiting for me. When I opened it, I found two beautiful pictures – one of you and one of Alan and his family. I also noticed that you signed the card. Thank you so much for thinking of me. Barbara and I enjoyed hearing from you so very much.”

What tied us together was our engaged work on paremiological matters. There is no doubt that her published dissertation on *Proverbial Comparisons in Ricardo Palma’s “Tradiciones Peruanas”* (1966) is one of the very few literary investigations of an individual author for the use and function of proverbial comparisons. Several articles followed, of course, but about ten years later appeared one of Shirley’s major contributions with the title *Proverbial Comparisons and Related Expressions in Spanish* (1977). In addition to being a valuable collection of Spanish proverbial comparisons as they are used in the Los Angeles area today, this book also presents a fundamental guide for effective field research on proverbial language. It discusses various types of comparisons, their style and metaphors as well as their frequency and distribution in Spain and South American countries. The book with its large bibliography represents a magisterial accomplishment in Hispanic paremiology and paremiography.

Speaking of bibliographies, I would like to point out that all of Shirley’s publications are based on her vast knowledge of secondary sources, to wit her “Critical Bibliography of Mexican American Proverbs” (1982). In the same year she also published her article “Proverbs in Mexican American Tradition” (1982) that is the basis for all subsequent studies on the proverbial language brought by immigrants from Mexico to the United States. Naturally Shirley also looked at how these Spanish language proverbs survive in the United States in their original language and by way of loan translations. The beginning of my long letter of January 31, 2013, relates to this:

My dear Shirley,

This has been a wonderful day! This morning I was teaching my lecture course on “‘Big Fish Eat Little fish’: The Nature and Politics of Proverbs,” and guess what? We were talking about the proverbs that immigrants have brought to the United States, and so your ears should really have been ringing! I had brought some of your publications to class and explained to the students the exciting field work that you have undertaken in the greater Los Angeles area. Of course, I told them also about your *magnum opus* of a comparative dictionary of Hispanic proverbs that you are working on now. The students were very interested, and they were impressed that we proverb scholars are all such good friends. Then, when I got back to my office, our secretary told me that we had been informed that we have received a \$1000 donation from you for *Proverbium*. Now that was a surprise, and I hasten to thank you and your sons Alan and David for your incredible generosity.

Numerous articles followed once again, including a fascinating look at how proverbial language functions among academics: “Proverbial Speech and Leadership in Academe” (1988). Here she documents that proverbs and proverbial phrases do in fact play a considerable role in the oral communication among professors. Shirley showed that the intellectually sophisticated professors used proverbial language for the purposes of instruction, persuasion, commentary, humor, and as expression of familiarity during committee meetings at UCLA. I must admit that I play this “game” as well during long meetings while I think of my dear friend.

But the *magnum opus* among her published articles is without any doubt “The Perception of Proverbiality” (1984) which I had the honor of including as the lead article in the first volume of *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship* that I have edited for the past thirty-eight years. I still remember receiving the manuscript of this article, knowing instantly that it represents a truly seminal accomplishment. As I wrote to her on February 22, 1984: “I would like to take this opportunity to

thank you for contributing this excellent study to *Proverbium*. The first issue is supposed to be a particularly fine one, and your paper will most certainly strengthen the merit of this yearbook.” In fact, there is no doubt that this article belongs to the most quoted publications in international paremiology. For this reason, I included it in my essay volume *Wise Words. Essays on the Proverb* (1994) ten years after its original publication once again, and three years later it also appeared in Spanish translation as “El reconocimiento del refrán” (1997). What makes this article of not quite forty pages so special and cutting edge to this day? It basically deals with the problem of what people perceive to be proverbs. She argues that proverbiality depends upon traditionality, currency, repetition, certain grammatical or syntactical features, metaphor, semantic markers (archaic words, etc.), and phonetic markers (rhyme, meter, alliteration, etc.). The more a given statement possesses such markers, the greater are its chances of being perceived as a proverb. Innumerable subsequent proverb studies throughout the world have cited and continue to refer to this publication. I know that I have quoted from it numerous times in my own work, and I shall definitely continue to do so with thanks and appreciation as I remember my special friend.

Many additional articles continued to appear in *Proverbium* and its Spanish equivalent *Paremia* that spread Shirley’s paremiological expertise worldwide. The fact that Shirley’s last publications all appeared in essay volumes dedicated to me on various advanced birthdays (I am but fourteen years younger than she) is especially meaningful to me, and I shall forever be thankful for her efforts of writing them at a time when her health was already not the best any longer. They inform my own work as all her publications have done for such a long time. In fact, when I was working on a paper a couple of years ago about modern Anglo-American proverbs that have their origin in various sports, I was lucky that Shirley had published her article on “Baseball as (Pan)America: A Sampling of Baseball-Related Metaphors in Spanish” (2004) some years earlier. Her very last article, written when Shirley was 85 years old, appeared in a *Festschrift* dedicated to me on my seventieth birthday as “‘Crossover’ Proverbs: Spanish to English?” (2015). Here, in her final statement

as a world-class paremiologist, she returns one more time to her paremiological “love”, i.e., the influence of Spanish proverbs on Anglo-American proverbs and vice versa. Her city of Los Angeles with its multitude of Spanish speakers was the perfect background for her life’s work. She did all of this as a scholar, of course, but there was much more to it. There was also always the human element that encouraged and inspired her to undertake her scholarly work. In our modern interconnected world, it behooves all of us to pay attention to fellow human beings of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds together with their proverb treasures.

Shirley worked on her giant comparative manuscript of Hispanic proverbs as long as she possibly could. In later years it had become an Albatross of sorts around her neck, but she happily labored along, writing to me on May 12, 2012: “I am continuing to work on my proverb project, but I’m beginning to suspect that there’s no end to it. I think perhaps I’ve just been trying to include too much. For instance, I began with the idea of two annotations as a minimum, but then I find variants and add those, and soon might have as many as four or five annotations instead of a minimum.” I responded on the same day by stating: “It is not important whether everything is absolutely perfect and detailed, etc. Your materials are simply too important not to be finished. Your strength, eyesight, health etc. are limited, dear Shirley, and you must not drive yourself too hard.” But on she went until she had to put her dream project aside with my repeated promises that I would try to get her proverb compendium finished somehow. In fact, I suggested to her that her former assistant and now Professor Alejandro Lee and I could team up for this purpose – something that we are now beginning to discuss. It would indeed be an honor to complete her diligent and dedicated work on this monumental comparative collection of Hispanic proverbs that she loved so much for our departed friend.

Let me close these observations in celebration and memory of my dearest friend Shirley L. Arora by stating that she was the embodiment of the proverb “True friends are like diamonds.” She was an educator *par excellence*, serving and inspiring generations of eager students with her informed lectures and challenging seminars at the University of California at Los Angeles. She

was also a diligent and respected administrator of a large Department of Spanish and Portuguese at that famous university. For all of this she deserves our appreciation and thankfulness. But she was also an eminent scholar of folklore with a national and international reputation. Above all, she was a leading proverb scholar for many decades here in the United States, in Europe, in Mexico in particular and in South America in general. She has influenced proverb scholars everywhere, and her remarkable scholarly achievements will continue to inform and influence paremiological studies. Paremiology has lost one of its greatest champions, who as a woman broke through many glass ceilings as she carved out her career with courage, determination, and dedication. She now rests in the hall of fame for paremiologists and will influence both paremiology and paremiography by way of her scholarly accomplishments, hopefully including the publication of her Hispanic proverb collection. We, who continue to benefit from and build on her significant work, will remember and treasure our dear colleague and special friend Shirley L. Arora as an exceptional professor and mentor, a world-class scholar, and an all-around wonderful person.

#### Shirley L. Arora's Proverb Publications:

"Some Spanish Proverbial Comparisons from California." *Western Folklore*, 20 (1961), 229-237.

*Proverbial Comparisons in Ricardo Palma's "Tradiciones Peruanas."* Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1966. 205 pp.

"'El que nace para tamal ...': A Study in Proverb Patterning." *Folklore Americas*, 28 (1968), 55-79.

"Spanish Proverbial Exaggerations from California." *Western Folklore*, 27 (1968), 229-253; 30 (1971), 105-118.

"'Como la carabina de Ambrosio'." *Proverbium*, no. 15 (1970), 428-430.

"Proverbial Exaggerations in English and Spanish." *Proverbium*, no. 18 (1972), 675-683.

"The 'El que nace' Proverbs: A Supplement." *Journal of Latin American Lore*, 1 (1975), 185-198.

*Proverbial Comparisons and Related Expressions in Spanish.* Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1977. 521 pp.



- “‘To the Grave with the Dead ...’: Ambivalence in a Spanish Proverb.” *Fabula*, 21 (1980), 223-246.
- “A Critical Bibliography of Mexican American Proverbs.” *Aztlán*, 13 (1982), 71-80.
- “Proverbs in Mexican American Tradition.” *Aztlán*, 13 (1982), 43-69.
- “The Perception of Proverbiality.” *Proverbium*, 1 (1984), 1-38. Also in *Wise Words: Essays on the Proverb*. Ed. Wolfgang Mieder. New York: Garland Publishing, 1994. 3-29. Also in Spanish as “El reconocimiento del refrán.” *Lingüística y Literatura*, 18 (1997), 77-96.
- “‘No Tickee, No Shirtee’. Proverbial Speech and Leadership in Academe.” *Inside Organizations. Understanding the Human Dimension*. Eds. Michael Owen Jones, Michael Dane Moore, and Richard Christopher Snyder. Newbury Park, California: Sage Publishers, 1988. 179-189.
- “On the Importance of Rotting Fish: A Proverb and Its Audience.” *Western Folklore*, 48 (1989), 271-288. With 1 illustration.
- “Weather Proverbs: Some ‘Folk’ Views.” *Proverbium*, 8 (1991), 1-17.
- “A Woman and a Guitar: Variations on a Folk Metaphor.” *Proverbium*, 10 (1993), 21-36.
- “Proverbs and Prejudice: El Indio in Hispanic Proverbial Speech.” *Proverbium*, 11 (1994), 27-46. Also in *Cognition, Comprehension, and Communication: A Decade of North American Proverb Studies (1990-2000)*. Ed. Wolfgang Mieder. Baltmannsweiler: Schneider Verlag Hohengehren, 2003. 17-36.
- “El refranero español en Los Angeles (California).” *Paremia*, 6 (1997), 67-76.
- “‘Como decimos nosotros’: The Transcultural Use of Spanish Proverbs.” *Proverbium*, 15 (1998), 37-58.
- “Una familia de refranes ‘destinistas’.” *Paremia*, 7 (1998), 27-34.
- “Tradición, invención y autoridad en el refranero actual.” *Paremia*, 8 (1999), 37-46.
- “Paremiología hispanoamericana: Un campo en peligro de extinción?” *Paremia*, 9 (2000), 35-42.
- “Baseball as (Pan)America: A Sampling of Baseball-Related Metaphors in Spanish.” “*What Goes Around Comes Around*”: *The Circulation of Proverbs in Contemporary Life. Essays in Honor of Wolfgang Mieder*. Eds. Kimberly J. Lau, Peter Tokofsky, and Stephen D. Winick. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2004. 58-85.
- “Proverbs and Narratives: Some Observations from Contemporary Spanish-speaking Tradition.” *Res humanae proverbiorum et sententiarum*.

*Ad honorem Wolfgangi Mieder*. Ed. Csaba Földes. Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 2004. 27-35.

“Crossover Proverbs: A Preliminary Sampling.” *The Proverbial “Pied Piper”*. *A Festschrift Volume of Essays in Honor of Wolfgang Mieder on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*. Ed. Kevin J. McKenna. New York: Peter Lang, 2009. 47-62.

“‘Crossover’ Proverbs: Spanish to English?” *“Bis dat, qui cito dat”*. *“Gegengabe” in Paremiology, Folklore, Language, and Literature. Honoring Wolfgang Mieder on His Seventieth Birthday*. Eds. Christian Grandl and Kevin J. McKenna. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2015. 43-49.

“The Collection of Spanish Proverbs in Los Angeles (California).” *Paremia*, 29 (2019), 43-48.

### See also:

Mieder, Wolfgang. “Shirley L. Arora: Paremiologist par excellence. Laudatio on Her Sixty-Fifth Birthday (June 3, 1995).” *Proverbium [=Festschrift for Shirley L. Arora]*, 12 (1995), 1-12. With 1 illustration.

Mieder, Wolfgang (ed.). *“True Friends Are Like Diamonds”*. *Three Decades of Correspondence Between the Folklorists Shirley L. Arora and Wolfgang Mieder*. Burlington, Vermont: The University of Vermont, 2010. 314 pp. With 2 illustrations.

Mieder, Wolfgang. “Shirley L. Arora: Folklorist and Paremiologist (3 June 1930 – 23 March 2021).” *Paremia*, 31 (2021), 11-18. With 2 illustrations.

### Correspondence from 2010 to 2020:

My dear Shirley,

May 9, 2010

We have not heard from each other for some time, but I assume, as always, that “No news is good news!” Those proverbs come in so handy, don’t they?

This is one of the shortest letters I have written to you! You know, some of us are still working, and it is final examination and paper time! I imagine I will not miss this when I retire in a few years.

I am writing to you, Shirley, just to verify your address. I want to send you a small package, and I want to make sure that I send it to where you will actually be!

So please drop me a quick note – all the very best and regards to your family – Barbara sends her best as well,  
 Wolfgang

Dear Wolfgang,

May 10, 2010

It seems to me that every letter I write to you starts with an apology for being so slow in communicating, but be assured that if I'm "busier" than a retiree is expected to be, it's because so much of my time goes into the proverb project. Several hours a day, literally. (I can't imagine what it would have been like to do it without a computer!)

I'm back up north, and the address is PO Box 14, Point Arena, CA 95468. Just now it is pouring rain outside, although that may change in a few minutes. But rain is always welcome to redwoods and to people like me who depend on a well for their water supply. We've had a lot more rain this year than we've had for several years in a row, and for the first time since I've been living here I haven't had to have water trucked in from the Navarro River north of here to put in my big redwood storage tank.

I have been working especially hard on the "sample" I want to send you, and I hope to actually get it off to you by the end of this month. I have a lot of questions that I want to put in such a way that answering them won't take a lot of your time. For example, I keep wondering if I'm trying to include too much in the project – too many variants, for example – and whether besides having a "minimum" of two annotations for each country I should have a "maximum" (two? three? four?), and either just ignore the variants or divide them into "major" and "minor" differences and ignore the latter. (I'll give you examples to show what I mean.) Anyway, I do want you to know that I'm still at it, and still enjoying it, too!

Has Spring come to Vermont by now? Besides the rain, our signs of Spring are the redwood violets (which happen to be bright yellow) and now the wild rhododendrons, which are pink. The wild azaleas will bloom a little later; they are mostly white and extremely fragrant. The blackberry bushes are finally beginning to bloom; I was beginning to worry about them. And the jumping mice have come out of hibernation and are appearing in unexpected places, including the glove compartment of my car.

(I have a catch-and-release campaign going on, but it's hard to tell whether I've caught ten mice or the same mouse ten times.)

And now, having done my email, I'm going to get to WORK!

All the best to you both,

Love, Shirley

My dear Shirley,

May 11, 2010

Thank you so much for your kind letter and the notification where you are right now. I can now put a little package into the mail to you.

Do not worry about not having written lately. The main thing is that you continue to work on your collection. It also shows me that you are doing well, and that's just wonderful.

I will have to make this a short note since we are right in the middle of final examinations. Aren't you glad that you don't have to grade any longer? It takes so much time, but it is part of it all, as we know.

Things are going well otherwise. I also have two scholar friends here using my archives: Elena Arsenteva from Kazan, Russia, and Pedro Martins from Siena, Italy (his home is near Porto, Portugal). They are great people, and I love having them around.

All the best for now - back to grading!

Wolfgang

Dear Shirley,

May 11, 2010

I hope you will like my little birthday present about us. A package with more copies is on its way to you

Please let me know how many copies you, Alan, and David would like. They are all *free*! I have sent a box to Alejandro [Lee] to send to some of your former students.

250 copies are on their way to North American libraries, and 250 copies will be mailed out with *Proverbium* in mid-August.

Enjoy the book and all the best,

love, Wolfgang

P.S. I need addresses for Alan & David!

[this is the text of a card included in the package with two copies of the book with our correspondence edited by me: "*True Friends Are Like Diamonds*". *Three Decades of Correspondence*

*Between the Folklorists Shirley L. Arora and Wolfgang Mieder.*  
Burlington, Vermont: The University of Vermont, 2010.]

My dear Wolfgang, May 15, 2010

I'm absolutely overwhelmed! I don't know what to say. (Can one be "speechless" via email?) The dedication to [our spouses] Harbans and Barbara is an especially warm touch. I've leafed through a good portion of the book, more or less at random, and it brought back so vividly the many years of our friendship and our shared interest in proverbial language. I shall treasure the book and return to it again and again. And whenever I do, it will be like having another conversation with you.

You asked for the addresses of David and Alan. Here they are:

David Arora, PO Box 672, Gualala, CA 95445

Alan Arora, 1080 S. Oak Knoll Ave., Pasadena, CA 91106

Alan has recently taken up a new job at a company in Orange County – a good position, but it means a 45-mile commute from Pasadena each day. It's likely that he'll be putting his present house on sale and moving somewhere closer to his work. That means I'll also be planning to sell my little Pasadena house, which was originally part of Alan's property (a garage and chauffeur's quarters) and would logically be sold along with it, either as a guest house or as a rental (which it used to be when Harbans was alive). The real estate market being what it is, the selling process will likely be quite prolonged, and getting a property ready to sell is a huge project in itself.

Spring seems to have come at last to Point Arena. We had more or less "normal" rainfall this year – twice what we had last year – and now the wildflowers are coming out – wild pink rhododendrons in the woods, wild azaleas (white and intensely fragrant), redwood violets (which happen to be bright yellow, with faint red streaks), and wild Douglas irises, which are deep blue. There are flocks of quail and of goldfinches, and the feeders I have hanging around my house are always busy. The jumping mice are out of hibernation and keep finding ways to come into the house, or perhaps they spent the winter here. (I run a catch-and-release program for them, and that keeps me busy.) All in all it's good to be back here, although I may be making a quick trip

down to L.A. to see my granddaughter graduate with her A.A. degree next weekend. The details haven't been worked out yet.

I imagine your school year is coming to a close also. What are your current travel plans? Looking through the book you sent reminded me of how much traveling I did in those days – it's almost hard to believe, in contrast to now. (I just went an entire week without leaving my house! Or, to be more precise, without leaving my property – I did go into the woods to let the mice go, and down into my orchard to check on the progress of the fruit trees.) The apple trees have finished blooming and the blackberries are just beginning. There was some very cold (for California) weather here in March and it seems to have destroyed the plum and apricot blossoms before they could set fruit. Too bad. The figs are doing well, though.

I'm going to sign off now, with one more attempt to express my gratitude and appreciation for the book as well as for the years of friendship that it represents.

All the best to you and Barbara, and to everyone else involved in the publication process.

Love, Shirley

My dear, dear Shirley,

May 20, 2010

Your big day is quickly approaching! I wanted to make sure that you received the book in time [of your 80th birthday on June 3, 2010], and so I mailed it out plenty early. In the meantime you probably also received the box with about twenty additional copies. Today – just now – I have mailed twenty copies each to your sons David and Alan. I believe that I have also told you that I sent an entire box of 34 copies to Alejandro Lee who will distribute them to some of your former students.

How about your Department at UCLA. Would you like me to send a bunch of the books there to be distributed? If so, please send me a contact person and a number of how many books I should send there.

Also, of course, if you or your sons need more copies, just let me know. We have already mailed out 250 copies to North American libraries. Another 250 copies will be mailed to all *Proverbium* subscribers throughout the world in mid-August. In any case, I am thrilled to know that you like the book. I think it is

a wonderful testimony to our long friendship and it tells a great story of two paremiologists and folklorists working together for over thirty years. Above all, it is a document for our discipline, and I am sure that the many people whom you have touched and who love you will enjoy reading about you personally and your work – especially your many students.

As always, I am glad that you are doing well, Shirley, and that you are making progress with your collection. My work is also going quite well. It is my hope to complete my investigation of the proverbial rhetoric of Martin Luther King by the end of this month. It has been a fascinating study, and I am so excited that I will now have worked on three truly superb African Americans – Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King, and Barack Obama.

This weekend we have graduation, and then I am free. You will like to hear that I will travel to Granada, Spain, at the end of June to participate in the meeting of the European Society of Phraseology, speaking, you guessed it, on Martin Luther King. I will be gone only a total of five days with a one-night stop-over in Madrid to visit [my colleague] Juan Maura.

Here then is wishing you the very best, dear Shirley. Thank you for having been such a faithful and supportive friend for all these years. I wish you the very best for your birthday and above all good health and super working spirit for many, many years to come. I also hope that we will be able to see each other again soon. The Western States Folklore Society meeting next year will be at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, but that will once again be too far for you to come, I suppose.

All the best and much love,

Wolfgang

Dear Shirley,

June 3, 2010

Happy birthday, dear friend, and many good years of joyful proverb work. Thank you for being such a dear friend for so many years,

love, Wolfgang & Barbara

[just a message on a birthday card mailed earlier]

My dear Shirley,

June 3, 2010

Today is your big day! Congratulations on your 80th birthday! I have been thinking about you during the past few days in great anticipation of this special day. I wish you the very best, my dear friend, and I hope that you will have many more wonderful years with your family, your friends, your colleagues, and former students. As always, I hope that you will remain healthy, wealthy, and wise, and that you will have the strength to continue with your proverb collection.

Your book "*True Friends Are Like Diamonds*": *Three Decades of Correspondence Between the Folklorists Shirley L. Arora and Wolfgang Mieder* (2010) has already arrived in 29 libraries according to OCLC. Many more will be registered in the next few weeks. As you know, I sent out about 250 copies to various North American libraries. David and Alan also have received twenty copies each, and Alejandro [Lee] got 34 copies (an entire box) to distribute to former students. If you want copies to be sent to your former Department at UCLA, please let me have an address and a number of copies that should be made available. Another 250 copies will be mailed internationally in August together with volume 27 (2010) of *Proverbium*. I was so glad that I could put this together in celebration of your special birthday.

Here then is wishing you once again a wonderful birthday with your family, Shirley. Rest assured that you are admired and loved by many people and that you will forever be a super paremiologist and special friend to me.

Best regards to your family, from Barbara as well,  
love, Wolfgang

Dear Wolfgang,

September 20, 2010

It's been so long since we've exchanged letters, and I think it's probably my fault. I was away from home for six weeks and just returned, and am still trying to catch up with things. I went originally to the Bahamas to attend my son Alan's 50th birthday bash at a resort down there (interesting, though not really my kind of "vacation"; some 50 of his friends and associates met there to celebrate). Afterward I spent some time in Pasadena, taking care of medical appointments and that sort of thing, and now at last I'm back home in my little house in the redwoods.



One of the things I was able to do in Pasadena was to get those “proverb” clippings [of cartoons and comic strips] ready to send off to you. I went through them briefly and removed those that were completely extraneous, but you will no doubt find a good many that are of no interest to you. Anyway, I hope that some of them will be useful. I left them with Alan to be sent after I left, and I hope they will reach you soon. They are from the Los Angeles Times (LAT). Some of them are in files, but after a while I gave that up and just put them all together. I have some more saved up here that I will send to you eventually, if you find them useful.

I was not able to do much work on my proverb project in Pasadena, since all of my references were up here, but now that I’m back home I hope to tackle it with renewed energy. I seem to remember setting myself a “deadline” of the end of June to send you some sample pages, and although the time is long past, I still intend to do that. I won’t set another “deadline,” but I’ll do it as soon as possible.

I suppose the trees in your area are now taking on their gorgeous fall colors; my two maple trees are just beginning to “blush”, but they will eventually turn bright red. They are not native to this area – David and I had them shipped down here from Oregon. Our weather has been unusually cool and everything is late in blooming or ripening. By the time I arrived all of my figs were gone (the raccoons and squirrels got them) but the blackberries are still in full fruiting mode, and the apples and pears are getting ripe. The plums and apricots never did bear fruit, apparently because of a heavy frost during the time the trees were blooming.

I’m going to say “good night” now and spend an hour or so on proverbs before turning in. Give my regards to Barbara. I hope everything is going well with you.

All the best,

Love, Shirley

My dear Shirley,

September 20, 2010

It is always a special day when a letter arrives from you! I had been wondering what had happened to you, and I must admit that even just yesterday those promised newspaper proverb clippings

[of cartoons and comic strips] jumped into my mind. That should indicate to you how very excited I am about the package of references that should more or less be on its way. You are so kind to let me inherit your collection on proverbial materials from the LA Times. I will thoroughly enjoy looking through all of them, and they will become a special treasure in my International Proverb Archives. So let me already thank you today for this wonderful and very special present, but I will be in touch once the package has arrived and I have had a chance to look at your clippings.

Thank you also for the update of your travels, celebrations, etc. I can well understand that you did not have time to work on your proverb project while you were in the Bahamas and in Pasadena. But now your life should return to normalcy, and as you say, it is time to get back to those proverbs again. Speaking of proverbs, I am just thrilled with my large proverb lecture course this semester ["Big Fish Eat Little Fish": The Nature and Politics of Proverbs]. Seventy-nine students are enrolled, and they do come on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30-9:45 in the morning! How do you like that? Alan [Dundes] used to push me to do such an English course, but it just never was quite possible. Now, on the other hand, the administration is pushing us to teach larger course so that our enrollment figures would increase. This is now the second time that I have offered this course, and I just love it!

On Thursday I am off on a quick trip to Germany. Two nights with my mother as well as my sister and her family near Hamburg, then to Frankfurt and on to Mannheim for an international proverb conference. I am speaking on Barack Obama in German!

Barbara and I are well, but this might well be Barbara's last year of teaching. If she stops in June 2011 (at 66), she will have taught German and Latin for forty years! A fantastic accomplishment. I too have been at it forty years, but I am not quite ready to throw in the towel yet. I hope I can go to seventy, and that would give me four more rewarding years of teaching, etc.

Let me stop here, Shirley. We have a departmental meeting coming up in a few minutes. I am so excited to hear from you and to know that you are well. I can't wait to get the clippings! Stay well, dear friend, and I will be in touch, greetings from Barbara as well,

love, Wolfgang

My dear Shirley,

October 13, 2010

Please forgive me for not having written to you sooner, but I was in Germany for a conference, and when I returned, there was so much catching up to do. Now I am leaving for Nashville, Tennessee, tomorrow to attend the annual meeting of the American Folklore Society. But before I do, I want to write to you to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the incredible treasure of clippings included in the package that you had sent to me. The other reason why I have not written to you was, of course, that I wanted to spend some time with the clippings first!

Well, I have had the greatest time starting to look at the clippings one at a time! Incredible materials, and I don't know how to thank you enough for handing them on to me for my International Proverb Archives. It is amazing what you were able to amass over the years, and I know that I will spend many hours looking through every clipping in the box.

Of course, I will also try to put some order into all of the materials. You had started doing this, but as you mentioned, there is a lot still to do. In any case, I am so very excited in having inherited these proverbial treasures from you, and I do want to thank you once again for your kindness and generosity.

I sure wish you could come to Nashville. It would be so good to see you again and to talk with you about our proverb projects. But I realize that this would be a far trip for you. But I have mailed off one box with the books of our letters to Nashville so that I can distribute it to various friends. So in a way you will be there after all!

Everything is going well here. I just love my proverb course with its seventy-nine students at 8:30-9:45 in the morning on Tuesdays and Thursdays. It is an elective for the students, and they come from all areas of interest, ranging from first year students to senior citizens. It has never been my policy to check on who is coming and who is not, telling the students that they are here to learn and that I would do my best for them. I think most of them come very regularly, and yes, once in a while I can see a student closing his/her eyes that early in the morning. But altogether it is a great group of wonderful students, and I just love teaching this large class. It gives me a chance to talk about

you, Alan [Dundes], [Anand] Prahlad, Steve [Winick], and others who have done such great work on proverbs.

I hope you are doing well! Autumn is here, and I have been thinking of you and Harbans, knowing how much you enjoyed our fall colors when you visited our beautiful state of Vermont.

Take good care of yourself, my dear friend,  
Wolfgang

Dear Wolfgang,

August 28, 2011

It's a long time since we exchanged emails, and I'm afraid the fault is mine. I've had some continuing health issues (though, fortunately, nothing really serious), and I spent several rather strenuous months down in Pasadena getting my little house there ready for sale, and then after it was sold (which only took about ten days!), vacating it for occupancy by the new owners. I'm very glad to be back up north in my house-in-the-woods, but I'm still dealing with the problem of amalgamating essentially two households into one. I'm going to miss the convenience of having a place to stay in Pasadena, but I had no strong personal ties to the house itself. It was one that Harbans and I purchased because it was adjacent to the house we lived in before we moved to Mandeville Canyon near UCLA. In fact, the little house and our larger one had been part of the same property years before. Alan had been living in the larger one for a number of years, and it was his decision to sell that one (which became his after Harbans's death) and move to one with an easier commute that started this whole process. His house sold in a few days, and he is now living in a smaller, rented house in Playa del Rey, which is not particularly close to where he works (in Orange County) but is ten minutes from the airport – an important advantage since he travels a great deal. He is engaged to be married, and the rental house is convenient to where his fiancée works. The wedding will be February 29, 2012 (!), but the place has yet to be decided.

David is on a research trip in connection with a new article he is writing on a certain genus of mushrooms. He had planned to go as far as New England, but the hurricane predictions intervened. He might still make it there, if the situation is not as serious as predicted, or he might go to Michigan instead, or just come home.

I continue to plug along with my proverb project and am currently concentrating on filling in gaps in the annotations and adding explanatory comments where needed. I have been trying to reduce the number of “variants” in the annotations by eliminating those that involve only differences in singular/plural nouns, or differences in word order when the words themselves are the same (you know how flexible Spanish word order can be; even the same informant may give the same proverb, on another occasion, with a different word order), or differences in verb tense, or differences in the use of articles or prepositions – things that usually have no effect on the meaning. I still haven’t decided about subjunctive vs. indicative, because in Spanish as in English the use of the subjunctive appears to be lessening (especially among U.S.-born informants), but there is a difference of meaning involved. And so far I’ve been including variants that use different nouns or verbs, even if the meaning is essentially the same. Just to be on the safe side, I keep backup copies of everything in case I need to refer to them. As I recall, I was able to discuss some of these points with you some years ago, and I hope I’ve succeeded in applying the results of that conversation. I’ll send you a sample of the “thinned out” pages to compare with the original ones – not with this email, but in the near future.

Are you teaching your “general elective” on proverbs again this year? I hope so. I could tell you were really enjoying yourself, and if I were anywhere around there I would have loved to enroll in, or at least audit, the course. I think my favorite course to teach at UCLA was the undergraduate “folk literature” course, which started with proverbs and went on through riddles, folktales, legends, romances (ballads) and **corridos**. A good many of the students were of Hispanic descent, and I still remember in particular a girl student who chose to do her “term paper” on proverbs and who said to me afterward: “It was the first time I ever really talked with my grandmother!” She seemed to be thrilled, and so was I.

I haven’t heard any news today of the weather on the East Coast, but I hope your area has not been badly affected by the storms. Please forgive me for this long silence, and write when you have time.

Love, Shirley

My dear Shirley,

August 30, 2011

How wonderful to hear from you and to get so much exciting information! I am glad to hear that Alan is getting married in February and that David continues his work on mushrooms. Obviously I am especially pleased to know that your health is okay, that you are working on your proverb collection (I look forward to a few sample pages), that you sold your little house in Pasadena, and that you are now settled solidly in your house-in-the-woods. I can well imagine how difficult it was to downsize from two homes.

About two weeks ago I mailed off the new *Proverbium* volume to you. Actually, you should have received it by now. The postage alone is killing me, Shirley. Prices are going up like crazy, and the postage for all the packages came to almost \$5000. I have no idea what will happen to our yearbook when I cannot do it any longer. The production and printing of each volume costs almost \$11,000 by now. Of the total of \$16,000 we pull in just a bit more than \$6000 from subscriptions, \$2000 from the dean, and \$1000 from the bookstore – and you know from where the rest cometh! I have set up a little money printing machine in our basement. But all joking aside, Shirley. If you could make a small donation again, I would certainly appreciate that support. You and Alan Dundes have always done that, and I have very much appreciated your help. I had a wonderful friend here in Burlington who made several considerable donations, but unfortunately he died last year. But don't worry, *Proverbium* will not die as long as I am in charge of it. Julia [Sevilla Muñoz of Madrid] has now made an electronic yearbook out of her wonderful *Paremia*. She said the university cut all funding, and she simply could not raise enough money any longer. She is fine – I saw her at an international proverb conference at Paris during the summer – and she always asks about you!

Yes, I am teaching my large proverb lecture course again this year. Today was the first day of classes, and I had 72 students! So you can imagine how happy I am with such a great group of young people.

Irene, the hurricane, was a terrible disaster for our little beautiful state. Barbara and I were lucky, since northern Vermont was not hit too badly. But the southern part of the state really got hit!

Bridges swept away, roads washed out for miles, villages cut off, hundreds of trees uprooted, etc. Clean-up has started, but it will take all fall to get back to normal, more or less.

My sad news is that my dear mother passed away unexpectedly at the age of almost 92 a few weeks ago. She was very healthy, living on her own, and still traveling. In fact, she had returned from a trip visiting her best childhood friend and then, a few hours later, she very quietly fell asleep in her chair. So she was very fortunate to have been spared any of those diseases like Alzheimer or Parkinson. But her death came so sudden, and we were not at all prepared for it. In any case, Barbara and I went to Germany for the funeral, etc. (I remember your trip to India after Harbans had died).

There are also good news: As I already mentioned, I went to Paris for a wonderful international proverb conference, giving the keynote address there on modern Anglo- American proverbs. Our [Charles Clay Doyle, Wolfgang Mieder, and Fred R. Shapiro] dictionary with Yale University Press will be out in May 2012 with the title *Dictionary of Modern Proverbs*. You will be one of the first to receive a copy, of course.

AFS is meeting at Bloomington this year, and I can't wait to spend a few days at the Mecca of folklore studies. Sure wish that you could come, but I do understand that you don't want to make this long trip.

If you should need a few more copies of our correspondence, please let me know. I gladly send you some additional copies for former students, friends, etc.

Barbara has just retired after forty years as a German and Latin teacher. It was a tough decision, but at 66 she thought the time had come. She had an incredibly fruitful career, touching a lot of young people in her four decades. There were a number of receptions in her honor, and I was so proud of all of her accomplishments. Many people spoke, and I could tell what incredible influence Barbara had on generations of students. That is the rewarding part of our profession. We all have students who think we made a difference.

Dear Shirley, thank you again so much for your letter. I have been thinking of you a lot lately, and I am sure that I would have written to you during the upcoming long weekend. But now you

beat me to it, and I love you for it. Stay well, my dear friend, enjoy your home-in- the-woods, and keep that collection moving ahead. Barbara sends her regards as well,

Love, Wolfgang

Dear Shirley,

August 30, 2011

Just about an hour ago I wrote to you in response to your kind letter. At that time, I took all my courage and asked you whether perhaps you could make a small donation to *Proverbium*. And now, just now, our administrative assistant Janet Sobieski walks into my office and tells me that you have sent \$100 with a little note attached.

For *Proverbium & Supplements* & a bit extra –

Regards, Shirley Arora

I should have known that you would do this, as you have done so often before. So please forgive me for having asked you to consider sending a bit extra this time as well. Ignore my request, please, and thank you for all of your support over the years.

All the best, dear friend,

Wolfgang

My dear Shirley,

October 31, 2011

The news just reached me that you and your sons have made a most generous donation of \$1000 to *Proverbium*. You have no idea what this gift means to me! I so much appreciate your help and generosity! Your gift makes a giant difference, and it will make it possible for me to continue with *Proverbium*.

I hope that you are doing well, Shirley. I will be at WSFS [Western States Folklore Society] in April at Sacramento and *hope* to see you there.

Thank you all again for being so kind and supportive. Please thank your sons. I think of you often!

Thank you and much love,

Wolfgang

Dear Wolfgang,

May 12, 2012

I was away from home for almost a week (attending my younger son's wedding in L.A.), and when I returned, I found



among my accumulated mail the copy of the *Dictionary of Modern Proverbs*. Congratulations on another indispensable reference for anyone interested in or working with proverbs! I sat right down and leafed through the book and in a few minutes found at least a half dozen English counterparts for items in my Spanish collection – and that’s just the beginning! It’s a wonderful addition to my Mieder Shelf (an entire shelf filled with your publications) and will be an especially valuable source for proverbs that have recently “crossed over” from English to Spanish – a phenomenon becoming more and more common. (“There are no atheists in foxholes,” for example, which was used in Spanish – *No hay ateos en los foxholes* – in conversational context by a Mexican-American friend of mine. You might be interested to know that there is a similar proverb in Bolivia: *En las tempestades no hay ateos.*)

I am continuing to work on my proverb project, but I’m beginning to suspect that there’s no end to it. I think perhaps I’ve just been trying to include too much. For instance, I began with the idea of two annotations as a minimum, but then I would find variants and add those, and soon I might have as many as four or five annotations instead of the “minimum.” I also find many variants in my own collection, and find myself wondering how relevant they are – some of them “vary” just by using a plural noun instead of a singular one, or a subjunctive rather than an indicative verb (which of course can change the meaning of the saying), or by changing the word order (Spanish word order being extraordinarily flexible) so that I sometimes have two different versions of the same saying from the same informant, on different occasions.

I had an email from Julia Sevilla [Muñoz] asking if I would be interested in publishing something on a website that she is developing, and I wonder if perhaps that is the way to go. I could maybe develop one section at a time (e.g., keywords beginning with “a”) rather than working on the project as a whole, as I do now. What do you think? Julia wrote that she would send me the “*pautas*” (requirements or rules for publishing on the website), but I haven’t received them yet.

Are you still enjoying those huge classes of yours? I wish I could enroll! I doubt that I’ll be able to attend any more confer-

ences, so I don't know when we'll meet again. But I think of you often, and I will try to be a more consistent correspondent in the future. And if you have a meeting in Berkeley, or anywhere else in this area, perhaps you could visit Point Arena? It's a beautiful place.

Give my warmest regards to Barbara, and an affectionate pat to your current canine friend.

Love, Shirley

My dear Shirley,

May 12, 2012

It is so wonderful to hear from you! I was starting to worry about you, since I knew that you should have received *The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs* more than a week ago. But you were away, and you are okay – that's all that counts!

Thank you for your kind reaction to our new proverb dictionary. Hearing your praise means the world to me, as you well know. It was a lot of work, even for three people [Charles Clay Doyle, Wolfgang Mieder, and Fred R. Shapiro] working on it for a number of years.

And here you are working on your giant project all alone. I wish you had someone to help you. Might not Alejandro Lee be pulled in to help you get this project done?

Personally, I do not think much of what Julia wants to do electronically. I don't mean this critical but rather personally. I am simply of a different generation, and I have little interest in electronic publications. I understand that Julia wants to go that way, but at my and your age, I really just as well stick to the old way of getting our work out. This is just my own opinion, and obviously you need to decide for yourself.

I sometimes think that someone like Alejandro should come out to California for a few months and simply help you finish your giant project in a limited amount of time – that is with a definite date for closure. It is not important whether everything is absolutely perfect and detailed, etc. Your materials are simply too important not be finished up. Your strength, eyesight, health etc. are limited, dear Shirley, and you must not drive yourself too hard. I don't want you to get sick because of this project or lose sleep over it. But how about talking to your sons about having someone like Alejandro spend three months with you for some

pay to help you complete what you have in a reasonable fashion? That person could work eight hours a day on doing this job under your supervision. Perhaps Alejandro is looking for summer work to earn some extra money. I would be willing to do this, Shirley, but I do not know Spanish (a big shame). In any case, please give this approach some thought.

My help will come in when we will look for a publisher for your collection. It does not need to be absolutely complete or perfect, Shirley. The key issue is to draw a line in the sand and say that by such a date the project is done!

Things are going well here. Barbara is enjoying her retirement, and yes, I still enjoy my large proverb class and my advanced German classes. A couple of weeks ago I was at Sacramento for the WSFS [Western States Folklore Society] meeting. It was great, but I wish you could have been there or I could have come to see you. I will try harder. It looks as if next year's meeting will be at Berkeley Community College (I did not know that this exists).

Congratulations to your son on his wedding. I am so glad that you were able to travel to L.A. It is great that you are having so much joy with your family, Shirley.

One last thing: Thank you for your comments regarding the loan translation of modern Anglo-American proverbs into Spanish here in the United States. That would make a great paper! Do you feel up to writing it? But then that would take time away from your collection! Please think about my idea about Alejandro taking on an official role in getting your collection finished and published.

Barbara and I are off to France for ten days on May 24 with another couple. We will spend two-and-a-half days at Paris and then go on to the wine region southwest of Bordeaux for one of our bicycle trips with a group of about 18 people. We are very much looking forward to this vacation.

Again, Shirley, thank you so much for your kind words regarding our dictionary. Stay well and rest assured that I often think of you. Barbara sends her best wishes as well,

love, Wolfgang

P.S. Best regards to your sons and their families.

Hello, Wolfgang

November 3, 2012

I'm writing this on my son Alan's computer during a visit to Los Angeles. (I do hope I've remembered your current e-mail address correctly.) It's been a long time since I wrote, having been unwell for some weeks, but I'm much better now, the main purpose of my visit here being to see some of my former doctors that I used to see when I spent the winters in my little house in Pasadena, which I sold last year. However, I've also taken advantage of the opportunity to update some legal documents, and that's what this letter is about.

I mentioned to you quite a while ago that I would like my proverb collection to go to UVM, but specifically to your proverb library. I want to formalize that donation, and the attorney wants to know whether your Proverb Library has a specific name or can you suggest how the bequest should be worded. You can reply to this e-mail at Alan's address.

I find this computer very difficult to use; I'll write more when I get back home.

Love, Shirley

My dear Shirley,

November 4, 2012

You won't believe this, but my plan was to write to you today! But then you jumped the gun, and that is just fine. I am so glad to hear from you, and I am happy that you are doing better! I do worry about your health, Shirley, but since you were able to travel to L.A., things must have improved, and that is very, very good.

I wanted to write to you to tell you that I got back from the AFS [American Folklore Society] meeting at New Orleans, where I received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Folklore Society. What a wonderful recognition, and I still can't believe that I really deserve so much attention. Sharon Sherman gave a wonderful laudatio, and I was allowed to give a short response. Simon Bronner also had arranged a two-hour session in my honor dealing with "Transatlantic Folkloristics", where I gave additional remarks. I am attaching both documents for you.

My trip home was quite an ordeal! It took me three-and-a-half days to get home. Many hours sitting at airports, standing in line, looking for hotels, etc. – and having no clothes to change

into. But I am home safe and sound, and no damage to our home or land.

But now to your kind and wonderful letter, Shirley. Yes, I do remember that you had said on several occasions that your proverb collection would move to UVM eventually. I am obviously deeply moved that you are now proceeding to formalize your eventual donation, and I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your generosity and for entrusting me with your rich holdings.

The official name of my proverb library is “International Proverb Archives”. I am thoroughly convinced that your proverb collection should be integrated into my international archives. The holdings of Lutz Röhrich (Freiburg, Germany), Ria Stambaugh (Chapel Hill, North Carolina), and Robert Dent (UCLA) have already been integrated. In this way my archives have by now become *the* holding place.

I also have good news for you. Obviously I will not be here forever, and Barbara and I have given much thought to what will happen to my International Proverb Archives eventually. I have not been successful in finding an American library or institution that is willing to take over the giant archives. However, the Institute of the German Language at Mannheim, Germany, has agreed to take everything in due time! This is a great solution, since the institute is also a pioneer in European studies on phraseology and paremiology. This means that the many members of the European Society of Phraseology will have a central European location to use my archives. A representative of the Institute has been here and inspected everything, measuring bookshelf space, etc. The Institute with its eighty employees has the space, and they are committed to this plan. I am traveling to Mannheim this summer to formalize the agreement. I shall keep everything as long as I am able to work with it. Then eventually everything will move to Mannheim. I can already imagine scholars from Spain and elsewhere to come there to use your Spanish language materials! [This plan did not come to pass. Instead, I was able to donate my International Proverb Archives to the University of Vermont. Shirley Arora’s books and materials will now be added to these rich holdings to be used by scholars and students from around the world.]

So, dear Shirley, I think we have a good plan. I am deeply touched that you are trusting me with your proverb collection, and you know that I will treasure it and safekeep it as your dear and good friend. And yes, I do have the space for your holdings. Above all, I wish that both you and I will be able to carry on with our work for a bit longer!

Again, the name is “International Proverb Archives” at the University of Vermont. Good luck with finalizing your donation. It will be good for you to know that matters will one day be in good hands [by the summer of 2022 all materials had arrived at the University of Vermont]. And again, Shirley, thank you for your trust and friendship.

Please give my best regards to Alan and your entire family. Barbara sends her kind regards as well. The WSFS meeting will be in San Diego in April – maybe you will be able to come!

Take good care of yourself, and thank you so very much,  
love, Wolfgang

My dear Shirley,

January 31, 2013

This has been a wonderful day! This morning I was teaching my lecture course on “‘Big Fish Eat Little Fish’: The Nature and Politics of Proverbs,” and guess what? We were talking about the proverbs that immigrants have brought to the United States, and so your ears should really have been ringing! I had brought some of your publications to class and explained to the students the exciting field work that you have undertaken in the greater Los Angeles area. Of course, I told them also about your *magnum opus* that you are working on now. The students were very interested, and they like the fact that we proverb scholars are all such good friends.

Then, when I came back to my office, our secretary told me that he had been informed that we have received a \$1000 donation from you for *Proverbium*. Now that was a super surprise, and I hasten to thank you, your sons and their families for your incredible generosity. Your gift makes a giant difference, and I have to admit that we really need your fantastic support. Can you imagine that we now pay \$25 postage for every package we send abroad? The postage bill is \$5500 a year – incredible.

Of course, some people are saying that we should publish *Proverbium* only electronically. But I am simply not ready to do that. We are publishing volume 30 this year, once again with its normal 544 pages – all of this is quite an accomplishment for international paremiology. I am turning 69 in a couple of weeks – so your donation is my greatest birthday present! – and I hope to continue teaching for at least another six years - let's hope my health will continue to be good! In any case, as long as I edit *Proverbium*, I will continue publishing it in print. However, we are now working on getting all the back issues on the web so that people can use it everywhere.

As you can imagine, I will be coming out to California to take part in the WSFS [Western States Folklore Society] meeting in April at San Diego. It would, of course, be wonderful if you were to be able to come !

In mid-February I am going to the University of Georgia. My dear friend Charles Doyle has invited me to give a public lecture, but the two of us will also spend three days looking through the Archer Taylor papers to see if there is something that we should publish – letters, notes, etc.?

Speaking of Archer Taylor, this morning I also showed my students that you had dedicated your massive volume of proverbial comparisons in Spanish to Archer Taylor. I had told them in an earlier lecture that proverb scholars all stand on the shoulder of giants, making me the grandson of Archer Taylor, with my doctoral adviser Stuart Gallacher being Taylor's son and I Gallacher's son. The students liked this idea of the continuity of scholarship and the acknowledgment of the scholarship of those that came before us. Your work, Shirley, is of course getting ever more recognition with the incredible importance of Spanish in the United States.

My own work is going well. *Proverbium* keeps me busy, and there are many projects, as you know. Our *Dictionary of Modern Proverbs* appears to be a success, with Yale University Press being very happy with the sales. I enjoy my teaching, and as I said, I hope to carry on for a few more years. Barbara is enjoying her retirement, but she is plenty busy with various boards, talks, and volunteer work.

Well, this is a bit of a report for you, Shirley. I am so very much overwhelmed by your generosity, and I want to thank you and your sons once again for making such a difference for *Proverbium*. Please stay well, and definitely know that I think of you often. Perhaps we can meet somewhere this year. Please give your sons and their families my best regards, and all the very best to you and your work, Shirley. Please carry on with your dictionary when you can. It is a very, very important undertaking, as we all know!

love, Wolfgang

My dear Shirley,

October 16, 2013

It is that time again for AFS [American Folklore Society] that is taking place at Providence, Rhode Island, this time. I have one more class to teach, and then I am driving (about five hours) down. It is so wonderful to go by car rather than by plane. I have the trunk full of books to give away, among them also copies of our correspondence.

Obviously I am thinking of you, wishing that I could see you at the meeting. It was always so nice to have a meal with you, listen to your lecture, and spend time with you. I hope you are doing fine and that you have received volume 30 [2013] of my beloved *Proverbium*.

Things are going well here. I continue to teach full time, this semester also my large English lecture course on proverbs. And yes, the students know who that wonderful lady and great proverb scholar Shirley Arora is out there in distant California.

Barbara is also fine, but we too are getting older. Barbara is retired, but I am just not ready to follow her yet. My various projects are keeping me busy, among them a book on Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony [*All Men and Women Are Created Equal*]: *Elizabeth Cady Stanton's and Susan B. Anthony's Proverbial Rhetoric Promoting Women's Rights*. New York: Peter Lang, 2014]. And I still enjoy teaching, even though the modern students are somehow different than in former times. All very nice youngsters but I miss the enthusiasm and passion for study in them at times. But we all know about the "golden age", and we must be careful not to think that things were necessarily better decades ago. Different yes, but not necessarily better, I suppose.



Well, I better let you go. Class will start in twenty minutes on medieval German epics, and I better get my stuff together and tell them about heroes, love, honor, etc.

I hope you and your family are doing well. Best regards to you all, and you will be on my mind during the next few days, but not just then,

love, Wolfgang

My dear, dear Shirley,

March 10, 2014

Time continues to fly by, even when one has turned seventy. I am happy to report that I survived this special birthday, and I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your wonderful contribution of “‘Crossover’ Proverbs: Spanish to English” in the massive *Festschrift* that I received as an absolute surprise [“*Bis dat, qui cito dat*”. “*Gegengabe*” in *Paremiology, Folklore, Language, and Literature. Honoring Wolfgang Mieder on His Seventieth Birthday*. Eds. Christian Grandl and Kevin J. McKenna. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2015]. As you can imagine, I just love your paper since it picks up on something that we are both very interested in, but I also want you to know that it was a special joy to see your name at the beginning of the *Festschrift*. As I hope you know, I think of you so often, and finding your article in the volume, I know that you are doing well! That is a special present for me as well.

The volume has not yet appeared in print, but I received a printed manuscript version of it, and just imagine, Christian and Sabine Grandl as well as Elisabeth Piirainen traveled all the way from Germany to present me the eight-hundred-page volume with contributions by about seventy colleagues and friends from around the world! It was a true surprise, and I had no idea whatsoever that the volume had been planned for at least two years.

Friends here at the university had organized a surprise reception attended by many colleagues, friends, and neighbors. The university president and the dean both gave speeches, and I was overwhelmed by their positive and laudatory remarks. Then I spoke, and I hope that I found the right words in all of my excitement and surprise. I just hope that I really deserve all the praise, recognition, and attention. All that I have ever done is to be good to my students, deliver interesting lectures and semi-

nars, and do good scholarly work. Now that so many colleagues and friends have honored me with the wonderful *Festschrift*, I have the strength and joy to carry on with my work in the service of international paremiology for some more years.

Thank you again for your kind and good wishes and your contribution to my voluminous *Festschrift*. It means so very, very much to me that you are part of this celebratory volume that was the best birthday present in the world!

Unfortunately the annual WSFS [Western State Folklore Society] meeting will be at Logan, Utah, so I know that we will not be able to see each other. But I believe it will be at Berkeley next year, and maybe we will be able to connect then.

My Spanish colleagues still remember you and Harbans here at UVM [University of Vermont], and so does Barbara, of course. We all wish you the very best, Shirley, and I thank you again for taking the time to honor me with your presence in the book. All the best also to your two sons and their families,

love, Wolfgang

Dear Wolfgang,

August 17, 2014

I really do apologize for this very long silence. I've had a few difficulties, though none that I would call truly major, unless one might count being away from my computer for several weeks while recovering from a broken ankle. I was in a local convalescent home – a very nice place of its type – but I was quite immobilized, and of course unable to do any proverb work or send any emails. The ankle has healed very nicely, I'm glad to say, and I'm back home and able to get around quite well with the help of a walker (which I use partly because of the ankle but mostly because of a pre-existing balance problem that I've had for years). I don't travel any more, nor do I drive (or own) a car; but I'm very happy living in my little isolated spot in northern California among the redwoods. It's quiet and beautiful and full of all kinds of wildlife, from migrating whales to hummingbirds and bobcats. Also deer, and an occasional bear or mountain lion. ( And lots of raccoons; the young ones are cute but when they grow up they're an awful pest, raiding my orchard before the fruit is even ripe.)

I would have loved to attend your birthday celebration, but since that was impossible, Christian Grandl was kind enough to send me photographs of the event. When I was googling your name to get your email address (which for some reason I couldn't find on my computer), I saw one reference that said you were now retired – is that true, or did it refer only to your leaving the chairmanship of the department? Either way, I'll bet you're as busy as ever if not more so. I have just received my copy of *Proverbium* 31 [2014] plus the accompanying volume of [František] Čermák's studies [*Proverbs: Their Lexical and Semantic Features*. Burlington, Vermont: The University of Vermont, 2014], which I've barely had time to dip into but found very stimulating. I must admit that despite the many pleasures of living here, I do miss academic activities – lectures, meetings, interactions with scholars in many fields.

I've been trying to put together a sample of what I've been doing, to get your opinion on how it's being done, but it goes slowly. For one thing, I've been wondering if I've made a mistake by not limiting myself to “real” proverbs (as you did with your American proverbs), and including expressions that informants considered “dichos”, which as you know has a very broad meaning in Spanish; but eliminating all the “non-proverbs” at this point would take an enormous amount of time, even with the help of the computer, and would of course mean that a great deal of time has been wasted. I can sympathize with Spanish-speaking collectors who solve the problem by coming up with titles like Ismael Moya's *Refranero: Refranes, proverbios, adagios, frases proverbiales, modismos refranescos, giros y otras formas paremiológicas tradicionales en la República Argentina* (and he didn't even use the word *dichos*!)

I shall try to be a better correspondent in the future. My warm regards to Barbara, and to you a very, very fond and admiring, though very, very retroactive, “Happy Birthday”!

Love, Shirley

My dear Shirley,

August 23, 2014

You know how happy it makes me when I find a letter from you! I just returned from a short lecture trip to Finland and Estonia, and now I am trying to catch up with way over a hundred

e-mail messages. Many of them are mundane stuff, so it is wonderful to find your epistle among them.

There was, however, also a sad message. Our dear friend Linda Dégh passed away at the age of 96 a few days ago. She was basically well to the very end, and I saw her not even a year ago at a conference. She certainly was one of our truly outstanding folklorists, and we shall all miss her a lot.

No, I have not retired! These rumors float around from time to time, and it makes some sense, I suppose, to think that when an old person at seventy receives a *Festschrift* that that person has now retired. If my health continues to be good I hope to go on for another five years. That would truly be wonderful. The *Festschrift* should finally come out in print at the end of the year. I know that you will receive a copy from the publisher at that time.

I am glad you received the new *Proverbium* [31 (2014)]. Lots of good work going on, including your own. Don't make any changes on your massive collection, Shirley. Just keep going whenever you have the strength to do so. It continues to be my sincere hope that you will finish your *magnum opus* in due time.

Barbara has been retired for a couple of years and loves her new life. We have been married forty-five years today! How time has flown by!

I am glad that you continue to enjoy the wildlife in the woods, Shirley. You know that I love our land, and in the morning and evening we walk with our two Labradors – dogs really are our best friends!

Nice of you to promise that you will write more often. That is great, and I do look forward to hearing from you from time to time. A Finnish friend of mine has just published an article with the title “On the Proverbiality of Finnish Proverbs”, and he bases his article on your seminal study on “proverbiality”. So you see that your scholarship is still very significant, even thirty years later!

The university starts on Monday, so there is much to do. I have sixty students in my lecture course on proverbs! So you can imagine how happy I am with that enrollment.

Dear Shirley, take good care of yourself, keep healthy, wealthy, and wise, and give your sons and families my best regards. Barbara also sends her best wishes, of course,  
 love, Wolfgang

My dear Shirley, December 29, 2015

Just in time for Christmas I received the wonderful news that you have once again donated \$1,000 to *Proverbium* – how could I possibly have received a more welcome, needed, and appreciated gift!? It means so much to me that you continue to support my international paremiological efforts. Please do know that your help means the world to me, and I cannot possibly thank you enough. You are indeed a special friend!

I hope that you are doing well out there in California. Barbara and I think of you when we hear about the forest fires and other natural catastrophes. We here in little Vermont do not have such severe weather conditions, at least not very often. In fact, we have had no winter at all until yesterday. It finally snowed during last night and we have about 4 inches of snow. Our winter tourism is far off, and we hope that winter is now here in earnest.

We have had a good year with an exciting bicycle trip to Slovenia – an absolutely beautiful country! I also went to AFS [American Folklore Society] at Long Beach [California] and had hoped that you might just be there. WSFS [Western States Folklore Society] will meet at Berkeley in April, and perhaps you can come for that. I sure would love to see you again!

Barbara and I also traveled to Bucuresti in Romania, where I received an honorary doctorate for my work in international paremiology. It was a wonderful ceremony, and I was deeply touched by this special recognition. As you might recall, I received an honorary doctorate from the University of Athens last year. It must be my age that all of these unexpected honors are coming. I just hope that I really deserve such special awards.

Barbara is enjoying her retirement, but I am still not quite ready. At 71 I would like to go on for four more years to complete fifty years at the University of Vermont. I hope that I will be able to do this. I am still enjoying teaching and doing my scholarly work. Our two Labrador dogs and the land keep me in good physical shape.

I taught my class on “The Nature and Politics of Proverbs” again this fall, and your ears should have been ringing from time to time. It is always a pleasure to refer to your important work, and the students also were touched by the volume of our letters.

Barbara and I think of you often, Shirley, and together we wish you a healthy and happy New Year. Please give our best regards to the rest of your family, and thank you all once again for your generosity and kindness regarding *Proverbium*.

All the very best and many, many thanks,  
love , Wolfgang

Dear Wolfgang,

January 2, 2016

I can't tell you how delighted I was to receive your email. It does seem to me that we have been out of touch for way too long, though you are certainly not out of my thoughts. I received my copy of “*Bis dat, qui cito dat*” a while ago and have already read a good many of the contributions (English only; my German is far too rusty). It is a grand tribute to one whom we all honor and admire so much, and I'm glad I could be a small part of it. How I wish I could have been there for the presentation ceremony! Christian Grandl was kind enough to send me some pictures of the ceremony, which I shall treasure. Tell me, did he manage to keep the volume a secret all that time?

I loved hearing about all your travels, and the continuing international recognition of your work. I am no longer able to travel, unfortunately, otherwise I should be thrilled to see you in Berkeley. On the other hand, is there any possibility at all that you might make a brief trip up here to redwood-and-wine country? It's a beautiful area, especially here along the North Coast, and I have a small but comfortable little guest house where you could stay. It would be around a three or four hours' drive, but a scenic one. My place is not right on the coast, although I can see a bit of the ocean from my property; but there are many nearby places of interest to visit. We could even go whale-watching! Do consider it!

I am continuing to work on my proverbs, although I confess I do get discouraged sometimes. When I started out I was recording “dichos” from my informants, but as you know, that Spanish term is a broad one, covering everything from idioms

to proverbs, and I find myself wondering whether I should have limited myself to actual proverbs. I have thought of separating the proverbs from the “other expressions,” as is done in many Spanish collections, but it seemed to be such a time-consuming task that I gave it up after a brief trial. So I just keep plugging along. I work at it every day, and I enjoy it when I’m doing it, and it keeps my Spanish from deteriorating from lack of use.

I no longer have my little dog Chipper, and I miss him; but I do have a cat, an indoor cat, a long-haired calico, who has turned out to be more of a companion than I expected. She belonged to a friend of mine who could no longer keep her, and because she has been declawed (by a former owner, not my friend) she can’t be allowed outside here in the woods; it would be too dangerous for her. I had not thought of getting a cat because one of my greatest pleasures is feeding birds (quails, juncos, jays, etc. etc.), and I certainly wouldn’t want to attract them to be preyed upon. Anyway, the cat and I are getting along fine. The cat spends a lot of time watching the birds through the window, something she couldn’t do before because she lived in a city apartment and the windows just looked out at other buildings. And I have someone to talk to besides myself.

I hope we can stay in somewhat closer touch from now on, though with your busy schedule it may be difficult. Please give my warm regards to Barbara, and a VERY Happy New Year to you both!

Love, Shirley

My dear Shirley,

January 3, 2016

Thank you for your most welcome and detailed epistle! I am so glad to hear from you and to learn that you are doing well! And you are working on your *magnum opus*, something that excites and pleases me to no end, as you know!

And yes, we should be writing more often. Don’t worry, I can always find time to respond to your letters. You are such a dear friend, and Barbara and I think of you often.

We are sorry that you lost your dear dog Chipper. Our black Labrador Sophie also left us a few months ago. We now have a puppy black Lab named Emma, and she loves our six-year old yellow (almost white) Lab Jackson. Both dogs make us very happy.

Our cat died about a year ago, and since we are more dog people, we have decided to stick with just two dogs. We are glad that you have a cat to keep you company.

I would love to come North to visit you in April, but as you know, WSFS [Western States Folklore Society] always meets during the semester, and I can't cut that many classes.

Things are going well here. The *Festschrift* turned out to be a major and massive book, and yes, Christian was able to keep it a definite secret right up to the presentation here last year. I am so glad that you are in it, Shirley.

I enjoyed teaching my large proverb class again last semester, and I am now looking forward to a senior seminar with my German students. Teaching is still a joy for me, and I hope to be able to carry on four more years so that I can complete fifty years of my happy life at the University of Vermont.

Again, Shirley, thank you so much for your *Proverbium* support! Keep going on your project. Every day a bit, as you write. It will be an invaluable publication!

Here is wishing you and your family the very best. Don't worry, I have not forgotten Harbans, who was always so kind to me. It was so good to have you both here in Burlington quite some years ago.

Take good care, my dear friend,

Wolfgang and Barbara

My dear Shirley,

September 21, 2016

Thank you so very much for sending in your payment for vol. 33 (2016) of our beloved *Proverbium*. Can you believe that I have edited the yearbook for 33 years!?! While it has been a lot of work, it has also been a pleasure and honor to serve the international paremiological community.

I have noticed your new address, and our secretary Brian Minier and I have looked it up in the internet. Amazing what you can find! Now I even know how your new residence looks like. You are now back in the Los Angeles area, and I am certain that you made the right decision to move into this senior living community. I assume that you are also closer at least to one of your sons and family. I wish you all the best in your new dwelling, and I am glad that you are well taken care of now.



Speaking of *Proverbium*, I wonder at times how much longer we can bring it out in printed form. The expense is incredibly high, and the postage alone is over \$5000 a year. But even more troubling is the fact that libraries and unfortunately also individuals are cancelling their subscriptions for various reasons. I will go on for a few more years, but when I will eventually retire in five years – after fifty years at my beloved University of Vermont – *Proverbium* will doubtlessly move to an electronic publication, if in fact an editor can be found. Right now I need to raise over \$15000 a year to make *Proverbium* possible, and I doubt very much that we can find anybody else to make this kind of commitment. I do get \$2000 from the university and a \$1000 from the bookstore. We take in about \$5000 in subscriptions, and you know where the rest comes from. BUT, I am not complaining, Shirley, as you know. I am absolutely committed to *Proverbium*, and as I said, I am happy to carry on for a few more years. But in five years even Wolfgang will be 77 years old, and when I do retire, there is no way that I could go on with publishing *Proverbium*. Having said all of this, let me thank you once again for your wonderful support over the years. As you might have noticed, I do mention you in the preface of this newest volume [33 (2016)]. And no, Shirley, this is not a letter to ask you for money! You have done enough to keep *Proverbium* alive, and I shall forever be thankful to you and your family.

Everything is going well here. I am still full time and hope to carry on for five more years. I would be excited to make it to fifty years at UVM [University of Vermont]! This semester I am teaching my proverb course in English again. I do this every fall, and you can imagine how excited and thankful I am to do so. Dear Alan [Dundes] used to tell me that I should teach more in English, and I am so glad that I have been doing this course for about seven years now.

Barbara is also doing well. She has been retired for four years, but she is not pressuring me into retiring. So I can go on for a few more years which makes me perfectly happy.

Your ears should have been ringing last week when we covered Spanish proverbs in the United States. I took your big book to class and also our volume of correspondence. The students were very interested in your work, especially also your seminal

article on “proverbiality” – one of the most cited articles in the field. I read a couple of the letters to the students to show them what deep friendships mean among scholars. They were visibly touched by what we had to say.

Here is wishing you all the best, my dear Shirley. I think of you gladly and often, and I just wished that we lived a bit closer so that I could visit you. Now that you are back in the Los Angeles area, it might just be possible when the Western States Folklore Society meets in LA next time.

Take good care,

love, Wolfgang

Dear Shirley,

August 28, 2018

It has been a long time since we have heard from each other. Also, my *Proverbium* package that I had mailed to 5481 Torrance Blvd. #215 at Torrance, Ca., was returned. So now, as you can imagine, I am very concerned about you, my dear friend.

I hope that you are okay, and I look forward to hearing from you. Please let me know your correct address. Also, please do know that I think of you often.

Our new semester will start on Monday, and I am teaching my proverb class. So your ears should be ringing quite often.

All the best for now, and please write me so that I know that you are well,

love, Wolfgang

Dear Shirley,

December 19, 2019

What a *joy* to receive your [Christmas] card and to learn that you now live in Oregon.

Please know how often I think of you and how much my students like your publications on proverbs.

All is well here, but age is moving along – 75 by now, but still working full time. Much love,

Wolfgang & Barbara

Dear Shirley, dear Alan [Arora] and family, December 29, 2020

This morning on my way to the office I thought of you, Shirley, as I often do. Then when I came home around noon, there was your most welcome Christmas card waiting for me. When

I opened it, I found two beautiful pictures – one of you and one of Alan and his family. I also noticed that you signed the card. Thank you so much for thinking of me. Barbara and I enjoyed hearing from you so very much.

We are doing fine in the Vermont countryside with our two Labrador dogs. So we are quite safe in our isolation [during the pandemic]. I had to teach Online and will have to do it again in the spring semester. It is working out okay, and I guess you can teach an old dog new tricks.

After much thought and with a heavy heart I decided in September that I would retire at the end of May 2021. I will have taught fifty years at the University of Vermont, and at the age of 77 it is time to let go. It was a very difficult decision. I am attaching the letter that I wrote to my departmental colleagues to inform them of my decision.

I am allowed to keep my International Proverb Archives, and my large proverb library is also housed at the university after I donated about nine thousand books. So I will continue to be on campus two or three days a week. I certainly will continue my scholarship, as you know I would.

Thank you again for thinking of us. We wish you all the very best for the New Year. Take good care, and be safe,  
Wolfgang and Barbara

Wolfgang Mieder  
Department of German and Russian  
425 Waterman Building  
University of Vermont  
85 South Prospect Street  
Burlington, Vermont 05405  
USA  
wolfgang.mieder@uvm.edu

