PETER UNSETH

Introduction to Paremiology: A Comprehensive Guide to Proverb Studies. Ed. by Hrisztalina Hrisztova-Gotthardt and Melita Aleksa Varga, managing ed. Anna Borowska, associate ed. Darko Matovac, language ed. Aderemi Rajij-Oyelade. Warsaw & Berlin: DeGruyter Open, 2014. Pp. 368.
http://www.degruyter.com/viewbooktoc/product/449649

This is a book that many have wished for, some have dreamt of trying to write, but it is now available to all, published as open access on the Web. The authors (mostly from continental Europe) all have expertise in their fields – which is better than one person trying to write the whole book alone. Not surprisingly, the book is dedicated to Wolfgang Mieder.

All of the chapters in the book examine European proverbs (almost) exclusively, though Lauhakangas does refer to Kuusi's database which is based on proverbs from around the globe. This is both a strength and a weakness. It is a *strength* in that the authors are dealing with a similar (often shared) set of sayings and language behaviors. It is a *weakness* in that they overlook additional data from the rest of the broad proverbial world. One point where differences arise between European languages and some others is the breadth of the definition of "proverb". (A number of non-European language communities have different definitions and criteria for proverbs. For example, in Efik of Nigeria *ŋke* means "proverb", but the same word also includes "story, riddle, tongue-twister" (Finnegan 1970:426, fn. 2).) Concentrating on data from Europe allows for the writers to assume the same (or very similar) concept of proverb across all their data, even if it is not universal. The book's Eurocentric view was highlighted when one author wrote that anti-proverbs are "studied all around the world, major European languages being considered" (p. 283).

The first three chapters all touch on the matter of defining proverbs, but the first one is the most focused on this topic. The three complementary perspectives are helpful. Other than these,

there is little overlap between the chapters; each article can stand by itself as a resource on its subject.

1. Subject Area, Terminology Proverb Definitions, Proverbs Features. Neil R. Norrick

The first three chapters all touch on the challenge of defining a "proverb", but Norrick's addresses the topic most directly. As Archer Taylor warned us long ago, "The definition of a proverb is too difficult to repay the undertaking". But, of course, this has not stopped many from trying.

I am delighted that Norrick distinguishes "proverbs proper" from a variety of similar constructions, such as proverbial phrases, proverbial comparisons, wellerisms, and idioms (p. 8). There are times that these other types of constructions can be considered along with proverbs, but it is more often useful to distinguish them from true "proverbs". He introduces the concept of prototypicality of proverbs (p. 14, 22), but does not go on to develop it in any detail as a way to define proverbs.

I find the concept of prototypicality helpful in classifying sayings as proverbs. It is helpful to think of a series of concentric circles, as in a target. Some proverbs are at the center, very prototypical: "Don't judge a book by its cover." Other traditional sayings may be further from the center, less prototypical proverbs: "If it moves, shoot it." And some sayings are at the outer ring, far from being prototypical proverbs: "'I see,' said the blind carpenter as he picked up his hammer and saw."

Norrick provides a helpful and detailed comparison and analysis of many methods used to define or describe proverbs, showing how certain approaches have obtained results of varying usefulness. However, all of Norrick's analysis and his examples are based on English proverbs, but much of it would also apply to proverbs from other language communities. The chapter shows many ways that have been used in defining a proverb. They have shown a variety of degrees of usefulness. Norrick, probably wisely, does not attempt to form a definition that would satisfy all needs and all opinions.

2. Origin of Proverbs. Wolfgang Mieder

Mieder writes about a complex subject in a way that can be understood by undergraduate students. His chapter is like many of

his writings, major points supported by clear examples drawn from his voluminous knowledge of proverbs from many eras.

Mieder explains that proverbs are not created by "the folk" in a mysterious and murky process. Rather, each proverb is created by an individual, though others may then alter and popularize it. It is rarely possible to identify the actual originator of a proverb, even for proverbs that are traced to certain authors since those authors may well have quoted it from others. There are, of course, some proverbs that can actually be traced to an individual (Doyle, Mieder, and Shapiro 2012). Also, new proverbs are constantly created, while some old ones are lost.

He lists "four major sources of common European proverbs." The first is from earlier civilizations, especially Greek and Latin, particularly because they left written records. Much proverb lore from classical antiquity was spread across by Erasmus of Rotterdam in his monumental *Adagia*. His second major source of European proverbs is the Bible, both from vernacular translations and the Latin Vulgate translation. With the sad decline in awareness of the Bible, many no longer recognize that they are using proverbs that are derived form the Bible. The third major source of proverbs in European languages is "the rich treasure trove of medieval Latin proverbs." Since Latin was the language read by scholars from Portugal to Scandinavia to the Black Sea, these proverbs were readily circulated and translated into local languages. His fourth major source of proverbs in European language may not be as readily agreed on by some: proverbs from English. He gives several examples of proverbs from English that have been translated and adopted into other languages, though some will not know their origin. He shows that other languages also contribute to the pool of borrowings, the media allowing for the spread of proverbs. He makes it clear that despite these four major categories, each language has its own store of proverb treasures, made with their homegrown alliteration, meter, rhyme, images, etc.

Though scholar's interests vary, I found his final section to be fascinating and helpful. Mieder challenges the works of Honeck & Welge and Winick in their listing of defining characteristics of proverbs. Winick believes that "the proverbiality of an utterance is the text itself" regardless of whether the utterance become adopted and used by society (p. 41). Honeck & Welge studied proverbs from a cognitive point of view, regardless of whether the utteranc-

es becomes adopted and used by society. Mieder argues (to my mind, convincingly) that the repeated and widespread use of a saying is a defining feature of proverbs. Those who study proverbs from different academic points of view may loosen definitions within their smaller spheres, but I believe Mieder's position will be followed by the majority of *Proverbium* readers.

3. Categorization of Proverbs. Outi Lauhakangas

Lauhakangas examines the two best-known taxonomic systems devised to categorize proverbs, the one by G. L. Permjakov and the one by Matti Kuusi (her father). But before she compares them, she writes of proverb collections. She notes that for both scholars, "the starting point has been a real proverb corpus, collections and archives of proverb texts" (p. 62). As a writer on proverb collection methods, I chuckle when some scholars belittle proverb collections for not having contexts, while so many scholars find many ways to profit from collections.

Organizing collections of proverbs has always been a challenge: alphabetical order, alphabetizing by key word, or by themes. There is subjectivity involved, especially if the analyst does not know well the culture from where the proverbs were collected.

She compares the two systems, first examining the work of Permjakov. "His analysis is a description of the rules of building clichéized texts and considers clichés originating as oral speech… Permyakov sees that features of proverbs centre around a limited number of invariant opposition pairs of the type *one's own—another's, near—faraway, good—evil*, etc. ... The problem in his approach is his attempt to make differences between proverb types according to their negative, positive, and mixed forms" (p. 57) [italics in original]. As Chlosta and Grzybek tried to apply his system to German proverbs, they found his system difficult to apply. "The difficulties are not only due to the complexity of Permyakov's system, but because it seems to be more exact than our everyday usage of proverbs" (p. 59).

In describing Kuusi's International Type System of proverbs, Lauhakangas is able to describe it authoritatively since she helped her father with it, classifying and entering proverb data. Instead of following the work of others who studied the evolution of proverbs among geographical neighbors, Kuusi noted similarities be-

tween proverbs from Africa and Finland. His system for classifying proverbs began with 13 categories, each of which was divided into lower categories, and these themselves into smaller categories. "For example, in the subgrouop C1d you will find a global proverb type C1d 19 *An old ox plows makes a straight furrow*. Equivalent proverbs will be found… a Japanese synonymous proverb *An old horse doesn't forget his path*" (p. 61,62).

In her comparison of how some proverbs are classified in the two systems, there is not enough explanation for most readers (including me) to adequately understand the significant differences, strengths, or weaknesses of either system. Today, neither system is being widely applied to additional collections of proverbs, but since Kuusi's system is better described in English and is on the Web, it is more used, more useful, and more likely to be applied by scholars in the future (at least in the West). Though neither system is being used as much as its creator had hoped, their mere existence is important as proverb scholars, present and future, think about ways to classify proverbs. In the next chapter, Grzybek also provides a brief comparison of the proverb classification systems of Permjakov and Kuusi.

4. Semiotic and Semantic Aspects of the Proverb. Peter Grzybek

Grzybek's contribution is the longest chapter in the book, and the most intellectually rigorous. His approach requires a significant amount of theoretical framework, more than some readers will be willing to study. But he offers significant proposals and insights for those who are familiar (or willing to read his theoretical summaries and become familiar) with pragmatics, semiotics, model-theoretic notation, and other formal approaches to meaning. To illustrate the difference between his approach and most of the others in this book, he refers to the writings of Charles Peirce more often than Wolfgang Mieder. Depending on the readers' interests, they may think this is the most helpful chapter in the book, or the least helpful. But if readers will read it carefully, all will learn and gain something new.

Grzybek points out that proverbs have generally been an object of research for those in such fields as folklore, linguistics, and sociolinguistics. But taking a different approach, Grzybek vigorously applies formal theoretical tools for the analysis of meaning to the study of proverbs and their meanings. Most proverb schol-

ars are not familiar with logical formulation to represent a proverbial phrase or saying: "$\exists_x(x=a)(P_x \supset Q_x)$ or $\exists_x(P_x \supset Q_x)$" as distinguished from "$\forall_x(P_x \supset Q_x)$" to represent a proverb (p. 96). Nor are we used to using a notational system such as *A : B : : C : D* to represent the structure of a proverb, comparing this to *A : B : : p : q : : C : D* (p. 98, 99). Grzybek introduces and explains each new concept in its relation to proverb study. But those who want to understand Grzybek enough to apply his ideas on their own will want to read the appropriate literature that he cites, unless they already grasp the concepts he uses.

It is disappointing that after all of the precise discussion about how to analyze the meaning of a proverb, the Grzybek did not give any examples analyzing a proverb in use, not even a hypothetical example. I agree with his conclusion, "It should have become clear that theoretical as well as empirical works are necessary to provide a sufficiently broad picture."

5. Structural aspects of proverbs. Marcas Mac Coinnigh

Mac Coinnigh reviews proverb structures, systematizing much that is commonly assumed in proverb studies but is not usually so carefully explained in grammatical detail. For example, he speaks of "asyndetic parallelism", carefully explaining that in asyndetic parallelism there are no conjunctions to link the two parallel elements. Mac Coinnigh includes many grammatical structures for proverbs, but does not include the adverbial types with such words as "always", "never". Nor does he include the common quantifier adjectives: "all", "no", "every", "each", "many", "few", "none", "nothing". Outside of Europe, we find other kinds of proverb structures, also, such as dialogue proverbs, e.g. from Yoruba, "They say, 'Lame man, the load on your head is sitting crookedly.' He replies, 'It is not the load, but the legs.'"

Mac Coinnigh mentions sound-based markers that can indicate that a saying is carefully crafted as a proverb, but mentions only rhyme and alliteration. These are common, but so is meter, especially in forming two parallel lines of equal syllables. Ironically, Jesenšek's chapter on stylistic aspects of proverbs includes more examples showing sound-based art in the structure of proverbs, and also more labels for syntactic figures (p. 138,139). Though there are some gaps here, I will assign this chapter to my students as they study proverb structures.

6. Pragmatic and stylistic aspects of proverbs. Vida Jesenšek

Jesenšek makes three contributions, all related. First, readers get a brief introduction to stylistics, learning of the distinction between "stylistic-pragmatic" effects and "functional pragmatic" perspectives. Second, for those who may still need persuasion, Jesenšek provides evidence and repeated reminders that the meaning of a proverb needs to be studied in the context of its use. Third, the chapter provides a set of categories for stylistic and pragmatic aspects of proverb use.

She reminds readers that "an analysis and interpretation of the stylistic-pragmatic functionality of proverbs is possible only in a context" (p. 137). The meaning of the *use* of a proverb is understood in context. She strongly made her point that proverbs cannot be classified in stylistic terms without knowing the context in which one is used, e.g. one German proverb (in isolation) was classified in different ways by three different sources (p. 142).

One of the applications of her approach is showing the importance and contrast of function of proverbs at the beginnings and endings of texts. At the beginnings of texts, proverbs can introduce a topic and situational frame, but at the ends they summarize and conclude. As the author wished, the chapter provides a good basis for further research into proverb use and serves as a warning for those who work too vigorously to describe and categorize the meaning of a proverb outside of a context in which it is used.

7. Cognitive Aspects of Proverbs. Anna Lewandowska and Gerd Antos, in cooperation with Dana Gläßer

This chapter's perspective for studying proverbs is very different from the approach taken by those who think more like folklorists and stress context. It is based on the work of Lakoff & Johnson and their Conceptual Metaphor Theory as first introduced in their *Metaphors We Live By* (1992). Their theory holds that "Our ordinary conceptual system… is fundamentally metaphorical in nature… the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor." Applying this approach to proverbs, instead of more traditional folklore or literary approaches asks very different questions. Instead of looking at grammatical structure, they look at the metaphors in the structure.

They think about the differences between literal and metaphorical proverbs. They wrestle with the matter of language and cognition.

They list four proverbs (from languages outside of Europe!) that are all classified under one type by Permjakov. But by cognitivist methods, they claim that these four are better classified into "two opposing PCs [Proverb Concepts]" (p. 172).

Their cognitive view leads them to downplay the importance of sound-based artistry which is seen as important by some; rather, they believe "proverbs are perceived as proverbs independently of their" sound based artistry (p. 169).

8. Empirical Research and Paremiological Minimum. Peter Ďurčo

Ďurčo seems to have more publications than others in actually assessing a paremiological minimum (PM), much of it studying Slovak proverb familiarity. Proverb scholars in different countries have used different methods to determine which proverbs are in the PM. There is no single method that scholars agree on. A key point is that nobody is exactly sure how to precisely define the PM. All agree that it is the proverbs that adults in the language community will know. But how should this be precisely defined? The proverbs known by 90% of the adults over the age of 25? The proverbs recognized by 80% of the adults over 20? The 100 proverbs that are most commonly known by adults over age 30?

Ďurčo's is the most detailed discussion I have found of methodology of measuring the PM, or ranking proverb familiarity. He covers different kinds of testing methods (interview, questionnaire, Web, corpus) and different types of tests (listing as many as a person knows, responding to a list by saying whether one knows the proverb, completing a proverb when given only part of it, etc. p. 188,189).

Rather than spending much time arguing about a point on which many will not agree, I think it is more useful (and easier) to speak of ranking the familiarity of the proverbs in a speech community. In this way, the researcher does not have to claim that they have discovered the paremiological minimum, but only say that they have shown the ranking of the most commonly known proverbs in a language community. A researcher may go so far as to say that they have identified the 100 most commonly used proverbs in a corpus, but these may not compose the PM. It is still

very useful to think of the PM as we study proverbs; it is still a useful concept even if it is not precisely defined.

Those interested in studying the PM or doing Web-based proverb research should consider the innovative method used by Zellem (2014) to collect Pashto proverbs. He launched the collection of Pashto proverbs on the Web. Counting the number of people who submitted a proverb, then noting how many times each proverb was tweeted and retweeted, he was able to assess the relative popularity of Pashto proverbs. (See the review of this in the 2015 *Proverbium* by Kuhlberg.)

9. Proverbs from a Corpus Linguistic Point of View. Kathrin Steyer

The Web contains a huge amount of data relevant to the form and use of proverbs. Previous authors have explained ways to search for and study proverbs on the Web, but as newer software and systems are created, there will always be a need for newer, up-to-date studies on this subject. Some of the chapters in this book touch on this, each with its own focus.

Steyer's specialty is searching through large language corpora, her specialty being the German corpus, Deutsches Referenzkorpus (DeReKo) at Mannheim. She explains the results of different ways to search for proverbs, such as keywords in context or seeking key words with a specified minimum number of words in between. She demonstrates how the application of her techniques proved that an old German proverb *Alte Ochsen machen gerade Furchen* ("Old oxen make straight furrows") is no longer in use. When she did not recognize what her children claimed was a new proverb, *Das Leben ist kein Ponyhof* ("Life is not a pony farm"), she also applied these tools and confirmed her children's report of a new proverb becoming established in usage.

Steyer gave some good clues on how to search the Web for proverb use, so I found myself testing them as I read. However, her article does not give detailed instructions on how to search a specific corpus for proverbs since some corpora have different ways to search the data. The searches she described found many examples of the use of partial proverbs or deliberately restructured examples of proverbs, anti-proverbs. However, I was surprised to find no explicit mention of "anti-proverbs" or how searches should be done to include or exclude them. Clearly Steyer has

done this sort of search, but she did not specifically describe the applications to restructured proverbs.

10. Paremiography: Proverb Collections. Tamás Kispál

All who have used a wide variety of proverb collections know that many of them are quite different in arrangement, function, and breadth. Kispál has given us some clear and useful categories to use in analyzing proverb collections. For example, some collections make "no distinction between 'proverb, proverbial phrases and proverbial similes,'" but others are collections of "*pure* proverbs" (emphasis in original) (p. 230).

Kispál emphasizes the importance of the intended usage of proverb collections, electronic or paper. Some contain historical forms, including multiple variants. Other collections organize proverbs according to subjects/themes, such as "economy" and "diligence". Proverb collections that are prepared in more than one language are useful for those comparing proverbs across languages, which he classifies as "scientific", "popular scientific", and "for the teaching of foreign languages" (p. 231).

The arrangement of proverbs is classified into three categories: by keywords, alphabetically, and by theme. He recommends that collections that are arranged alphabetically should also include an index of keywords. Kispál goes on to discuss the content of each proverb entry: some collections simply list the proverbs, others include explanations and equivalent proverbs in another language, origin, usage of the proverbs, frequency, and examples of the proverbs in context.

The chapter closes with a discussion of electronic proverb collections, disks or Web. These collections may be digitized versions of old proverb collections (such as a collection of German proverbs from 1867-1880) or new collections. With electronic collections, searching is more flexible, allowing the study of more patterns and forms. As the Web develops and software packages grow more powerful, such topics will become more and more important.

11. Contrastive Study of Proverbs. Roumyana Petrova

Petrova examines how large numbers of proverbs around the world are often similar in meaning (and in form), but also many proverbs are different. She distinguishes between "comparative" and "contrastive" approaches to studying proverb collections. She

realizes that "contrastive paremiology" is not a familiar term or field of study for many, particularly outside of Eastern Europe, admitting that it is a "relatively recent branch of proverb study" (p. 247). She sees the *Matti Kuusi International Type System of Proverbs* as a powerful tool for this approach.

A major part of the Contrastive approach is comparing the cultural values expressed by the proverbs of a language community. The validity of this approach has been debated for years (and will likely to continue to be debated), but Petrova gives the general form of a method that can be applied to a corpus of proverbs to produce a list of values found in a corpus of proverbs. This chapter is meant to introduce a number of concepts that are not (yet) widely known by proverb scholars. It informs all readers, and will likely ignite the attention of some. It is a welcome addition to the global study of proverbs, presenting an approach that is still developing.

12. Proverbs in Literature. Charles Clay Doyle

Doyle says on his first page that proverbs "belong to the province of *oral* tradition" (emphasis in original), but he goes on to show how they have been used in a wide variety of *written* literature. His examples range from classical antiquity to the writings of Shel Silverstein (1974).

The body of the article is the use of proverbs in each of four classes of literature: poetry, prose fiction, plays, "other kinds of literature". In the last category, he includes genres as diverse as essays, movie scripts, political speeches, newspaper advice columns. For each of the four general classes of literature, Doyle lists some prominent examples of proverb use, some important paremiological literature, then some authors whose work in that class of literature has been neglected by proverb scholars. He reminds readers, "The desideratum of studying proverbs in literature, then, is not merely to identify the *occurrence* of proverbs in poems, plays, stories, or novels (however useful that activity can be) but rather to examine the *artistry* of proverb use in literary contexts" (emphasis in original) (p. 267).

13. Proverbs in Mass Media. Anna Konstantinova

Konstantinova's article has many insights, but she spent too much space (over two pages) simply documenting that proverbs are used in mass media, a point that many readers know to be true.

Sadly, the organization of the article is not always clear. Proverbs as song titles are covered twice (p. 287), other points are not clearly differentiated from each other (nonce proverbs *vs*. anti-proverbs, p. 282).

Konstantinova compares the use of traditional proverbs vs. modified proverbs in the media. She states that the use of modified proverbs is "predominant" over traditional proverbs (p. 281). I assume she is right, but I would like to see evidence to support this claim. Konstantinova recognizes a difference between proverbs used "on the structural level of media texts" and "on the semantic level". The first category is about the use of proverbs that frame a text, such as in a title. The second category is about the use of proverbs to support a topic or theme. This is a useful distinction, one that should be applied to studying proverbs in all forms of literature.

14. Proverbs and Foreign Language Teaching. Sabine Fiedler

Fielder addresses teaching and learning proverbs in foreign language classes, pointing out the need, and also giving suggestions for helpful steps, to teach and measure proverb learning. It is useful to note that she does not think of proverbs as an isolated part of language, but rather as a subset of phraseology, an area where language teachers are spending increased attention. The field of *phraseodidactics* (the teaching of fixed phrases), and the lesser-studied field of *Paremiodidactics* (the teaching of proverbs), is of interest to more scholars in Europe than in North America, but North Americans can benefit from this approach to language teaching/learning. Fiedler, coming from Europe, has a much higher expectation of what language learners will achieve than the low expectations of too many in American universities.

She believes that teaching proverbs in language classes is useful, presenting such evidence as the opinions of published scholars, the motivational potential for students, their usefulness in understanding a culture, increased fluency and understanding, etc. Most readers of *Proverbium* will happily agree that learning the proverbs of a language is important.

She spends several pages on the matter of deciding which proverbs to teach. This leads to a discussion of the PM, a topic that all agree is important, but few agree on how to determine its content. (She includes her list of 100 English proverbs that should be

taught.) One of her guidelines in choosing which English proverbs to include in her teaching list is whether the proverbs are frequently used in modified ways and as anti-proverbs. When teaching students to be able to function in another language and culture, this is important.

Not surprisingly, in testing she finds that proverbs are better understood in a context than proverbs in isolation on a test. I do not join her in concern that students who learn proverbs in another language well may identify too strongly with the second language and culture. The purpose of language teaching is to give students the skills to learn languages well, not to withhold key elements. They will make their own choices about what to do with their acquired skills. Her five points at the end give clear applications for language teaching/learning of proverbs.

15. Anti-Proverbs. Anna T. Litovkina

Litovkina's chapter on anti-proverbs is a very good, comprehensive introduction to anti-proverbs. It includes a definition of anti-proverbs, a history of the study of anti-proverbs, lists of collections of anti-proverbs in some European languages (German, Hungarian, Russian, French, English), lists of techniques used in forming anti-proverbs, topics that are often touched on by anti-proverbs, and topics for further research. She believes that anti-proverbs are used in every sphere of life and that collecting anti-proverbs should also be part of paremiography, and I heartily concur.

In this excellent chapter I find a mysterious omission, two volumes of Russian anti-proverbs collected by Andrey Reznik, published as supplement volumes to *Proverbium* in 2009 and 2012.

Glossary and index

The glossary contains 95 entries defining some specialized terms used in the book. In light of the disagreements about defining "proverb", cited in the first three chapters, it is not surprising that the glossary does not have an entry "Proverb". I found the definition for "Cliché" difficult. At least in North American English, the common definition is "a trite or overused expression". The glossary aims at a more technical definition, one more in keeping with the usage of the word in the translated title of Permjakov's book, *From Proverb to Folk-Tale: Notes on the Gen-*

eral Theory of Cliché. Even knowing that, I found the definition difficult.

The definition of "Counter-proverb" is not clearly distinguished from that of "Anti-proverb". I prefer to follow Doyle's distinction (2012:33,34) that a *counter proverb* has a meaning that contradicts another, e.g. "Look before you leap" vs. "He who hesitates is lost." Such proverbs are not based on modification of form, as is done in contradictory *anti-proverbs*, such as "Life is a bowl of cherries" vs. "Life is not a bowl of cherries."

Summary

All of the chapters will be helpful to scholars and graduate students. Some chapters, because of their topic or their depth of investigation, are beyond the reach of many undergraduate students, though some are accessible such as 2, 5, 10, 12. This book will become a standard resource for all who study proverbs from any backgrounds. We owe a debt to the editors and authors. So will scholars of the future.

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Peter Unseth
Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics & SIL Intl.
7500 W. Camp Wisdom Rd.
Dallas, Texas 75236
USA