

# PROVERBIUM

Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship



# 30:2013

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TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
PREFACE	vii
ARTICLES	
Peter-Jazzy Ezeh In Capsule: Saws and Sex Mores Among the Igbo of Nigeria .....	1
Heather A. Haas If It Walks Like a Proverb and Talks Like a Question: Proverbial and Other Formulaic Interrogatives .....	19
Lee Hartman “Que sera sera”: The English Roots of a Pseudo-Spanish Proverb .....	51
Marija A. Kul’kova Die Realisierungsformen des kommunikativ- pragmatischen Frames „Erlaubnis“ in den russischen und deutschen Bauernregeln .....	105
Marcas Mac Coinnigh “The Heart of Irish-Language Proverbs”: A Linguo- Stylistic Analysis of Explicit Metaphor.....	113
Kevin J. McKenna The Tolstoy “Connection”: Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s <i>In the First Circle</i> Through the Prism of Peasant Proverbs in <i>War and Peace</i> and <i>Anna Karenina</i> .....	151
Wolfgang Mieder “My Tongue – is of the People”: The Proverbial Language of Friedrich Nietzsche’s <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustrta</i> .....	171

Dietmar Peil	
Das Sprichwort im Schulactus des Christian Gryphius .....	227
Roumyana Petrova	
“‘If There Were No Clouds, We Shouldn’t Enjoy the Sun’”: The Crosscultural View and Multifaceted Meaning of a Proverb .....	255
Per K. Sørensen and Franz Xaver Erhard	
An Inquiry into the Nature of Tibetan Proverbs.....	281
Nereus Yerima Tadi	
The Changing Face of Orature in Postcolonial Nigeria: Proverbs in Eddie Iroh’s <i>Without a Silver Spoon</i> and <i>Banana Leaves</i> .....	311
Brienne Toomey	
Old Wisdom Re-Imagined: Proverbial Cartoons for University Students .....	333
Vilmos Voigt	
Précis of Hungarian Paremiography and Paremiology .....	347
Stephen D. Winick	
Proverb is as Proverb Does: <i>Forrest Gump</i> , the Catchphrase, and the Proverb .....	377
REVIEWS	
Pedro Benavente Jareño and Xesús Ferro Ruibal.	
<i>O libro da vaca. Monografía etnolingüística do     gando vacún.</i> (Santiago de Compostela 2010) – (Xosé Alfanso Álvarez Pérez) .....	429

- Johann Ludwig Burckhardt. *Arabische Sprüchwörter  
oder die Sitten und Gebräuche der neueren Aegyptier  
erklärt aus den zu Kairo umlaufenden Sprüchwörtern.*  
(Weimar 1834) Reprint ed. by Wolfgang Mieder.  
(Hildesheim: 2012) – (Hilda Matta) .....438
- Anita Naciscione. *Stylistic Use of Phraseological  
Units in Discourse.* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia  
2010) – (Tatiana Fedulenkova) .....447
- Aderemi Raji-Oyelade. *Playful Blasphemies.  
Postproverbials as Archetypes of Modernity in  
Yorùbá Culture.* (Trier 2012) –  
(Hrisztalina Hrisztova-Gotthardt) .....451
- Gertrud Schneider-Blum, ed. *Máakuti t’awá  
shuultáa: Proverbs Finish the Problems: Sayings  
of the Alaaba (Ethiopia).* (Köln 2009) –  
(Peter Unseth) .....459
- Kathrin Steyer, ed. *Sprichwörter multilingual.  
Theoretische, empirische und angewandte  
Aspekte der modernen Parömiologie.* (Tübingen  
2012) – (Hrisztalina Hrisztova-Gotthardt) .....462

## BIBLIOGRAPHIES

- Wolfgang Mieder  
International Bibliography of New and  
Reprinted Proverb Collections .....471
- Wolfgang Mieder  
International Proverb Scholarship:  
An Updated Bibliography .....481





WOLFGANG MIEDER

PREFACE

Thirty years ago the first volume of *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship* appeared in the United States, and it has been my honor and pleasure to act as the editor ever since. Galit Hasan-Rokem of the Hebrew University has been the Associate Editor right from the start in 1984, with Janet Sobieski and Hope Greenberg serving as the Managing Editor and Production Editor respectively for more than two decades. Recently Brian Minier has taken over the role of Managing Editor following Janet's retirement. And, of course, the good friends of Queen City Printers at Burlington, Vermont, have printed our handsome volumes since 1988. All of this shows an impressive continuity in the service of international paremiology and paremiography, and I wish to express my gratitude to these good friends for their long and dedicated service. I also owe much gratitude to the Deans of the College of Arts and Sciences as well as the Managers of the Bookstore at the University of Vermont for their financial support. We all work together so very well, and the proverb "Many hands make light work" might well describe our small group of engaged workers.

"Tempus fugit", as we all know, especially "when you're having fun" as a popular addition to this classical proverb states. In fact, the expanded American variant "Time flies if you are having fun" has become a proverb in its own right, with its earliest reference stemming from 1939, as can be seen from *The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs* (2012) edited by Charles Clay Doyle, Wolfgang Mieder, and Fred R. Shapiro. Naturally it has been a lot of work over these thirty years, and I sometimes feel as if a constant Damocles sword hangs over my head as I am editing one volume after another, getting it to the publisher, and then mailing it to libraries and scholars throughout the world. But I count my lucky stars that *Proverbium* is a yearbook and not a journal that appears four times

PROVERBIUM 30 (2013)

a year. So the work has been scholarly fun, and I will forever be thankful that my fellow paremiologists have entrusted me with the publication of *Proverbium*. It is my hope to carry on for a few more years. With such good helpers at my side, I am confident that we can keep the proverbial ship afloat.

It is, of course, important that scholars, students, and libraries maintain their subscriptions. We have had a few cancellations, but in general we are keeping our subscribers. This is not to say that it would not be appreciated if some new subscriptions could be registered. If every subscriber would attempt to bring a new person or library on board, that would make a giant difference. Let's all give it a try by telling ourselves proverbially "Yes We Can!"

As the present volume shows, we have submissions from scholars from all continents. I strongly believe in making *Proverbium* as international and polyglot as possible, and I think this commitment has born excellent fruit. Scholars from many countries and cultures have published their best research in our yearbook, and while its pages are filled with articles by some of the most renowned paremiologists in the world, we have also given young scholars and even students opportunities to publish their scholarly work. In fact, I personally take great delight in including at least one student paper in each volume. This time it is a short illustrated paper by my undergraduate student Brienne Toomey, who was a student in my large lecture course on "Big Fish Eat Little Fish': The Nature and Politics of Proverbs" during the fall semester of 2011. As a young artist, she drew humorous or satirical cartoons based on proverbs for our weekly student paper. She is presenting eleven of them here with explanatory comments added to them. Words can hardly express my joy in having her explicated cartoons in this year's volume. After all, we older proverb scholars must make sure that the younger generation of proverb enthusiasts will carry on our work in the future and take it to new heights.

So let us all wish *Proverbium* a happy thirtieth birthday. *Ad multos annos*, dear friend, and may you continue to prosper and serve proverb scholars everywhere to the best of your ability.

Wolfgang Mieder

PETER-JAZZY EZEH

IN CAPSULE: SAWS AND SEX MORES AMONG THE  
IGBO OF NIGERIA

**Abstract:** The study is a rare attempt to study proverbs and related forms as repositories of the traditional worldview of the Okposi, an Igbo of Nigeria's glottocultural group, on sex and sex-related matters. This effort has both academic and practical relevance. This is an under-explored area which should add to how much paremiologists know at present in this interesting form in the human speech art. At a practical level, understanding autochthonous sexual ideology of a group has important implications for reproductive health and appreciation of human sexuality in general. Igbo language is spoken indigenously by up to 40 million people. The lexicons of its 300 odd dialects can differ markedly in many respects. In an unhurried participant observation for the purpose of this study spanning five years (2005 to 2010) I collected 53 naturally situated utterances; 39 refer to sex and 14 were used for comparative purposes. It seems advisable to focus on proverbs and allied forms in this essay because of the audience. I am a native speaker of the dialect and a career anthropologist. I transcribe each utterance as collected before giving its English equivalent.

**Keywords:** African, African American, *dozens*, field research, folk speech, idiom, Igbo, morality, *ncha*, Nigeria, participant observation, proverb, ritual insult, sexual ideology, value system, women.

**Introduction**

Onyejekwe (2001) has studied proverbs that deal with gender relations among the Igbo but that study lacks the focus of my present effort. Another related study, insofar as it is about proverbs of the Igbo and gender relations is Oha (1998). But that study is cast in the feminist theoretical mould and has such wide macrosociological concerns that may allow for a close scrutiny of sexual relations as a free-standing social process. There are more closely related studies on this subject in another Nigerian group, namely the Yoruba, but it is impractical to conflate these on the Igbo case since both societies have their different cultures (Owomoyela, 1972; Ojoade, 1983). None of these studies nor any other one in

Nigeria has studied the formulaic category, *ncha*, which my present investigation includes. This category curiously seems to be related to a form the Americans call *dozens*. Burns (2006: 346) has described the American variety as “a game of ritual insult”, a description which with a small modification can fit the Igbo case just as well.

Idioms that make contain sex-related words in their structure or have words that in their ordinary meanings do not refer to sex but do so in their connotations are scarce in the dialect. I was only able to collect four during the period of the research.

I suggest that it is important to study the Igbo fixed speech forms relating to sex because of what language can reveal about norms of a society and the important position of sex in social life (Ukaegbu, 2006). Sex whether in small-scale societies or the contemporary large plural societies determines what humans do in practically all other social domains. Certainly without proper knowledge of how members of a group negotiate their sexual life it will be impossible to understand macro issues concerning their demography, and without such understanding it will be difficult to make policies that will be effective. It is for this reason that this study has a practical value besides its obvious academic relevance of adding to knowledge of this form of human speech form.

### ***Methodology***

The observation method that was used for this study was largely unobtrusive. When I became interested in this topic six years ago in 2005 I did two things. First I began taking systematic interest in speech acts that are likely to yield the type of utterances that were relevant to the topic. In an unhurried participant observation for the purpose spanning five years (2005 to 2010) I collected 53 naturally situated utterances; 39 referred to sex and 14 were used for comparative purposes. I am a native speaker of the dialect. I did not influence the use of such utterances, in the way that an interviewer would do. The idea was to allow such utterance where they were fitting to the speech acts to occur in the ordinary course of events; i.e. to be performed as the culture-bearer would normally do it in workaday life. Secondly I began recollecting and recording expressions that I had heard in the discourse community that were relevant to the subject I was investigating. Expressions

in this latter category were mainly of paremiological nature and the ones that have been listed as *ncha* in this report.

For the expressions that I encountered newly, I will record them as soon as practicable when the recall ability was highest. But I would do so discreetly without giving the clue that I was using the notes for a special purpose.

It emerged as I continued that four forms in the language were involved.

- Plain
- Proverbs
- Idioms, and
- *Ncha*.

It is helpful to explain each of these forms for ease of understanding of this report. I regard as **plain** any expression which while forming part of the repertoire of normal speech performance in the community is not used in a figurative sense. In other words, a form that carries its denotative meaning ordinarily.

**Proverb** has been glossed as a ‘concise statement, in general use, expressing a shrewd perception about everyday life or a universally recognized truth’ (Microsoft Encarta, 2008). Rey-Deborve (1975: 179) has described it as a coded or fixed sentence whose meaning cannot be determined by understanding the individual words that make it up. Paremiologists have noted its value as fossilised ideas of a society running into a distant past. This is true of all societies of whatever technological level. Wolkomir (1993: 270, 272) remarks regarding the American case, ‘My interest in proverbs centres on how we are ruled by traditional attitudes ... Proverbs are part of the country’s social glue.’ Anthropologists have long recognized that most African cultures that are nonliterate use proverbs as an economical way to store social knowledge (Beals & Hoijer, 1965: 670). **Idiom** is used here in the sense of a phrase or group of words that are not to be understood by understanding the individual words that constitute them.

Plain speech, proverb and idiom occur in most languages and in the other dialects of Igbo. I am not aware that other languages have *ncha*. The entries in each category are selected because they are recognized in Okposi’s lexicon. Put differently, nonce words, idiolectal coinages, or any usages that are peculiar to the individual are excluded.

It is advisable to begin with *ncha*. This is because of its peculiarity. In its pure form I do not know of its parallel in English or any other language that an American or European reader is familiar with, except insofar as there are now suggestions that the African-American insolent exchange, dozens, originated from it (Burns, 2006). Proverbs and idioms are figurative usages. Plain forms anticipate literal interpretations. However, while *ncha* is not a figurative usage as such, it is not an ordinary plain form. It is employed as either a word game or an invective. Yet some aspects of it are sheer fantasy embodying referents that are not possible in real life but nevertheless reflecting the worldview of the discourse community. Its usage is also age-grading, being ordinarily restricted to teenagers. *Ncha* is remarkable for its absence in nearly all other discourse communities. The context of the usage of *ncha* is also noteworthy for the purposes of this study. *Ncha* occurs only in the language game of youngsters. Game is used here more or less in the sense it carries in the sociological term, game theory. Youngsters employing *ncha* may be using it aggressively or playfully. The notable thing for the present purpose is that this form is used at a socio-psychologically important stage of the culture-bearer's life. I will compare it below with the form, dozens, that has been reported among African-American adolescents.

### ***Ncha***

*Ncha* untranslatable for the obvious reason that it is unattested in any other discourse community. Usually authors of *ncha* are unknown. *Ncha* is also known as *inu*, depending on the dialect and appears to have once been widespread. Indeed among the Okposi the preferred term is *inu*, making it polysemous with the term for proverb. But it has to be underlined that whereas as a rule proverbs appear in adult discourse, *ncha* is pre-adult. In a sense *ncha* can be regarded as the youngsters' foil for the adults' proverb. Evidence that *ncha* was once widespread among the Igbo is the fact that in some communities that no longer use it there is still the metaphorical exclamation, '*I kwuo ncha!*' ('You have uttered an *ncha!*') in reaction to someone whose speech is considered cheeky or brash.

*Ncha* in its literal form has been discontinued in most of the 300 odd communities that make up the Igbo culture area. It was popular among us youth in my own community, Okposi, as re-

cently as 1960s. No one performs it there anymore but I was pleasantly surprised recently to come upon a group of boys using it in a real-life roughhouse in another community not too far from my own. An *ncha* consists of two lines of statements. Both lines must be linked by a rhythm, which is truly *ncha*'s main claim to art. Performers cannot improvise, a major difference, as I will show, between it and the African-American dozens. Jemie, also an Igbo (but of a different dialect group) who has studied dozens, is impressed with the ability of its performers at improvisation. Indeed, he records that the form influenced some of the poems of Langston Hughes in whose works he is a specialist (Jemie, 1976: 31, 83-84; Burns, 2006: 348, 349).

In *ncha* the combinable lines are fixed, and can only be learned. It is amazing how antagonism is imbued with such beauty. I have not seen a report of an exact equivalent of it in the ethnological literature with regard to any other human group elsewhere in the world but it is noteworthy that some writers have speculated that the African-American dozens might have grown out of this sort of insult-strewn verbal play among the Igbo male (Burns, 2006: 347). Nor has this Nigerian case been documented previously.

Examples that I report in this essay are only those ones that have to do with gender or sex. It happens anyway that a good percentage of the entire corpus concerns these two social categories, gender and sex. Because it is inherently antagonistic and aims to hurt or shock the opponent, the butt of the attack is either one's putative wife or one's mother. In its playful version the former is usually the case. Ordinarily two boys will confront themselves in the bout. Occasionally a girl and a boy or a girl and girl will be the ones to spar. In its altercative versions, each side might get supporters among his siblings or cousins who might be of either sex. The parties will trade the invectives. It is considered smart to be able to think up more of these expletives and direct them at the opponents faster than they could do to you. A proponent must also be clever enough to sort his/her invectives according to their gender germaneness. For example, to propose to a female opponent 'to fuck' a female persona will expose the proponent as stupid or not bright. Usually it will draw derisive laughter from the posse.

I have collected 23 units of this rare form. Nine of these refer explicitly to sex. Out of the remaining 14, 11 refer to the opponent's self and three refer to opponent's father.

**Table 1. Some gender-/sex-related *ncha***

<i>Ncha</i>	English translation
Okori Ogo nw'Idikariaogoęka, nye o ji atj kpakpaa nku n du n'ovja.	Okori Ogo the brat of Idikariaogoęka, your wife cleared the ebire fagots in the jungle with her vagina.
Chjta ękwinj ovu, raa Nkwọ nw'Ukpaa.	May you fetch the nestling of coucal <sup>1</sup> , may you fuck Nkwọ nw'Ukpaa.
Chjta ękwinj enekakaka, raa Nkwọ nw'Ojukpakpakpa.	May you fetch the nestling of enekaka, <sup>2</sup> may you fuck Nkwọ nw'Ojukpakpakpa.
Amasiri noje okompiti, ikpu nnye o duje mmsina.	May Amasiri <sup>3</sup> people keep lazing around, may your wife's cunt keep busy with a sewing machine.
Me ka anyi je n'ogo, rajaa okwunokwa.	Get set so we might hit the road, may the cutting board supporting the sex partner you are fucking split.
Isiekwu da kpil vokota eja, ikpu nnye o zi vaa pata une ji.	May the oil palmfruit bunch fall to the ground with a thud, may your wife's cunt zing through to grab a chunk of yam.
E see o ęgwọ n'ireohu, sensen!.	May a strand of raffia be used in pulling your clitoris, senseni! <sup>4</sup>
Kpirikoti, mua ge egu.	Kpirikoti <sup>5</sup> , may you spawn to the number of the tree grub.
Anigo egu kwu godo, m gbara e egbe, ikpu nye o me riwa m tieree utchu.	May an antelope gambol and so that I shoot at it, may your wife's cunt flash so that I insert my penis.

Source: author's field data



Some of the referents are impossible in the ordinary world, e.g. using the vulva to fetch fagot; or a vulva grabbing a chunk of yam ... nevertheless in the ncha's make-believe world all is possible. For our purpose, though, the important thing is that it is the female sex that is under attack. When the focus is on the opponent's self, the motif is misfortune or other rude wishes. When his father is the focus of the invective, it is on a part of his father's body other than his sex, or even to wish his father a violent death.

**Table 2. Some ncha that are directed to an opponent's self or his father**

<i>Ncha</i>	English translation
Tụe, m tụe, m tụe, nwuhụ, m kwaje ẹkwa. <sup>6</sup>	Propose, so that I may propose, so that I may propose, die so that I may weep. <sup>6</sup>
Tụe, m tụe, m tụe, nwuhụ, m chije ọchị.	Propose, so that I may propose, so that I may propose, die so that I may laugh.
O ji egbe e bebe e n'avia, ndakwukwu ụ tọ ọ n'ọkụ.	May he that carries his gun rest it in the marketplace, may your epileptic fit land you in a fire.
Gẹ m nẹ-eje ẹwụwọ nẹ-ajutu m, gẹ ị nẹ-amụ aganị nẹ-ekene o.	The grasses brush me as I move along, the variola greets the birth of each you're your child.
Oke nkita n dakara abọ, ji ọvuru ekpu a ọnu.	A male dog that broke the basket in which it lay, may you not eat the new yam.
Oke nkita ibirika ọjụ, ive ọjọọ juru u obu.	A male dog of a short strong tail, your heart is full of evil.
Nwoguduoteuvie, nwivuru-omenjo.	Nwoguduoteuvie <sup>7</sup> , (you) a great evildoer.
Kpirikoti, mua gẹ egu.	Kpirikoti <sup>5</sup> , may you spawn to the number of the tree grub.
Uvuzeneke, ọtaagbankita.	Uvuzeneke <sup>9</sup> , eater of dog's jaws.
Jee Ndiegu nẹ m nẹmawa o, vọọ mgboko ọgu ụ vuta o.	May you go to Ndiegu for I will soon return, pack the world on you hoe's blade and carry on your head.

Ọọ ịve ị mọọ ne ọ ọdụ? Raa ewu Akpoke Nwigwe.	Must you always know everything? May you fuck Akpoke Nwigwe's goat.
Egbe bere ugo bere, e gbuo nna ọ ọgụ naa.	May the kite perch and the eagle perch, may the war end at the killing of your father.
Ukoro mgbingbi, nna ọ ọhụ ọcha.	The trunk of the papaya tree, your father the white anus man.
Ukoro mgbingbi, nna ọ ẹvọ ọcha.	The trunk of the papaya tree, your father the white tummy man <sup>10</sup> .

**Source: author's field data**

As I have pointed out elsewhere, the traditional Igbo society, not least the Okposi Igbo, demonstrate gender balance in nearly all social domains (Ezeh, 2007). Such is present here. To accommodate both sexes, there are propositions that are suited to the society's view of their functions. It is only peripherally that this might be counted against a society that managed its tabooing of birth control and absence of teenage pregnancy so effectively that incidents of accidental pre-marital pregnancy used to be zero in the entire community.

#### ***Peculiarity of Ncha as a Formulaic Folk Speech Category***

It is important to compare *ncha* and the African-American *dozens* to bring out areas of similarity and disparity between the two forms. For readers who may not be familiar with the American form, a word should be said in terms of its description. To paraphrase Jemie (1976: 83), dozens is a form of verbal contest among African-American adolescents in which contestants trade, usually sexual, insults on, typically female, relatives. It may lead to a physical fight when a contestant has had more than his verbal resource can deal with. *Ncha* has both the playful and belligerent varieties. Dozens can only be bellicose. Burns (2006: 347) lists other terms for the form, depending of the parts of the US: sig-ging, signifying, capping, ranking, and sounding. Jemie (1976: 83) contains examples which he borrowed from an earlier study by H. Rap Brown, of which two are taken for illustrative purposes here.

- Your mother is a doorknob, everybody gets a turn.
- Let's get off the subject of mothers, 'cause I just got off yours.

### *Similarity*

There are areas of similarity with *ncha*. As in *ncha* the performer aims to get at by saying something rude or insulting about his close relative; in this case his mother. Audience is also necessary in each case. In the last analysis, both are forms of public performance, what the sociolinguist, William Labov, has been reported as calling, if debatably, 'ritual insult'. In the Okposi Igbo genre there are usually supporters for each side. Also as in *ncha* the dozens' performer statement should not be prosaic. Even in its rudeness the statement must exhibit some ability at verbal art. Jemie (1976) has demonstrated the adaptation of this for poetry in the works of Langston Hughes, which fact demonstrates both the artistic quality of the American form but also its difference from the Okposi Igbo type. It may not be easy to adapt *ncha* for such a purpose, for the pre-eminent reason that it is rigidly a fixed form. Improvisation is typically impossible.

### *Disparity*

The latitude for improvisation is the most conspicuous difference between the two genres. In dozens you can improvise. In *ncha* you cannot. There is also some thematic difference. While both targets close relatives of the opponents for attack, *ncha* performers may also direct the attacks at themselves. Some examples have been given in Table 2 above. "May you go to Ndięgu for I will soon return, pack the world on you hoe's blade and carry on your head." A wish of misery, rather like that of the Titan, Atlas, in the Greek mythology. "Must you always know everything? May you fuck Akpoke Nwigwe's goat." A demeaning of all demeaning wishes, for while normal humans will go for fellow humans as sexual partners the poor guy will be fit only for a goat.

There is a different category among the Okposi that is more closely related to the dozens. It is known as *ikwu ne* [pronounced, *ikwune*]. This is a hyponym under a large superordinate, *ikwu*, that will include any abusive utterance. *ikwu ne* may be translated as an abusive utterance against a mother. While adults may use other types of *ikwu*, *ikwu ne* is observed only among teenagers and ado-

lescents. Unlike *ncha*, *ikwú nē* has no playful version. As a rule, parties engage in it in an aggressive context. Often it may result in a physical fight. Again unlike *ncha*, it can be improvised. It is not formulaic although verbal skill is essential. The greater the ability of a party at skilful arrangement of his rude one-liners, the more his/her chances of overwhelming and therefore humiliating his/her opponent. At such a point the verbal bout can result in a physical combat.

I have also witnessed performers who started with the *ikwú nē* category and ended up with the *ncha* exchange in a single encounter. However, such is not always the case. Girls may also be involved in the *ikwú nē* exchange. In that case while she abuses the male opponent's mother, the male opponent may abuse her directly. The performer needs a good memory to excel in *ncha*. The more of the formulaic forms he can recall and hurl at his opponent the more successful he will be in the encounter. To succeed in *ikwú nē*, he/she needs a verbal skill of his/her own to improvise his/her insulting one-liners.

Burns (2006) speculates that dozens could be traced to insulting verbal performances among either the Ashanti of Ghana or the Igbo of Nigeria. I lack data that can admit reliable comments on the former. However, there is some evidence that the hypothesis of Igbo origin of the American variety is reasonable. Note that one of the synonyms of dozens is **signifying**. The Okposi Igbo's preferred term for *ncha*, namely *inu*, may also translate this alternative name of dozens, for *inu* means proverb or an expression that is not to be interpreted literally. But the application of the term, *inu*, to the bawdy bout of the Okposi Igbo youngsters creates a foil of the descent saws that is an important hallmark of descent adult speech. It is possible that the use of the term, **signifying**, as a synonym of dozens by the African-Americans is a calque or loan translation of the Okposi Igbo term. Burns' own account that links this to some of the psychological cruelties of the days of slave trade, the Igbo influence on linguistic practices of people of African origins is well documented. Louis Oraka has reported that in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the German researcher, G.C.A. Oldendorp, was collecting linguistic data from Igbo slaves in the Western Indies (Ezeh, 2012: 82, 83). Another researcher has also reported that up to 25 percent of African-Americans with slave ancestry have Igbo

roots (Nickerson, 1970). Dealers in the inhuman trade valued the Igbo human commodities for their acclaimed hardness.

There are two possibilities regarding the provenance of dozens that the Americans are familiar with, if its Igbo origins are established. One is that it seems to be related to *ikwú nē*; not *ncha*. The other possibility is that it is a reconstruction that seems to combine the two varieties in the foreign context. But more research is needed to be able to confirm either of these or any other possibilities.

### ***Plain Speech***

By this I mean speech that use words in their ordinary or denotative meaning. Heavy weather has been made lately by post-modernist or poststructural theorists about the status of denotative meaning in everyday verbal or written communication. But as writers such as Alvesson (2002) have observed, the issue of multiplicity of meaning tends to be exaggerated by such writers. Much as linguists have always recognized the problem of words having more than one meaning, such a phenomenon does not create the level of hopelessness or impossibility of communication as such extreme views, often unsupported by field-sourced investigations, might purvey (Anyanwu, 2008: 190 – 192). In the Okposi dialect of Igbo as well as other dialects of the language, it can be shown that speakers easily recognize the denotative meanings of words that have such (Mbah, 2007).

Belaboring the sub-topic of plain speech may only amount to unnecessary digression in this context. It seems advisable to focus on the remaining coded forms, namely proverbs and idioms.

The figurative genres; proverbs and idioms, provides insight into the ideology of the discourse community regarding coitus and associated biological functions. It seems that the agentive is always masculine.

### ***Proverbs***

The following are the related proverbs I collected and their English translations. Eleven (11) of these were collected in all. Each example is followed by its English gloss and finally by a comment on its implication to the coital worldview of the group.

*Some Okposi Proverbs that are Related to Coitus*

Utchu n jere iri eri ge gbonyi agbo.

Penis that sets off to enjoy a meal but ended up throwing up.

**Comment:** This seems to suggest that sexual activity is viewed here as demanding on the male partner in contradistinction to its touted status of being an enjoyable activity.

Iwo ive n ka ikpu kpee ikpu.

To pay for the vulva with that which is worth more than the vulva.

**Comment:** Vulva in this case is metonymical of sex or coition. This proverb is used in a context where someone ended up suffering greater consequence than the apparent advantage of an experience. For our purpose, it suggests that the group hold a low view of casual sex. It is not worth much trouble.

Ikpu nnye onye ozo a na-ara achu egwu.

One fucks someone else's wife's vulva in fear.

**Comment:** This proverb is used in contexts where one is functioning in a situation where one lacks confirmed legitimacy of status. For our purpose it suggests that rather like Macionis (2003: 228) has reported with regard to contemporary America, extra-marital sex is not unknown in this discourse community.

Ejere kahụ nẹ ejeo, nwanyị n jere ogori a pẹ ẹ nja akaja.

Venturing out no matter how modest the intension is better than idleness, for a woman had a fling and got a packet of salt to show for it.

**Comment:** This reinforces the claim for extramarital sex just mentioned. Besides, it also suggests that the woman's desire to earn money is an incentive for some of such experiences.

E nẹ-ekpenyara nwanyị ogori ye e kwoo, e seta utchu gosị ẹ.

To win over a hard-to-get potential extra-marital sexual partner you might have to expose your penis to her.

**Comment:** This proverb is used in contexts where soft-soaping is considered less effective than more determined bargaining strategy. Again, a reinforcement of the place of extra-marital sex in the social life of this group.

A roo ikpu, e je i voo e ji?

If the proper use of the vulva is not to fuck it, should it be treated to a meal of yam?

**Comment:** This proverb is always presented in this rhetorical question form. It suggests a down-to-earth attitude to matters of coition.

I je i no ikpu ne ndida eka me chi a boo?

Will you spend a whole amorous night merely stroking your partner's vulva?

**Comment:** It is used in contexts where an actor spends too much time on preliminaries rather than engaging the main act. Like the previous one, this proverb is also always presented in the form of a rhetorical question. It underscores the discourse community's view that coition is the ultimate objective of an amorous encounter.

Nwanyị onyeibi maara ajja di e.

The wife of someone with ascites of the scrotum will somehow find a way of making love with her husband.

**Comment:** In pre-contact days medicine men had no cure for this affliction. The proverb suggests that wives of anyone so afflicted had nevertheless to find a way of putting up with it. The proverb is said in contexts where a means has to be found in dealing with n intricate situation.

A ne-amajerị ne ikpu bu ikpu e tu e ehu nwanyị.

Although it is known that the real name of vulva is vulva nevertheless it is called the woman's body.

**Comment:** *Ehu nwanyị* is the euphemism for vulva in this dialect where descent diction is considered an important diacritic for good behaviour. The proverb is used in contexts where refinement or caution is required in dealing with a delicate social issue. For the purposes of this essay it underscores the decorum with which adult conduct must treat the subject of sex.

M me a jukanuụ mgbā agboo.

I don't refuse a nubile girl's offer of wrestling.

**Comment:** Said with regard to a man. The idea being that it is fun for the man whoever has the upper hand between the two. The proverb is used in a win-win situation. For the purposes of this

essay it refers to the felicity that is associated with sex in the speech community.

Èjọ ọdụ sere èjọ ẹnụ.

Improper sitting of the woman attracts lewd attention.

**Comment:** To understand this proverb one has to imagine what the situation was in traditional days when people were scantily dressed with only a loincloth without the equivalent of underpants or shorts. Society prescribed a sitting position for the woman that consisted in stretching her legs forward with one of them on top of the other. Sitting with the legs apart was considered improper. For the present essay, the social space allocated to the woman in sexual matters is protection of the morals by conducting herself in such a way as not to encourage tabooed coition.

### *Idioms*

I collected four of these. Idiom is used in this essay in the sense Matthews (2002: 183) has defined it, namely, 'A set expression in which two or more words are syntactically related, but with a meaning like that of a single lexical unit.' He used the English example, 'spill the beans', to illustrate this. The Okposi dialect of Igbo has examples of this form, some of which concern sex. Among other functions, idiom is a convenient tool for euphemism which itself is crucial in discussing sex in some contexts in the Okposi discourse community. Decorum is considered essential in handling sex and fertility issues in respectable company and in most culturally defined relationships. A vulgar diction will almost certainly attract derisive laughter and is most likely going to expose the speaker as gross. Exceptions to this rule may be found in situations where youngsters engage in some amusement or quarrel among themselves outside the control of adults or where adults employ such coarse diction as a deliberate act of amusement, either in group or a more intimate engagement as a couple.

It seems therefore that idiom is an important medium for an insight into a group's worldview. More like the proverb, it uses what a group consider a settled fact of existence to make an appropriate statement in an unrelated area. I set out some sex-related Okposi idioms below; each followed by its translation in English and a comment on the context of its use.



*Some Okposi Idioms that Are Related to Coitus and Associated Processes*

igbaje oşo utchu gbakwuru nke okporokpo

to run into the real big penis while trying to dodge penis

**Comment:** Said in a paradoxical situation where one ends up in a complex situation in an attempt to escape a less complex one. In this study it is probably indicative of the fact that for some reasons some members of the female sex might be known to be frigid. For such it may as well happen that while trying to escape the experience of sex, circumstance might compel some of them to end up in it in a more unpleasant manner.

inabara madu n'uno

to go in to sleep in the house for someone

**Comment:** Used to say that a woman accepts freely to have sex with someone, usually her husband or any other culturally approved partner.

ékù madu n̄ nke madu ikokò

to co-hang one's cloth with that of another person

**Comment:** Usually said in the negative where the reverse of the previous example is the case. In a situation where the woman for whatever reason refuses to have sex as a sign of protest she might say that her cloth and that of the partner will no longer hang together. Other aspects of social life in the traditional society here must be understood to appreciate this idiom. Unhurried legitimate sex was made at night usually in the hut of the husband. In that hut there was usually a line to hang clothes so that the couple could make love staying naked.

íkpū okò

itchy vulva

**Comment:** Used to refer to a woman that is considered oversexed.

***Discussion and Conclusion***

We see in the case of the Okposi an ideology that allocates spaces on proper use of sex along gender lines. In the four linguistic forms that I have examined, coition is constructed as an act which the male partner is the agent. In the examples in this study, references to coition are such that only males are the grammatical agents and females are grammatical patients. A grammatical agent

is one that performs the act whether or not with the acquiescence of the patient. A grammatical patient is one on whom the act is performed. In the Okposi dialect the only word for coition in plain speech is *írā*. This word is used only to refer the act of the male partner in coitus. It cannot be applied to the act of the female partner. Strictly speaking it cannot, for example, translate the English expressions **make love to** or even **have sex with**.

Instead of being totally new, what has been found in the Okposi case rather seems to support a conclusion that is already familiar in recent anthropological literature, namely that much of sexual behaviour is cultural construct. Using variables other than language Seupin & DeCorse (2009: 280, 281) have cited ethnographies that revealed societies whose attitude range from keeping inhibitions to the barest minimum such as the Lepcha of Sikkim in the Indian subcontinent to those where inhibition to sex is a prized virtue such as many Arab communities and Beag Islanders of Ireland.

In the Okposi case, coitus protocol seems to be passed early in life to the young members of the community. This is evident in the terms for coition that are used in **ncha**, the word game used by youngsters in the speech community.

The passivity demanded of the female partner in matters of sex is paradoxical for a society whose structure is rooted in gender equity. But the situation becomes easy to understand when the circumstance of the period that produced these protocols is taken into account. I have pointed out elsewhere that the the Okposi, as most other Igbo groups, demonstrate gender balance in nearly all social domains (Ezeh, 2007). Such, closely examined, was also present in sexual relations. Both sexes were accommodated in consonance of the society's understanding of what was considered safe both for each partner and for the society as a group.

### ***Acknowledgements***

This is one of those articles where one ends up learning more from reactions of reviewers than one sets off to report. I send through this forum my sincere thanks to the anonymous reviewers whose reactions opened my eyes to the possible relationship between one of the linguistic forms that I investigated, namely the *ncha* of the Igbo of Nigeria and the *dozens* of African-Americans.

This promises to be an important area of further investigations, however challenging. I have worked with no other editor that has the level of kind proaction of Professor Wolfgang Mieder. He sent some of the publications that were related to this subject that I otherwise couldn't have accessed in these parts. While debts of gratitude that I owe for these interventions are enormous, I am entirely to blame for any flaws the work may still contain.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Coucal, a type of bird, *Centropus senegalensis*, that is common in these parts.

<sup>2</sup> A type of grasshopper that is common here.

<sup>3</sup> A community neighbouring to the Okposi on the South-West.

<sup>4</sup> Untranslatable ideophone imitating the movement of the pull.

<sup>5</sup> Untranslatable ideophone peculiar to this form, probably suggesting a sense of horde in the manner of some tree-leaf-eating grubs that the statement refers to.

<sup>6</sup> The first to start especially if this is in the game version of the encounter, must say this. His opponent will say the next.

<sup>7</sup> Untranslatable name of a kind of bird found in the locality. Often it seems that the kickoff is chosen just for its suitability at provision of appropriate rhythm for the second and the offensive part of the structure in the dialect.

<sup>8</sup> Name of a village's lineage.

<sup>9</sup> Apparently a version of the previous one.

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HEATHER A. HAAS

IF IT WALKS LIKE A PROVERB AND TALKS LIKE A  
QUESTION: PROVERBIAL AND OTHER FORMULAIC  
INTERROGATIVES

**Abstract:** Although a small number of question-form phrases have been included in standard proverb dictionaries or have been proposed for inclusion in future dictionaries, many of these phrases, although fixed in form, lack the truth-statement function that typifies most so-called true proverbs. This is also true of sarcastic interrogatives; although sarcastic interrogatives are (at least in some cases) fixed-form interrogatives, they do not state generalizable truths about the world or propose appropriate ways to respond to particular types of recurrent situations within it. Fixed-form rhetorical questions with a more clearly proverbial function do exist, however, and a number of these proverbial interrogatives are here identified, described, and distinguished from other types of formulaic interrogatives.

**Keywords:** proverbs, paremiology, sarcastic interrogatives, rhetorical questions, formulaic language, formulaic interrogatives, proverbial interrogatives

Although many writers (e.g., Dundes, 1975; Lau et al., 2004; Mieder, 1993; Taylor, 1931; Whiting, 1932) have expressed considerable doubt that we will ever have a satisfactory definition of the folkloric form known as the proverb, that belief has not prevented scholars from trying, nonetheless, to describe the major elements that differentiate “proverb” from “not proverb.” Whiting (1932) traced the history of the definition of the proverb from antiquity through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, from Aristotle’s requirement that a proverb be “a product of the masses rather than of the classes” (p. 278) and Apostolius’s observation that a proverb is “a useful saying” that “makes clear the truth in furtive fashion” (p. 287), to John Dykes’s (1709) observation that proverbs are expressions “directing the Conduct of human Life” (p. 295) as well as Thomas Fielding’s (1825) note that proverbs “are the manual of practical wisdom compiled from the school of experience” (p. 299). He also referenced perhaps the most alliterative definition ever, Nathan Bailey’s (1721) observation that a proverb is “a Pithy Phrase but if it not be pos-

sess'd of the Proper Pedigree, be it ever so *Brilliant*, it is at best but a Bastard Brat or a Sorry Upstart *avoided* alike by the Learned and *flouted* by the Vulgar. Its Patent of Nobility demands that it be Witty and Handsome in *Admonition*; Dignified in *Discourse*, and Rapid as a Rapier in Rebuke. Combining Wit with Wisdom and Brevity with Brain it may afford a Crutch for the Cripple to save his shins and anon, a Cudgel for the Curate to thwack Sinners to Salvation" (p. 297).

Consistent with the emphases of these early scholars, most contemporary researchers seem also generally to agree on several common characteristics of proverbs including relative brevity (Basgoz, 1990; Lau et al., 2004; Mieder, 1993); fixedness of form (Taylor, 1931); incorporation of poetic elements (Abrahams, 1972); reliance on metaphor (Gläser, 1998; Mieder, 1993); traditionality, encompassing evidence both of age (demonstrating the imprimatur of history; Arora, 1984, Basgoz, 1990; Mieder, 1993) and currency (demonstrating the imprimatur of a generalized social acceptance; Arora, 1984; Mieder, 1993); and evidence of an authoritative value perceived to come from "the people" rather than from the authority of any one person (Arora, 1984; Mieder, 1993). Unfortunately for those in search of a precise definition, however, many of these elements are also more "generally" and "relatively" true than definitively so. Just how brief, how fixed in form, how poetic, how metaphorical, how traditional, how widely used, and how far removed from the original speaker a phrase must be to be truly proverbial is left largely to the discretion of the individual paremiologist or paremiographer (Arora, 1984; Lau et al., 2004; Mieder, 1993).

Proverbs may also be defined by their functions in social and behavioral terms (Lau et al., 2004). After reviewing both lay definitions of the proverb and proverbs about proverbs, Mieder (1993) concluded that "It appears that to the mind of proverb users... proverbs contain a good dose of common sense, experience, wisdom, and above all truth" (p. 5). In fact, when lay people defined proverbs, the most commonly used word was "wisdom" (included in almost half of all definitions, more commonly even than the words "phrase," "sentence," or "saying"), and the adjective "general" occurred almost as frequently as the word "short" (Mieder, 1993). This emphasis on the wisdom-imparting function of the proverb is also apparent in scholarly definitions of the genre. Whiting (1932), for example, included in his definition of the proverb the observa-

tion that a proverb “expresses what is apparently a fundamental truth” (p.302). This requirement, for a proverb to present the hearer with wisdom or a truth that applies not just to a given situation but that can be generalized to encompass a number of similar situations, is echoed in other definitions as well. For example:

“Proverbs are descriptions that propose an attitude or a mode of action in relation to a recurrent social situation. They attempt to persuade by clarifying the situation, by giving it a name, thus indicating that the problem has arisen before and that past practice has come up with a workable solution.... This does not mean that all proverbs attempt to produce an action immediately. Many proverbs rather attempt to produce an attitude toward a situation that may well call for inaction and resignation.... We can distinguish two kinds of occasions, then, in which proverbs attack ethical problems: one, in which a proverb is used to direct future activity; and two, in which a proverb is invoked to alter an attitude toward something that has already occurred. In either case, the proverb places the problem situation in a recognizable category by providing a solution in traditional witty terms.” (Abrahams, 1972, p. 119, 121).

Or, in pithier form, Gallacher (with a parenthetical addition from Mieder) defined a proverb as “a concise statement of an apparent truth which has [had, or will have] currency among the people” (Mieder 1993, p. 14) and Lau et al. (2004) concluded, “Proverbs are short, traditional utterances that encapsulate cultural truths and sum up recurrent social situations” (p. 8). Once again, however, there is disagreement on this point. Dundes (1975), for example, specifically asserted that “purely functional definitions are inadequate” (p. 961) and argued that “the critical question is thus not what a proverb does, but what a proverb is” (p. 962).

It seems quite likely that the problem or even impossibility of defining proverbiality results from the fact that proverbs do not actually comprise a natural category of texts at all; instead it may well be that the perception of proverbiality is a judgment call. That is, proverbiality, like beauty, may be, to a considerable extent, in the eye of the beholder. Such a view is consistent with Taylor’s (1931) observation that “an incommunicable quality tells us this sentence is proverbial and that one is not” (p.3). The problem with Taylor’s

assertion, however, is that the “incommunicable quality” of proverbiality (like beauty) clearly has a different essence for one person than it has for another; although different people often agree, not all people – or even all scholars – always agree. That does not mean, however, that proverbs (like beauty) cannot be studied or that progress cannot be made toward an empirical definition of these perceptual phenomena. Just as psychological researchers have made progress in identifying predictors of the perception of beauty that the average person has probably not explicitly noted (e.g. facial symmetry, familiarity, and, in females, waist-to-hip ratio), so too have paremiologists made progress in identifying the predictors of the incommunicable quality of proverbiality (e.g., brevity, familiarity, poetic features, and degree to which the phrase encapsulates wisdom). In short, it appears likely that both beauty and proverbiality may form perceptual continua that exist as a function of the presence of a number of associated factors, each of which is an imperfect indicator on its own. This is consistent with the observation that “The utterance in question – ‘truly proverbial,’ i.e., traditional, or not – will function as a proverb, with all the accompanying weight of authority or community acceptance that the concept implies, as the direct result of the listener’s perception, right or wrong, of its ‘proverbiality’” (Arora, 1984, p. 4). From this perspective, then, it is less meaningful to ask whether or not a phrase *is* a proverb than to ask about the likelihood that it will be *perceived* as a proverb. So-called “true proverbs,” in this sense, are those that are likely to show the greatest degree of consensus among judges. They also likely to be those phrases best marked by key indicators of proverbiality, much as Mieder (1993) argued that “the more ‘proverbial markers’ a statement has, the greater its chance to become proverbial” (p. 9), it could also be argued that the more proverbial markers a statement has the greater its chance to be *perceived* – consensually or by an individual - as proverbial.

Researchers from outside the field of paremiology have also had to grapple with the definition of the proverb in their attempts to contextualize the relationship of proverbs to other forms of fixed-form speech. Both proverbs and proverbial phrases have been described as examples of “phraseological units” (Gläser, 1998), “phrasal lexemes” (Moon, 1998), “formulaic language” (Wray, 2002), and idioms (Gläser, 1998). None of these categories, though, seems especially apt from a paremiological point of view. Although



the first three categories include proverbs and proverbial phrases, they extend well beyond those folkloric forms also to include fixed-form phrases such as “at least,” “of course,” “in fact,” “you know,” and “in time” (Moon, 1998), “to live in sin,” “of a certain age,” “a bone of contention,” “the alpha and omega,” and “burden of proof” (Gläser, 1998), “Praise the Lord!,” “Happy birthday,” “I wouldn’t do that if I were you,” and “God willing” (Wray, 2002). The term “idiomatic” is problematic in that it has often been defined with reference to metaphor and scholars using this terminology have then sometimes required that only phrases that are metaphorical can be true proverbs. Gläser (1998), for example, differentiated between proverbs (e.g., “Make hay while the sun shines. One swallow does not make a summer.”) and commonplaces (e.g., “Boys will be boys. We live and learn. It’s a small world.”) in noting that “All proverbs are idiomatic because in their figurative meaning they refer to a different state of affairs...” while “Commonplaces may be trite formulae and truisms.... As a rule, they are not idiomatic” (p. 127). This is, however, not a distinction that most paremiologists make because most paremiologists do not make metaphoricity a prerequisite to proverbial status. In fact, there is evidence that less than half of most modern proverbs (coined since 1900) are metaphorical, and it may be that metaphoricity is a less common feature of contemporary Anglo-American proverbs than it was of more traditional sayings (Mieder, 2012).

Although paremiologists appear not to have devoted much effort to differentiating true proverbs and proverbial phrases from other types of fixed-form speech, they have devoted considerably more attention to differentiating between these two types of phrases. In his early attempt to differentiate between these forms, Whiting (1932), referred to the category of proverbial phrases as a “catch-all” category including simple comparisons and other phrases that “are often very hard to distinguish from what we call idioms” (p. 305), noting that many of these phrases may be “barbarians from the outer darkness of Slang” (p. 306). Ultimately, he noted, “the investigator must use discretion and his own judgment in distinguishing between proverbial phrase and idiom” (p. 306). Taylor (1934) also tried to clarify the difference in his note that a proverbial phrase “is a locution varying according to person, tense, and number, e.g., ‘He brings home the bacon,’... which consequently exists in the speaker’s mind as a turn of speech without a completely rigid

form” and a proverb “which, although it may lack a verb, is a grammatical sentence expressing a complete idea... existing in speech as a unit” (p. 16).

The problem of differentiating between proverbs and proverbial phrases is likely to result because the types of phrases generally characterized as “proverbial phrases” often are marked by a number of features (e.g., brevity, familiarity, metaphor, and poetic features such as alliteration and rhyme) predictive of proverbiality. As such, phrases of this sort may well be perceived as existing along that continuum of proverbiality. Lacking other markers of proverbiality, however, they are much less likely to be consensually regarded as proverbial than the so-called “true” proverbs. This is also the sense in which some superstitions (e.g., weather or medical superstitions), if expressed in brief fixed-form rhymes (e.g., “Red sky at night, sailors’ delight”), may be mistaken for proverbs because they have “the textural features of proverbs” (Dundes, 1984, p. 40). Notably, however, the marker of proverbiality that these kinds of phrases (e.g., proverbial similes, proverbial comparisons, rhymed superstitions) seem most likely to be absent is the marker of generalizable truth or generalizable injunction to wise response that is likely to be present in the case of most (or, arguably, even all) “true” proverbs. This feature then appears to play a key role in differentiating “proverb” from “proverbial phrase.”

That is the sense, then, in which “proverbs” and “proverbial phrases” will here be differentiated. A fixed-form phrase with currency and traditionality will be considered to be a true proverb if it appears to state a generalizable truth or to prescribe a course of action based on such a generalizable truth, but not if it merely describes a particular situation in formulaic language (even if that formulaic language is metaphorical, frequently used, and traditional).<sup>1</sup>

### *Formulaic Interrogatives*

Because most definitions of proverbs refer only to sayings, phrases, expressions, or utterances, it seems that the definition of proverbiality would not preclude a proverb in interrogative form, especially as some questions, particularly “rhetorical” questions, can be regarded as “pseudo-assertions” (Schmidt-Radefeldt, 1977, p. 375) or “interrogatively coded answers” (Driver, 1984) that make statements or answer questions rather than pose questions. There

are, furthermore, clearly a number of formulaic interrogatives (here meaning simply interrogatives that have been codified into a frequently-used fixed form by the members of a group) that appear to meet, at least, the criteria of familiarity and traditionality. Some of these formulaic interrogatives (e.g., “Has the cat got your tongue?” “What are you driving at?” “Where do we go from here?” “How does that grab you?” “Who’s minding the store?”)<sup>2</sup> are non-rhetorical in the sense that the locutionary syntax is interrogative and the illocutionary intent is information-eliciting (i.e., they are questions that are intended to be answered); the fixedness of their form does not undermine the genuine nature of the query. Other formulaic interrogatives, however, are largely rhetorical, i.e., despite their interrogative syntax, their illocutionary intent is not primarily information-eliciting (see, e.g., Schmidt-Radefeldt, 1977). In the category of rhetorical formulaic interrogatives we find phrases that appear generally to function as rebukes (“What’s that got to do with anything?” “Who the hell do you think you are?” “What will people think?” “Are you out of your mind?” “How should I know?” “Who died and made you God?”), intentional distracters (“How ‘bout them Mets?”), discussion enders (“What can I say?” “Do you have a better idea?”), warnings (“Do you want a spanking?” “How would you like a knuckle sandwich?”), expressions of encouragement (“What’s the worst that could happen?”) and expressions of gratitude (“How lucky am I?” “What would I do without you?”). Still, however, despite their familiarity, popularity, fixedness of form, and occasional metaphorical nature, these phrases would not generally be regarded as proverbs, at least by paremiologists, largely, perhaps, because they neither state nor hint at generalizable truths.

Because proverbs are not information-eliciting, true proverbial interrogatives, as a subset of true proverbs, should also not be information eliciting; despite their interrogative form, they should pose questions that are rhetorical in the sense that they should make a point (i.e., state a truth or suggest an action) rather than elicit information. This, then, raises the question of whether “true proverbs” can ever take an interrogative form.

#### *Sarcastic Interrogatives*

The one line of scholarship most directly related to the issue of proverbs as questions (or questions as proverbs) is the work on a type of question often known as a sarcastic interrogative. Doyle

(1975), and Dundes (1967) before him, described a particular type of fixed-form response in which a speaker replies to a previous query requiring a yes or no response with a question of his or her own, phrased so as to have a “glaringly obvious” (Doyle, 1975, p. 33) yes or no answer that corresponds to the answer to the original speaker’s question. A “dumb” question might therefore be answered with “Is the Pope Catholic?,” “Can a duck swim?,” “Do fish swim?,” “Is the sky blue?,” or “Does a chicken have lips?” Use of such a response, in question form, not only answers the original question but does so “derisively,” and in a way probably intended to make the recipient feel sheepish in the face of the (albeit usually jocular) rebuke (Doyle, 1975, p. 33). Dundes called these responses “pointed rhetorical questions” while Doyle referred to them as “sarcastic interrogatives.”<sup>3</sup>

Scholars from a variety of disciplines have discussed this kind of response under a variety of other names for a variety of purposes (for reviews see Doyle, 2008; Schaffer, 2005), but Doyle went a step further than any other researcher when he argued that these questions “constitute a minor species of proverb lore” (1975, p. 33) and a “subcategory of proverbs” (2008, p.5). In fact, Doyle noted that “not a single one” of the language scholars who have described these types of questions “uses the term proverb” (2008, p. 10). Dundes (1967), for example, not only did not describe these pointed rhetorical questions as being proverbial, he actually noted that “no one of these minor genres [including pointed questions] is of the importance of a genre like the proverb” (p. 35). The proverbiality of these phrases is nonetheless apparent, Doyle argued, in the fact that sarcastic interrogatives are clearly metaphorical (1975; meaning that the content of the sarcastic interrogative is almost always also irrelevant to the question it is intended to answer, 2008)<sup>4</sup> and consist, as proverbs do, of a topic and a comment (2008). Doyle also noted that, like proverbs, sarcastic interrogatives frequently involve assonance and alliteration (1977). Furthermore, sarcastic interrogatives are, in some cases, clearly related to familiar proverbial similes (e.g., “Do fish swim?” is related to “swims like a fish”). Doyle did note, however, that these sarcastic interrogatives are also arguably related to jokes and riddles (1975, 1977); both jokes and sarcastic interrogatives, for example, appear to be more likely than traditional proverbs to “allude to historically prominent persons or events” (1977, p. 79).

With the exception of “Can a duck swim?,” few examples of sarcastic interrogatives exist in standard proverb dictionaries, although phrases of this type have been included in some dictionaries of American slang (Doyle, 2008). Doyle interpreted this as being due to the tendency for authors and editors of more recent proverb dictionaries to draw potential entries from already published volumes. As a result, he argued, “The expressions are there in oral tradition and in printed documents, but nobody thinks of them as proverbial” (p. 13). The other possibility, though, is that although sarcastic interrogatives may be formulaic, and although they may well be representatives “from the outer darkness of Slang” (Whiting, 1932, p. 306), they may not be truly (or at least prototypically) proverbial.

The primary argument against the proverbial status of sarcastic interrogatives is that although sarcastic interrogatives often appear to be fixed form phrases with both currency and the kind of history of usage required by the criterion of traditionality, sarcastic interrogatives seem, almost by definition, not to carry the kind of generalizable truth that has historically been held to typify true proverbs. Sarcastic interrogatives, which by definition are limited to providing emphatic “yes” or “no” responses, would seem to be unlikely candidates to be arguments that state the truth in furtive (or any other) fashion (à la Apostolius), direct “the Conduct of human life” (à la Dykes), serve as a “manual of practical wisdom” (à la Fielding), “propose an attitude or mode of action in relation to a recurrent social situation” (à la Abrahams), or “encapsulate cultural truths” (à la Lau et al.).

Furthermore, although Doyle, in his earlier (1975, 1977) papers, limited his discussion to fixed-form sarcastic interrogatives with demonstrated currency and at least some evidence of traditional usage, by thirty years later (2008) his definition had apparently broadened. Phrases such as “Do I know my own name?,” “Do I eat food?,” “Am I hearing you speak?,” and “Do I love this pearl of India?” (2008, p. 16-17) seemingly meet the requirements of being questions with obvious answers uttered in retort in response to another question, but they do not appear to be formulaic phrases characterized by traditionality and currency (nor do they seem to have the humorous intent of anti-proverbs that result when a speaker or writer intentionally alters a traditional fixed-form proverb for humorous effect; Mieder, 2004). In fact, Doyle acknowledged this

distancing from the criterion of traditionality when he noted that "... it is the pattern and the *function*, not the presence of particular words, that mark a given text as belonging to the category that I have designated sarcastic interrogatives. Such is less extensively the case with so-called true proverbs" (2008, p. 22). He argued, however, that with sarcastic interrogatives, as with proverbial similes, "the pattern is definitive... even if the actual wording of the expression has been invented on the spot" (2008, p. 23). In fact, he noted, speakers may "*invent* a sarcastic interrogative, pouring new words into the old formula" (p. 23).<sup>5</sup>

Paremiologists, though, do not traditionally limit themselves only to the pattern of a text as evidence of its proverbiality. Thus if it is truly only (or primarily) "the pattern as it functions... in context... that defines the genre" (Doyle, 2008, p. 23), then it appears to be more appropriate to consider sarcastic interrogatives to be a discrete genre – quite possibly, as Doyle has suggested (1975, 1977, 2008), closely related to the riddle or the joke – than to consider these statements as being proverbial in the traditional sense.

By this argument, original sarcastic interrogatives, as representative of only the wit of one person and lacking the force of tradition, seem definitely not to be true proverbs inasmuch as they lack fixedness of form, tradition, and familiarity. Even formulaic sarcastic interrogatives,<sup>6</sup> though, which do demonstrate these features, are questionable in terms of their status as proverbs (or at least questionable in terms of their likelihood of being consensually perceived as proverbs) because they do not attempt to convey any type of generalizable truth; they appear to convey more wit (or at least pseudo-wit) than wisdom. Interestingly, Doyle chose not to include sarcastic interrogatives in his 2012 *The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs* (Doyle, Mieder, & Shapiro, p. xi), suggesting that he too no longer regards these formulaic interrogatives as prototypically proverbial. As such it would appear that this one line of paremiography dedicated to the collection of question-form proverbs actually fails to identify any true *proverbs* in question form, despite identifying a number of interesting formulaic interrogatives.

*Other Formulaic Interrogatives That Have Received Folkloric Attention*

Other kinds of fixed-form interrogatives have also found their way both into standard proverb dictionaries and onto lists of new and emerging proverbs not yet well-represented in proverb dictionaries. A list of question-form phrases included in several published proverb dictionaries and additional phrases proposed as “new” proverbs (Doyle, 1996; Lau et al., 2004) appears in Table 1.

It is immediately apparent from inspection of Table 1 that the interrogative phrases included in proverb dictionaries are low consensus texts; by far the majority are included in only a single source. “Where’s the beef?”<sup>7</sup> and “Why buy the cow when milk is free (cheap)?” each appear in four of these sources and “When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?” appears in three. This suggests that these kinds of interrogative texts are not generally, despite their fixedness of form, consensually deemed proverbial – and inspection of the included texts suggests several reasons why this might be so.

First, to be perceived as proverbial, formulaic interrogatives must have a fixed-form, currency (or past currency), and traditionality. Phrases that meet these criteria should, presumably, be relatively commonly used and, therefore, should result in a number of “hits” in a Google search. Some phrases deemed proverbial enough to be included in proverb dictionaries may, however, fail to meet these most basic criteria; this is evident in the fact that some of these question-form phrases result in relatively few hits in a Google search (as will be evident in Table 2). Google searches are, of course, imperfect indicators of use in a number of ways; a Google search, for example, taps written rather than oral communication, and those written communiqués are more likely to have been written recently and for public consumption rather than longer ago or for a private audience. Thus it is possible that proverbial usage may be underrepresented on the internet. However, the fact that many proverbs are frequently found in Google searches undermines this argument. It seems more likely either that low-frequency phrases have not yet condensed into the kind of fixed form that is readily searchable or that the phrases have not had widespread currency at least during the time periods and in the types of written contexts most well represented by online texts. On this basis, then, the proverbial status of these low-frequency phrases is questionable; if an

interrogative lacks the familiarity that springs from widespread current or traditional fixed-form usage, it is probably relatively unlikely to be readily perceived as either a formulaic interrogative or as a proverbial interrogative.<sup>8</sup>

A second possible explanation for the lack of consensus about the proverbiality of some of these texts also seems possible. For the most part, discussion of “proverbs” has traditionally been understood to refer to items with currency but without clear origins. Clever sayings from a recognizable source may eventually attain proverbial status but they seem to do so only as the “wisdom” or “truth” element comes to carry its own weight, independent of the authority of the original source (Mieder, 1993, 2012). That is, “proverbs” that can be traced to use by Franklin or Shakespeare or to Biblical origins are more “proverbial” the more they are used without reference to source to justify their value. The authority of the proverb comes from what “they” say (Arora, 1984) and from what “we” believe rather than from what Franklin, Shakespeare, the Bible, or any other particular source suggests. People might well argue that “a divided house cannot stand” or caution against “sparing the rod” without being able to cite chapter and verse and without referencing or even necessarily recognizing the Biblical origins of these ideas. For this reason, references to phrases from literary works (“Doctor Livingstone, I presume?” “Et tu, Brute?”), television shows (“Is that your final answer?” “What you mean *we*, white man?”) or from advertising slogans (“Where’s the beef?”) may well be rejected (perhaps even on an implicit level) as proverbial because they are recognized as having arisen from the Hollywood and Madison Avenue “classes” rather than from the popular “masses.”

Finally, even those texts that are short fixed-form phrases with both currency and at least some tradition of usage may well not ring proverbial if they do not make any greater truth statement. Although some of the interrogative phrases included in Table 1 might suggest a generalizable truth, it seems clear that in many cases their primary reference is to a particular situation and not simply to the situation as an example of a generalized type of situation encompassed by a larger proverbial truth. For example, “Has the cat got your tongue?” could be used in any situation in which someone is being very quiet and “Who’s minding the store?” could be used in a number of different kinds of situations to ask who is in charge while the person who is presumably supposed to be in charge is obviously absent, but



neither of these queries states or even hints at a larger truth about how to interpret or respond to the situation. “How do you like them apples?” likewise challenges the hearer with respect to a particular situation but states no truth with respect to it. Other phrases come a little closer to at least hinting at generalizable truths. For example, “Other than that, Mrs. Lincoln, how did you like the play?” hints that a bad circumstance may generalize to affect our feelings about a whole of which the circumstance was only a part and “Will it play in Peoria?” hints that an idea that may be endorsed by select groups may nonetheless be rejected by the common person, but these observations are, in these particular forms, much more clearly references to particular circumstances than to generalized observations of truth. The question posed (respectively) are: how did you like *this* circumstance and will *this* idea take root with the common folk? Thus although many of these phrases do clearly appear to be *formulaic* interrogatives (by virtue of their currency, traditionality, familiarity, and fixedness of form – and worthy of study by virtue of that categorization), it is easy to see why many of these phrases might not be likely to be perceived as truly *proverbial* interrogatives.

Thus we have evidence of a category of formulaic interrogatives that includes fixed-form sarcastic interrogatives (but not original sarcastic interrogatives), familiar fixed-form interrogatives strongly identified with a particular (often mass-media) source (including both catchphrases – e.g., “What do you mean we, white man?,” “Is that your final answer?,” “What you talkin’ about, Willis?,” “Well isn’t that special?,” “You talkin’ to me?,” “What’s up, Doc?,” and “Will you accept this rose?” - and advertising slogans such as “Where’s the beef?,” “Got milk?,” and “Whassup?”), and formulaic interrogatives that are related much more strongly to particular situations than to generalizable truths. Other types of fixed-form interrogatives may also be subtypes of this larger category of formulaic interrogatives. Dundes (1967), for example, mentioned “irrelevancy indicators” (e.g., “What’s that go to do with the price of tea in China?”), “rebukes to the greedy” (e.g., “What do you want, blood?” or “What do you want, egg in your beer?”), and “emissions traditions” (including “Going fishing?” as a response to nose-picking or “Do you hand out towels with your showers?” as a response to being sprayed with spittle) as a minor folklore genres that clearly can, at least in some cases, take the form of rhetorical questions. Although not mentioned by Dundes, familiar greetings

may also take a fixed interrogative form (e.g., “How’s it going?” “What’s shakin’?” and “How’s it hanging?”).

All of these examples are formulaic in that they consist of fixed-form phrases with both currency and traditionality but they are not traditionally proverbial inasmuch as they do not state or imply generalizable truths. The question then is whether, within the domain of formulaic interrogatives, there does exist a subcategory of phrases that truly serve as truth-statements and that are, therefore, likely to be perceived as truly proverbial. If so, these phrases, here called “proverbial interrogatives,” would prove to be still another subtype of the formulaic interrogative.

#### *Proverbial Interrogatives*

Some popular fixed-form interrogative phrases do seem to encapsulate wisdom in the form of a rhetorical question. This, for example, seems to be the case for the interrogative “Where does a 500-pound gorilla sit?” Because this question, when answered (“Anywhere it wants to”) -- either explicitly by the original speaker or implicitly or explicitly by the hearer -- makes an important observation about power in metaphorical (or furtive) form, this fixed-form interrogative does seem to state a generalizable truth that appears to be applicable to many different situations where power is an issue. Other examples of this kind of potentially proverbial interrogative are listed in Table 2, which includes both potential proverbial interrogatives currently found in proverb dictionaries and some that have not yet been indexed (at least in the dictionaries surveyed here) but that one may well encounter in everyday life.

Some apparently proverbial interrogatives may actually be better interpreted as variants of non-interrogative proverbs. Mieder et al. (1992), for example, specifically listed interrogative variants for a number of included proverbs: “The reddest apple may have a worm in it” (“What’s the good of a fair apple if it has a worm in its heart?”); “The early bird catches the worm” (“The early bird catches the worm – but who wants worms?”); “Little boys are made of rats and snails and puppy-dog tails” (with two interrogative variants... one version asking what are little boys made of and the other, after reviewing what both little boys and girls are made of, asking “doesn’t a girl have a taste for roughness to marry a boy?”); “Old brag is a good dog but hold fast is a better one” (“Brag is a good dog, an’ hold fast is a better one – but what do you say to a

cross of the two?"); "Christmas comes but once a year" ("Christmas comes but once a year; why not celebrate while it's here?"); and "Never hit a man when he's down" ("Why hit a man when he's down?"). Doyle, Mieder, and Shapiro (2012) also listed interrogative variants for several proverbs including "It is possible to swallow an elephant – one bite at a time" ("How do you swallow an elephant?"); "Never give anything away that you can sell" ("Why give something away when you can sell it?"); "Nobody ever said life was easy" ("Who ever said life was easy?"); and "Nobody ever said life was fair" ("Who ever said life was fair?"). Likewise Tittleman (1996) referenced "Where does a 500-pound gorilla sleep?" as having origins in a popular riddle of the 1970s, but indexed this interrogative form under the arguably idiomatic but not prototypically proverbial heading of "It's an 800-pound gorilla."

Using Google frequency as an indicator of relative frequency of use can help us estimate the relative primary of interrogative and non-interrogative proverbial forms. For example, "If ignorance is bliss, why be otherwise?" (Mieder et al, 1992) results in only 3 hits compared to the 3,640,000 hits for "Ignorance is bliss," clearly suggesting that the interrogative is a minor variant of a typically non-interrogative proverb. On the other hand, the non-interrogative "It's an 800-pound gorilla" and "It's a 500-pound gorilla," occurring 4,960 and 4,990 times respectively, are both clearly less common than the interrogative "Where does an 800-pound gorilla sit?" which occurs more than nine times as often. Similarly, "How do you eat an elephant?" occurs more than a hundred times as often as either "It is possible to swallow an elephant" (3 hits) or "You can swallow an elephant" (3,030 hits, and this figure includes many apparent hits that are not actually of the "one bite at a time" type). Thus it appears that even where both interrogative and non-interrogative versions of a phrase both exist, we cannot infer that the interrogative is merely a minor variant of the non-interrogative version; in some cases the (admittedly imperfect) down-and-dirty "Google test" suggests the interrogative phrasing is actually primary. Give this, interrogative forms of some proverbs that exist in both interrogative and non-interrogative forms (e.g., "Don't we all have the same 24 hours in a day?," "If ignorance is bliss, why be otherwise?," and "Why mess with success?") were retained as potential proverbial interrogatives and are included in Table 2.

Table 2 presents a number of potential proverbial interrogatives and their “Google frequency.” It is obvious from this frequency data that many of these potentially proverbial interrogatives meet several essential criteria of proverbiality -- the fact that they often result in a number of hits in a standard internet search suggests that they have a relatively fixed form<sup>9</sup> as well as currency and/or traditionality. Equally important, the phrases included here also arguably express generalizable truths, albeit in interrogative form. Many of these phrases also involve other markers of proverbiality including use of metaphor (“Where are the snows of yesteryear?,” “Why buy the cow when you can get the milk for free?,” “Who ever saw a kitten bring a mouse to the old cat?,” “You get a thorn with every rose, but aren’t the roses sweet?,” “Of what good are tools if allowed to rust?,” “What weapon has the lion but himself?,” “What can you expect from a pig but a grunt?,” “Who cares if a cat is black or white as long as it catches mice?,” “Why go out for hamburger when you can get steak at home?,” and “Why put on a raincoat if you’re already wet?”), rhyme (“When Adam delved and Eve span, who then was the gentleman?,” “What greater crime than loss of time?,” and “You can talk the talk but can you walk the walk?”), and alliteration (“Are you a chump or a champ?” and “What are you, a man or a mouse?”). Some of these potentially proverbial interrogative phrases are also marked by the same kinds of limiting factors that diminish the perceived proverbiality of non-interrogative phrases. Several, for example, do not appear to be commonly used and others come from a relatively commonly known source (e.g., “Am I my brother’s keeper?,” “How’s that working out for you?,” “If God is with you, who can stand against you?,” and “If you prick us, do we not bleed?”).

Many of these phrases may be relatively new, although Mieder estimates that only about 1% of the proverbs included in Doyle, Mieder, and Shapiro’s (2012) *The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs* either take an interrogative form or exist as interrogative variants of non-interrogative proverbs (Mieder, 2012). It is clear, though, that the proverbial interrogative has a history dating back at least into the Middle Ages as the use of the phrase “When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then a gentleman?” has been dated back at least to the late 1300s (Friedman, 1974; Resnikow, 1937). What’s more, the fact that this phrase also appears in German, Swedish, Dutch, and Icelandic (Resnikow, 1937) versions also indicates that the interro-

ative phrasing of proverbial truth-statements is not idiosyncratic to the English proverb lexicon.

If the sample of potentially proverbial interrogatives included in Table 2 is representative, then we can also infer that not all types of questions are equally likely to be proverbial. Roughly half of these interrogatives pose rhetorical questions about who, what, and why. Less common are questions about where, how, and when events occur and questions about whether something is or isn't, or can or can't (or does or doesn't) happen.

These proverbial interrogatives appear to be quite similar to non-interrogative proverbs in terms of both their overall length and in terms of the general association between length and frequency of use. Mieder (2012) reported that the proverbs included in *The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs* ranged in length from 2 to 23 words and averaged about 7 words in length. Considering only the most frequent variant of each of the potential proverbial interrogatives listed in Table 2, we find the length of these phrases ranges from 3 words ("Why ask why?") to 21 words ("There are lots of things in life that money won't buy, but have you ever tried to buy them without money?"). The modal phrase length is 7 words and the average length is 8.6 words. Furthermore, much as Mieder (2012) observed that longer modern proverbs tend to be less frequently used, there is a correlation of  $r = -.32$  between the length of (the most frequent variant of each of) these interrogative phrases and the number of hits obtained for each in a Google search – suggesting at least a slight tendency for shorter proverbial interrogatives to be more frequently used.

Although not all proverbs are metaphorical, those that are often reference animals to convey the metaphorical message. Despite the industrialization of society that has occurred since 1900 this trend appears still to be true of modern proverbs, with 8.2% of the proverbs included in *The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs* categorized as "animal proverbs" (Mieder, 2012, pp. 171-172). This appears to be even more true of the interrogative proverbs. In fact, nearly a quarter of the proverbs included in Table 2 reference either domestic animals (cows, cats/kittens, dogs, horses, chickens, and pigs) or wild animals (fish, birds, mice, gorillas, lions, and elephants).

In some cases (e.g., "How do you eat an elephant?," "How does a fish get caught?," "What's the difference between try and triumph?," and "Where does a 500-pound gorilla sit/sleep?"), prover-

bial interrogatives clearly take on a riddling character, especially when they are first encountered. The riddling nature of (at least some) proverbs has long been noted. Dundes (1975) differentiated the two genres in his observation that “in riddles the referent of the descriptive element is to be guessed whereas in proverbs the referent is presumably known to both the speaker and the addressee(s)” and, as a result, “riddles confuse while proverbs clarify” (p. 965). Green and Pepicello (1986) furthermore argued that a key feature of riddles is that, although often phrased as questions, their intent is not to elicit information; as such, although the locutionary act of posing a riddle may take an interrogative form, riddles (like proverbial interrogatives) are not true questions because they do not function as questions to elicit information. Obviously the links between proverbs and riddles are even more evident when we are dealing with proverbial interrogatives because both share the same very evident interrogative form. What’s more, proverbial interrogatives, like riddles but unlike sarcastic interrogatives, do not generally have obvious answers (until the answer is learned). Despite this riddling aspect, though, proverbial interrogatives are, nonetheless, proverbial in that they present a truth relevant to the conversation at hand. Once the answer to the proverbial interrogative is known (either on the basis of past experience or when provided by speaker), the proverbial interrogative makes a point, albeit in question-form, germane to the issue or conversation under discussion. The point of the proverbial interrogative is not to be funny or entertaining (as is true of jokes, sarcastic interrogatives, and, sometimes, riddles) but rather to make a truth statement about the way the world is or about how one should respond with respect to that world, even if that statement is expressed in an incongruous, and therefore potentially “funny,” form.

#### ***A Preliminary Representation of Category Relations***

This analysis, then, defines proverbial interrogatives with respect to three broader genres: formulaic language (itself a subset of folkloric forms and inclusive as well of other types of folkloric forms), rhetorical questions (a subset of all interrogative statements), and verbal humor (a subset of all humor). Although the role of verbal humor has not been the primary focus of this article, its role in our understanding of both (some) forms of formulaic language and (some) forms of rhetorical questions has certainly been at

least implied. Proverbs, after all, are frequently associated with humorous devices such as hyperbole, irony, and puns, and may be related, in some ways, to jokes (Norrick, 1989). Similarly, whether labeled as pointed rhetorical questions (Dundes, 1967), sarcastic interrogatives (Doyle, 1975, 1977, 2008), rhetorical-questions-as-retorts (Schaffer, 2005), or indirect-responses (Nofsinger, 1976) texts belonging to this genre appear almost always to be uttered with humorous intent, and they are interpreted as more humorous than more direct responses (Pearce & Conklin, 1979). Given, then, these three partially overlapping categories, a Venn diagram (as in Figure 1, with the hope that one figure will be worth at least several hundred words) may be profitable in elucidating, at least in a preliminary way, the relationships between these forms.

Although no attempt has been made to draw Figure 1 to scale, one very evident observation is that although the three main categories do overlap, each is also, to some extent independent of the others. Some (and probably most) formulaic language (e.g., slang and acronyms) is neither interrogative in form nor intended (or perceived) to be humorous in effect. Similarly most rhetorical questions are probably original creative utterances and therefore not formulaic, and they are probably also not generally intended (or perceived) to be humorous in effect. And, finally, much (and maybe most) verbal humor (e.g., puns and silly nicknames and, arguably, even jokes) does not involve rhetorical questions or formulaic use of language.

Each of these categories, however, does overlap with each of the others. At the intersection of rhetorical questions and formulaic language, for example, we find many of the examples of formulaic interrogatives previously discussed (e.g., fixed-form interrogative greetings, rebukes, warnings, catchphrases, advertising slogans, emissions traditions, etc.).<sup>10</sup> At the intersection of rhetorical questions and humor we probably find all or almost all examples of sarcastic interrogatives (fixed-form and original) and also texts included within the slightly broader category of “rhetorical questions as retorts” (Schaffer, 2005). Finally, at the intersection of formulaic language and verbal humor we find the folkloric form that has been called the “stock conversational witticism” (Norrick, 1984). These witticisms, intended to evoke laughter, are both conversational in the sense that they do not disrupt the flow of conversation and “stock” in that they are relatively well known by members of a giv-

en community. As such, this category may include proverbial comparisons (e.g., to lie like a rug), quips (including those Dundes described as examples of “emission traditions”), and, of course, fixed-form sarcastic interrogatives (but not original sarcastic interrogatives as those, by definition, cannot be “stock” witticisms). Such an analysis also implies that there may further be texts that represent all three of these categories, and that is exactly what we find: fixed-form sarcastic interrogatives, for example, are formulaic rhetorical questions used for humorous effects and other folkloric forms may also meet all three criteria (e.g., the nose-picking emissions tradition, “Did you find any gold yet?” or the proverbial interrogative, “With friends like those, who needs enemies?”).

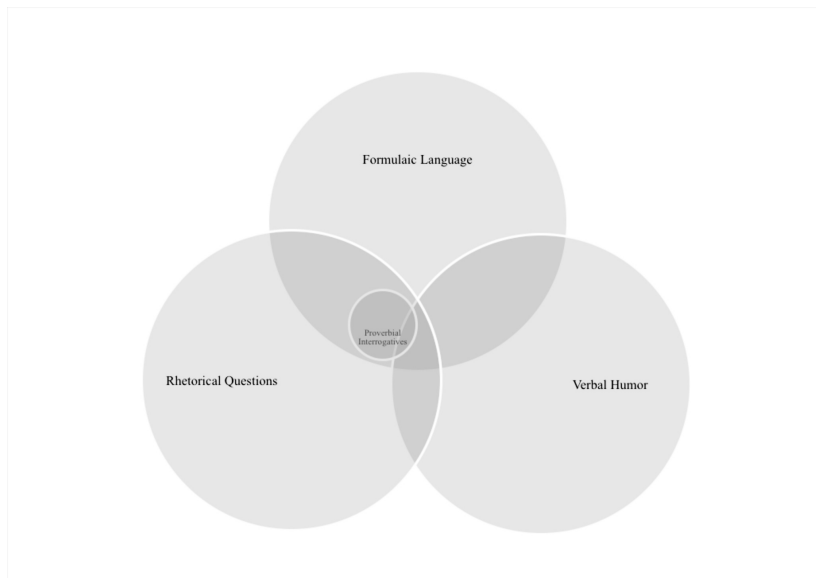


Figure 1. Relationship of proverbial interrogatives to formulaic language, rhetorical questions, and verbal humor.

What is the place of the proverbial interrogative in this system? By definition all proverbial interrogatives must be both formulaic and interrogative – probably in a rhetorical sense - and therefore they exist at the intersection of these two categories. Furthermore some (but not all) proverbial interrogatives may have a humorous aspect and this category may therefore also overlap with the catego-



ries of verbal humor and stock witticism. With a proverbial interrogative, however, as with proverbs more generally, the humor is not humor for its own sake, but rather humor in service of wisdom. If, as Bailey suggested (1721, in Whiting, 1932), a proverb results from a combination of “wit with wisdom,” then the “humorous” (i.e., wit) elements of the proverb may serve to capture the attention of listeners in a way that makes them more receptive to the truth (i.e., the wisdom) message.

Ask a silly question and you may get a silly answer, but ask a proverbial question and you state the wisdom of the ages.

Table 1  
*Idiomatic Interrogative Entries Included in Standard Proverb Dictionaries or Proposed for Future Inclusion*

<b>Interrogative Entries</b>	<b>Am Prov<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Facts File<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>Oxford C<sup>c</sup></b>	<b>Ran-dom<sup>d</sup></b>	<b>Mo-vern<sup>e</sup></b>	<b>Lau<sup>f</sup> Doyle<sup>g</sup></b>
A bird may love a fish, but where would they live (build a home, build a nest)?					21	
All are good girls, but where do the bad wives come from?	251					
Am I my brother's keeper?				414		
Avarice and happiness never saw each other. How, then, should they become acquainted?	31					
Birds sing after a storm, (so) why shouldn't (can't) we?					21	
Brother can you spare a dime? (Buddy...)				414		
Can't we all just get along?					95/97	
Cat got your tongue? (Has the...)				416		
Certainly there are lots of things in life that money won't buy, but have you ever tried to buy them without money?	589					
Doctor Livingston, I presume?				434		
Et tu, Brute?				414		
How could we measure the ups in life if it weren't for the downs?	626					
How do you like them apples?				410		72
How does that grab you?				434		

<b>Interrogative Entries</b>	<b>Am Prov<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Facts File<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>Oxford C<sup>c</sup></b>	<b>Ran- dom<sup>d</sup></b>	<b>Mo- dern<sup>e</sup></b>	<b>Lau<sup>f</sup></b>	<b>Doyle<sup>g</sup></b>
If fortune smiles, who doesn't -- if fortune doesn't, who does?	230						
If ignorance is bliss, why be otherwise?	325						
If not us, who? If not now, when?				435			
If you're so smart, why aren't you rich?					234		79
Is a woman ever satisfied? No, if she were she wouldn't be a woman.	667						
Is there anything men take more pains about than to make themselves happy?	447						
Is that your final answer?						9	
Never mind who was your grandfather -- what are you?	652						
Of what good are tools if allowed to rust?	606						
Of what use is it to pretend there is a choice when there is none?	98						
Other than (Aside from) that, Mrs. Lincoln, how did you like the play?							78
Talk of the rack, what is it to a woman's tongue?	604						
What are you driving at?				422			
What can you expect from a pig but a grunt?		250	72				
What did the President know and when did he know it?				437			
What greater crime than loss of time?	126						
What makes someone tick?				441			
What weapon has the lion but himself?	646						
What you mean <i>we</i> , white man (paleface)?							81
What's in a name?		252		445			
What's the use of cleverness, if foolishness serves?	101						
When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?	8	255	1				
Where are the snows of yesteryear?				457			

<b>Interrogative Entries</b>	<b>Am Prov<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Facts File<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>Oxford C<sup>c</sup></b>	<b>Ran- dom<sup>d</sup></b>	<b>Mo- dern<sup>e</sup></b>	<b>Lau<sup>f</sup></b>	<b>Doyle<sup>g</sup></b>
Where do we go from here?				430			
Where does a 500-pound (800-pound) gorilla sit?					109		76
Where's the beef?				411	18	9	73
Which came first, the chicken or the egg?		259		417			
Who cares if a cat is black or white as long as it catches mice?					35		
Who ever saw a kitten bring a mouse to the old cat?	350						
Who'll bell the cat?	87						
Who's counting?				418			
Who's minding the store?				443			
Why are there more horse's asses than there are horses?	30						
Why buy a (the) cow when you can get the milk (for) free?	123	261					
Why buy a cow when milk is (so) cheap?		261	44		288		
Why buy milk when a cow is so cheap (when you've got a cow at home)?					166		
Why go out for fast food (hamburger, a hamburger) when you can get steak at home?					75		
Why keep a dog and bark yourself?	261		124				
Why should the devil have all the best tunes?		262	52				
Will it play in Peoria?							79
With friends like that, who needs enemies?		263					
Would you buy a used car from this man?				415			
You get a thorn with every rose, but aren't the roses sweet?	592						

Notes. <sup>a</sup>Mieder's *The Dictionary of American Proverbs*; <sup>b</sup>Manser's *The Facts on File Dictionary of Proverbs*; <sup>c</sup>Simpson's *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs*; <sup>d</sup>Titelman's *Random House Dictionary of Popular Proverbs and Sayings*; <sup>e</sup>Doyle, Mieder, and Shapiro's *The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs*; <sup>f</sup>Lau (2004); <sup>g</sup>Doyle (2006). The page number of each entry is indicated in the table.

**Table 2***Preliminary List of Potentially Proverbial Interrogatives*

<b>Potential Proverbial Interrogative</b>	<b>Google Hits</b>
A bird may love a fish, but where would they live?	36,000
A bird may love a fish, but where would they build a home?	12,400
A bird may love a fish, but where would they build a nest?	3
All are good girls, but "where do the bad wives come from"?	43
Am I my brother's keeper?	904,000
Are you a chump or a champ?	1,340
Avarice and happiness never saw each other. How, then, should they become acquainted?	2,050
Birds sing after a storm, why shouldn't we?	33,700
Birds sing after a storm; why can't we?	5,120
Can't we all just get along?	5,240,000
Certainly "there are lots of things in life that money won't buy, but have you ever tried to buy them without money?"	3
Do "you kiss your mother with that mouth"?	195,000
Do "you kiss your momma with that mouth"?	182,000
Do "you kiss your mom with that mouth"?	104,000
Don't we all have the same 24 hours in a day?	1000
How could we measure the ups in life if it weren't for the downs?	1
How do you eat an elephant? (One bite at a time.)	389,000
How do you swallow an elephant? (One bite at a time.)	3,370
How does a fish get caught? (He/it opens its mouth.)	9,350
How's that working out for you?	326,000
How's that working for you?	276,000
How's that workin' for you?	52,200
How's that workin' out for you?	34,000
If everyone else jumped off a bridge, would you?	13,100
If everybody else jumped off a bridge, would you?	11,500
If fortune smiles, who doesn't -- if fortune doesn't, who does?	1,200
If God is with you, who can stand against you?	152,000

FORMULAIC & PROVERBIAL INTERROGATIVES 43

If God is with you, who can be against you?	102,000
If ignorance is bliss, why be otherwise?	2
If not now, when?	7,750,000
If not you, who? If not now, when?	278,000
If not us, who? If not now, when?	150,000
If you can't laugh at yourself, who can you laugh at?	1,600,000
If you prick us, do we not bleed?	215,000
If you're so smart, why aren't you rich?	659,000
Is a woman ever satisfied? (No, if she were she wouldn't be a woman.)	2,480
Is the screwing you're getting worth the screwing you're getting?	318
Is the screwin' you're getting' worth the screwin' you're gettin'?	287
Is there anything men take more pains about than to make themselves happy?	0
Never mind who was your grandfather -- what are you?	9
Never mind who was your grandfather -- who are you?	0
Of "what good are tools if allowed to rust"?	1
Of "what use is it to pretend there is a choice when there is none"?	53
Talk of the rack, what is it to a woman's tongue?	4
What are you, a man or a mouse?	169,000
What can you expect from a pig but a grunt?	25,500
What do you have to lose?	3,450,000
What have you got to lose?	2,960,000
What greater crime than loss of time?	12,700
What if the shoe was on the other foot?	444,000
What if the shoe were on the other foot?	287,000
What weapon has the lion but himself?	8
What would Jesus do?	1,200,000
What would you do if you knew you could not fail?	307,000
What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail?	101,000
What's in a name?	26,300,000
What's the difference between try and triumph? (A little umph.)	3,610
What's the use of cleverness, if foolishness serves?	1

When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?	24,600
Where are the snows of yesteryear?	42,200
Where does an 800-pound gorilla sit? (Anywhere it wants to.)	45,100
Where does an 800-pound gorilla sleep?	9,370
Where does a 500-pound gorilla sleep?	4,000
Where does a 500-pound gorilla sit?	2,880
Where's your sense of adventure?	215,000
Which came first, the chicken or the egg?	1,460,000
Who cares if a cat is black or white as long as it catches the mice?	5,020
Who cares if a cat is black or white as long as it catches mice?	80
Who ever said life was easy?	42,600
Who ever said life is easy?	5,970
Who ever said life was fair?	72,800
Who ever said life is fair?	21,600
Who ever saw a kitten bring a mouse to the old cat?	0
Who made you judge and jury?	128,000
Who made you judge and executioner?	7,780
Why are there more horses' asses than there are horses?	14,000
Why are there more horse's asses than there are horses?	1,120
Why ask why?	1,410,000
Why buy the cow when you can get the milk free?	633,000
Why buy the cow when you can get milk for free?	611,000
Why buy the cow when you can get the milk for free?	271,000
Why buy a cow when you can get the milk for free?	46,500
Why buy a cow when milk is cheap?	39,000
Why buy a cow when you can get milk for free?	29,100
Why buy a cow when milk is so cheap?	8,140
Why buy the cow when milk is so cheap?	1,900
Why buy the cow when milk is cheap?	1,410
Why buy a cow when you can get the milk free?	10
Why buy a cow when you can get milk free?	9
Why buy the cow when you can get milk free?	2

FORMULAIC & PROVERBIAL INTERROGATIVES	45
Why buy milk when a cow is cheap?	4
Why buy milk when a cow is so cheap?	1
Why buy milk when cows are cheap?	1
Why buy milk when cows are so cheap?	0
Why give something away when you can sell it?	159
Why go out for hamburger when you have steak at home?	28,900
Why go out for a hamburger when you have steak at home?	25,400
Why go out for hamburger when you can get steak at home?	154
Why go out for a hamburger when you can get steak at home?	2
Why go out for fast food when you can get steak at home?	2
Why go out for fast food when you have steak at home?	2
Why keep a dog and bark yourself?	72,300
Why mess with success?	440,000
Why put on a raincoat if you're already wet?	72
Why wear a raincoat if you're already wet?	32
Why should the devil have all the best tunes?	114,000
Why should the devil have all the best music?	2,360
With friends like these, who needs enemies?	235,000
With friends like that, who needs enemies?	140,000
With friends like this, who needs enemies?	75,600
With friends like those, who needs enemies?	30,300
You can talk the talk but can you walk the walk?	236,000
You get a thorn with every rose, but ain't the roses sweet?	3270
You get a thorn with every rose, but aren't the roses sweet?	33

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Note. Google results were gathered July 25-27, 2012. Where noted, only the portion of the text enclosed in quotation marks was searched; for all other entries, the indicated phrase was itself searched (without parenthetical "riddle" answers).

*Notes:*

<sup>1</sup> Not all paremiologists would probably agree with this characterization, however. This distinction does not, for example, explain why Abrahams (1972) included “crying wolf” and “sour grapes” as well as Wellerisms (e.g., “I see, said the blind man, as he picked up his hammer and saw”) as proverbs or why Mieder (1993, pp. 50-51) argued that “Don’t throw the baby out with the bath water” should have been included in Hirsch et al.’s book on cultural literacy as an example of an idiom rather than as a proverb and should not have included “Carpe diem” as a proverb. If, however, proverbs “are self-contained units” that “have a moral weight of their own and an argument that is virtually self-sufficient” (Abrahams, 1972, p. 123), then it would appear that by Abraham’s own definition neither “crying wolf” nor “sour grapes” is a true proverb inasmuch as neither presents an argument. On the other hand, a directive NOT TO throw the baby out with the bath water does appear to be stated in truly proverbial form. Although “to throw the baby out with the bath water” merely describes a situation, the directive “DON’T throw the baby out with the bathwater” advocates a course of action. In this sense, then, some proverbial phrases (including “crying wolf” or “rocking the boat”) may take on the form of proverbs when they become directive statements of generalized truths or directives to particular responses (e.g., “Don’t cry wolf” or “Don’t rock the boat”) in generalized types of situations. Other proverbial phrases, including proverbial similes and proverbial comparisons (e.g., “neat as a pin,” “snug as a bug in a rug,” and “like a bat out of hell”), do not state generalized truths about the world or suggest appropriate courses of action to take when confronting certain kinds of situations within that world and they are, therefore, here interpreted to be lacking a very important characteristic of proverbiality.

<sup>2</sup> These examples were selected from Titleman’s (1996) *Random House Dictionary of Popular Proverbs and Sayings*. The inclusion of “and Sayings” in this title suggests that Titleman may not see these phrases as being actual proverbs but inclusion of these “sayings” in the same volume with “proverbs” suggests that in Titleman’s view, at least at some implicit level, these two forms of texts must share at least some elements or characteristics in common.

<sup>3</sup> Doyle argued that these phrases are not rhetorical (inasmuch as their content is almost never relevant to the topic under discussion) and are not pointed (inasmuch as the response implies rather than directly states the foolishness of the original question and/or the original questioner). Schaffer (2005), however – and without reference to the work of either Dundes or Doyle -- not only categorized these questions as rhetorical (on the basis of their “question structure, apparent lack of need or expectation of an explicit verbal answer, and ability to serve as an acceptable answer to a true information-eliciting question and to elicit mental responses”) but also noted that answers to these types of questions are “*pointedly* left for the hearer/reader to infer” (p. 452, italics added).

<sup>4</sup> In fact, a more relevant sarcastic interrogative may be harder to interpret than a less relevant one. Nofsinger (1976) gives an example of asking a swimming fanatic, “Did you swim yesterday?” and receiving the response, “Is the Pope a Catholic?” (p. 174). Such a response, because of its clear thematic irrelevance, is probably actually easier to interpret than an exchange of “Did you swim yesterday?” with a



response of “Do fish swim?” (or “Do ducks swim?”), although relative ease of interpretation is an empirical question beyond the scope of this paper.

<sup>5</sup> Without the limiting factors of fixedness of form, traditionality, and currency, however, Doyle’s sarcastic interrogatives come to be almost indistinguishable from the yes-no subtype of Schaffer’s (2005) “RQ-as-retort,” in which a rhetorical question is “used in response to a preceding question” because the answer “is to be recognized as precisely the same as the first question’s” (p. 433); the parallelism is also obvious in Schaffer’s observations that these RQ-as-retort responses “seem to be used specifically to imply that the answer to the prompting question should have been obvious to the asker” and that they are “clearly exploited in different ways to create humor” (p. 433).

Schaffer’s conceptualization of RQ-as-retorts seems to be the broader domain in that RQs-as-retorts are not limited to responses to yes-no questions (although most of the examples she gives do fit into this category) and in that RQs-as-retorts may, in her scheme, be responses to statements rather than to questions, a possibility that Doyle (2008) explicitly rejected. Both domains, though, allow for the creation of original as well as fixed-form utterances, although this was not clearly evident in Doyle’s earlier work.

<sup>6</sup> Schaffer’s (2005) work suggested that fixed-form (popular, stock) sarcastic interrogatives probably comprise a relatively small proportion of the sarcastic interrogatives used in natural conversation with a far greater proportion being original creations.

<sup>7</sup> For a history of the transformation of “Where’s the beef?” from advertising slogan to proverb, see Barrick (1986).

<sup>8</sup> Of all the dictionaries here surveyed, it was Mieder et al.’s (1992) dictionary that yielded the most low-frequency texts. This dictionary was compiled in a notably different fashion from the others, however, as the entries were based on field research and reports of oral use. The editors did note in the Preface, however, that the original set of nearly 150,000 texts was edited to “approximately 75,000 citation slips containing true proverbs” (p. ix), indicating that the texts presented in Table 1 all passed muster with the group as being truly proverbial regardless of their lack of established currency or traditionality. (It is important to note, however, that although the introduction suggests that “true” proverbs were defined as “concise statements of apparent truths that have common currency,” it also indicates that the editors “decided to err on the side of inclusion rather than exclusion,” p. xii). Here the primary criterion of proverbiality then appears to be that if it sounds like a duck and somebody says it’s a duck, then it’s a duck. And given that perceptions of proverbiality, like perceptions of beauty, may vary to some extent from one person to another, I would not argue that these are not proverbs, but rather only that they might be relatively unlikely to be *consensually* recognized as such.

<sup>9</sup> The fixedness of form is relative rather than absolute because “many proverbs are current in various degrees of variation” (Mieder, 2012, p. 143). The argument is not that a given phrase exists in only a single form but rather that at least one fixed form of phrasing is used frequently enough that the phrase is (at least potentially) recognizable as the wisdom of the folk rather than as an idiosyncratic phrasing constituting the wit of a given speaker. To illustrate differences in the frequency with which particular phrasings are used, I have included in Table 2 the number of internet search “hits” for several different phrasings for a number of potential pro-

verbal interrogatives. In Table 2 variants are listed in descending order of frequency (i.e., with the variants with the greatest number of Google hits listed first).

<sup>10</sup> Although, of course, each of these categories also includes members that are fixed-form, and therefore formulaic, but not interrogative. Similarly some formulaic interrogatives are interrogative but do not exist within the domain of *rhetorical* questions because they are treated, by both the asker and the answerer, as genuine requests for information (e.g., “Who’s minding the shop?” and “What are you driving at?”). In fact, some rhetorical questions (e.g., “Where is it written that a bathtub has to be cleaned once a week?”) have both formulaic (“Where is it written...?”) and original elements. Clearly Figure 1 does not capture all of these possibilities; it is intended only as a shorthand heuristic guide and not a comprehensive representation of any of these domains.

#### Author Note:

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## “QUE SERA SERA”: THE ENGLISH ROOTS OF A PSEUDO-SPANISH PROVERB

**Abstract:** “Que sera sera” has become a proverb in English, meaning “What will be will be”: an expression of cheerful fatalism. Today it appears in spellings that resemble those of Spanish (usually), Italian (less often), or French (occasionally), but it is ungrammatical in all three of these languages, based on an erroneous merger of the English “free relative” *what* (‘that which’) with the interrogative *what*. From its first documentation (in 15<sup>th</sup>-century England) and its adoption as an English heraldic motto (beginning in the 16<sup>th</sup> century), through its use by English-speaking authors in the speech and thoughts of fictional characters (especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries), and up to its appearance in Doris Day’s 1956 hit song “Que Sera Sera (What Will Be Will Be)” — the proverb has appeared almost entirely in English-language contexts. Corpus searches show that the phrase has virtually no history in Spain or Italy: neither among proverbs nor in running prose. A possible origin in Middle French is suggested, but evidence of its grammaticality in that language is inconclusive. Some writers, misled by its form, cite it as evidence of a fatalistic attitude in Mediterranean cultures.

**Keywords:** corpus linguistics, fatalism, free relative pronoun, heraldry, mistranslation, mottoes, proverbs, pseudo-Italian, pseudo-Spanish, “que sera sera”

### *1. Introduction: An English proverb in Romance words.*

The phrase “Que sera sera” (rarely with accent marks in English), translated as “What(ever) will be will be,” has been adopted by many English-speakers as an expression of cheerful fatalism. Rather than connoting despair, it typically offers relief from worry about future events beyond human control. Although its most frequent spelling today has the appearance of being Spanish, it is ungrammatical in Spanish, has no history in Spain, and virtually never appears in a Spanish context. Prior to the 1950s, it appeared more often with an Italian spelling — “Che sarà sarà” (but rarely with accent marks) — yet, similarly, it is ungrammatical in Italian and has no history in Italy. Prior to the 1950s it is documented only by Eng-

lish-speaking writers and used almost entirely in English-language contexts. Even the few instances of the saying that seem at first to be in a Spanish or Italian context often turn out to be in works translated from English or written in those languages by authors whose first language was English (e.g. Teshe 1873 [manuscript dated 1582], Howell 1659, Armstrong 1988, Blonsky and Desnoes 2000, and Grogan 2006).

All evidence indicates that the saying originated in England. It first appears—with the unique, French-like spelling of “quy serra serra”—in an English manuscript of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, with a somewhat enigmatic function (Sec. 5.1). In the 16<sup>th</sup> century it was adopted as the heraldic motto of an aristocratic English family (Sec. 5.3), with the Italian spelling that was to be its predominant form for 400 years. Alongside that *emblematic* use, it begins to take on an *expressive* function in the speech and thoughts of fictional characters, as a manifestation of an individual’s fatalistic attitude toward a specific situation—occasionally in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and later with increasing frequency, especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In some of its instances, the saying appears with a translation or paraphrase; but in others—even some of the earliest ones—it appears on its own, suggesting that the reader may have been expected to understand it without semantic assistance.

The saying owes its present popularity to its use in the title and lyrics of a popular song, written by Jay Livingston and Ray Evans for Alfred Hitchcock’s 1956 movie *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, and first sung by Doris Day (Sec. 5.6). Livingston had recently seen and heard an Italian version of the saying in another Hollywood film, and he and Evans decided to respell it in Spanish for their song. Soon after the success of Doris Day’s version in English, the song was rewritten to be sung in many other languages, and in some of those languages, as well as in English, the phrase has been adopted by some speakers into their active vocabulary.

The present-day Internet provides rich resources for researching the history of the saying. Light can be shed on its popularity and various uses by means of searches in online linguistic corpora of Spanish, Italian, and English, designed for the purpose. In addition, the corpus of the *Google Books* project includes more than 15 million digitized books in many languages, many of which—especially the older ones—can be accessed and searched online, either in snippets or as whole text. A subset of this corpus, chosen for the *Google*

*Books Ngram Viewer*, lends itself for quantitative judgments about the varying frequencies of words and phrases through five centuries of history. The *Ngram Viewer* is based on a body of five million books, comprising more than 500 billion words, including 361 billion in English and 45 billion each in French and Spanish (Michel et al. 2011). In addition to these formal resources, anonymous bloggers, while not credentialed to speak with authority, can sometimes provide useful insights inadvertently through their usage or their thoughts about usage. And finally, some questions can be answered by searching the Internet at large, as a vast, unintentional linguistic corpus.

## 2. *Variations of form.*

Throughout its history, the saying appears in a variety of spellings resembling Spanish (“Que será será”), Italian (“Che sarà sarà”), French (“Qui sera sera”), or mixtures of Spanish and Italian. A few authors maintain the “correct” accent marks (acute for Spanish, grave for Italian), and a few others mix Italian accents with Spanish spelling or vice versa, but most authors omit the accent marks entirely. In order to background these differences when referring to the saying generically, I will lump the variants together under the abbreviation “KSS.” The most frequent spelling of the saying today is “que sera sera,” and that is the form of its main entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary* online. In speaking of the “Spanish,” “Italian,” or “French” versions of the saying, I refer only to their form (with *Que*, *Che*, or *Qui* respectively); I do not mean to imply that they come from Spain, Italy, or France—on the contrary, the concrete evidence of their early use is all from England (although I will speculate about a possible French origin in Sec. 3.3).

The form “**Che** serà serà” may look like a hybrid variant based on Italian *che* and Spanish *será*, but the Spanish-looking “serà” is more likely an archaic Italian form of the verb.<sup>1</sup> This form of the saying appears in sources ranging from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including Whetstone (1585), Marlowe (1604), and “Through Devious Ways” (1870). Meanwhile a true hybrid, “Què sara sara” (Spanish *qué* with Italian grave accent, and Italian *sarà* minus its accent), does appear, uniquely, in an English book published in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup>

The form “**Qui** sera sera”—which is ungrammatical in Modern French, but conceivably permissible in Old and Middle French (see

Sec. 3.3)—appears sporadically, first in the unique variant “quy serra serra” of the saying’s first documentation (Sec. 5.1), and later in books from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It appears both as a motto (in dozens of books on heraldry, including J. Burke 1839, J. B. Burke 1884, Elven 1851, and Fairbairn 1911 and 1968) and as a proverb in running text, expressed by both fictional characters and nonfiction authors (e.g. Sutcliffe 1896: 57; Lewin 1902/03: 89; Krishna 2000: 112; and Russell 2010: 41).

Indifference to these variations of form is prevalent among writers. In fact, many authors spell the saying in the Italian way even when writing specifically about the Doris Day song (which of course Livingston and Evans codified in Spanish). Some 20 instances of this latter juxtaposition can be found online at *Google Books* by searching simultaneously for “Che sara sara” and “Doris Day.” Authors include the noted philosophers Quine and Žižek, novelist Chinua Achebe, and the disk jockey Dick Clark, as in examples (1) through (4):

- (1) The question of future truths is a matter of verbal convenience and is as innocuous as Doris Day’s tautological fatalism “**Che sarà sarà.**” (Quine 1995: 199).
- (2) ...none other than the notorious “**Che sara, sara**” sung by Doris Day....” (Žižek 2001: 118)
- (3) Clara did not reply. Instead she started humming “***Che sarà sarà***” (Achebe 1960: 15)
- (4) The top ten was rounded out with such standard fare as “Lisbon Antigua” by Nelson Riddle, “Wayward Wind” by Gogi Grant, “Poor People of Paris” by Les Baxter, “Whatever Will Be, Will Be (**Che Sarà Sarà**)” by Doris Day,.... (Uslan, Clark, and Solomon 1981: 20)

Quantitative judgments about the relative frequencies of the different forms can only be given as rough approximations, due to a number of complicating factors arising from the nature of the available corpora.<sup>3</sup> But given that caveat, the varying popularity of the forms can be summarized as follows:

Among the 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century sources, both the Spanish and the Italian spellings are found, but both are so few that there is no statistical basis on which to claim that one is more frequent than the other. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Spanish spelling seems to fall out of



use, leaving only instances of the Italian form, mostly in the heraldic context.

The *Google Books Ngram Viewer* can be requested to show a graph of the relative frequencies of the Spanish and Italian spellings over time. Figure 1 is based on such a graph for “Che sara sara” and “Que sera sera.” Since the *Viewer* is case-sensitive, only the capitalized instances are counted on this graph. The form must occur 40 or more times in a year to register above zero on the graph. For this graph, the range of “smoothing” was set at the relatively high value of 20 years, in order to filter out the “noise” of yearly fluctuation and accentuate the long-term trends. Arranged in this way, the graph shows that the Italian spelling reached its peak in the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and that, beginning in the 1930s, its decline is mirrored by the rise of the Spanish spelling. Around 1950, the Italian spelling ceases its decline and assumes a somewhat constant frequency up to the present, while the Spanish spelling surpasses the Italian with a steadily increasing frequency. There is nothing to indicate anything like a “coup de grace” administered by Doris Day (1956) to the Italian spelling.

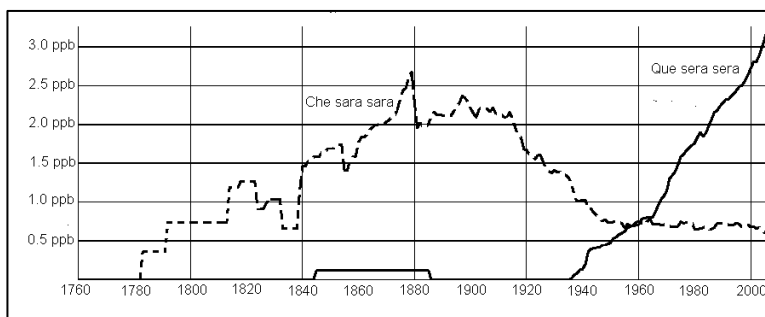


Figure 1: Comparative frequencies of “Che sara sara” (Italian spelling) and “Que sera sera” (Spanish spelling), 1760-2008. Graph adapted from *Google Books Ngram Viewer*; “ppb” = “parts per billion.”<sup>34</sup>

In the Italian spelling, the proportion of standard “sarà” to the archaic “serà” continues to be about 2 to 1.

The French spelling (“Qui sera sera”) never registers on the English-language *Ngram Viewer* (1500-2008); this means that its numbers never reach 40 in any given year, *in the corpus of books*

*published in English*. A search in *Google Books* nevertheless reveals 396 instances. I estimate that some 50% of these are in the (grammatically correct) French context of “*ce qui sera sera*”; about 33% are in heraldic reference books; some 12% are due to errors, either typographical or of an optical scanning device; and perhaps 5% appear in an English running text (mostly dialog in novels). Meanwhile, the *Google Books: American English* corpus (Davies 2011-) yields *no* tokens of “*qui sera sera*”—which is not surprising, given (1) that books in French are excluded, and (2) that the topic of heraldry is much less popular in the U.S. than in the U.K.

### 3. *Grammatical issues.*

The first clue that KSS may not be of Spanish, Italian, or French origin is its lack of grammaticality in those languages. It is clearly ungrammatical in Spanish, Italian, and Modern French, while its possible grammaticality in Old or Middle French, in my view, has yet to be confirmed. The English pronoun *what* has two functions, one interrogative and the other non-interrogative (the “free relative pronoun,” paraphrased by “that which” or “the thing that”). Thus it is not surprising that English-speaking learners of other languages, having acquired the interrogative early in their learning experience, frequently make the error of using the same form for the free relative pronoun.<sup>5</sup> But Spanish, Italian, and Modern French (as well as medieval French usually) each use two different forms for the two functions of English *what*. In these languages the interrogative is a single word (Spanish *qué*, Italian *che*, and French *que*), while the free relative is a two-word expression—Spanish *lo que*; Italian *ciò che*, *quello che*, or *quel che*, interchangeably; and French *ce qui* for the subject of a clause, or *ce que* for the direct object.

#### 3.1. *Ungrammatical in Spanish.*

The *Oxford English Dictionary* online, in its etymological discussion of “*que sera sera*,” recognizes the grammatical anomaly of the phrase, as follows: “In Spanish, the phrase *que será será* is ungrammatical, rare, and recent (1988 or earlier), and therefore probably borrowed [from] English.”<sup>6</sup>

In Spanish, the interrogative “what” is *¿qué?*, while the free relative “what” (= “that which”) is *lo que*, as in (5) and (6) respectively:

(5) ¿**Qué** dijo? — **What** did he/she say?

(6) No puedo creer **lo que** dijo. — *I can't believe **what** he/she said.*

Matthews (2007: 147) and Radford (2004: 233) call a clause such as “what he said” a “free relative clause,” highlighting its freedom from connection with any explicit antecedent, and I have adopted this term, along with “free relative pronoun” for the non-interrogative “what” of Spanish *lo que*. However, there seems to be no consensus among grammarians on a single, standard term for this construction, and some discuss it only through specific examples, without naming it.<sup>7</sup> This is the case with four Spanish reference grammars in English: Ramsey (1894/1956: 123-124—p. 161 of the online, 1894 ed.); DeBruyne (1995: 192); Butt and Benjamin (2000: 507); and Batchelor and San José (2010: 324). In addition, two of the four—DeBruyne, and Batchelor and San José—are careless about the distinction between two kinds of *lo que* in Spanish: the free relative pronoun (with *no* antecedent), which concerns us here, and the relative pronoun with *clausal* antecedent—also called a “sentential antecedent” (Crystal 2008: 411)—which does not. The former can be translated as “what,” “that which,” or “the thing that,” while the latter is translated simply as “which.” The relative *lo que* with clausal antecedent can be replaced by *lo cual*, while the free relative *lo que* cannot. DeBruyne, however, groups together the following two examples—here numbered (7) and (8), free and clausal respectively—under one heading, “Lo que/lo cual,” as if these were interchangeable:

(7) Recuerda **lo que** te dije ayer. — *Remember **what** I told you yesterday.*

(8) Sostenía que el hombre es pariente del mono, **lo que** regocijaba a doña Bernarda. — *He claimed that man is a relative of the monkey, **which** delighted Doña Bernarda.* (DeBruyne 1995: 192)

Meanwhile, Batchelor and San José also confuse the two categories of Spanish *lo que*, as follows:

**Lo que** is used as a relative pronoun when it refers to an idea or a statement that is expressed by the previous clause [i.e. the clausal antecedent]. Its closest equivalent in English is *that which* [true only for the free relative],

although this does not always fit the Spanish [a veiled allusion to the existence of the two categories]. It has the same value as **lo cual** [true only for the clausal relative]. (Batchelor and San José 2010: 324)

This explanation is followed by three examples—two clausal and one free—lumped together with no comment on the distinction. No clarity is gained by this additional comment:

**Lo que** is also used when it follows a neuter pronoun, or a noun used without article (or even with), or with the indefinite article. The meaning falls halfway between reference to a group of words or an idea and specific nouns. (Batchelor and San José 2010: 325)

Given that even grammarians tend to marginalize the free relative pronoun in these ways—having no unanimous term for it (and some having no term at all for it), occasionally merging it with other categories or omitting it altogether from outlines of grammar—it is not surprising that adult learners of Italian or Spanish might mistranslate it. How, then, do Spanish-speakers today deal with the ungrammaticality of KSS? Evidence from my informal queries to native speakers, as well as from the punctuation used in some of the online lyrics of Spanish versions of the Livingston and Evans song (e.g. Portal de Marieli, n.d.), suggests that it is heard as an interrogative (with the second word echoed, merely to fill the musical rhythm). The question “¿Qué será?” can mean “What will it be?” or “What is going to happen?”<sup>8</sup> Additionally, some present-day Spanish-speakers use KSS as a noun phrase (“un qué será será”) to mean something like “riddle” or “guessing game,” evidently akin to the Anglo-American parlor games *Twenty Questions* or *Botticelli* (see the example at “ForosChatestrella.com” 2006).

### 3.2. *Ungrammatical in Italian.*

Italian, much like Spanish, expresses the nonhuman (‘what’, not ‘who’) free relative pronoun with a compound (i.e. two-word) construction. One grammar presents it as follows:

The neuter relative pronouns, **quello che**, **quel che**, **ciò che**, are used to replace a general or abstract idea rather than a specific antecedent. They are similar to the English *what* and *that which*. All three of them are interchangeable.

**Ciò che** dici non è vero. **What** you say is not true.  
**Quel che** ti consiglio è di studiare. *What I suggest to you is to study.*  
 Non capisco **quello che** dice. I don't understand **what** he/she says. (Germano and Schmitt 2007: 234)

Of these three expressions, *quel che* is the most frequent in Italian proverbs.

In fact, the ungrammaticality of “Che sarà sarà” is emphatically condemned by the Italian author of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century Italian grammar for English-speakers (published in Britain), in a section on pitfalls for learners:

It is not, however, surprising to find a wrong *Italian motto*, in a country [Britain] where a multiplicity of volumes, professedly treating of the Italian grammar, and colloquial style, daily appear, containing the most absurd rules, and despicable barbarisms, which meet, nevertheless, with the warmest reception, even by the reviewers. As to incorrect Italian Mottos, even the English Peerage contains one. We read under the arms of a Most Noble Duke [i.e. the Duke of Bedford],

CHE SARA SARA.

The Italian adage, however, says so

SARA QUEL CHE SARA.

and it might have easily been corrected by attending an Opera Buffa, (*Gli Zingari in Fiéra*), performed at the King's Theatre (London) some years ago, where the music of the *Finale*, at the end of the first act, turned chiefly upon this proverb *Sarà quel che sarà*. (Galignani 1823: 219-220)

Although this latter form, “Sarà quel che sarà,” does not appear in Italian collections of sayings, its “correctness” is confirmed by the online *Corpus di Italiano Scritto (CORIS, n.d.)*, in which it occurs 14 times, while the tally for “Che sarà sarà” as an indigenous Italian saying remains at zero (see Sec. 4.3).<sup>9</sup>

One (American) collection of quotations points out the same grammatical error in “Che sarà sarà,” and offers virtually the same “correct” form as a replacement: “N.B. The Italian is not correct: it should be, ‘sarà qual [sic] che sarà’” (*A New Dictionary...*, 1860: 77).

In recent times, KSS (Italian spelling) has become so well established in the minds of some English-speakers as an Italian saying that it appears in chapter titles (but nowhere else) in teach-yourself textbooks of Italian for English-speakers. Thus Chapter 19 in Euvino (2004: n.p.) is titled “**Che Sarà Sarà**: Communicating in the Futuro”; Lymbery (2005: 232) titles her Chapter 7 “Progetti e previsioni—**che sarà sarà**: Plans and predictions—what will be”; and Picarazzi (2006: 113) titles Chapter 10 “**Che Sarà Sarà**: Looking Ahead with the Future Tense.” According to their respective titles, Picarazzi’s book is intended for “dummies,” and Euvino’s is for “idiots.”<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, we occasionally find instances in which Italian-speakers, in the post-Doris Day era, treat KSS as a foreignism, preserving its Spanish spelling in spite of its phonetic similarity to words in Italian (see Sec. 4.3). The Italian version of the Doris Day song, attributed to “Elgos” and “Pinchi” (1956),<sup>11</sup> does not bother to transliterate the words from Livingston and Evans’s Spanish into Italian (except for reorienting the accent marks from acute to grave): “**Que serà, serà** / e ciò che succederà / nessuno saper potrà / **Que serà, serà** / e nessun lo sa” (“Wikitest.com,” n.d.). As noted below (Sec. 5.7), at least twelve books with KSS in their titles have been published since 1970. Of these, the one that is in Italian and was published in Florence uses the Spanish spelling (Prete 1970).

### 3.3. *Grammatical in medieval French?*

The first documentation of KSS (Sec. 5.1), in the 1470s, with its French-like spelling, gives a tantalizing hint that the saying might have originated in Middle French—but I have found no data in support of that hypothesis. Collections of medieval French proverbs (Morawski 1925, Hassell 1982, Schulze-Busacker 1985—see Sec. 4.1) yield just one example of *qui* as an inanimate free relative pronoun, namely (9) (the translation is mine):

(9) **Ki** ne norit n’asavore. [**What** doesn’t nourish doesn’t taste pleasant.] (Morawski 1925: 74)<sup>12</sup>

A second example appears in the Old French dictionary of Godefroy (1889), under the heading “*Qui* sans antécédent.” Godefroy, without explicitly labeling them as such, gives four examples in context where *qui* is animate (‘he who’), and one in which it is

inanimate (‘that which’). The latter example is as follows (with my translation):

Je ne cuis home en trestot cest regné,  
 Mien esciant, james en vostre aé,  
 Qui vos osast, outre vo volenté,  
 Dire ne fere *qui* vos deust pezer.  
 [I believe that there is, in all your kingdom, nobody, in my  
 opinion, who dared, during your life, to say or do anything  
 that could give offense to you.]<sup>13</sup>

Another dictionary of Old French (Hindley, Langley, and Levy 2000: 1) implies the possibility of an inanimate free relative *qui* in its third entry for *cui* (to which the reader is directed from *qui*). That entry gives the grammatical function of the word as “*pro-n[oun] absolute*,” and gives English translations both animate (“he who, whoever, those who”) and inanimate (“that which, what”). But this dictionary does not provide examples in context.

Meanwhile, the testimony of grammarians is inconclusive. F. F. Roget’s only example of the inanimate free relative pronoun (“The Neuter *que*”) is a compound form with *que*: “*Ceu que* comandeit nos est,” rendered in Modern French as “*Ce qui* nous est commandé” (“That which we are commanded [to do]”) (Roget 1887: 183).

Foulet (1961) devotes six pages to relative pronouns; but *free* relative pronouns, rather than being treated as a discrete category, are accounted for only by allusion, with the observation that the relative *que* is used in the “locution” *ce que*. (In Modern French, the inanimate free relative is *ce que* when acting as the direct object of its clause, and *ce qui* when the subject.) In Foulet, examples of the *simple* free relative *que* appear only incidentally in a passing reference to the fossilized modern expressions “*coûte que* [object] *coûte*” (“regardless of cost”) and “*advienne que* [subject] *pourra*” (“come what may”)—with no comment on the suppression of *ce*, and no reference to *ce qui* or its possible reduction to *qui* (Foulet 1961: 6-183).

Einhorn interprets the example “Or escoutez que ge ferai” (“Now listen to what I will do”) as an omission of “the antecedent *ce* ... before the neuter pronoun *que*” (Einhorn 1974: 76). However, I see “que ge ferai” as an indirect interrogative, given its dependence on the information-handling verb “listen to” (“listen to [the answer to the question] what will I do”). In any event, for Einhorn,

the only *qui* without antecedent is animate: ‘he who’, ‘whoever’ (Einhorn 1974: 77 and 79).

Marchello-Nizia (1979: 159) cites (curiously, under an introduction that describes relatives with a *clausal* antecedent, rather than *no* antecedent) an example that some may view as an inanimate free relative *qui*: “Je vous diray *qui* bon me semble” (“I will tell you what seems good to me”). But, like Einhorn’s example, above, I consider this instance and others like it—appearing only with information-handling verbs (‘to write’, ‘to know’, ‘to tell’)—to be indirect interrogatives (“I will tell you [the answer to the question] what seems good to me”). The occasional role of *qui* as an inanimate *interrogative* in Old French is not in doubt.

Jensen discusses the free relative *qui* at length and with clarity, giving many examples, with English translations—but in all cases, the implied antecedent is animate: ‘he who’, ‘whoever’ (Jensen 1990: 219-221). There is no *qui* for free relative ‘what’.

Ménard (1994: 79), in his section (63) on relative *qui* without an antecedent, likewise gives only examples referring to persons, not things.

Buridant (2000: 142), treating *ce* in his section on determiners, establishes the contrast between two types of “*ce que* phrases” (his term, in French): conjunctive and relative. In the conjunctive type, *ce que* corresponds to “the fact that” and does not concern us here, while the relative type is our inanimate free relative pronoun. Buridant (143) refers specifically to the possibility, in the relative *ce que* phrase, for *ce* not to be expressed; he includes one example in which *que* is the subject of its clause (“Que plaist a cels, a cez ennuï”—“What’s pleasing to these [people] is irritating to those”). Buridant also makes passing reference to the same modern fossilized “*adviene que pourra*” cited by Foulet. However, he does not mention *qui* as an alternative to *que* in this construction.<sup>14</sup>

Elsewhere, in his brief chapter “Le relatif-interrogatif-conjonctif en *qu-*” (2000: 547-549) Buridant returns to the matter of the “relatif autarcique” (which I translate as “autonomous relative”), the relative without explicit antecedent. Here he reproduces a table from Kunstmann (1990: 6) showing how the forms *qui*, *que*, and *quoi* are distributed with regard to three variables: (1) use with or without an explicit antecedent; (2) animate or inanimate status; and (3) the role as subject, direct object, or indirect object. Of the ten cells in the table, one is vacant, namely the one that interests us: the cell for the



inanimate free relative as subject—which leaves “Qui sera sera” grammatically unaccounted for in Old French. (Kunstmann [personal communication] explains that the empty cell reflects the rarity of the form, and specifically its absence from the corpus on which his study was based.)

For Joly (2004: 71), like the other grammars, free relative *qui* represents only an indeterminate *person*, not an inanimate concept.

In these eight grammars, then, one searches in vain for strong support for the grammaticality of “Qui sera sera” in Old or Middle French. This fact, together with the rarity of examples of inanimate free relative *qui* generally in Old French, as well as the absence specifically of any written record of French-speakers using a version of KSS, leads me to doubt the hypothesis of a French origin for the saying. I find it more likely that the phrase was coined by English-speakers who mistranslated “What will be will be” into other languages.

#### **4. No Romance proverb.**

Although it is difficult to prove a negative, my searches in authentic collections of traditional proverbs in French, Spanish, and Italian have produced no trace of KSS. And in running prose, on the few occasions when native writers in these languages cite the saying, they tend to treat it as a foreignism.

##### **4.1. No French proverb.**

KSS does not appear in collections of French proverbs, whether of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Backer 10), of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Le Roux de Lincy 1842), or medieval (Morawski 1925, Hassell 1982,<sup>15</sup> Schulze-Busacker 1985). The saying does appear in the writing of Victor Hugo, in the preface to his melodrama *Cromwell*, but his use of the Italian spelling, “Che sara sara,” makes it clear that he does not consider it a French saying (Hugo 1827: 4). Spyropoulou-Leclenche, writing about the French lyrics of the Livingston and Evans song (copyrighted by E. Marnay in 1956), spells “será” with the Spanish accent, refers to our phrase as “l’expression espagnole,” and describes it as “sufficiently comprehensible in French not to be translated”—making it clear that she also considers it not French (Spyropoulou-Leclenche 1998: 146). French singers (e.g. Jacqueline François, online at <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8yRRpfd3QEs>>) render the “Que” with the [e] vowel of Spanish, not the

schwa of French *que*, and they generally give the *r* of “sera” a Spanish-like apical flap, rather than the standard French uvular pronunciation.

#### 4.2. *No Spanish refrán.*

Searches in 14 collections of Spanish sayings (*refranes*, *dichos*, etc.) find no trace of any aphorism such as KSS, nor indeed of any saying resembling it in the use of *que* as a free relative pronoun.<sup>16</sup> In contrast, most of these *refranero* reference collections contain dozens of sayings that begin with “Lo que,” including several whose meaning is similar to that of KSS. Examples (10) through (12) below are from Rodríguez Marín (1930: 182), while (13) and (14) are from other sources (the translations are mine):

(10) **Lo que** ha de ser, Dios o el diablo lo han de traer; *or*  
**Lo que** ha de ser, será: Dios o el diablo lo acarreará.—  
*What is to be, God or the devil will bring it about.*

(11) **Lo que** ha de ser, sea ya.—*What is to be, let it be.*

(12) **Lo que** ha de ser, ya fué.—**What** is to be, has already  
 been [determined].

(13) Dios sabe **lo que** será.—*God knows what will be.*  
 (Maldonado 1966: 122).

(14) **Lo que** ha de ser, será, o el mundo se hundirá.—**What**  
 is to be, will be; [the contrary is as unlikely as the end of  
 the world]. (“Recopilación...,” n.d.).

In fact, a near-equivalent of KSS (except for its use of *lo que*) appears in a 19<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish translation of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. Early in Act 4, Scene 1, where the English Juliet says “What must be shall be,” the translation has Julieta saying “Lo que será será” (Shakespeare 1880: 82). The translator, Guillermo Macpherson y Hemas (b. Gibraltar, 1824 – d. Madrid, 1898), in spite of his Scottish surname, evidently has native Spanish-speaker credentials in the form of a Spanish mother and lifelong residence in Spain (according to his biography in the Spanish-language *Wikipedia*).

Although it may be tempting to explain the ungrammatical free relative *que* as poetic license or otherwise special language for an aphorism, the fact that no other saying in Spanish follows that pattern rules that notion out.

KSS with its simple *Que* is absent not only from the collections of *refranes*, but also from running prose in Spanish generally. I base

this statement on searches in online corpora, as well as the Internet generally. KSS does not occur, for example, in either of the two corpora maintained by the Spanish Royal Academy—the diachronic *CORDE* (Academia, n.d.-1), with some 250 million words, and the contemporary *CREA* (Academia, n.d.-2), with more than 160 million—nor in the 100-million-word, diachronic *Corpus del Español* (Davies, 2002-). Similarly there is no trace of KSS in any of the books in Spanish, published between 1500 and 2008, that have been digitized for the immense corpus of the online *Google Books Ngram Viewer*. Where KSS does appear in the *Google Books* corpus—more than 800 times—is in books in English. And on the Internet at large, one way to demonstrate the Englishness, and the non-Spanishness, of “Que será será” is simply to perform a Google search for the expression in a Spanish context such as “Bueno pues **que será será**” (zero hits) and compare this with a search for it in an English context such as “Oh well **que sera sera**” (tens of thousands of hits). Meanwhile an *authentic* Spanish expression in the same Spanish context, such as “Bueno pues **así es la vida**” (“Oh, well, such is life”) also generates tens of thousands of hits.

#### 4.3. *No Italian proverb.*

No saying like KSS (i.e. neither “Che sarà sarà” itself nor any other aphorism beginning with “Che...” as a simple free relative pronoun) appears in the 16 compilations of Italian proverbs by *Italian authors* that I have been able to examine. For full disclosure I must mention three initially apparent exceptions, which nevertheless turn out not to be free of English influence: (1) KSS does figure in one 17<sup>th</sup>-century collection of purported Italian proverbs by an *English* author (Howell 1659: 13 [image 362]),<sup>18</sup> (2) Author Bill Vivio, in his memoir (Vivio 2008: 123), claims that his parents—*Italian-Americans* born in Pittsburgh in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century—were saying “Que sera sera” [sic, Spanish spelling] long before Doris Day sang it. And (3) “Che sarà sarà” does appear in the online collection of proverbs compiled by Anthony Parente, a self-described “first generation *Italian-American*” [my italics] (Parente, n.d.). However, there are no data from Italy to confirm an Italian origin of KSS. The Italian sources do offer dozens of proverbs containing the *compound* (i.e. two-word) free relatives “Quel che...” and occasionally “Quello che...,” as in examples (15) through (19). The translation of (18) is Torriano’s; the other translations are mine:

(15) **Quel che** si fa all'oscuro apparisce al sole.—*What goes on in the dark will come out in the light.* (Giusti and Capponi 1956: 76; Bellonzi 1968: 160)

(16) **Quel che** fu duro a patire, è dolce a ricordare.—*What was hard to suffer is sweet to remember.* (Giusti and Capponi 1956: 246; Bellonzi 1968: 7)

(17) **Quel che** non ammazza, ingrassa.—*What doesn't kill you makes you nice and fat.* (Giusti and Capponi 1956: 313; Bellonzi 1968: 30)

(18) **Quello che** non va in suole, va in tomaia.—*That which goeth not into the soles, goeth into the upper leather.* (Torriano 1649: 87).

(19) **Quello che** si fa il primo dell'anno si fa tutto l'anno.—*What you do on New Year's Day, you'll do all year long.* (“Wikiquote,” n.d.).

The online *Corpus di Italiano Scritto* (CORIS, n.d.) has just three instances of KSS. Two of these, (20) and (21) below, are in texts translated from non-Italian sources; and two of them, (21) and (22), use the Spanish spelling. The co-authors of (20), Blonsky and Desnoes, are American and Cuban respectively. Their article is accompanied by the statement “Traduzione di Margherita Zizi,” which leads me to suspect that its first version was written in English, Blonsky’s native language.<sup>19</sup> Example (21) is translated from a novel originally published in English, and I quote the corresponding sentence from its English source (the other translations are mine). And in the third example, (22), KSS appears in an authentic Italian context, but the use of the Spanish spelling, albeit with Italian grave accents, suggests that the author does not consider KSS an Italian saying.

(20) Oggi la distinzione tra finzione e realtà è diventata irrilevante, priva di interesse. **Che sarà sarà**, come canticchiava Doris Day. (*Today the distinction between fiction and reality has become irrelevant, uninteresting. What will be will be*, as Doris Day sang.) (Blonsky and Desnoes 2000: n.p.)

(21) “Credo che potremmo sospendere l’uso degli anti-concezionali e vedere quel che succede”, suggerii. “Ah”, fece Jenny con l’aria di chi la sa lunga “Il vecchio metodo **Que sera, sera** di pianificazione familiare” (Grogan 2006:

129). (“*I guess we could just go back off birth control again and see what happens,*” *I suggested. “Ah,” Jenny said knowingly. “The old **Que sera, sera** school of family planning*” [Grogan 2005: 111]).

(22) ... è sempre utile la conclusione di Altan, fra i lavoratori della vecchia classe, quella operaia: “E allora concedimi l’ultimo slow e poi **que serà serà**”. (... *it’s always helpful to remember Altan’s conclusion, among the workers of the old working class: “So give me the last slowdown [labor tactic] and then, **whatever happens happens.**”*) (Berselli 2007).

### 5. *History.*

The early historical record of KSS is sparse, and not very orderly. The saying appears in writing for the first known time—with the unique, French-like spelling “quy serra serra”—as part of a poem in an English manuscript of the 1470s. The earliest Spanish version, cast in a brass coat of arms that adorns a village church in Surrey, is dated 1559. And the Italian spelling was first recorded in 1582 (but perhaps adopted 30 years earlier) as the heraldic motto of a newly created English earl; and soon after that it reappears in a play by Christopher Marlowe.

Over the next three and a half centuries—its spelling more often Italian than Spanish, and rarely French—the saying grows in its expressive function in the speech and thoughts of fictional characters, while it continues also to be cited in its role as a heraldic emblem.

Finally, beginning in the mid-1950s, the saying is widely disseminated by the cinema and other mass media, mainly through the song made popular by Doris Day. As a result (judging by the frequency of its appearances in published texts), it undergoes a great increase in popularity as a saying in English, independent of its roots in motto and song.

#### 5.1. *The Trinity College manuscript.*

KSS is first documented in a manuscript held by Cambridge University’s Trinity College and thought to have been written, by an unknown author, shortly after the Battle of Barnet (1471). This battle was a decisive turning point in the Wars of the Roses, which established Edward IV on the English throne. One of several poems in

the manuscript, titled “Gaudete iusti in domino,” commemorates the battle and celebrates the good fortune of Edward’s subjects in having him as their king. The poem consists of four seven-line stanzas and a final couplet. Each stanza is bracketed by a curly brace (}) in red ink to its right, and to the right of that, as if a refrain, are the repeated words “Conuertimini ye comons and drede your kyng.”<sup>20</sup> The final couplet is similarly straddled by a red bracket, but in this case the refrain is our saying (see Figure 2), as follows:

Homo proponit [man proposes]: oftymes in veyn  
 But deus disponit [God disposes] The boke [i.e. the Bi- } quy serra serra  
 ble] telleth pleyn

The saying appears without translation or paraphrase, as if readers were expected to understand it: Edward’s victory was a result of God’s will, and, this being inevitable, it happened. These words beyond the brackets are clearly not a marginal afterthought, but rather an integral, planned part of the manuscript, and are of equal antiquity with it.<sup>21</sup>

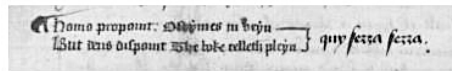


Figure 2: First documentation of KSS, in the unique, French-like spelling “quy serra serra.” From the Trinity College manuscript (ca. 1471), with permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge University.

The manuscript was edited and published in 1913 along with several others under the general title “Lydgatiana,” referring to the Middle English poet John Lydgate. The editor, H. N. MacCracken, points out, however, that this particular poem was wrongly ascribed to Lydgate—who died ca. 1451, twenty years before the Battle of Barnet. I read no particular significance into the use of *y* for modern *i* in *quy* (assuming French *qui* as a model): that is the norm throughout the poem (*myght*, *wryte*, *thyng*, etc.). It is rare to find French *sera* ‘will be’ misspelled with double *r*, but such forms can be observed in both medieval and modern texts.<sup>22</sup>

### 5.2. *The Thames Ditton brass.*

The Spanish spelling of KSS first appears in a coat of arms on a monumental brass that dates from 1559, located in St. Nicholas Church, in the village of Thames Ditton, Surrey (U.K.). The brass, measuring 25 by 18 inches, dedicated to Erasmus Forde and his wife Julyan, is depicted and described in detail by Stephenson (1914: 67-71). The coat of arms bears the motto “Qve sera sera,” and the dates of death for Erasmus and Julyan are given as 1533 and 1559 respectively (see Figure 3). Presuming the brass was cast soon after Julyan’s death, this first documentation of the Spanish spelling is thus dated some 20 years prior to that of the Italian version.<sup>23</sup>

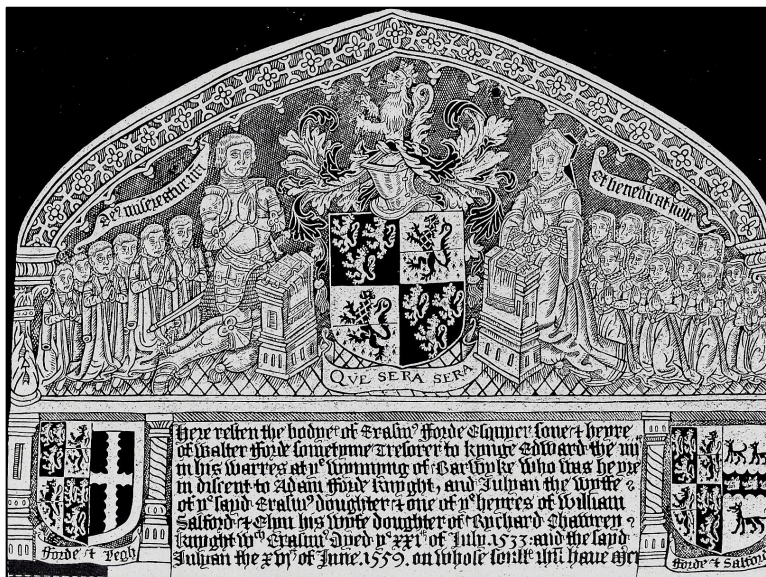


Figure 3: A rubbing of the Thames Ditton brass, first documentation of the Spanish spelling “Que sera sera,” ca. 1559, from Stephenson (1918: 68). Reproduced courtesy of Surrey Archaeological Society. Colors reversed for legibility. The original image is on page 48 of the online PDF document.

### 5.3. *The Earls of Bedford.*

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, England’s upper classes were in the process of discovering the Italian Renaissance; Lewis Einstein (1902: 97-107) describes their enthusiasm for studying the Italian language. John Russell (ca. 1485-1555) was known for his proficiency in

Spanish and Italian, and in fact his service as an interpreter was what initially brought him to the attention of the first in the series of three English kings whom he served (Henry VII, Henry VIII, and Edward VI).<sup>24</sup> The title of Earl of Bedford was created for him in 1549, in recognition of “[h]is services against the insurgents in the western counties” (Cunningham 1853: 73).

There is disagreement as to whether it was John Russell or his son Francis, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Bedford, who initially adopted KSS for the family motto. Einstein states (referring to John) that “the [yet to become] Earl of Bedford adopted *Che sarà sarà* for the motto of his house after the battle of Pavia [1525], at which he was present” (Einstein 1902: 98). And J. J. Foster asserts that “it was he [John Russell] who, according to the *Anecdotes of the House of Bedford* [i.e. E. Burke 97], changed the ancient war-cry of the Norman Rozels or Rousells, ‘*Diex aie,*’ for ‘*Che sara sara*’” (Foster 1884: 69). But Gladys Scott Thomson suggests that the motto may not have been adopted until after John’s death:

It may have been the second earl [i.e. Francis] who adopted as motto *Che sara sara*. We know that his father used a posy, *Plus que jamais*, and that his favorite saying was reported to be, “Sans l’ayde de Dieu, le ne puis.” We do not know if he ever used, “Che sara sara,” but he may have done. It is not impossible that he originated it, for Italian mottoes became very popular in the sixteenth century, but its first known appearance seems to be on his tomb. It was certainly recognised as the family motto in the time of his son. (Scott Thomson 1930: 228)<sup>25</sup>

John Russell’s language skills were “gained during some years of foreign travel” (Cunningham 1834: Vol. 2, p. 73); and yet it is possible that his knowledge of Spanish and Italian—while adequate for his duties as interpreter and diplomat—may not have extended to the niceties of the free relative pronoun.

On John Russell’s death, his son, Francis (1527-1585), became the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Bedford. It was common (though not required—see Clark 1829: 72) for a son to adopt his father’s heraldic motto. Whether it was inherited from his father or newly coined, Francis’s adoption of the motto is documented in two literary works that were dedicated to him: (1) one of odes by William Teshe to individual members of the Knights of the Garter (manuscript dated 1582, pub-



lished by Furnivall and Morfill 1873: 121); and (2) a 630-line versified biography, written by a servant of Francis Russell's, George Whetstone, on the occasion of his death (Whetstone 1585).

The three stanzas of the ode by Teshe (two in English and one in Italian, with my translation) are as follows:

Some sorte of men contynually forecast,  
and doe dyvine of thinges which maye insue,  
neuer respecting what is gone and past,  
but what's to come, that deeme they wilbe true,  
Though falce in fine; for why? by prooffe we see,  
**che sara, sara**, What shalbe, shalbe.

No fatall feare, or dread of destenye,  
can daunte a mynd which euer is resolv'd.  
Mans thought is fraile, his forecast vanitye,  
which when I ofte within my mynde revolu'd,  
I took my pen and writt this worde for me,  
**Chē sara, sara**, what shalbe, shalbe.

Per quant' a me non stimo dj Fortuna	As for me, I don't hold Lady Luck in high esteem
ch'ognj cose è al voler d'Iddio,	for all things are [subject] to the will of God.
non credo che Fortun' ha forz'alcuna:	<i>I don't think Fortune has any effect:</i>
mà <b>che sara sara</b> , ben dico Io, proui che vuol et egl'in fin dira	<i>but <b>what will be will be</b>: so say I try what you may, He will have the final say;</i>
fa tutto Iddio, <b>che sara sara</b> .	<i>everything is done by God, [and] <b>what will be will be</b>.</i>

(Teshe 1873: 121)

This is the closest that early KSS comes to being embedded in an Italian context, but—as in every other case—it is a context created by an English-speaking writer.

In the poem by George Whetstone, Stanza 32 narrates Russell's choice of a family motto:

To show he bilt his actions of the Lord,  
Not as the most, on fortunes smiling cheare:

He chose *Che sera, sera*, for his word.  
 Gods will shalbe, in heauen aboue and heare.

(Whetstone 1585)

With its date of 1585, it is the first *published* record of KSS.

Francis's great-grandson, William Russell, 5<sup>th</sup> *Earl of Bedford*, was created *Duke of Bedford* (sixth creation) in 1694 (*Wikipedia*, "Duke of Bedford"). His successors as Duke of Bedford kept the motto, and it appears on their coat of arms (see Figure 4).

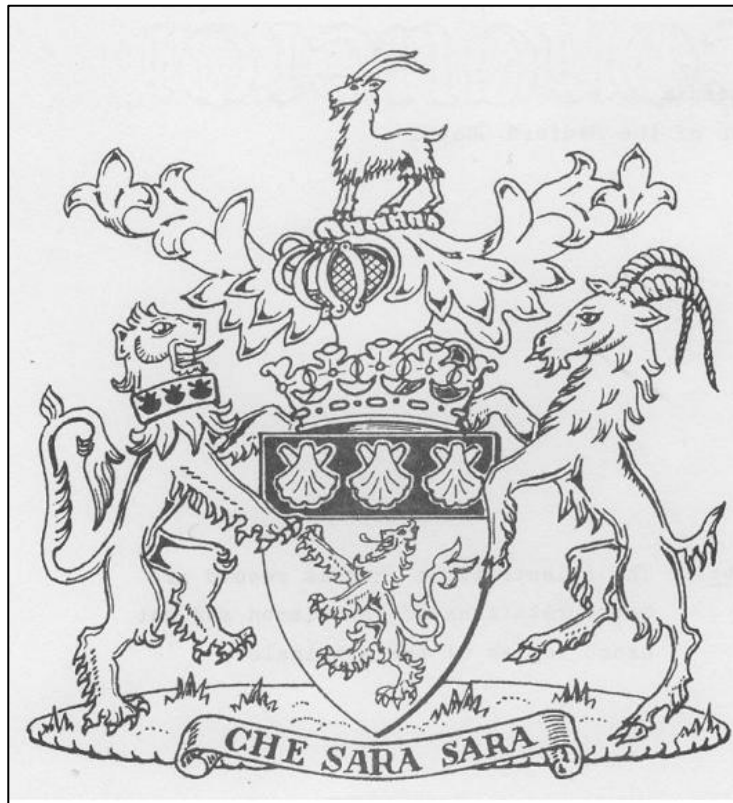


Figure 4: "Che sara sara" (Italian spelling) on the coat of arms of the Dukes of Bedford. An interpretation of the blazon, from the Bedford Chapel, Chenies, Buckinghamshire, with permission of the Middlesex Heraldry Society. Online at <[http://www.middlesexheraldry.org.uk/publications/monographs/chenies/cheniesBKM\\_images/cheniesBKM\\_Picture03.jpg](http://www.middlesexheraldry.org.uk/publications/monographs/chenies/cheniesBKM_images/cheniesBKM_Picture03.jpg)>.

#### 5.4. *Christopher Marlowe.*

The most famous of the early documentations of KSS appears in the play *Doctor Faustus*, written by Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593) in the late 1580s.<sup>26</sup> A heraldic motto functions mainly as an emblem for a family; it is debatable to what extent its literal meaning has importance (see Sec. 6.1). Nevertheless, it is clear from Whetstone’s poem (above) that he regards his master’s motto as a sign of piety, of submission to God’s will. By way of contrast, the same phrase is spoken by Marlowe’s character in order to scorn it, in defiance of religious orthodoxy (Marlowe was accused of being an atheist). In Act 1, Scene 1, Doctor Faustus is weighing the theological doctrine of predestination:

[Reads.]

Stipendium peccati mors est

The reward of sin is death: that’s hard.

[Reads.]

Si peccasse negamus, fallimur, et nulla est in nobis veritas;

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and there’s no truth in us. Why, then, belike we must sin, and so consequently die:

Ay, we must die an everlasting death.

what doctrine call you this, *Che sera, sera,*

What will be, shall be? Divinity, adieu!

(Marlowe 1604/2008)

In this instance, Marlowe (through Faustus) is quoting the still-emblematic motto, but he gives it some semantic life by imputing meaning to it and arguing with it. Biographies of Marlowe (e.g. Honan 2005: 52) speak of his fondness for the (Latin) writers of ancient Rome, but they give no indication of his proficiency in Italian or specifically how he might have come to know the motto. There is no mention of Italian travel by Marlowe in the detailed chronology of Kuriyama (2002: xiii-xix). His archaic Italian spelling of “serà” matches that of George Whetstone’s poem for the Earl of Bedford.

#### 5.5. *Three and a Half Centuries of KSS.*

From the early 17<sup>th</sup> century on, the Spanish spelling and—more frequently until the 1950s—the Italian spelling are both evident, serving both the heraldic and the expressive functions. In fact, the first purely expressive use of KSS appears (with the Spanish

spelling) soon after its citation in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. In the play *Cupid's Whirligig*, by Edward Sharpham, the character Nuecome (or Nuecome) says, with no supportive paraphrase, "Well, since tis thus, hence foorth ile loue thee euer, for *que sera, sera*, gainst what plots so euer" (Sharpham 1607, n.p.).

Additional instances of the Spanish spelling in the 17<sup>th</sup> century are found in the British government's *Calendar of State Papers* and on a gravestone dated 1677. In the *Calendar* entry for September 19, 1634, there is reported the situation of one Captain Hannibal Bonithon, residing in an English castle and contemplating the possibility that he may lose his right to continue living there. His presumed attitude of resignation is expressed with KSS in the Spanish spelling:

St. Mawes' Castle. Capt. Hannibal Bonithon to Nicholas. Knows not what is intended of him there. Hears daily reports that the place will be given over his head; if it be, *que sera, sera*, he will retire, and live private. (*Calendar of State Papers*, 1864: 211)<sup>27</sup>

I do not find another expressive use of Spanish KSS until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Meanwhile, the gravestone, located in the parish of Wimbledon, county of Surrey, bears a coat of arms that is described in heraldic terminology as follows:

On the ground are flat gravestones, with these inscriptions. Arms at top.—Argent, a fess gules, in chief, a lion passant gardant sable, all within a bordure engrailed ermine. Crests on a wreath, a lion's head, coupé sable, collared Argent. Motto, "**Que sera sera.**" "Here lyeth Richard Betenson, [...] He departed this life in the 45<sup>th</sup> year of his age, 1677." (Bartlett 1865: 77)<sup>28</sup>

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the motto appears in several books on the English aristocracy, always with the Italian spelling, and always as the motto of the Russell family: the Earls—and later, Dukes—of Bedford (e.g. Collins 35: Vol. 1, p. 119; Millan 49: 4 (fig. 10); Clark and Wormull 79: 7).

Also in the 18<sup>th</sup> century we see a great increase in the use of KSS in running text to carry out the expressive function. One fictional character who uses KSS to convey an attitude labels it an "Italian Doctrine" (italics in original):

I thank you dear *Morton*, says *Archy*, go and try to persuade my good Mother to believe the *Italian Doctrine*, *Che sara sara*, or in plain *English Proverb*, you know, Cousin, that *Marriages are made in Heaven* (Kidgell 55: Vol. 1, p. 288).

Here KSS is accompanied by a proverb in English, perhaps as an indirect semantic aid. More cryptic is its appearance in the caption of a 1780 satirical engraving, the equivalent of an editorial cartoon, entitled “Chatham’s Ghost, or a Peep into Futurity: Che Sara Sara” (Wells 80; accessible online). Tamara Hunt describes the picture as follows:

George III sits on a throne, and the torn petitions from the county associations lie under his feet. The ghost of Lord Chatham shows him the result of neglecting the petitions of his people: in an inset picture, devils conduct the kings of France and Spain, followed by Lord North and other leaders of the British government, towards a pit inscribed “Chaos” (Hunt 2003: 47).

Perhaps the point of KSS in the caption is to imply that the punishment of a despot will eventually come to pass.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Italian KSS continues to figure in reference works on heraldry (e.g. De la Motte 1803: 164; Lodge 1834: 51; and Mair 1873: 114). In addition to the surname Russell, Mair links it also with the name Chatford, and B. Burke (1880: 345) with the name De Clifford.<sup>29</sup>

Even in heraldic use, KSS in Spanish spelling is rare before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But in 1829 (or perhaps as early as 1775<sup>30</sup>) it appears as the heraldic motto linked to the English surname Folkes, in a treatise on English heraldry by the engraver Hugh Clark (Clark 1829: 312). The prior use of the motto in Italian did not pose a problem for those who chose to adopt it in a Spanish version. Clark explains:

The motto, *mot*, *word*, *expression*, *saying*, or *epigraph*, added or appropriated to arms, not being hereditary, may be taken, changed, varied, or relinquished, when and as often as the bearer thinks fit; and may, with impunity to the assumer, be the very same as is used by other families (Clark 1829: 72).

Another early heraldic appearance of the Spanish KSS is on a medal engraved in 1835 for the “Woodmen of Arden,” a British archery club. The association owns a ceremonial bugle that is adorned with 42 commemorative medals. The engraving on Medal #29 is described in heraldic terminology as follows:

*Escutcheon*, sable; a fess wavy or [i.e. gold color], between three wolfs’ heads erased argent. “*Que sera sera.*” *Reverse*, 50<sup>th</sup> year. STANLEY PIPE WOLFERSTAN, Aug. 12, 1835. (Woodmen of the Forest of Arden, 1885: 57)

Soon after this, “Que Sera Sera” appears, again with more emblematic than expressive function, on a gravestone in the “Tomb House” of St. Mary’s Church in Watford (Hertfordshire, England) dated 1837 (*Railrodiana* 1839: 33). The watchful reader will note that the individual commemorated here, “Harriet, Wife of Richard Ford,” shares her surname with Erasmus and Julyan “fforde,” named on the Thames Ditton brass some 30 miles to the south and 300 years prior in time. None of my heraldic sources, however, link the name Ford(e) with “Que sera sera.”

The “French” spelling, “Qui sera sera,” also is occasionally recorded as a motto of several families, associated with the surname “Ffolkes” (J. Burke 1839: 405), also spelled “Folkes” (Elven 1851: n.p.); with the names “Wolferstan” (as on the bugle cited above—or Pipe-Wolverstan in Fairbairn 1968: 447) and “Edgell” (J. B. Burke 1884: p. 1,179; “*Armorial Gold*” [n.d.]); and with “Betenson,” “Betenson,” “Betterson,” “Bettinson,” and “Bettison” (Fairbairn 1911: 49 and 1968: 51).

By the second quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the expressive use of the saying is well established, and it occurs casually in the dialog (or, often, in interior monologs) of novels. Authors evidently feel no need to translate or explain its meaning: “‘*Che sara sara!*’ said Alford, in a tone of vexation” (Pickering 1834: 194); “‘*Che sara sara!*’ muttered Catherine” (Mancur 1834: Vol. 1, p. 82); “‘*Che sara, sara,*’ thought poor Cunnington” (Hendriks 1847: Vol. 2, p. 59).

No doubt the standing of the saying, the belief in its authenticity, is enhanced by its appearance in reference books (in English) (e.g. Jones 1925; King 1958). One of these, in the United States, is the prestigious Webster’s dictionary, which includes a section (“Proverbs and Phrases from the Italian and Spanish”) containing the saying in its Italian spelling: “*Che sarà, sarà,*” translated “What-

ever will be, will be” (Webster 1856: 459). This list of foreignisms was not prepared by the dictionary’s originator, Noah Webster (1758-1843), but rather by his son, William, for an edition prior to 1856 (Webster 1856: iv). Meanwhile, *Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (Merriam-Webster 1990) continues to include the Italian KSS in its list of “Foreign Words and Phrases.”

#### 5.6. *Doris Day et al.*

The popularity of the saying today is due almost entirely to its propagation by the song that was first heard in Alfred Hitchcock’s film *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. The general history of the Livingston and Evans songwriting team is well documented (for example in Ewen 1987:256-259;<sup>31</sup> Severo 2001; Severo 2007; and “In Loving Memory...” 2001). Briefly, Jay Livingston (1915-2001) and Ray Evans (1915-2007)—billed as composer and lyricist, respectively—met while students at the University of Pennsylvania (both graduated in 1937). Their long collaboration produced many popular songs, many of which were written for movies and television. “Que Sera, Sera (Whatever Will Be Will Be)” won an Oscar, their third song to do so.<sup>32</sup>

The specific history of this song is recounted in the item on Ray Evans in the “Anecdotes” section of the online art newspaper *Artdaily.org* (“Anecdotes,” n.d.), as well as by Sullivan (2006: 192-193). Evans summarized this history in a letter to me (Evans 1995), written in learner’s Spanish, responding to my inquiry (in English). Director Alfred Hitchcock requested a song whose title would be in a foreign language, and which could be sung by a mother to her child. Livingston had recently seen *The Barefoot Contessa*, a 1954 film written and directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz, in which an Italian family has the motto “che sara sara” carved in stone at their ancestral castle, as well as on the gravestone of the Contessa.<sup>33</sup> Livingston immediately copied down the slogan (in the darkness of the theater!) as an idea for a song title. On receiving Hitchcock’s assignment of a song for his film, Livingston and Evans already knew what foreign phrase they would use for its title (Pomerance 2001; “Anecdotes,” n.d.).

But who, between Evans and Livingston, decided to “translate” the phrase from Italian to Spanish, and why? And whose knowledge of Spanish was called on for the task? The account in “Anecdotes” says “They [referring to both Livingston and Evans] changed the

spelling to the Spanish ‘Que Sera Sera’ because there are so many Spanish-speaking people in the world.” Evans, in his personal letter, explains as follows (my translation):

Mi colega, Señor Livingston fué muy impresionada con la película y el anotó esta frase como un posible título por una canción; solamente el tradujo en Español porque este language pareció mejor por una canción de éxito. (*My colleague Mr. Livingston was very impressed with the film, and he made a note of this phrase as a possible title for a song; only he translated [it] into Spanish because this language seemed better for a hit song.*) (Evans 1995).

I take Evans’s “solamente” as a mistranslation of the English *conjunction* “only” (meaning ‘with the qualification that’), rather than a statement that his partner acted alone (“only he”) in altering the language of the saying. One obituary, with regard to this specific song, refers to “Ray Evans’s lyrics (on which the composer *Livingston lent a hand*)” (my italics; “Ray Evans, lyricist,” 2007). The coining of the title “Que Sera Sera” probably must be attributed to both partners as a collaborative decision.

The Spanish of Evans’s letter shows that, in spite of grammatical errors, he had a communicating command of the language. In the letter, he explains that his interest in Spanish began when he was a university student, and that he continued to learn while he and Livingston were working as musicians aboard cruise ships in the Caribbean and Latin America. Presumably Livingston also learned some Spanish from that experience. Evans is modest in referring to his language skill, as he offers to answer my queries “en mi mal Español,” and (knowing that I was a teacher of Spanish) he suggests that it might receive a grade of “d.” He apologizes for continuing (at the age of 80!) to practice his Spanish “solamente ... veinte minutos cada mañana” (“*only 20 minutes each morning*”). All this is in keeping with the statement in his *New York Times* obituary, in which he is described as “a self-deprecating fellow” (Severo 2007). I draw attention to his proficiency level simply to show that he might not have been bothered by the reduction of compound *lo que* to simple *que*.

The Livingston and Evans song has been recorded by a variety of singers (and instrumentalists) in a variety of languages, and in a great variety of styles and tempos. Brief samples of 35 versions can



be heard online at MusicMe.com (n.d.), including renditions in Danish, English, French, Mandarin, Spanish, and Swedish. YouTube offers full-length versions in Japanese (Hayama 1996), Mandarin (Teng 2011), and other languages. In the search for “translated” versions, it is much easier to find the names of the performers than of those responsible for rewriting the lyrics.

### 5.7. *Beyond English.*

In the contemporary era, KSS is a popular theme for titles of books and periodical articles in a variety of languages. The WorldCat library catalog reveals the existence of 12 books with *Que Sera Sera* as (or in) their titles, published between 1970 and 2008: seven in English (published in the U.S., the U.K., Australia and New Zealand), two each in Spanish and Japanese, and one each in Italian and German. One of the books in English is about Doris Day’s television career, while subject matter in the other books ranges among poetry, fiction, biography, child care, and parapsychology. Both of the titles in Spanish punctuate and accent KSS as a question. Additionally, the Italian spelling appears in the titles of two novels: one published in London (Snaith 1926) and the other in Austria (Schablhofer 2008/2011).

A search for the phrase “Que sera sera” at <<http://books.google.com/>> finds not only books with KSS in their titles, but also books with KSS among their *chapter* titles, as well as books that simply refer to KSS in passing. They include reminiscences about the music of the 1950s, novels in which characters rationalize the ironies of fate, and solemn discussion by philosophers, psychologists, and theologians about the fatalistic worldview represented in the saying. Books, both fiction and nonfiction, with KSS in their chapter titles include Yorke (1888: 71), Earman (1986: 18), Vivio (2008: 123), and others. Limitations of space prevent my listing here all the book, chapter, article, and poem titles that include one or another version of KSS, but many of these can be found through online searches in *Google Books* <<http://books.google.com/>>. This source is preferable to the general Google search engine, as the latter device tends to “correct” the spelling of search phrases to fit that of the Doris Day song.

Meanwhile, a search in Ebsco Host finds more than 40 periodical articles with KSS in their titles, dating from 1983 to 2011 and dealing with varied topics, some with an obvious connection to the

meaning of KSS (e.g. decision-making, free will), and others not so obvious (mass media, education, medicine, sports, video games, economics, and business).

Coincidentally, two movies made in 2002 assumed the title *Que Sera Sera*: a Norwegian short film directed by Geir Greni (Snurr Film AS, n.d.), and a Brazilian feature film directed by Murilo Salles (Young 2002). In Portuguese, the phrase is equally ungrammatical as in other Romance languages.

Not only has the song been recorded by dozens of performers and rewritten in many languages, and its title transferred to other literary works, but also the KSS phrase has taken on new life as a title of other cultural artifacts, often to give them an air of carefree abandon. These are easily found on the Web: vacation rentals in Florida, Portugal and Western Australia; restaurants in Quebec, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Japan (two: in Shimoda and Ichikawa); a nightclub in Long Beach, California; a midwifery service in the state of Maine; and a sandwich shop in Bedford, Pennsylvania (Italianate version, as in the motto of the Earl of Bedford). And the song, reworded, has become an anthem for some soccer teams in Britain and Ireland. The *Que Sera Sera* was the first airplane to land at the South Pole, on October 31, 1956, just five months after the June 1 release of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*.

In Chekhov's play *The Seagull*, near the beginning of Act Two, where the character Arkadina says in Russian "Chemu byt', togo ne minovat'"—literally "What will be, there is no escaping"—the translator Stephen Mulrine finds the closest English equivalent to be "Que sera, sera" (Chekhov 1997: 23).

KSS—in both song and saying—is known in East Asia. One of the Japanese book titles (Otsuka 2002) incorporates in addition an authentic Spanish theme: *Ginza itchome no don kihote: Que sera sera* ("A [modern-day] Don Quixote in the Ginza district [of Tokyo]: Que sera sera"). A Japanese "J-pop" band called Aicle released a song in March 2010 entitled "Que Sera, Sera" and having those words, but nothing else, in common with the Doris Day song (Aicle 2010). "Que Sera, Sera" is also the title of a Korean television series, first aired in 2007, referenced at HanCinema.net (n.d.). A horse named "Che Sara Sara" won the Hong Kong Derby in 1996. And an Indonesian book on "health at a glance" tosses "Qui sera sera" into its discussion of panic attacks— though not without a

paraphrase in Indonesian, “apa yang harus terjadi, akan terjadi” (Krishna 2000: 112).

### 6. *Commentary.*

The English saying “Que sera sera” (“Che sara sara,” etc.), in its historical development, presents a unique sequence of metamorphoses. From its initial use as an aristocratic motto, with mostly emblematic function, it emerges as a popular proverb, available to individuals to express their fatalistic attitude toward specific situations. And the foreignness of its constituent words, also perhaps initially emblematic—as a symbol of erudition, or at least of cosmopolitanism—is transformed by some observers into support for stereotypical thinking about fatalism in Mediterranean cultures.

#### 6.1. *A motto is not a proverb.*

Having seen how KSS originated, we are now in a position to understand why, aside from its being ungrammatical, the search for it in collections of proverbs was a mission doomed to fail: heraldic mottoes and folk proverbs are as different as aristocrats and peasants. The language of proverbs—although often rhymed and/or telegraphic—is generally the vernacular of the common people, while most heraldic mottoes are composed in foreign languages. For example, in Mair’s (1873) list of nearly 3,000 English mottoes, 79% are in Latin, 9% are in French, and only 10% are in English. (Mottoes in Italian and Spanish are rare, numbering seven and three, respectively, in this collection.)<sup>34</sup>

Proverbs treat a broad range of subjects: human relations, the natural world, the human body, religious concepts, human character, civic relations, etc. Heraldic mottoes, on the other hand—those whose meaning can be discerned—tend to concentrate on lofty character traits such as loyalty, piety, and courage. Simpson and Speake (2008: ix) classify proverbs in three types, depending on their abstractness: proverbs may be (1) abstract and literal (e.g. “Absence makes the heart grow fonder”); (2) concrete and figurative (e.g. “Don’t put all your eggs in one basket”); or (3) concrete and literal (e.g. “Red sky at night, shepherd’s delight; red sky in the morning, shepherd’s warning”). Mottoes, in contrast, tend to be mostly of the abstract-and-literal kind—e.g. “Fortis et fidelis” (“Brave and faithful”). Occasionally they are concrete-and-figurative—e.g. “Noli irritare leones” (“Do not irritate lions,” inten-

tionally punning on the surname Lyons)—but never concrete and literal.

While proverbs, figurative or not, are almost always subject to some semantic interpretation, it is not unusual for a motto to be cryptic, or, in the word of Lower (1845: 155), “enigmatical.” Examples of this latter kind of motto include “Sic donec” (Latin, “Thus until”; surnames Egerton, Jopp); “Cause caused it” (in English; surname Elphinstone); and—according to Hogg (1848: 301), “a perfect riddle” —“Per il suo contrario” (Italian, “By the reverse of it”; surname Paget).<sup>35</sup>

Lower (1845: 155) places KSS in the “enigmatical” category, and Hogg (1848: 301) agrees, calling KSS one of “a number of family mottoes in which not much meaning, or at least no very pointed meaning, can be discerned.” Of KSS in particular, Hogg says “This is a comfortable bit of fatalism, having no very great appropriateness, one would say, as a family motto” (Hogg 1848: 301). This shortage of meaning may be what the character Count Vincenzo Torlato-Favrini in *The Barefoot Contessa* meant in calling his family motto “unimaginative.”

As we have observed, KSS is absent from collections of Italian and Spanish proverbs. In fact, there is no other saying with a parallel use of Spanish *que* or Italian *che* as a simple free relative pronoun, among sayings *of folk origin*. But among the *heraldic* sayings listed by Clark, we do find another free relative *che*: “Che Dio vuole [sic, for *vuole*], Io voglio. *What God wills, I will*. L[ord] Dormer” (Clark 1829: 297).<sup>36</sup> Note that it is not a proverb from Italy, but rather a motto contrived for an English-speaking nobleman.

### 6.2. *From emblematic to expressive.*

Most of the early documentations of KSS are emblematic in function; that is, the literal meaning of the phrase is of lesser importance than its heraldic role as an identifier of an individual or family. (The very first recorded instance of the saying, in the Trinity College manuscript, is exceptional, fitting neither the emblematic nor the expressive category very well.) KSS as a heraldic motto, while its general fatalism is unanimously recognized, is variously described also as “unimaginative,” “enigmatical,” and having “not much meaning” and “no very great appropriateness.” From this semantically lightweight beginning, KSS expands into an expressive function, whereby English-speakers can spontaneously utter, mut-

ter, or think it to themselves as a comforting device in the face of cruel fate. There was evidently a semantic niche in English waiting to be filled by it.

The following example, from fiction, bridges the gap between the emblematic and expressive functions by presenting the saying first in its role as a motto, immediately followed by one of the characters appropriating it to express his own feelings:

They had reached the house, and Beatrice pointed to the motto over the door. “**Qui sera sera**,” she said. And, as he bent down to kiss her hand, he also whispered “**Qui sera sera**,” with a sense of complete satisfaction. (Sutcliffe 1896: 57)

A typical example of the expressive KSS with rich semantic support from its context appears in an autobiographical reminiscence by Holme Lee:

Already it appeared that my rede was being spun for me, and that I had but to look on and submit. My childish impatience and wilfulness being gone, into their place had come, in lieu of higher trust, a certain passive humility; half fatalist perhaps. I said to myself, “*Che sarà, sarà*,” and ceased struggling with the blind time that had overtaken me. (Lee 1860: 124)

Elsewhere, in an anonymous short story in *Catholic World* magazine, we find KSS again used as a verbal way to “cease struggling” with decisions about the future: “‘If she is not at home,’ I thought, ‘that vow shall be registered and kept; if she is, *che sera sera*’” [italics in original] (“Through Devious Ways” 1870: 555). Here the writer evidently feels no need to translate the phrase, even though there is little in the context to elucidate it: it stands on its own for meaning. In this latter example, as well as the one from Lee (1860), above, KSS occurs in a character’s private thoughts; and likewise in many other instances the expressive use of the saying is found in an interior monolog.

The fatalism of KSS is usually light-hearted, but it is sometimes portrayed with a darker side, as in this description from an autobiographical account: “He is peevish, despairing, has a presentiment that he shall die soon, and utters as his sole consolation the not very

consolatory Italian words, ‘*Che sarà sarà*’” (Mereweather 1859: 162).

In a novel by Elizabeth Gaskell, KSS is used as a noun phrase, evidently meaning “inevitability”: “It was no use reasoning to them on the subject; so Mr. Browning [...], Mr. Sheepshanks [...], and Mr. Hall [...] left off the attempt, feeling that the *Che sarà sarà* would prove more silencing to the murmurs than many arguments” (Gaskell 1864: 148).

Expressive KSS generally serves to relieve the speaker or hearer from worry about the future (it is, after all, formulated in the future tense). But occasionally it serves to relieve the tension of an expression of disapproval about past events, as in (23) and (24):

(23) There are those who make their living out of the book-stalls by buying to sell again, a sordid use to make of the immortal thoughts of mankind, but *qui sera sera*. (Lewin 1902/03: 89)

(24) The USA was blamed for sending another rocket into space, but the cynical rest just shrugged their shoulders and thought “**Qui Sera Sera**”, and left it at that! (Russell 2010: 41)

### 6.3. *Ethnic stereotypes.*

Throughout the history of KSS as an expressive device we find the saying used in a variety of contexts, including (1) those in which *no* allusion is made to Italian or Hispanic speakers or settings (the majority); (2) those that seem to imply some relation between the saying and a Romance-speaking character or setting; and (3) those that make an explicit connection between the fatalism of KSS and the Spanish- or Italian-speaking cultures. For the Russells (16<sup>th</sup> century) or the Folkeses (19<sup>th</sup> century), their respective decisions to couch their family mottoes in Romance languages may have been somewhat arbitrary, or perhaps based on the current prestige—in England—of Italy or Spain, respectively, in those two eras of history. And yet, in choosing those languages, they created for English-speakers a receptacle into which to project their beliefs about fatalism in Mediterranean cultures.

The link between ethnicity and fatalism is sometimes subtle, as when an English-speaking author simply puts KSS in the mouth of an Italian- or Spanish-speaking character, or juxtaposes the saying

with a Mediterranean setting. In the following example, an anonymous (Anglo-American) visitor to Venice asks

[W]ho that has known that pleasure of all pleasures, the gliding down the Grand Canal of Venice in a gondola, [...] has not paused before the *Ca' d'Oro*, and envied its possessor, before asking the possessor's name? —“*Sior! La Taglioni*,”<sup>37</sup> being the answer of the *Checco* or *Damiani* who sculls the traveller forwards. But “*che sara, sara*” (“Musical and Dramatic Gossip” 1859: 216c).

Here the phrase seems to function merely as a discourse marker, a sign of ending a topic with indifference, translatable as “Oh well”—but a marker couched in Italian words to resonate with the setting of the sketch.

In another example, the saying occurs, with Spanish spelling, in the speech of a Cuban character in a short story set in Tabasco, Mexico. The members of a survey team on an expedition to map a section of the Gulf Coast are contemplating camping overnight in a swampy area where a “fever fog” (a miasma) is beginning to form, and they are discussing it as a possible threat to their lives:

The gallant Cuban shrugged his spare shoulders again, and setting his theodolite-stand down, deliberately rolled and lighted a fresh cigarette. “*Que sera sera*,” he said, blowing the blue smoke from his nostrils. “We must all die when our time comes. What matters it, then, where or how?” (Leslie 1882: 17)

Although the expression is not translated here, its meaning is supported by the fatalistic tenor of the accompanying speech and the shoulder shrug.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a recent history of World War II seems to use KSS to characterize the Italians, as a group, as fatalist: “The four battles of Monte Cassino were fought by [12 nationalities], although not by the Italians themselves, the majority of whom had by now largely adopted a *che sara sara* attitude to their national fate” (Roberts 2011: ii).

In other cases, the generalization to an entire nationality is more explicit. We have already seen (Sec. 5.5) how, as early as 1755, KSS is said to represent an “Italian doctrine.” In recent times, the link from KSS to Latino fatalism is made straightforward in a dic-

tionary of cultural “code words” intended for U.S. travelers to Mexico, as it uses a misaccented version of KSS (“Qué Sera Sera!”—or, in the Table of Contents, “Qué Sera Sera!”) as the subtitle of the chapter “Mañana,” which deals with the stereotype of relaxed attitudes toward time in Mexico (DeMente 1996: 182). And in the following example, from present-day nonfiction, our phrase has taken on such reality in the English-speaking world that it is now known as a “fatalistic Hispanic concept.” The passage refers to a case study of a Filipino-American patient in a hospital who fails to request medication for pain. The author explains as follows:

Filipinos may appear stoic because they believe pain is the will of God and thus God will give them the strength to bear it. Besides, one cannot change it. This attitude is reminiscent of the fatalistic Hispanic concept *Qué será será*. (Galanti 2008: 56).

We might ask why a phrase that is ostensibly from another language was enlisted in English to express the idea that human will is helpless in the face of fate. Sociolinguist Jane H. Hill advances the theory that English-speakers incorporate words of Spanish into their speech as an indirect way of expressing their (generally negative, even “racist,” according to Hill) stereotypes about Latinos. Thus, for example, young Anglo men in the American Southwest may invite one another for a beer by saying “Let’s get together and crack a few cervezas”; Hill interprets this as follows:

It probably means something like this [...]: “On this occasion, we will be relaxed about alcohol, the way we believe that Mexicans are relaxed about alcohol, rather than careful and responsible and sober like White people.” (Hill 2008: 42).

In a similar way, KSS may resonate, among some English-speakers, with the stereotype that Mediterranean, Romance-speaking people do not plan for the future, nor try to exert their will against fate. In this view, it would be seen as significant that English-speakers adopted *this* saying, KSS, rather than others such as “A Dios rogando y con el mazo dando” (roughly “God helps those who help themselves”) or “El tiempo es oro” (“Time is money”), because these sayings do not fit the stereotype of the passive, stoic Latino.



### 7. Conclusion.

This investigation of the saying “Que sera sera” has found it to be, through almost all of its history, exclusively a phenomenon of the English-speaking world. Searches for sources in Romance languages failed to be fruitful and eventually led back to English. Only in the last 50 years, with its international propagation through the Doris Day song, has the phrase been adopted more widely.

The question of what meaning the phrase might have had for readers (and, by implication, for speakers) in the early stages of its history remains puzzling. In its first documentation (“quy serra serra” in the Trinity College manuscript), rather than being presented as an expression in need of explanation—as one might expect of a newly introduced phrase composed of foreign words—it seems paradoxically to function as an explanation itself, a paraphrase of other lines of poetry. Later, as a heraldic motto and occasional epitaph, its literal meaning is in the background, less important than its emblematic function of identifying individuals of the nobility and their families. With its appearance in Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*, the saying is introduced into the culture of, presumably, a broader segment of society, given the accessibility that the theater offers to its audience regardless of literacy. In that setting, it was supported with a translation (perhaps for the benefit of those hearing it for the first time) and labeled a “doctrine.” Almost immediately after Marlowe’s citation of the saying, we find KSS used, again on the stage, in the purely expressive function, spontaneously and without translation or other semantic support, in the speech of a character in *Cupid’s Whirligig* (Sec. 5.5). Such uses of KSS, embedded in discourse, are rare at first, but in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries they increase substantially, and today the popularity of the saying—at least in published writing, as reflected in the graphs of the *Google Books Ngram Viewer*—continues on an upward trajectory.

When the Earls of Bedford adopted their motto, its meaning, like that of many such mottoes, was considered by some to be enigmatic, and was even ridiculed by some critics. Nevertheless, Christopher Marlowe evidently “took the bait,” imputed meaning to the motto, and grappled with it. Eventually its meaning became so real to English-speakers that they could not only utter it to express their own fatalism but also analyze it as an embodiment of a fatalistic worldview, and point to it as presumed evidence of an inherent

fatalism in the Italian- and Spanish-speaking cultures—where the saying had never existed.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>One instance of the saying with Italian *Che* and *serà* (rather than modern standard *sarà*) occurs in one of the earliest documentations of KSS, in Christopher Marlowe's play *Doctor Faustus*. Marlowe's editor Alexander Dyce (1798-1869) attaches a note to the Italian quotation, saying "Lest it should be thought that I am wrong in not altering the old spelling here, I may quote from Panizzi's very critical edition of the *Orlando Furioso*, 'La satisfazion ci *serà* pronta'" (Dyce 1850: Vol. 1, p. lxxii). In Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1516), there is indeed one instance of the "old spelling" *serà* (as well as several of the modern *sarà*), but in the even older works of Dante (1265-1321) the form is consistently *sarà* (Soules, n.d.). The online *Corpus di Italiano Scritto* (CORIS, 2011), comprising 120 million words of text in contemporary Italian, contains no tokens of *serà*. A search on the Web at large for "quello *serà* molto" ("that will be very...")—with the verb in context to rule out the noun *sera* 'evening', since Web searches are accent-mark-insensitive—found two hits: in publications quoting documents written in 1458 and 1510 respectively. The first Italian grammar published in English (Thomas 1550) gives only *sarà* for the future of *essere*.

<sup>2</sup>In the introductory pages of a book by John Deacon, Deacon and his work are praised by another author, "S. T.," who signs with a humble complimentary close in Latin, followed by his own initials and, cryptically, the KSS saying: "...and so (deare friends) adieu with all my heart. Laudum suarum praeco insufficiens [insufficient herald of his—i.e. Deacon's— fame], S. T. Què sara, sara." (Deacon 1616, [xxi]).

<sup>3</sup>There are three ways of accessing the *Google Books* corpus (each with its own advantages), which must be distinguished in spite of the similarity of their titles: (1) *Google Books* per se, at <<http://books.google.com/>>; (2) the *Google Books Ngram Viewer*, at <<http://books.google.com/ngrams/>>; and (3) the *Google Books American English* corpus (Davies 2011-), at <<http://googlebooks.byu.edu/>>. And of course all three must be distinguished from a fourth resource, the Google search engine for the Web at large. The graphs of the *Google Books Ngram Viewer* register 0% if an expression occurs in fewer than 40 books (according to "Datasets," n.d.) or fewer than 40 times overall (according to "Info," n.d.) in a given year. Nevertheless, the researcher can specify any range of years (within the limits of 1500-2008), and if, in that period, *some* year registers a greater-than-zero percentage, then the graph offers the opportunity to identify (and sometimes see the text of) books from the "zero-percentage" years (i.e. years in which it appeared fewer than 40 times). These results are further complicated by the fact that each graph of the *Viewer* is based on a corpus of books in just *one language*, but a search in *Google Books* produces whatever matching sequences are found in *any* books of the *Google Books* project, regardless of language. This means, for example, that, while the *Ngram Viewer* (with English as the selected language) registers "no" instances of "Qui sera sera," a search in *Google Books* yields hundreds of hits, including both (1) "Qui sera sera" in books in English from years with fewer than 40 instances; and (2) instances in books published in *French* in which the sequence forms part of the (grammatically

correct) “Ce qui sera sera” (these searches are case-insensitive). Searches in the *Google Books Ngram Viewer* and in *Google Books* generally can be supplemented with searches in the *Google Books: American English* corpus (Davies 2011-), which filters out books in French, but also excludes books in English not published in the United States. And finally, the *Google Books* data are subject to scanner error, especially those published before the 19th century. Thus, for example, some instances counted as “Qui sera sera” turn out to be, on closer scrutiny, “Qué sera sera” with its accented *é* misread as a dotted *i*.

<sup>4</sup>The graphs of the *Ngram Viewer* express frequency in very small percentages. In order to make these figures easier to read, I shift the decimal point seven places to the right and restate them as “parts per billion” (ppb). For a “trigram” (three-word sequence) such as KSS, the percentages are derived by dividing the number of instances by the number of trigrams in all the texts. A text of  $n$  words contains  $n - 2$  trigrams; thus the number of “ppb” is virtually equivalent to the number of instances per billion words of text.

<sup>5</sup>Burke (1892: 50) makes the same error “in reverse”: he translates the stock initiator of storytelling in Spanish, “Érase que se era” (functionally equivalent to “Once upon a time”), as “What hath been, hath been,” as if it were a past-tense counterpart of “Que será será.” He evidently read the conjunction (complementizer) “que” as a free relative pronoun (‘what’), misled by the interrogative *qué*.

<sup>6</sup>At the time of this writing, the *OED*’s (online) etymology states “Apparently [from] Italian *che sarà sarà ...* (1659 or earlier).” The editors of the *OED* have confirmed (Katrín Thier, personal communication) that the 1988 source in Spanish and the 1659 source in Italian are, respectively, a book written by an author with an English name and published in the United States (Armstrong 1988: 99), and a book written by an English author and published in London (Howell 1659). The editors have assured me that the online *OED* will soon be updated to reflect the English influence on these two sources. The *OED* gives precedence to the Italian form and explains the forms with *que* as “altered partly after French *que ...*, and partly (in later use) after Spanish *que*.” No evidence is given for qualifying the Spanish influence as “in later use.”

<sup>7</sup>Others call it a relative pronoun with “no antecedent” (FIDESCU, n.d.; Jespersen 1927: 58; Plann 1980: 1). Gili y Gaya (1969: 303) discusses only the related animate (i.e. human) pronoun in Spanish, *quien* (as in “**Quien** canta su mal espanta”—“**He who** sings drives his troubles away”), referring to an “antecedente callado” (tacit antecedent), and the Spanish Royal Academy’s *Esbozo* (Academia 1973: 527) uses the same term. Alcina and Blecua (1975: 1,027-1,029) call the construction a relative pronoun with “implicit antecedent,” construing the *lo* component as a “neuter article.” Cennamo (1997: 198-199) uses the oxymoronic term “absolute relative.” Other terms for it include relative pronoun with “internal antecedent” (Cunha and Cintra 2001: 346) and “condensed relative pronoun” (Sweet 1891: Vol. 1, p. 81). Quirk et al. (1985: 373 and 1,056) distinguish the construction as a “nominal [rather than adjectival] relative clause,” as does, in effect, Joly (2004: 71—“la relative substantive”). The *Wikipedia* article “English relative clauses” calls these clauses “*free, fused* or *nominal*.” Crystal (2008: 411) likewise describes them as “**nominal** or **free**,” as well as “sometimes called **headless**.”

<sup>8</sup>In 1971 the Puerto Rican singer José Feliciano released the song “Che sarà?” (in Italian), written for him by Jimmy Fontana (stage name of Enrico Sbriccoli).

Because of the similarity of titles, it is often confused with the Livingston and Evans song. Feliciano later released a version in Spanish.

<sup>9</sup>In 1983 the Italian singer Tiziana Rivale won the prize for best song at Italy's Sanremo Music Festival for her performance of "Sarà quel che sarà," a song written by Roberto Ferri and Maurizio Fabrizio (Anselmi 2009: 332). See a 2008 performance of it on YouTube at <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFm54GHv8ok>>.

<sup>10</sup>Similarly, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Intermediate Spanish* (Hawson 2000: 139) offers the student "Que será, será" as a phrase equivalent to "Whatever will be will be."

<sup>11</sup>Elgos and Pinchi are the respective pseudonyms of Bruno Pallesi (1921-1987) and Giuseppe Perotti (1900-1971) (Italian-language *Wikipedia*, "Bruno Pallesi" and "Pinchi").

<sup>12</sup>I thank Prof. Barbara Vance of Indiana University and Prof. Pierre Kuntmann of the University of Ottawa for help in accessing and parsing premodern French proverbs. Morawski's source for this proverb is a 13th-century manuscript entitled *Incipiunt proverbia rusticorum mirabiliter versificata*, edited and published by J. Zacher in *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum*, 11 (1859): 115-144. Two variations on it are given by Le Roux de Lincy (1842: Vol. 2, p. 258): "Mal norrist qui n'asavoure" ("What doesn't taste pleasant nourishes poorly") and "Mal nourrit qui n'adoucit" ("What doesn't taste sweet nourishes poorly").

<sup>13</sup>Godefroy's source for these lines is the *Geste des Lorrains*, and specifically manuscript 3143 in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, folio 27<sup>a</sup>. I thank Jean-Loup Ringenbach for pointing out the two published editions: Herbin 1992 (line 7264) and Stengel 1903 (line 7245).

<sup>14</sup>Morawski (1925: 12-13 and 64-65) lists (and cross-references) proverbs in "Ce que..." and "Que..." in equal numbers (10 each), with the pronoun acting as a direct object in most, but not all, cases. It is not possible to make a similar comparison of "Ce qui..." and "Qui..." for two reasons: (1) because inanimates occur much more frequently as direct objects than as subjects, while the forms with *qui* are reserved for the subject function (Morawski [p. 13] gives only two proverbs in "Ce qui..."); and (2) because "Qui..." in the vast majority of proverbs (more than 400 in Morawski) is animate: "He who...", "The person who..."

<sup>15</sup>Hassell (1982: 31) does include a synonymous proverb: "Ce qui doit advenir advient" ("That which must come about comes about").

<sup>16</sup>The following collections of Spanish *refranes* contain no KSS nor any other simple free relative *que*: Canellada and Pallares (2001); Cantera and Sevilla (1998); Carbonell Basset (2002); Combet (1971); Díez Barrio (1987); Junceda (2006); "Recopilación..." (n.d.); Rodríguez Marín (1930); Sáinz de Robles (1950); Sbarbi y Osuna (1943); Sevilla Muñoz et al. (1998); Sintés Pros (1961); Soto Posada (1997); Suñé Benages (1941). I am grateful to Richard Heyer of the Instituto Cervantes (New York) for his help in verifying the absence of KSS from Spanish *refrán* collections in that library.

<sup>17</sup>None of the following collections of Italian proverbs include KSS, nor any other simple free relative *che*: "About.com" (n.d.); Bellonzi (1968); Bolelli (1989); Cibotto (1975); Ferrando and Ferrando (1977); Franceschi (1908/1982); Gianeri (1976); Giusti (1908); Giusti and Capponi (1956); Martello (1981); Mondadori (1977); Paravicino (1666); Raimondi (1975); "Scribd.com" (n.d.); Spallicci (1975); Torriano (1649); Torriano (1666). Franceschi (1908/1982) does contain three turns

of phrase that begin with “Che,” but none of them is a declarative sentence with *Che* as a free relative. In one (p. 31), “Che io non lo sia” (‘Let me not be [thus]’), *Che* is the complementizer introducing a subjunctive with optative force. In another (p. 249), the *Che* is interrogative. And in the third case (p. 307), “Che mena la moglie a ogni festa” (‘Who takes his wife to all parties’), the expression is just a relative clause. A sentence fragment. Meanwhile the English author Charles Merbury, in his collection of Italian proverbs (Merbury 1581/1946), offers four that begin with “Che,” but again, in none of these cases is it a free relative. In one of them (p. 8) the *Che* is interrogative, while those on pp. 7, 10, and 19 are truncated literary quotations (from Ariosto, Antonio Vignali, and Petrarch, respectively) in whose original form the clause in question was subordinated by the conjunction (complementizer) *che*. I thank the blogger “√2” of the online Wordreference Language Forums for pointing out these literary sources. Their literary nature is ironic, in light of the title that Merbury gave his work, with its implication of anthropological fieldwork: “Popular proverbs, collected in different places in Italy, and most of them from the very mouths of the Italians themselves.” His editor Charles Speroni (Merbury 1946: 68 and 79) discusses this title, calling it “misleading” and “unjustifiable.”

<sup>18</sup>Each section of Howell is paginated separately; page 13 of the Italian section is in image 362 of the online facsimile version. Also in the 17th century, an Italian compiler of proverbs cites an *English* version (only) of our saying as partial explanation of another, Italian proverb about lawyers (italics in original): “Lite d’*Avvocato*, lite che non muor mai. *An Advocates sute, is a sute which never dies.*” The note commenting on this saying is “*For what must be must be*” (Torriano 1666: 18). If this Italian paremiologist had known a genuinely Italian version to exist, here would have been an opportunity for him to cite it, but he did not do so.

<sup>19</sup>I am grateful to Corradina Fratini for e-mailing me a complete copy of the article, which I was not able to find online.

<sup>20</sup>Reading *conuertimini* as a Latin passive imperative plural, and *drede* as “dread” in its archaic sense of “stand in awe of, treat with reverence” (rather than “fear”), the refrain could be paraphrased “Be converted, you commoners, and revere your king.” The irony of pretending to address commoners in Latin is echoed by the untranslated KSS in apparent French.

<sup>21</sup>I am grateful to Sandy Paul, of the Trinity College Library, for e-mailing me a color photocopy of the manuscript page. The image is online at <<http://mypage.siu.edu/lhartman/kss/trinity.jpg>>. Prior to the edition by MacCracken, the manuscript was catalogued and described by M. R. James (1901: Vol. 2, p. 90), who quotes the lines in question. It is also described in the online *Index of Middle English Verse* at <<http://www.cddc.vt.edu/host/imev/record.php?recID=1497>> (accessed 2012/9/6).

<sup>22</sup>The French verb *être* ‘to be’ builds its future-tense forms on the suppletive stem *ser-*. Contemporary forms misspelled with double *r* can be found by means of Web searches. These forms can be separated from homographic forms of *serrer* ‘to squeeze, to grasp’ by including a context such as *demain* ‘tomorrow’ in the search (*serra* can be the simple past tense of *serrer*, meaning ‘squeezed’, but probably not in combination with ‘tomorrow’). Among future forms of *être* on today’s Web at large, those with double *r* make up between 1% and 2% of the total. Medieval instances of ‘will be’ based on *serr-* can be found in Rotelande 1924 (12th-century) and Giacchetti 1989 (manuscripts dated 1449 and ca. 1520).

<sup>23</sup>I am grateful to Lorna Mackintosh, Administrator, St. Nicholas Church, for e-mailing me several photographs of the brass. One photo (online at <[http://mypage.siu.edu/lhartman/kss/brass\\_1.jpg](http://mypage.siu.edu/lhartman/kss/brass_1.jpg)>) shows the entire plate. In another (at <[http://mypage.siu.edu/lhartman/kss/brass\\_2.jpg](http://mypage.siu.edu/lhartman/kss/brass_2.jpg)>), the motto “QVE SERA SERA” can be seen near the top of the image. In another (at <[http://mypage.siu.edu/lhartman/kss/brass\\_3.jpg](http://mypage.siu.edu/lhartman/kss/brass_3.jpg)>), the date “1533” can be seen in the second-to-last line of text, near the left side. And in another (at <[http://mypage.siu.edu/lhartman/kss/brass\\_4.jpg](http://mypage.siu.edu/lhartman/kss/brass_4.jpg)>), the date “1559” can be seen in the last line of text, slightly to the right of center. The brass is also described in Aubrey (1719: Vol. 1, p. 234), as well as in a travelogue by Charles Dickens, Jr. (1894: 243), son of the novelist, who erroneously gives Julian Forde’s date of death as “1539.”

<sup>24</sup>John Russell happened to be present and was able to mediate communications in 1506 when a storm at sea brought the Archduke of Austria (who was, through marriage, King Philip I of Castile) and his wife (“Juana la Loca,” Queen of Castile) ashore at the port of Weymouth on the south coast of England. The Spanish royal couple at first stayed (it is not clear whether they were considered guests or prisoners) at the home of Russell’s cousin, Sir Thomas Trenchard, until they were invited to the court of Henry VII, where they recommended Russell to the English king. Russell stayed on at the court through the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI, serving them in a variety of military and diplomatic missions (Cunningham 1853: 72-73; Furnivall and Morfill 1873: 121; Lodge 1835: Vol. 2, 6th portrait, p. 1; Ross 1848: 2). Foster (1884: 69) narrates the event in detail.

<sup>25</sup>Scott Thomson adds, in a footnote, “Lansdowne MSS. 858, dating between 1571 and 1586, gives it (f[olio] 47) as the Bedford motto.”

<sup>26</sup>*Doctor Faustus*, although not published until 1604, eleven years after Marlowe’s death, was first performed at least 12 years before that, and is said to have been written before 1590 (Stanford 1892: 235). This date is confirmed by a note scribbled by Marlowe’s friend Thomas Nashe in the margin of a 1589 publication: “Faustus: **Che sara sara** deuinynitie adieu” (Kocher 1942: 46; Kocher records Nashe’s spelling as the modern “sara,” rather than Marlowe’s archaic “sera”). Kocher suggests that the odd spelling of “divinity” may be Nashe’s irreverent attempt to pun with “ninny.”

<sup>27</sup>I am grateful to Paul Carlyle, National Archives of the United Kingdom, for confirming that “que sera, sera” was transcribed faithfully from the 1634 manuscript, not introduced by editor John Bruce in the 19th century.

<sup>28</sup>“Que sera sera” is likewise linked, in the 19th century, to the family name Betenson (but in County Kent) by Elven (1851: Vol. 2, p. 39), as well as to the names Folkes (Norfolk) and Bettison (Warwickshire) (Elven 1851: Vol. 2, pp. 181 and 538). These are essentially the same families said to use the “French” version, “**Qui** sera sera.”

<sup>29</sup>Three reference works of the 19th century are particularly useful for tracing English family mottoes: Clark (1829) and Mair (1873), alphabetized by motto, and Elven (1851), by surname. In addition, some 9,000 mottoes, with translations and organized by family name, are available online through “Armorial Gold” (n.d.).

<sup>30</sup>The date of 1829 for this heraldic documentation of Spanish KSS comes from the *eleventh* edition of Clark (available through *Google Books*), which contains almost 1,100 mottoes. The first edition (1775) contained 400, and the second, third, and fourth editions (1776, 1777, and 1779) added some 200 each, so the total

reached about 1,000 in the 4th edition (1779), making it likely that “Que sera sera” was published by that date.

<sup>31</sup>In Ewen (1987: 257) the photos of the round-faced Jay Livingston and the long-faced Ray Evans are miscaptioned: their names are interchanged.

<sup>32</sup>Livingston and Evans’s song was evidently one of three songs written in the 1950s with a title based on the KSS saying. The U.S. Copyright Office’s *Catalog of Copyright Entries* (1950: 25) indicates that a copyright was issued in February 1950 for a song entitled “Che Sara, Sara” in the name of Renee P. Owen. And the *Catalog of Copyright Entries* (1955: 26) refers to a copyright issued in May 1955 to Norman Gimbel for a song entitled “Che Sera, Sera: What Will Be Will Be” (see also *Copyright Encyclopedia*, n.d.). It is evidently to this latter song that DeRosa (2001: 177) refers—but apparently without being aware of the English paraphrase included in its title—in stating that Livingston and Evans were obliged to differentiate their title from that of the 1955 song by expanding it from simply “Que Sera Sera” to “Que Sera Sera (Whatever Will Be Will Be).” DeRosa’s note (2001: 314) explains that a letter from Paramount Pictures music director Roy Fjastad to production manager Frank Caffey, dated June 7, 1955, “indicates the existence of an Eddie Wolpin song titled ‘Che Sera, Sera’ on Mercury Records.” *Billboard* magazine (September 17, 1955 <GB>, p. 50) published a thumbnail review of a record by big band vocalist Gloria Van (or Vann) whose Side 1 is “I Wanna Be There” and Side 2 is “Che Sara [sic] Sara.” The label is Wing (a subsidiary of Mercury), and it is referred to in WorldCat <<http://www.worldcat.org/title/che-sara-sara/oclc/082887333>>, which names the songwriters as Barry Parker and Hal Hester; it is “held by 0 [zero] libraries worldwide.” The puzzle remains unsolved as to the exact title of the 1955 song and whether it was written by Norman Gimbel, Eddie Wolpin, or Barry Parker and Hal Hester.

<sup>33</sup>On the gravestone also, the saying is spelled in all-lowercase letters, with ambiguously vertical accent marks. Count Vincenzo Torlato-Favrini (Rossano Brazzi) explains: “an ancient and unimaginative Italian proverb; it has been the motto of my house for more than 450 years.”

<sup>34</sup>Clark (1829) lists some 1,100 mottoes, of which 74% are in Latin, 14% in French, and 8% in English; this list contains seven mottoes in Italian and four in Spanish. Georges (2012) examines 206 mottoes used in Wales and finds 55% of them in Latin, 15% in French, 23% in Welsh, and 7% in English.

<sup>35</sup>An 18th-century humorist with the pseudonym Orator Reynard published a book of heraldic mottoes, all in English translation, with mocking, sardonic responses to them based on their incomprehensibility and/or their vanity. His relatively mild response to the Duke of Bedford’s “What will be, will be” is “Indeed!—There need no ghost come from the grave to tell us that, my Lord” (Reynard 1782: 20).

<sup>36</sup>Both grammar errors—the free relative pronoun and the first verb ending—are corrected in the version given by Elven (1851: 147), under the surname Dormer: “**Cio che** Dio vuole io voglio.” Lodge (1890: 204) (mis)spells the first word “Chio.”

<sup>37</sup>Marie Taglioni (1804–1884), Italian/Swedish ballerina.

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DIE REALISIERUNGSFORMEN DES KOMMUNIKATIV-  
PRAGMATISCHEN FRAMES „ERLAUBNIS“ IN DEN  
RUSSISCHEN UND DEUTSCHEN BAUERNREGELN

**Abstract:** Im vorliegenden Artikel wird der Versuch unternommen, den kommunikativ-pragmatischen Ansatz auf die Untersuchung der kommunikativen Bedeutungsorganisation von russischen und deutschen Parömien anzuwenden. Der erwähnte kommunikativ-pragmatische Ansatz sieht die Benutzung kommunikativ-pragmatischer Frames als Erfassung kognitiver Mechanismen bei der Produktion und der Interpretation von der deontischen Situation einer Erlaubnis. Es werden die Fragen der Universalität und der Einmaligkeit in der Semantik der Erlaubnis am Beispiel russischer und deutscher Bauernregeln unter Heranziehung der Frame-Analyse untersucht.

**Keywords:** Bauernregeln, Parömien, parömiologische Texte, kommunikativ-pragmatischer Frame, Sprechakte mit der Bedeutung einer Erlaubnis, Semantik der Tätigkeitsstimulierung, Illokutionsindikator.

Unter Parömien oder parömiologischen Konstruktionen verstehen wir eigenständige, oft lehrhafte Äußerungen, die auf die Modellierung menschlicher Handlungen gerichtet sind und als Produkt einer jahrhundertealten menschlichen Reflexion betrachtet werden können (siehe Kul'kova 2011b: 39). Die Parömie zeichnet sich durch strukturelle Selbstgenügsamkeit aus und kann als Einheit abgerufen werden, ohne einen speziellen Kontext zu benötigen. Sie kann kontextfrei verstanden werden, die kontextuelle Umgebung kann jedoch einige Nuancen in ihren kommunikativen Sinn mit einbringen. Unter Parömien sind in erster Linie Sprichwörter, sprichwörtliche Redensarten, Rätsel, Bauernregeln zu unterscheiden. Ein wertvolles Objekt für die pragmalinguistische Forschung stellen die Bauernregeln dar, da sie erstens als Mehrfunktionszeichen zur Realisierung nicht nur der repräsentativen und der expressiven Funktionen, sondern auch zur appellativen Sprachfunktion fähig sind, d.h. diese parömiolo-

gischen Konstruktionen können auf den Adressaten eine bestimmte Einwirkung leisten und ihn zur Ausführung von Handlungen stimulieren. Zweitens sind die Bauernregeln ein fester Bestandteil des nationalen Sprachweltbildes, das die reichhaltige Erfahrung bei der Regelung und den Korrekturen des menschlichen Verhaltens einer linguokulturellen Gesellschaft auf ihre eigene Art widerspiegelt. Die Bauernregeln explizieren eine bestimmte Schicht von kommunikativ-pragmatischen Informationen im Sprachverhalten eines konkreten Volkes und repräsentieren den mentalen Schnitt der jahrhundertelangen Reflexion des Volkes während des langwierigen Umganges mit der umgebenden Wirklichkeit im Verlauf des Ablaufens verschiedener kommunikativer Situationen (Kul'kova 2011a: 77).

Die Bauernregeln sind feste parömiologische Konstruktionen, die auf die Modellierung des menschlichen Verhaltens in lebenswichtigen Situationen gerichtet sind, die dank dem Vorhandensein der prognostischen und stimulierenden Einstellungen in der Bauernregel realisierbar ist (Kul'kova 2011d: 39).

Im vorliegenden Artikel geht es im weiteren um die Frame-Analyse von Bauernregeln, u.z. um die sprachliche Objektivierung des kommunikativ-pragmatischen Frames „Erlaubnis“ in den vergleichenden parömiologischen Einheiten.

Der Begriff „Frame“, der von Marvin Minskij in Bezug auf den künstlichen Intellekt in den wissenschaftlichen Gebrauch eingeführt wurde, hat sich in der modernen Sprachwissenschaft etabliert und ist einer der Schlüsselbegriffe der kognitiven Sprachwissenschaft. In der wissenschaftlichen Literatur wird der Frame als Datenstruktur zur Vorstellung der stereotypen Situation (vgl. Minskij rus. 1979: 7), als vereinheitlichte Schematisierung einer Erfahrung (vgl. Fillmore rus. 1988: 54), als komplexes Wissen in Form von stereotypen relevanten Situationen (vgl. Dem'jankov 1996: 187) beschrieben. Vladimir I. Karasik charakterisiert den Frame als im individuellen oder kollektiven Gedächtnis bewahrte, bedeutsame Information, die eine spiralenartige Erscheinungsform hat (Karasik 2004: 128).

Nach unseren Vorstellungen entwickelt sich der kommunikativ-pragmatische Frame, der eine Abart des Konzeptes ist, in Form einer komplexen Mehrebenenstruktur des kommunikativen Bewusstseins, welche entsprechend in einer konkreten linguo-

kulturellen Gesellschaft nach den geltenden Regeln des Sprechverkehrs sowie den Normen der Etikette und den entsprechenden Beschränkungen in der Sphäre des verbalen und nichtverbalen Verhaltens organisiert wird. Dabei geht das kommunikative Bewusstsein des jeweiligen Vertreters einer linguokulturellen Gesellschaft „als Integralbestandteil ins kognitive Bewusstsein der Nation ein, das eine Komponente des allgemeinen kognitiven Bewusstseins des Volkes ist“ (Popova/Sternin 2007: 49).

In den Bauernregeln kann die Semantik der Tätigkeitsstimulierung innerhalb des kommunikativ-pragmatischen Raumes des Frames „Erlaubnis“ mit Hilfe verschiedener sprachlicher Mittel expliziert werden, deren „syntaktisches Skelett“ in Form eines einfachen oder komplexen Satzes mit der impliziten Form eines Performativs gestaltet ist (siehe Kul'kova 2010).

Sprechakte mit der Bedeutung einer Erlaubnis, sogenannte *Permissive*, ordnet Searle den direktiven Äußerungen zu und macht eine wesentliche Bemerkung: „eine Erlaubnis zu geben bedeutet eigentlich keine sprachliche Handlung, durch die jemand etwas leistet; dieser Akt besteht eher darin, dass die bis jetzt existierenden Störungen bei der Vollziehung von etwas beseitigt werden“ (Searle rus. 1986: 189). Damit zieht Searle vorsichtig den Schluss einer offensichtlichen Wechselbeziehung zwischen der Situation der Erlaubnis und dem Moment der Verbotsaufhebung zu. Was die Grenzskezzierung zwischen deontischen Erlaubnis- und Verbotssituationen betrifft, so ist zu bemerken, dass eine Situation zum Zeitpunkt der Hindernisbeseitigung dank ihrer autonomen Natur in die andere zum Zeitpunkt der Beseitigung der Hindernisse leicht ineinander übergehen können. Doch kann die Richtung solcher Veränderungen nur einen einseitigen Charakter tragen: vom Verbot zur Erlaubnis.

Ein charakteristischer Zug regulativer Äußerungen, welche den kommunikativ-pragmatischen Frame „Erlaubnis“ in parämiologischen Texten repräsentieren, ist die obligatorische Anwesenheit einer temporalen Komponente, die einen Zeitraum bezeichnet, in welchem die Ausführung einer jeweiligen Handlung erlaubt ist. Die überwiegende Zahl der permissiven Äußerungen ist von dem zeitlichen Rahmen nur einseitig reglementiert, wobei in einer Erlaubnissituation meistens nur der Startmoment widerspiegelt wird. Als Marker für den Beginn eines Ereignisses bzw. einer

Handlung dienen im Russischen die Konjunktionen *как*, *когда*, *если* und die Konjunktion *если* im Deutschen:

- (1) *Как* только лещина украсится сережками, земля больше не будет промерзать, можно сеять редис, мак, васильки, ноготки (Ryshenkov). 'Kaum wird ein Waldhaselnussstrauch mit „Ohringen“ geschmückt, wird die Erde nicht mehr frieren, man kann Radieschen, Mohn, Kornblumen und Ringelblumen säen.'
- (2) *Когда* станет распускаться лесной дуб, тогда смело можно начинать купаться (Gruško). 'Wenn die Waldeiche zu blühen beginnt, darf man getrost baden gehen.'
- (3) Если грачи сели в гнезда, то через три недели можно выходить на посев (Gruško). 'Wenn die Saatkrähen schon in ihren Nestern sitzen, kann man in drei Wochen mit der Saat beginnen.'
- (4) *Wenn* die Johanniskörner glänzen, bereiten die Bauern ihre Sensen (Au).
- (5) *Wenn* die Birke Kätzchen hat, ist es Zeit zur Gerstensaart (Schleer).

Selten wird in den Bauernregeln der Schlussmoment einer erlaubten Handlung betont:

- (6) *Сеять можно до тех пор, пока цветет черемуха* (Ryshenkov). 'Man darf säen, **solange** der Faulbaum blüht.'

Die Ausführung der erlaubten Handlung kann von der temporalen und von der lokalen Komponente gleichzeitig reguliert werden:

- (7) *В день Ильи Пророка* можно работать только на пчельнике, ибо пчела – Божья пташка, Божья работница (Gruško). 'Am Tag des Propheten Ilja darf man allein in der Imkerei arbeiten, weil die Biene ein „göttlicher Vogel“, eine Arbeiterin Gottes ist.'

Die deontische Situation einer Erlaubnis kann in den Parömien sowohl einen direkten, als auch einen indirekten Ausdruck finden. Als morphologisch-lexikalische Mittel direkter Sprechakte der Erlaubnis dienen in der russischen Sprache die modalen

Konstruktionen *можно + V*, *man kann/darf + V'*; *положено + V*, *man darf + V'*, *man soll + V*, wie die folgenden Beispiele verdeutlichen:

(8) Если еловые шишки будут наверху, *можно сеять* хлеб раньше, если внизу – позже (Gruško). ‚Wenn die Fichtenzapfen oben sind, kann man das Korn früher säen, wenn sie unten sind – später.‘

(9) Если на дне оврага пятно снега осталось с корову, *пахать можно* (Gruško). ‚Wenn auf dem Grund einer Schlucht nur noch ein kuhgroßer Schneefleck geblieben ist, kann man pflügen.‘

(10) Рожь *положено сеять* мужчинам, овес, горох и яровые – бабам (Gruško). ‚Roggen soll nur von Männern und Hafer, Erbsen und Getreide von Weibern gesät werden.‘

(11) Если в доме появился приплод какой-либо скотины, то первым его *должен взять* на руки только тот, у кого легкая рука (Gruško). ‚Wenn es im Haus zum Viehzuwachs kommt, so soll es als erster nur der auf den Arm nehmen, der ein glückliches Händchen hat.‘

Als Illokutionsindikatoren der permissiven Semantik dienen in den deutschen Bauerregeln in erster Linie die modalen Verben *dürfen* und *können*:

(12) Wenn die Johannismwürmer glänzen, *darfst* du *richten* deine Sensen (Au).

(13) Hat St. Peter das Wetter schön, *kannst* du Kohl und Erbsen *sä'n* (Schleer).

(14) Ist Lambertus trocken zu sehen, so *kann man* in jedem Krötenpfuhl Roggen *säen* (Binder).

In einigen Fällen kommt in den deutschen Bauernregeln das modale Verb *mögen* vor:

(15) Siehst du im März gelbe Blumen im Freien, *magst* getrost du Samen *streuen* (Binder).

Im parömiologischen Korpus wurden innerhalb der Bauernregeln, welche den Frame „Erlaubnis“ repräsentieren, auch die Verwendung von modalen Wörtern fixiert, die eine „fördernde“ Funktion erfüllen und zur Beseitigung des Zweifels beim Adres-

saten zu der Verbotsaufhebung für eine bestimmte Tätigkeit beitragen. Vgl. z. B. den Gebrauch des Lexems *смело* in russischen Bauernregeln und des Lexems *getrost* in deutschen Parömien:

(16) Когда станет распускаться лесной дуб, тогда *смело* можно начинать купаться (Gruško). ‚Wenn die Waldeiche anfängt zu blühen, kann man *getrost* baden gehen.‘

(17) Когда курица теряет свой хвост – *смело* начинай сев (Gruško). ‚Wenn das Huhn den Schwanz verliert – beginne *getrost* mit der Saat.‘

(18) Siehst du im April die Falter tanzen, kannst du *getrost* im Garten pflanzen (Mayer).

Zu den Ausdrucksformen der Erlaubnis in den indirekten Sprechakten kann man Nominalisationen sowie das Satzmodell „*Prep + N<sub>2</sub> + V + N<sub>4</sub>*“ mit indikativischen Verbformen zählen. Sie heißen indirekt, da für den Ausdruck der modalen Situation der Erlaubnis Sprechakte mit den formalen Merkmalen der Informativa verwendet werden:

(19) Аграфены купальницы: начало купанья (Dal'). ‚Badefrau Agrathena heißt: Badebeginn.‘

(20) С Дарьи холсты белят (Dal'). ‚Von Darja an bleicht man die Leinensachen.‘

(21) С Пахома сеют поздние овес и пшеницу (Gruško). ‚Von Pachom an sät man den späten Hafer und den späten Weizen.‘

In deutschen Bauerregeln wurde ein anderes Satzmodell des indirekten Sprechaktes einer Erlaubnis fixiert – „*N<sub>1</sub> + V + V'*“:

(22) Christian fängt zu säen an (Binder).

### **Zusammenfassung**

Wie durch die Analyse des empirischen Materials festgestellt wurde, hat die Erlaubnissituation neben einer Menge anderer individuellpragmatischer Bedeutungen der Aufforderungsmodalität, die in Texten von Bauernregeln aktualisiert werden, eine anthropozentrische Ausrichtung und einen benefaktiven Charakter. Deontische Situationen spiegeln sich sowohl in den lexikali-



schen als auch in den grammatischen Realisierungsformen der Erlaubnissemantik wieder. Dies geschieht unter dem Blickwinkel einer „pragmatischen Vision“ des Sprechers in Bezug auf die eine oder andere Sprechsituation.

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“THE HEART OF IRISH-LANGUAGE PROVERBS”:  
A LINGUO-STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF EXPLICIT  
METAPHOR

**Abstract:** Metaphor has featured frequently in attempts to define the proverb (see Taylor 1931, Whiting 1932, Mieder 1985, 1996), and since the advent of modern paremiological scholarship, it has been identified as one of the most salient markers of ‘proverbiality’ (Arora 1984) across a broad spectrum of world languages. Significant language-specific analyses, such as those by Klimenko (1946), Silverman-Weinreich (1981), and Arora (1984) have provided valuable qualitative information on the form and function of metaphor in Russian, Yiddish, and Spanish proverbs respectively. Unfortunately, no academic scholarship has engaged with the subject of metaphor in Irish proverbs. This study builds on international paremiological research on metaphor and provides for the first time a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative analysis of the form, frequency, and nature of linguistic metaphors in Irish proverbs (1856-1952). Moreover, from the perspective of paremiology, it presents a methodological template and result-set that can be applied cross-linguistically to compare metaphor in the proverbs of other languages.

**Keywords:** Irish Language; Linguistic Metaphor; Proverbiality; Stylistics; Poetics; Conceptual Metaphor.

**1. Introduction**

The subject of metaphor is one of the most analysed aspects of modern paremiology due to the vast interdisciplinary interest and the emergence of new theoretical approaches to the subject, particularly advances in cognitive linguistics pioneered by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and more recent work on ‘Conceptual Integration Theory’ by Fauconnier and Turner (1998, 2002). The burgeoning interest in the subject is evidenced in Wolfgang Mieder’s two-volume *International Bibliography of Paremiology and Phraseology* (2010), which contains bibliographic details of over 4,000 scholarly works relating to metaphor in proverbs,

proverbial expressions (or phraseological units), and related forms. A review of this literature shows that interdisciplinary approaches have been used to tackle various questions relating to metaphor, but traditionally they have focused on the following general research areas: (1) *lexicography*– the treatment of metaphorical proverbs and related expressions in dictionaries (e.g., Weinreich 1969, Doyle 1996/2007; Pätzold 1998); (2) *translation studies*– problems and strategies in the translation of metaphorical proverbs (e.g., Hwang 1985, Navarro Salazar 1999, Ersözlü 2000, El-Yasin and Al-Shehebat 2005, Miller 2005); (3) *psycholinguistics*– the processing, comprehension and interpretation of metaphor in proverbs (e.g., Kemper 1981, Resnick 1982, Harnish 1993, Temple and Honeck 1999, Katz and Ferretti 2001, Cieslicka 2002); (4) *pragmatics/ethnology of speaking folklore*– metaphoric proverb performance as a speech act (e.g., Arewa and Dundes 1964, Seitel 1969/1977, Fabian 1990); (5) *cognitive linguistics*– the use of conceptual metaphors in proverbs (e.g., Lakoff and Turner 1989, Honeck 1997, Honeck and Temple 1994, Krikmann 1994, Tóthné Litovkina and Csábi 2002) or in individual metaphoric expressions (e.g. Krikmann 1996); (6) *literary stylistics*– the function of metaphorical proverbs in literary genres or in the works of a particular author (e.g., Abrahams and Babcock 1977, Bradbury 2002); (7) *second-language acquisition*– the problem of metaphoric proverbs in second-language acquisition (e.g., Nuessel and Cicogna 1993, Nuessel 1999, Cieslicka 2002), and (8) *linguo-stylistics*–proverbiality, proverbial markers and formal aspects of proverbs (e.g., Klimenko 1946, Silverman-Weinreich 1981, and Arora 1984).

Of all the approaches, the *linguo-stylistic* analysis of metaphor as a key tenet of ‘proverbiality’ is one of the most under-examined in the field, especially when one considers the paucity of language-specific studies that have examined the role of metaphor in different languages. This subject matter has the potential for extensive cross-linguistic comparative analyses that may provide a deeper linguistic understanding of the form and frequency of metaphor in proverbs, both at a stylistic and a pragmatic level. Furthermore, if one considers the absence of any linguistic research on metaphor in Irish-language proverbs in spite of the myriad aforementioned international methodological

approaches, then there is a valid rationale for examining the role of metaphor as a proverbial marker in the Irish language.

## ***2. Metaphor as a Proverbial Marker***

Metaphor has featured frequently and consistently in attempts to define the proverb (see Taylor 1931, Whiting 1932, Mieder 1985, 1996), and since the advent of modern paremiological scholarship, scholars examining the aesthetic and formal structure of proverbs have identified metaphor as one of the most salient markers of ‘proverbiality’<sup>1</sup> across the broad spectrum of world languages (see Seitel 1969, Barley 1972, Cram 1983, Arora 1984, Dundes 1975). Significant language-specific analyses, such as Klimenko (1946), Silverman-Weinreich (1981), and Arora (1984), have provided valuable qualitative information on the form and function of metaphor in Russian, Yiddish, and Spanish proverbs, respectively. Whilst less substantial analyses have commented on the use of metaphor in the proverbs of Northern Sotho<sup>2</sup> (Grobler 2001), the Tangle language of Gombe (Tadi 2009) and the Ondo culture of Nigeria (Arinola 2009, 124-127), and in English-language anti-proverbs (Valdaeva 2003, 388-9). Recent work by Szpila (2005) has also examined the related subject of metonymic operations in Polish proverbs.

The general consensus emerging from these studies is that metaphor is inherently connected to the proverb irrespective of language. Arora (1984, 11) has shown that metaphor is the most significant indicator of proverbiality in Spanish and that ‘the same observation would apply to most if not all languages as well’; Klimenko (1946, 65-73) demonstrates that it is used frequently in Russian proverbs in conjunction with other prominent markers such as antithesis, allegory and hyperbole; Silverman-Weinreich (1981, 76) suggests that ‘allegory is one of the clearest semantic markers of a proverb’ in Yiddish<sup>3</sup>; and, more recently, Yerima Tadi (2009, 255) has asserted that Tangle proverbs ‘abound in metaphors.’ In terms of Irish-language proverbs, Ó Bric (1976, 35) is the only scholar to make any comment on the use of metaphor, with the general *a priori* claim that they are ‘the heart of the majority of (Irish-language) proverbs’.<sup>4</sup> Needless to say, this supposition has never been examined using empirical data: herein lies the rationale for this study.

At this stage, it should be pointed out that all of these studies suffer from varying degrees of methodological inconsistency, which is problematic and indeed prohibitive for any comparative examination of the data. Firstly, the identificational criteria for metaphor are not outlined, so it is unclear if these scholars are actually examining the same subject matter, a point noted previously by MacKay (1986, 88):

‘One of the difficulties is that the choice of which metaphors or class of metaphors to study has been largely arbitrary, and different studies have examined different and perhaps fundamentally incomparable types of metaphors... resulting in a diversity of conflicting claims about metaphor in general.’

The second issue is the absence of relative frequencies of metaphor in the respective languages. It is methodologically unsound to draw conclusions about the frequency and relative importance of metaphor in proverbs without explicit statistical evidence to support the assertion. These, of course, are two methodological pre-requisites that must be explicitly outlined before any analysis of the data set may be completed as Cameron (1999a) and others have pointed out. This study will provide information on both identificational criteria and statistical frequencies of metaphor types in the corpus (see 3.3 *Identificational Criteria for Linguistic Metaphors*).

This present work will analyse a randomly selected data sample of Irish proverbs for the presence of metaphor using obligatory identificational criteria and based on ‘the “purely semantical” (virtual, context-free) mode’ (Krikmann 2009, 15). A ‘theory level analysis’ (Cameron 1999a, 7) will be used to examine metaphor and the related figurative trope of personification from a qualitative and quantitative perspective. Of particular interest will be those metaphors based on the structural forms *x is y* and *xyz*, as well as ‘predicative metaphors’ (Miller 1979). The correlation of other syntactic (structural parallelism, sub-clausal fronting, parataxis) and phonic (rhyme, alliteration) proverbial markers will also be analysed. The study will be the first comprehensive analysis of the nature, form and frequency of linguistic metaphor in Irish-language proverbs. Moreover, from the perspective of paremiology, it will provide both a methodological template and result-set that can be applied cross-linguistically to

compare the nature of metaphor in the proverbs of other languages.

### 3. *Methodological Framework*

#### 3.1 *Proverb corpus*

A corpus of one thousand randomly chosen Irish proverbs from printed collections spanning the years (1856-1952) was tested for the presence of metaphor using strict identificational criteria (see 3.3). The corpus has been randomly selected from a sampling frame comprising the three printed dialectal collections of Irish proverbial material,<sup>5</sup> namely (1) *Seanfhocla Uladh* [*The Proverbs of Ulster*] (Ó Muirgheasa 1907; 2nd ed. 1936);<sup>6</sup> (2) *Seanfhocail na Muimhneach* [*The Proverbs of the Munstermen*] (Ó Siochfhradha 1926; reissued and expanded as *Seanfhocail na Mumhan* [*The Proverbs of Munster*] (Ua Maoileoin 1984)), and (3) *Sean-fhocla Chonnacht* [*The Proverbs of Connaught*] (Ó Máille 1948, 1952; reissued and expanded as *Seanfhocla Chonnacht* [*The Proverbs of Connaught*] (Uí Bhraonáin 2010)).<sup>7</sup>

#### 3.2 *Metaphor*

The analysis and definition of metaphor can be traced back to classical times, particularly to the work of Homer, Isocrates and Plato,<sup>8</sup> but most importantly to Aristotle, who built on their scholarship and composed one of the first recorded definitions of the concept:

‘Metaphor is the application of a strange term either transferred from the genus and applied to the species or from the species and applied to the genus or from one species to another or else by analogy.’ (Levin 1982, 24)

At a basic level, metaphor is a linguistic device that unites two conceptual frameworks or domains so that one may understand or relate to one object in terms of another. There is a multitude of scholarly definitions yet many are faulted for being based on pre-chosen sample sentences or decontextualised sentences (Cameron 1999b, 106). The subdivision of metaphor into a variety of subclasses such as personification, dead metaphor, mixed metaphor, and synthetic metaphor, also prohibits a single theory of metaphor that can account for all the different types (cf. Gibbs 1999, 36). Two essential components are required for a metaphorical transfer: the literal sub-

ject of the metaphor, i.e. that to which the metaphor refers, and an anomalous field from which attributes are taken. These two have been classified by various labels such as ‘tenor’ and ‘vehicle’ (Richards 1936, Perrine 1971), ‘primary subject’ and ‘secondary subject’ (Black 1979, 28), and in cognitive linguistics through the use of ‘source’ and ‘target’ to indicate a unilateral mapping of one domain in another (Lakoff and Johnston 1980, Lakoff and Turner 1989). Black’s (1962) ‘frame-focus’ distinction identifies the specific word or phrase that is responsible for a metaphoric reading: the ‘focus’ is the anomalous or deviant language within the surrounding ‘frame’. At a pragmatic level, Searle’s (1993, 103) approach has shown that literal statements that are ‘defective’ act as a trigger for the hearer to seek out a hidden meaning through a process of metaphoric construal.<sup>9</sup> These general rules may be applied to two examples of Irish proverbs for the purposes of clarification: the first demonstrates metaphor as an implicitly linguistic phenomenon, whilst the second illustrates proverbs as ‘a social use of metaphor’ (Seitel 1981).

3.2.1 In the Irish proverb *Is ait an mac an saol* ‘Life is a strange son’ one may construe the literal subject (tenor/primary-subject/target) of life by transferring elements from the related source term of son (vehicle/secondary-subject/source). The anomalous term son is the ‘focus’, or what Kittay (1987) terms the ‘minimal frame’ of the rest of the sentence i.e. the ‘frame’. The metaphor derives from the fact that the characteristics of the vehicle domain are incompatible with those of the tenor to which it is transferred. At a processing-level a pre-requisite to decipherment of the metaphor is a recognizable correspondence between the two domains otherwise the metaphor will remain unintelligible (Brown 2004, 135; Lakoff and Turner 1989, 50-51). This may be termed an explicit metaphor (Steen 1989, 84) as both tenor and vehicle are found within the same linguistic utterance. Furthermore, pragmatic information relating to speaker-addressee relationships or social context is not a pre-requisite for the identification of the metaphor.



*Is ait an mac an saol*  
 Life is an odd son.

Tenor / Primary subject / Target domain = life  
 Vehicle / Secondary subject / Source domain = (odd) son

Focus = son  
 Frame = Life is an odd

3.2.2. Alternatively, many proverbs that do not contain an *explicit* metaphor may function metaphorically when applied in real-time to a speech situation. An incongruous context may rule out a literal rendering of the proverb and thus facilitate a metaphoric projection from source to target domain. This may be termed an *implicit* (Steen 1989, 82-84) or *applied* metaphor. For example, at a surface level the proverb *Salóidh aon chaora chlamhach tréad* ‘One mangy sheep will defile a flock’ (SU§899)<sup>10</sup> does not contain any incongruence between tenor and vehicle. It is not an *explicit* metaphor. However, if the context facilitates the application of the proverb to an external referent, e.g. a fraudulent politician guilty of corrupting his colleagues in government, the image schema associated with the source (i.e. a mangy sheep defiling a flock) is aligned with that of the target (i.e. a politician corrupting his colleagues) so that using intuitive and inferential strategies we can understand the source image in human terms by transferring the relevant schema. It is common, of course, for the proverb to present an immediate, recognisable physical image or event— in this instance, a farming dilemma — as a means of interpreting situations that are abstract, complex or unfamiliar (Gibbs and Beitel 1995, 136). In this case, we may apply Seitel’s (1981, 127) heuristic model to demonstrate the analogical relationship between the imaginary proverb situation and the social situation to which it refers or [A:B :: C:D] i.e. A is to B as C is to D.

A [mangy sheep]	~	[Relation between substantive ~ B [a flock] terms ‘defiles’]
C [corrupt politician]	~	[Relation between substantive ~ D [a cabinet] terms ‘defiles’]

### 3.3 *Identificational criteria for linguistic metaphors*

Clear identificational criteria are required to operationalize metaphor in this study. The proverbs in the corpus were collated from printed sources (even though the majority were recorded from the oral sources) with little or no detail regarding their meaning or application and, as a result, they may only be examined as decontextualised linguistic forms. This places limits on the range and depth of criteria that may be applied: the parameters of linguistic analysis only stretch to an examination of the surface structure or, more simply, the presence of metaphors in the proverb. The most effective approach to identification is what Krikmann (2009, 15) has termed ‘the “purely semantical” (virtual, context-free) mode’ in which the data simply consists of proverb texts without any ancillary information on their meaning or usage. Moreover, the type of analytic framework available is restricted to ‘theory level analysis’ (Cameron 1999a, 7) in which the primary concerns are the identification of metaphor, the categorisation of metaphor types, in both qualitative and quantitative terms, and an examination of salient patterns.

Context-free identifications of metaphor in proverbs rely on the presence of the tenor and vehicle within the same proverb, or what we have termed an *explicit metaphor*. A semantic ‘breaking point’ (Krikmann 2007, 8) within the proverb text is also required, in which there is a semantic contradiction or between one or more parts, or, more specifically, an incongruity between the domain of the vehicle and topic domains. This ‘metaphorical twist’ (Beardsley 1962), which results from literal absurdity, then presents a new semantic meaning. The following identificational criteria for linguistic metaphors (N1-3) suggested by Cameron (1999b, 118) have been used as a template for the identification of metaphors in the corpus:

N1 it contains reference to a Topic domain by a Vehicle term (or terms) and

N2 there is potentially an incongruity between the domain of the Vehicle term and the Topic domain and

N3 it is possible for a receiver (in general, or a particular person), as a member of a particular discourse community to find a coherent interpretation which makes sense of the incongruity in its discourse context, and

which involves some transfer of meaning from the Vehicle domain.

As a caveat to these necessary conditions (N 1-3), we must also outline a position relating to grey areas of metaphor that are linguistically and culturally specific, i.e., forms that are theoretically metaphorical yet are not processed as metaphors within the language: *dead metaphors* and *delexicalised metaphors*. We may consider a *dead metaphor* (also ‘frozen metaphors’ or ‘conventional metaphors’)<sup>11</sup> to be an expression that was perceived as deviant (i.e. metaphorical) in the language at its inception, but which has evolved to become part of the category of well-formed expressions through a process of ‘agrammatization’.<sup>12</sup> Through frequent and widespread use, these expressions have lost their basic metaphorical meaning, and have derived the status of a normal literal meaning in the accepted use of language.<sup>13</sup> The difficulty with such expressions from a diachronic analysis is that it is difficult to decipher when they ceased to be considered metaphorical in the language. We also have to consider *delexicalised verbs* (Sinclair 1991, 113), particularly irregular verbs such as *bí* ‘be’, *cuir* ‘put’, *tar* ‘come’, *déan* ‘do’, and *téigh* ‘go’, which in many instances functioned metaphorically with a noun collocation, but are now considered by language users as naturally-occurring. Cameron (1999b, 121) has suggested two methods of treating these forms, either (i) classifying them all as non-metaphorical, which precludes their use as metaphors in other contexts, or (ii) to outline the base literal use of the verbs and then view any use that does not conform to this meaning as metaphorical. The difficulty with this approach is that the core literal meaning is the oldest in terms of etymology, although this may not be the most common meaning in modern language. This notion of ‘an independent first-order meaning’ (Kittay, 1987) which acts as prerequisite to accessing metaphorical interpretations may also have been lost in a majority of cases (Low 1999, 121). Both these methods have severe limitations, and if we consider that ‘metaphoricity is a matter of degree’ (Dobrovolskij and Piiraninen 2005, 6), it has been decided to regard *dead metaphors* and *delexicalised verbs* as non-metaphorical lexical units in this study, except of course when the N1-3 conditions are fulfilled at a surface level.<sup>14</sup>

#### 4. Analysis of Metaphor in Irish-language Proverbs

A statistical analysis of the most salient phonic, syntactic and semantic markers in Irish proverbs shows that metaphor is not, as Ó Bric (1976, 35) claims, ‘at the heart of Irish-proverbs’. Linguistic metaphor occurs in approximately 17% of the corpus, which is on a par with sub-clausal fronting and rhyme (each 15%), but it is almost half as common as alliteration (29%), which is the proverbial marker *par excellence* in Irish, and syntactic parallelism which occurs with equally high frequency (27%). If the former two markers are, to use the classification of Silverman-Weinreich (1981), ‘primary proverbial markers,’ then those markers in the next class, including ‘metaphor’, may be described as ‘secondary primary markers’ as it occurs in approximately one in six proverbs. The exact distribution frequencies can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1. *Distribution of proverbial markers in a corpus of 1000 Irish-language proverbs.*

Proverbial marker	Distribution					
	present		absent		sum	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Alliteration	288	29	712	71	1000	100
Syntactic Parallelism	265	27	735	73	1000	100
Metaphor	165	17	835	84	1000	100
Sub-clausal fronting	152	15	848	85	1000	100
Rhyme	148	15	852	85	1000	100
Parataxis	56	6	944	94	1000	100

##### 4.1 *X is Y Metaphors*

In over one-fifth of the proverbs the simple nominal metaphorical structure, i.e. *x is y*, is the basis for the metaphor. In these examples the conceptual domains of the tenor and vehicle display an explicit semantic incongruity<sup>15</sup> that rules out a literal interpretation and indicates a metaphorical transfer from the vehicle domain to the topic.<sup>16</sup> For example in No.1, the proverb ‘The summer is the hungry man’ contains the NP topic of ‘the summer’ and the NP + adjectival modifier of ‘hungry man.’

1. *Sé an samhradh an fear gortach.* (SU§1464)  
The summer is the hungry man.

In this copulative proverb there is a clear violation of the semantic rules that govern the acceptable relationships between the elements. The violation occurs because the predicate assigns the subject to an improper category (Levin 1993, 118) i.e. an abstract concept such as ‘the summer’ cannot literally be a member of the superordinate category of which ‘man’ is a prototypical category member, i.e. *homo sapiens*. The ‘class-inclusion assertion’<sup>17</sup> is not true. In short, the sentence violates the constraints of category membership and, as a result, is not an acceptable, conventional literal sentence. Instead, if we examine the underlying simile, the metaphor can be comprehended through a mapping of the shared features of the topic and vehicle (Gentner 1983, Ortony 1979, Wolff and Gentner 1992). Not all shared features are required, however: there are relevant and irrelevant features involved. The number of relevant attributional features will vary from topic to topic, and from vehicle to vehicle (Glucksberg, McGlone and Manfredi 1997, 58). The sentence demands a transfer of the metaphor-relevant features of the vehicle ‘hungry man’ to the topic ‘the summer’, and a suppression of irrelevant features that do not readily transfer. The shared feature of ‘lack of food’ is of high salience in the vehicle and of low salience in the topic (high A ‘the hungry man’ / low B ‘the summer’), as Ortony (1979) has shown to be typical in his ‘salience imbalance model’. In this instance, a salient emblematic relevant behavioural feature of the vehicle is the abstract idea of ‘a lack of food’, whilst the irrelevant features are its physical characteristics, e.g. human and male. Relevant features are key to the processing of the metaphor, whilst the irrelevant features are suppressed. The metaphorical mapping of this relevant vehicle feature facilitates a reading of the topic ‘the summer’ through our conventional understanding of the concept of ‘hungry man’. We can therefore interpret summer as a time when food is not available and when, as a result, people suffer the physical effects of deprivation.

From a syntactic perspective, it should be noted that grammatical modification of the vehicle (i.e. the *y*-NP) is common in *x is y* type proverbs, either through the attachment of at least one

predicative adjective (No. 2), adjectival phrase (No. 3) or an adverbial phrase (No. 4) The juxtaposition of two noun phrases through parataxis is also used to indicate an implicit logical linkage, i.e. ‘equality or identification’ (see Mac Coinnigh 2012, 113). This can be seen in No. 5 below where the term ‘a tongue’ functions metonymically to represent ‘a language’.

2. *Breitheamh ceart cothrom an t-éag.* (SC§321)

COP judge (y) just fair the death (x).

Death is a fair and just judge.

3. *Is namhaid an cheard gan a foghlaim.* (SM§1616)

COP enemy (y) the trade (x) not to learn.

An unlearned trade is an enemy.

4. *Is lia gach othar tar éis a leighis.* (SM§149)

COP surgeon (y) every patient (x) after his/her healing.

Every patient is a surgeon [after he/she is healed.]

5. *Tír gan teanga, tír gan anam.* (SM§1044)

A country without a language, a country without a soul.

Of particular stylistic interest is the fact that the majority of the *x is y* type proverbs do not feature as a basic copulative sentence as in No. 1. Instead they are based on an emphatic identificatory copulative construction (55%), in which adjectival modifier of the vehicle NP is syntactically fronted in post-copulative position for the purposes of emphasis. Some typical examples can be found in No. 6-8.

6. *Is trom an t-ualach an fhalsacht.* (SU§790)

COP heavy the burden the laziness.

Laziness is a HEAVY burden.

7. *Is milis an rud an t-anam.* (SM§133)

COP sweet the thing the soul.

The soul is a SWEET thing.

8. *Is maith an scoil é an saol.* (SC§3618)

COP good the school the life.

Life is a GOOD school.

Once again, in spite of the emphasis the semantic violation is still to be observed. For example in No. 8 the proverb ‘Life is a GOOD school’ has the abstract topic ‘life’ and the vehicle ‘school’. The

abstract concept such as ‘life’ cannot literally be a member of the category domain of which ‘school’ is a typical member, i.e. a building. The sentence demands a transfer of the metaphor-relevant features of the vehicle ‘school’ to the topic ‘life’. In this case the relevant features is the abstract idea of a *process of education* through which individuals, or more specifically humans, incrementally develop and learn, whilst the irrelevant features are its physical characteristics, e.g. a building, classrooms, a playground, a dining-hall, and a gym. The metaphorical mapping of this relevant vehicle feature facilitates a reading of the topic ‘life’ through our conventional understanding of the concept of ‘school’, so that we can view it as a process of incremental educational and social development through which lessons are learned.

#### 4.2 *The xyz metaphor*

Not all metaphors are based on the simple *x is y* structure and often in proverbial material meanings are conveyed through the complex interaction of a multiplicity of terms, or what Turner (1991) has termed the *xyz* metaphor, and what Krikmann (2007: 11) has referred to as ‘Aristotelian structures with the “absent fourth”’. In this structure the simple syntactic construction of *x-NP* be *y-NP* of *z-NP* requires a complex semantic and pragmatic interpretation in which ‘*x* in a target is the counterpart of *y* in a source, and *z* in that target is the counterpart of an unmentioned fourth element *w* in that source’ (Turner 1996, 105).

The corpus evidence corpus shows that there are thirteen examples of the *xyz* type metaphor (8.2%). The syntactic structure of these examples follows two distinct patterns: (1) a classificatory copula structure with a simple NP as subject and a Prepositional NP as predicate [COP Predicate PP Sub NP] and (2) a copulative identificatory structure containing a simple NP as subject and a genitive (noun-noun) construction as predicate [COP Sub NP1 Predicate NP2]. An explication of one representative example from each category is sufficient to demonstrate this category.

##### (1) *COP Predicate PP Sub NP*

9. *Dearthair don bhás an codladh.* (SC§325)

COP Brother to the death the sleep.

Sleep is brother of death.

10. *[Is] Mac don chat an piscín.* (SM§2125)

COP son to the cat the kitten.

The kitten is son of the cat.

11. *Is máistir ar an saol an bás.* (SU§605)

COP master on the life death.

Death is master of life.

In the proverb, *Dearthair don bhás an codladh* ‘Sleep is brother of death’ (No. 9) originally of ancient Greek origin and first attested by Virgil in his *Aeneid*,<sup>18</sup> the *y-z* relationship (‘brother of death’) is unconventional. Class-inclusion is breached as ‘death’ is an abstract, inanimate, non-human, concept that is not a member of the basic source domain of which ‘brother’ is a typical constituent. We can postulate that the most familiar and applicable for the *y*-element (‘brother’) is that of *Familial Relationships or Kinship*. This is evidence by that fact that if we extend the conventional, literal instances of collocation with the phrase ‘brother of [=to]...’ we typically find that it refers to human individuals, mentioned by name e.g. *Paul (is) brother of Sarah*, or by category *The President (is) brother of the Mayor*.<sup>19</sup> To view an abstraction in terms of human kinship demonstrates a high level of semantic incongruity and lets us know that expression must be interpreted through the construction of a metaphor.

Determining this relationship metaphorically involves the invocation of unspecified item from the *y* source domain (which may be termed *w*) as a counterpart of *y*, and the mapping of this relationship onto the base conjunction *x* and *z* (Turner 1991).<sup>20</sup> If the metaphorical *y* (brother) ~ (of) ~ *z* (death) is replaced with a conventional literal rendering i.e. *y* (brother) ~ (of) ~ *w* (brother/sister), we can see that what is being suggested is a fratricidal blood linkage between *human* individuals. Our common understanding of ‘brother to brother/sister relationships’ typically evokes salient qualities such as physical, psychological, biological and behavioural similitude.<sup>21</sup> This image schematic information relating to a typical, literal *y-w* relationship i.e. ‘brother-brother/sister’ can then be mapped to the *x-z* conjunction ‘sleep-death’ (see Turner 1991, 200-1). This leads us to the understanding that ‘sleep’ is physically and psychologically like ‘death’, i.e. it involves a physical and behavioural similarity of lying motionless with eyes closed, and a psychological similarity in that



they both involve a break in human consciousness. Of course, in the case of ‘sleep’ the break in consciousness is a temporary one, whilst with ‘death’ the break is a permanent one.

(2) *COP Sub NP1 Predicate NP2*

12. *Ola an chroí an t-im.* (SM§432)

Oil of the heart the butter.

Butter is the oil of the heart.

13. *[Is] Lia gach boicht bás.* (SM§195)

COP is healer of every poor person death.

Death is the healer of every poor person.

14. *Is é an dóchas lia gach anró.* (SC§1905)

COP it is the hope healer of every misery

Hope is the healer of every misery.

The second structural category of *xyz* metaphors features a genitive construction linking the *z* and *y* elements as the examples above illustrate. In the proverb *ola an chroí an t-im* ‘Butter is the oil of the heart’ the association between ‘butter’ (*x*) and ‘heart’ (*z*) may be understood by the relationship indicated by the noun phrase ‘oil’ (*y*) and an unspecified absent counterpart from an associated conceptual domain (*w*) i.e. ‘engine’. Possible relevant features associated with ‘oil’ could be physical (e.g. viscous liquid), behavioural (e.g. fluid), or functional (e.g. lubrication, heat-generating), but if ‘engine’ is the absent (*w*) noun phrase then lubrication is the most salient shared feature. When the analogical mapping is deciphered, i.e. OIL IS TO A MACHINE as BUTTER IS TO THE HEART, a metaphorical understanding occurs so that we may comprehend that butter performs the same function to the heart as oil does to an engine i.e. lubrication.

#### 4.3 *Predicative Metaphor*

Aside from the *x is y* and the *xyz* structures, the most common other type is ‘predicative metaphor’ (Miller 1979) in which the subject component of the topic domain and the predicative component of the vehicle domain are incompatible. Metaphorical interpretations can be found in the major lexical categories involved in the predicates: nouns, verbs and adjectives (see Glanzberg 2008). In literal sentences, there is a limit to the type of NPs can be used in conjunction with a verb and when the NP

violates the verb restrictions, a metaphorical reading is required. For example, in the paradigm *Cuir do náire faoi do chóta* ‘Put your *shame* (*x*) under your coat’, the range of non-figurative applications of the *x*-NP is ‘physical object’, for example, a typical NP for *x* might be jumper, wallet, phone, or money. Yet, in the proverb reading, an atypical NP ‘shame’ with the marker ‘Abstract concept’ is used in conjunction with the verb. This violates selection restrictions of the verb and is semantically incompatible (see Levin 1977): the anomaly triggers readjustment rules, which in turn demands a metaphorical reading of the sentence.<sup>22</sup>

15. *Cuir do náire faoi do chóta.* (SC§3056)

Put your shame under your coat.

Semantic incompatibility is constructed through various attachments of NPs to non-compatible verbs in the proverbs, for example, the abstract noun ‘soul’ is used as the object of the human taste sense [‘soul’ ‘to taste’] (No. 16), a fixed human body part i.e. ‘nose’ is treated as if it was a portable object [‘nose’ ‘to put/move’] (No. 17), and a human category member i.e. ‘priest’ is composed of an inanimate, physical object [‘priest’ ‘to make from wood’] (No. 18).

16. *Is milis an rud an t-anam.* (SM§133)

The soul is a sweet thing.

17. *Cuir do shrón romhat agus déanfaidh sí eolas.*  
(SC§1507)

Put your nose before you and it will guide.

18. *Ní de gach adhmad is cóir sagart a dhéanamh.*  
(SU§77)

It is not of every timber it is right to make a priest.

The proverbial structure *COP Comparative Adjective x-NP than y-NP*, or ‘value comparison’ (Thompson 1974, 40) is one of the most commonly occurring in a large number of languages, and it has a relatively high frequency in the Irish language also (10%) (Mac Coinnigh 2012, 125). Silverman-Weinreich (1981, 78) has shown that Yiddish proverbs often compare abstractions in this manner—usually one generic and one abstract term—and that this form is a common semantic marker (e.g. *gezunt kumt far parnose* ‘health is more important than income’). In Irish, this structure often pertains to predicative metaphor as atypical noun phrases are frequently used

in relation to the comparative adjective. For example in No. 19 the *y*-NP ‘apron’ is an accepted literal object that can be physically close to the subject i.e. ‘woman’, yet the *x*-NP ‘an excuse’ is an abstract concept that is semantically incongruent. The two elements are not literally comparable. Whilst in No. 20, the treatment of humans as objects is once again responsible for a metaphorical reading as it is physically impossible to have a ‘fistful of men’ or a ‘withfull of a woman’:

19. *Is foisce do bhean leithscéal ná práiscín.* (RA§334)

A excuse is closer to a woman than an apron.

20. *Is fearr lán doirn d’fhear ná lán gaid de mhnaoi.*

(SM§30)

Better a fistful of a man than a witheful of a woman.

### 5. Personification in Irish-language Proverbs

Personification is a trope of pre-classical origin founded upon the concept of ‘primitive animism’ which scholars such as Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 33) and MacKay (1986, 87) have described as the prototypical metaphor.<sup>23</sup> At a basic level, it involves the projection of human physical attributes, characteristics, emotions, habits, beliefs and activities, onto a range of non-human entities, events and abstract concepts that feature at lower level of the GREAT CHAIN OF BEING (see Table 2).<sup>24</sup>

Table 2. *Lakoff and Turner’s (1989) Great Chain Metaphor*

			<u>Specifically</u> <u>Human</u> <u>Features</u>
		<b>Instincts</b>	<i>Instincts</i>
	<b>Biological Features</b>	<b>Biological Features</b>	<i>Biological Features</i>
<b>Physical features</b>	<b>Physical features</b>	<b>Physical features</b>	<i>Physical features</i>
Things, Substances	Plants	Animals	Human Beings

Key: Bold type = non-human

Italics = shared (non-human + human)

Underlined = only human

This projection facilitates the comprehension of the entities through an innate awareness of our own instincts and behaviour. Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 33) have identified personification, or anthropomorphism, as the most obvious ontological metaphor, and numerous other scholars have highlighted its importance in proverbs, as Taylor notes ‘Simple metaphors which verge on personification are of course common to proverbs in all lands; abstractions are assigned the powers of human beings’ (Taylor 1931, 142).<sup>25</sup> Although no specific analytical work has been completed on personification in Irish language proverbs, Ó Bric (1976, 35) has made the vague comment that abstract concepts *are* personified in Irish language proverbs.<sup>26</sup> Evidence from the corpus is more comprehensive, however, and it shows that personification is the most salient trope in Irish metaphoric proverbs, as it occurs in almost one half of the examples (48%).

Various types of metaphoric projection are responsible for the incongruity and in the case of Irish proverbs these may be classified into seven distinct formulaic sub-categories according to the aspect of human physical, cognitive, emotional or social behaviour that is projected onto inanimate objects and abstract concepts. Of all the projections, the transferal of typical (Cat. 1) *Human physical and social behaviour* to the inanimate or abstract is the commonest, as it occurs in almost one half of the personifications (46.8%). This concurs with Bloomfield’s (1963, 165-69) grammatical analysis of personification allegory in English where he states:

Of all the grammatical signs of personification it seems to me that the use of animate verbs and predicates is the most characteristic and important...Personification allegory combines the non-metaphoric subject with metaphoric predicate and yokes together the concrete and the metaphoric in the presentation of generality.

In Irish proverbs, these animate verbs (verbs typically used of living things, such as humans or animals), are often used with an incompatible NP subject or object. For example in the proverb *Char thacht an fhúinne fear ariamh* ‘Truth never ever choked a man’ the intransitive verb ‘choke’<sup>27</sup> is used with the abstract agent ‘truth’ and the object ‘man’. Of course, truth as an abstraction does not possess the physical properties (i.e. to suffocate by applying physical pres-

sure to the throat) to effect suffocation of a human. Some other examples are provided below to demonstrate the nature of the projection:

21. *Char thacht an fhírinne fear ariamh.* (SU§409)

Truth never ever choked a man.

22. *Is minic a bhris béal duine a shrón.* (SU§1365)

It is often that a person's mouth broke his/her nose.

23. *Beathaíonn an fáltas an leisce.* (SM§1389)

Profits breeds laziness.

(Cat. 2) *Conscious emotional and cognitive functions* associated with humans are also applied to the non-human (13%). For example in the proverb *Is cuma leis an éadach cé a chaitheas é* 'The cloth does not care who wears it', the physical object 'cloth' is furnished with the conscious mental reaction of expressing a lack of interest or concern towards its wearer. 'Cloth' is at the base level of the GREAT CHAIN METAPHOR, however, and possesses neither the biological nor the instinctual attributes required to validate this as a literal sentence.

24. *Is cuma leis an éadach cé a chaitheas é.* (SC§3353)

The cloth does not care who wears it.

25. *Aithníonn an fhuil an gaol.* (SC§2490)

The blood recognises the relation.

26. *Nuair a bhíonn an bolg lán is mian leis an gcnámh síneadh.* (SM§139).

When the stomach is full the bone wishes to stretch.

Closely associated with this category is the projection of (Cat. 3) *human sensory attributes* (6.5%) to the inanimate, namely sight 'ophthalmoception,' hearing 'audioception', taste 'gustaoception,' smell 'olfacoception',<sup>28</sup> and touch 'tactioception'. The faculty of speech has been included also as many linguists have posited it as a sixth 'sense' through which we perceive, and are joined to, our environment (see Owen 1991). We can see these clearly in the examples below in which the abstract concept of 'hatred' has visual abilities (No. 27) whilst birds (No. 28) and indeed abstract concepts such as 'misery' (No. 29) have the faculty of speech and linguistic cognition.

27. *Folaíonn grá gráin agus tchí fuath a lán.* (RA§270)  
Love conceals hatred and hatred sees all.

28. *Is searbh gach éan a labhrann leis féin.* (SM§550)  
Every bird that speaks to itself is bitter.

29. *Labhair leis an donas nuair a thioctas sé.* (SU§524)  
Speak to misery when it comes.

Other commonly occurring projections are the explicit attachment of (Cat. 4) *human physical features*, such as ears and heads, to inanimate physical objects (10.4%) (No. 30-32) as well as the attribution of (Cat. 5) *predicative behavioural adjectives*, such as loyalty, guilt, and generosity (6.5%), which may be understood as human-specific characteristics (No. 33-35).

30. *Bíonn cluasa ag na ballaí.* (SC§3996)  
The walls have ears.<sup>29</sup>

31. *Bíonn cluasa ar na claitheacha agus súile ar an mhachaire.*  
The walls have ears and the field (has) eyes (SM§228)

32. *Bíonn ceann caol ar an óige.* (SM§265).  
Youth has a narrow head.

33. *Cha raibh bolg mór fial ariamh.* (RA§373)  
A large stomach was never generous.

34. *Bíonn an chuimhne i gcónaí dílis.* (SC§697a)  
Memory is always loyal.

35. *Bíonn an grá caoch.* (SC§2530)  
Love is blind.

The final areas of projection see (Cat. 6) *human relationship structures* (7.8%) (No. 36-37) and (Cat. 7) *human occupations* (9.1%) (No. 38-39) used in conjunction with abstract concepts such as nostalgia, memory, life, hope, misery and time.

36. *Níl cara ag cumhaidh ach cuimhne.* (SC§689a)  
Nostalgia has no friend except memory.

37. *Is ait an mac an saol.* (SM§1480)  
Life is a strange son.

38. *Is é an dochas lia gach anró.* (SC§1905)  
Hope is the healer of every misery.

39. *Is maith an scéalaí an aimsir.* (SM§1946)  
Time is a good storyteller.

In some of the proverbs, it could be argued that the attributive quality is not human specific and that other lower-class entities in the GREAT CHAIN METAPHOR, particularly animals, share some of our biological, physical and instinctual features. For example there is case to argue that dogs, cats and other such animals also possess 'eyes' and 'ears' (Cat. 4), that they also 'breed' and 'jump', or that they can 'see' and 'hear' (Cat. 3). However, the anthropocentric nature of proverbial material means that our understanding of such 'shared' features is governed by our own human awareness and interpretation of their function. Our innate cognizance of these features as humans is universally more developed than our understanding of their role and behavior in animals, and this is the primary motivation for their metaphorical projection to lower-level entities.

...even though animals do eat up, catch up, give birth to, attack, outwit, and destroy, humans typically and most saliently do these things in everyday experience. These examples therefore seem more likely to involve a figurative person than a figurative animal for producers and perceivers alike. (MacKay 1986, 99)

From a syntactic perspective, there are a variety of sentential forms used in these proverbs, but there are three salient structures peculiar to personification. The first is the basic nominal *x is y* formula, which is produced as an identificatory copulative structure, usually with the qualifying adjective of the *y*-NP fronted in post-copulative position for the purposes of emphasis (No. 40). Secondly, substantive sentence containing an indefinite/definite noun are qualified with a predicative adjective that is semantically non-attributable (No. 41). And finally, a structure based on '*present tense verb x-NP y-NP*' in which the verb is semantically incompatible with at least one of the noun phrases (No. 42).

**COPAIL X (indefinite/definite NP) Y (indefinite/definite NP)**

40. *Is maith an t-eolaí deireadh an lae.* (RA§147)

COP good the guide the end of day.  
The end of day is a GOOD guide.

**SUBSTANTIVE VERB X (indefinite/definite NP) ADJECTIVE**

41. *Cha raibh bolg mór fial ariamh.* (RA§373).  
NEG VERB PAST to be a large stomach generous ever.  
A large stomach was never generous.

**VERB (Present Tense) X (indefinite/definite NP) Y (indefinite/definite NP)**

42. *Sceitheann fíon fírinne.* (SM§520)  
VERB spreads X wine Y truth.  
Wine spreads truth.

**6. Cognitive Metaphor**

The traditional view that proverbs are linguistically independent entities has been challenged by innovative work in the field of cognitive linguistics (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Lakoff 1987, Lakoff and Turner, 1989, Krikmann 2009, and Kövecses 2000, 2010). Their work has demonstrated that human thinking is conditioned by a relatively small set of extended metaphors, or what they term basic conceptual metaphors, which underlying everyday language, e.g. ARGUMENT IS WAR, and furthermore, that these are instantiated at a specific level e.g. ‘your claims are *indefensible*,’ ‘he *attacked every weak point* in my argument’, ‘his criticisms were *right on target*’ (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 4)<sup>30</sup>. Moreover, they assert that idioms and proverbs are not just a matter of language, but instead are connected to our conceptual system (cf. Gibbs and Beitel 1995, Kövecses and Szabó 1996). Many proverbs are systematically attached to an underlying conceptual metaphor that often, as Tóthné Litovkina and Csábi (2002) have shown in the case of the conceptual metaphor of love, transfers linguistic borders. Evidence from Irish proverbs supports the cognitive linguistic thesis that there are systematic patterns relating to underlying conceptual metaphors and, furthermore, in accordance with Kövecses (2000, 26-7), that *love* appears to be the most salient ‘metaphorized emotion concept.’

Conceptual metaphors relating to love occur in 4% of metaphorical proverbs. They may be divided into three types: (i) LOVE



IS A DISEASE /AN AILMENT (ii) LOVE IS A JOURNEY (i.e. Love is a moving object), and (iii) LOVE IS FIRE. The most common of the conceptual metaphors is LOVE IS A DISEASE /AN AILMENT<sup>31</sup> – which strangely Lakoff & Turner (1989) do not list in their seminal scholarship on poetic metaphor – but to which Kövecses (2000, 26-7) and Tóthné Litovkina and Csábi (2002, 389)<sup>32</sup> allude in more recent studies. This is a specific-level, structural metaphor in which the target conceptual domain of LOVE is construed by the use of a more experiential source domain of DISEASE/AILMENT. Unobservable internal states like emotions are often understood through more vivid metaphorical images (Ortony and Fainsilber 1989). The physical and physiological symptoms of *love* may be understood through our general knowledge of the symptoms of disease and ailments (or what Miller (1979, 358) has termed our ‘apperceptive mass’) i.e. physical and mental weakness, enervation and apathy. At a surface level, the linguistic manifestation (‘metaphorical linguistic expression’) of the conceptual metaphors is achieved, firstly, through the explicit *x is y* formula (No. 43) and, secondly, through the nominal and verbal use of ‘cure’ in conjunction with the abstract concept of ‘love’; thus, signalling a incongruence of tenor and vehicle (No. 44-46). It should be noted that this particular conceptual metaphor is not amongst the most common in everyday language (LOVE IS A NUTRIENT/JOURNEY/UNITY OF PARTS/BOND/FLUID IN CONTAINER, etc.) and owes its origins to classical antiquity, for example, Taylor (1961, 44) mentions that the Latin proverb *Amorius vulnus idem sanat* ‘Love carries the wound it makes’ as being a translation of an earlier Greek proverb.

#### LOVE IS A DISEASE/AILMENT

43. *Is cloíte an galar an grá.* (SC§2542)

Love is an enervating disease.

44. *Galar an grá ná leigheasann luibheanna.* (SM§293)

Herbs do not cure the disease of love.

45. *Chan fhuil lia ná leigheas ar an ghrá.* (SU§143)

There is neither healer nor cure for love.

46. *Níl leigheas ar an ngrá ach an pósadh.* (SC§2552)

There is no cure for love only marriage.

The other two common conceptual metaphors for love are outlined below:

LOVE IS A JOURNEY (Love is a moving object)

47. *Ní ghabhann grá le gnás is ní cheileann fuath a locht.* (SM§301)

Love doesn't accompany custom and hate doesn't conceal its fault.

48. *Nuair a dhruideann an radharc ón tsúil druideann an grá ón gcroí.* (SM§305)

When sight moves away from the eye, love moves away from the heart.

49. *Ní raibh grá mór riamh ná go dtiocfadh fuath ina dhiaidh.* (SM§297)

There was never a great love that wasn't followed by hatred.

LOVE IS FIRE

50. *An grá nach bhfuil sa láthair fuaraíonn sé.* (SC§2528)

Love which is not present cools.

### ***7. Correlation of Proverbial Markers in Metaphoric Proverbs***

To fully understand the structural and poetic form of the explicit linguistic metaphor in Irish-language proverbs, we may examine frequencies relating to typical sentence structures and also the correlation of other grammatical, phonic and syntactic markers of proverbiality. Table 3 shows the distribution of sentence types in proverbs containing metaphor, whilst Table 4 shows the relative frequencies of phonic and syntactic markers.

Table 3. Distribution of sentence type in proverbs containing metaphor.

Sentence type	Distribution					
	present		absent		sum	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Simple	119	79	46	21	165	100
Compound	14	6	151	94	165	100
Complex	30	15	135	85	165	100
Compound complex	0	0	165	100	165	100
Phrase	2	0	163	98	165	100

*Grammatical.* Of the four main sentence structures—simple, compound, complex, compound complex— and the phrase structure (or the ‘nominal sentence’ with a predicate lacking a finite verb), it is clear that the simple sentence is the most frequently used sentence type for metaphor (79%) as in No. 51. Complex (15%), compound (6%) and nominal sentences (0%) are also found as can be seen in the examples No. 52-54. Compound-complex sentences do not contain metaphor, however.

Simple

51. *Ní de gach adhmad is cóir sagart a dhéanamh.* (SU§77)

It is not of every timber it is right to make a priest.

Compound

52. *Neart a ritheann agus mire a léimeann.* (SM§233)

Strength runs and madness jumps.

Complex

53. *Labhair leis an donas nuair a thioctas sé.* (SU§524)

Speak to trouble when it arrives.

Nominal Sentence

54. *Tír gan teanga, tír gan anam.* (SM§1044)

A country without a tongue (‘language’), a country without a soul.

Table 4. *Relative frequencies of syntactic and phonic markers (to nearest %) in proverbs containing a linguistic metaphor.*

<i>Proverbial marker</i>	<i>Distribution</i>					
	<i>present</i>		<i>absent</i>		<i>sum</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Alliteration	50	30	115	70	165	100
Syntactic Parallelism	30	18	135	82	165	100
Sub-clausal fronting	13	8	152	92	165	100
Rhyme	11	7	154	93	165	100
Parataxis	3	2	162	98	165	100

*Phonic.* Phonic markers of proverbiality, such as rhyme and alliteration, often feature in metaphorical proverbs. The use of alliteration is particularly significant as it occurs in almost one third of all the examples (30%), whilst the presence of rhyme is not common (7%). Not only that, of all that proverbial markers that were analyzed, alliteration is the most frequently occurring proverbial marker in metaphors. It be inferred that this rhythmic adornment adds to the aesthetic of the conceptual metaphor and assists with processes of memorization, reproduction and recognition. Below are typical examples of phonic markers.

*Rhyme*

55. *Nuair a bhíos an deoch istigh, bíonn an chiall amuigh.* (RA§251)

[nuər' a v's ən d'ox ə'st'iy', b'i:n ən x'iəl ə'miy']

When drink is inside, sense is outside.

*Alliteration*

56. *Níl cara ag cumhaidh ach cuimhne.* (SC§689a)

[n'i:l karə eg' ku:i: ax kiv'n'ə]

Loneliness has no friend except memory.

*Syntactic.* Syntactic proverbial markers, such as syntactic parallelism (18%), sub-clausal fronting (8%), and parataxis (2%) are also present in metaphoric proverbs. There is no significant deviation between their occurrence in metaphorical proverbs and in non-metaphorical proverbs in the Irish corpus. Examples of these are shown below.

*Syntactic Parallelism*

57. *Ní ghabhann grá le gnás is ní cheileann fuath a locht.* (SM§301)

Love does not keep company with custom and hatred doesn't conceal its fault.

*Subclausal Fronting*

58. *Nuair a bhíonn an bolg lán is mian leis an gcnámh síneadh.* (SM§139)

When the stomach is full, the bone desires to stretch.

*Parataxis*

59. *Is milis fíon, is searbh a íoc.* (SM§524)

Wine is sweet, its payment is bitter.

Chi-squared tests show that the frequencies of these syntactic and phonic markers are not statistically significant, however (i.e. the p-values are all below 0.05), and that their co-occurrence is a result of chance as opposed to any latent process. It may be concluded that Irish-language proverbs containing linguistic metaphors do not exhibit any preference for other poetic or structural features.

**8. Conclusion**

This study clearly delineated identificational criteria for linguistic metaphor and sought to analysis the frequency, nature and form of metaphor in Irish-language proverbs. These results of this study demonstrate that linguistic metaphor is not at the heart of Irish-language proverbs, but instead is a secondary proverbial marker that occurs in just one in six proverbs (17%). Of stylistic primacy in Irish are the phonic marker of alliteration (29%)—the proverbial marker *par excellence* in Irish—, and the structural marker of syntactic parallelism (27%). Metaphor is a significant indicator of proverbiality, but it is not the 'heart of the majority of proverbs' as Ó Bric (1976: 35) has claimed. It is, however, the most important semantic marker, which concurs with Arora's (1984) findings in relation to Spanish proverbs.

The semantic incongruence of vehicle and tenor, which is a *sine qua non* of metaphor, is constructed through a range of methods in Irish proverbs. Results show that the commonest method is through the use of what Miller (1979) has termed 'predicative metaphor' in which the subject component of the topic domain and the predica-

tive component of the vehicle domain are incompatible. In these cases, the incongruous predicative element is predominately verbal, but also occurs as an explicit adjectival modifier in a number of proverbs. The 'value comparison' (Thompson 1974, 40) based on the structure *COP comparative adjective x-NP than y-NP* is the vehicle for the predicative metaphor in a number of proverbs. The basic nominal copulative structure *x is y* is also found (10%), but Irish proverbs display a preference for an emphatic identificatory copulative construction in which the adjectival modifier of the vehicle is fronted. The emphatic construction occurs in over a half of the *x is y* category. The *xyz* structure, which is one of the oldest classical proverbial formulae, and is often termed 'Aristotelian structures with the 'absent forth', features in one-tenth of Irish linguistic metaphors (8.2%). These involved complex semantic and pragmatic interpretations through which the absent forth element *w* is deciphered from its *z* counterpart, and then the image-schematic relationship projected to the source *x-y*. Evidence shows that familial relationships (e.g. son, brother) and occupations (e.g. master, healer [=surgeon]) are the predominant superordinate categories through which the *z* fourth is related in many of these proverbs.

As the most salient metaphoric trope, personification is extremely common in Irish, occurring in almost half of the proverbs (48.4%). This frequency suggests that personification is an important semantic marker in Irish and supports the work of numerous other scholars, such as Taylor (1962) and Mieder (1993b), who have shown the prevalence of personification in proverbs since classical times. The results show that there are at least seven typical types of projection in Irish proverbs, depending on the aspect of human behaviour, physicality, or social relations that are projected to the inanimate or the non-human. The projection of *human physical and social behaviour* (e.g. choking, breeding, running, jumping) is the most frequent form (46.8%), whilst the other six categories have frequencies ranging from (6.5%-13%). These categories of projection relate to *human emotional and cognitive functions* (13.0%), *physical features* (10.4%), *relationship structures* (9.1%) and *occupations* (9.1%) *predicative behavioural attributes* (6.5%), and *sensory attributes* (6.5%).

At a surface level, proverbs exhibiting linguistic metaphor also contain various phonic and syntactic markers, which en-

hance their ‘proverbial’ quality. The simple sentence is the choice of most linguistic metaphors (79%), whilst they also occur as complex (15%) and compound sentences (6%). Syntactic parallelism (26%) and alliteration (24%) adorn metaphor at the average rate of one in four, whilst other markers are much less frequent: sub-clausal fronting (9%), rhyme (6%) and parataxis (2%). The examination of probability values using a chi-squared test shows that these frequencies are not statistically significant (i.e. the p-values are all below 0.05). The null-hypothesis that the relationship between metaphor and these other markers is random is not disproven, so essentially, the co-occurrence of these markers is a result of chance as opposed to any latent process. It may be deduced, as a result, that proverbs containing linguistic metaphors do not exhibit any preference for other poetic or structural features.

In terms of deep structure, Irish proverbs attest to the presence of systematic patterns of underlying conceptual metaphors, such as been identified by Lakoff and Turner 1989, Kövecses 2000, 2010, and others. Using the work of Tóthné Litovkina and Csábi (2002) in paremiology as a template, it was shown that conceptual metaphors relating to the concept of love are also found in Irish. This is further evidence of the cross-linguistic nature of the conceptual metaphor in proverbs in general, and of the particular prevalence of the base concepts metaphors (i) LOVE IS A DISEASE/AN AILMENT, (ii) LOVE IS A JOURNEY, and (iii) LOVE IS FIRE. These are only tentative results, however, and further work is required to determine the exact nature of conceptual metaphors in Irish-language proverbs.

**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> See Arora (1984)

<sup>2</sup> The language is known as *Sesotho sa Leboa*.

<sup>3</sup> Silverman-Weinreich (1981) makes a dual distinction between proverbs that refer allegorically to a rule i.e. that are set off from the subject of discourse because they are not literally relevant, and direct proverbs in which a rule of behaviour is outlined in a literal manner, but which may contain metaphor. What she terms ‘allegorical proverbs’ and ‘direct proverbs’ can be more accurately described as proverbs functioning as ‘applied metaphors’ and ‘linguistic metaphors’, respectively.

<sup>4</sup> The original text reads ‘Fiú más meafair croí furchóir seanfhocal, tá seanfhocail nach bhfuil brí mheafarach leo.’ (Ó Bric 1976, 35)

<sup>5</sup> The sampling frame was created by numerically tagging proverbial entries in the dialectal collections. Using simple random sampling methods, one thousand proverbs were selected as a sample using an electronic true random number generator. Sampling with replacement (from an infinite population) was used so that each item would have the same probability of selection and, thus, the covariance between the two items would be zero. Quantitative statistics were used to calculate the frequency of a range of proverbial markers and these results were entered into tabular form and analysed. See Mac Coinnigh (2012, 96-96) for a detailed description of methodology, including specification of sampling frame, sample size and selection, and sampling process.

<sup>6</sup> Robert MacAdam originally published six hundred proverbs in the *Ulster Journal of Ulster Archaeology*, series 1, in 1856-62 (6: 172-83, 250-67; 7: 278-87; 9: 223-36), and these were subsequently included in *Seanfhocla Uladh*.

<sup>7</sup> The abbreviations SU, SM, and SC, will be used to refer to these collections when citing proverbial material. The editions used are: Ó Muirgheasa (1936), Ua Maoileoin (1984), and Uí Bhraonáin (2010), respectively.

<sup>8</sup> See Kirby (1997, 521-531) for a discussion of the work of Homer, Isocrates and Plato on metaphor.

<sup>9</sup> Alternatively, scholars such as Davidson (1978, 42) have argued that only the ‘truth/falsity’ element is applicable. The notion of ‘semantic nonsense’ is covered by the ‘truth/falsity’ criterion i.e. if an utterance is semantically nonsensical then it must be *patently* false. Levin (1993, 117) refers to the example of ‘the ship ploughs the sea’ and ‘Sally is a block of ice’ to demonstrate how both violate truth conditions yet do not require empirical investigation to prove that they are patently false.

<sup>10</sup> Gibbs and Beitel (1995, 136) argue that in terms of the ‘conceptual metaphor thesis’ (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) most proverbs are motivated by an underlying conceptual metaphor. English and German equivalents of this Irish example [namely, ‘one rotten apple spoils the whole bag’ *Eng.*; ‘one bad potato ruins the whole bag’ *Deu.*], they assert, have the underlying conceptual metaphor of PEOPLE ARE INANIMATE OBJECTS in spite of its instantiation in different linguistic terms. Our evidence shows, however, that the base conceptual metaphor varies according to language, as in the case of Irish, the base conceptual metaphor is PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS.

<sup>11</sup> See Dobrovol’skij and Piiraninen (2005, 6)

<sup>12</sup> See Levin (1977, 30-32) for a discussion of the process of ‘agrammatization’.

<sup>13</sup> ‘Many linguistic metaphors occur in ordinary language, although they are no longer classified as metaphors because they are now the most accepted method of encoding those contexts. The linguistic community do not perceive any disparity between the two conceptual fields on account of their high frequency of usage.’ (Cameron 1999b, 114).



<sup>14</sup> This approach is consistent with Low (1999, 49) 'The idea that the researcher examines the text and unilaterally decides what is and is not metaphorical is perhaps the commonest approach to identification.'

<sup>15</sup> '...regular (literal) interpretations are blocked by semantic violation.' (Leech 1969, 89)

<sup>16</sup> Pragmatic (e.g. Levin 1977, Searle 1979, Altwerger and Strauss 1987), psychological (e.g. Dascal 1987, 1989) and formal theoretical approaches (e.g. Chomsky 1971) generally assume that literal interpretation has primacy over the figurative, i.e. a figurative interpretation is only considered after some semantic anomaly, or 'trigger', has been observed at the literal level. Studies by Gibbs (1984), Keysar (1989), Keyser and Glucksberg (1992) on the psychological theory of metaphor have challenged this assumption, however. They argue that similar methods of processing underlie both literal and metaphorical language, and that a literal meaning must be first rejected to 'trigger' metaphor understanding.

<sup>17</sup> Glucksberg and Keysar (1990).

<sup>18</sup> Virgil has the following line in book 6 of his *Aeneid*: 'Suffering and Death the threshold keep, And with them Death's blood-brother, Sleep...' (Collington 1903, 185). In Greek mythology, sleep (*Hypnos*) and death (*Thanatos*) are twin brothers as de Purucker (1930, 45-46) has noted: '...*Hypnos kai thanatos adelphoi* said the ancient Greeks: Sleep and Death are brothers.'... What happens in sleep takes place in death— but perfectly so. What happens in death and after death, takes place when we sleep— but imperfectly so.'

<sup>19</sup> For example, a frequency search of the term 'brother of...' on Google has 'Jude, brother of Jesus' as the first return. Accessed 17 August 2012.

<sup>20</sup> 'In particular, we are to find some  $w$  in our conceptual knowledge that stands in a relation to  $y$  which we can refer to conventionally by the expression "y of  $w$ ," and we are to map the relation between  $y$  and  $w$  onto the conjunction of  $x$  and  $z$ ' (Turner, 1991).

<sup>21</sup> On occasion, the relationship between two brothers may appear contrariwise to describe opponents or rivals (see Revez 2003, 127).

<sup>22</sup> Levin's theory is not without its limitations, as Keysar and Glucksberg (1992, 636-637) have demonstrated with counterexamples.

<sup>23</sup> The trope was originally transferred into Western literary tradition by Greek and Roman scholars such as Prudentius, Boethius, and Martianus Capella (see Bloomfield 1963, 162).

<sup>24</sup> Table taken and adapted from Krikmann (2007, 35).

<sup>25</sup> Personification is found in Yiddish, but Silverman-Weinreich (1981, 77) shows that they are a 'rare device'.

<sup>26</sup> Translated from original 'cuirtear leis tré phearsantú a dhéanamh ar an rud teibí.' (Ó Bric 1976: 35)

<sup>27</sup> OED defines as 'to suffocate by external compression of the throat; to throttle, strangle; to produce a sensation of strangling; said of the action of anything which sticks in the throat and blocks up the windpipe or its orifices; of disease or emotion which stops the action of the respiratory organs; of an un-

breathable medium, such as water, gas, fumes, smoke, dust, or the like, when it fills the lungs and produces suffocation.'

<sup>28</sup> Also known as *olfaction*

<sup>29</sup> This classical proverb belongs to the International Medieval category of proverbial expressions (Taylor 1961) has owes its provenance to the classical period in which Dionysius, the tyrant of Syracuse (431-368 BC) had an ear-shaped underground cave cut in a rock so that he could overhear the conversations of his prisoners in an adjacent chamber (Room, 1996: 312).

<sup>30</sup> The metaphoric element in each sentence is italicised.

<sup>31</sup> Taylor (1962, 61) mentions that examples of this conceptual metaphor in classical literature, and explains that it is to be found in many international languages through translations

<sup>32</sup> 'As can be readily seen [I am heart-sick], the concept of love is probably the most highly 'metaphorized' emotion concept...this is possibly due to the fact that it is not only an emotion, but a relationship as well.'

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THE TOLSTOY “CONNECTION”: ALEKSANDR SOLZHENITSYN’S *IN THE FIRST CIRCLE* THROUGH THE PRISM OF PEASANT PROVERBS IN *WAR AND PEACE* AND *ANNA KARENINA*

**Abstract:** Like his nineteenth-century predecessor, Leo Tolstoy, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn displayed a keen fascination for the folk wisdom and simple speech of Russian peasants. And, like Tolstoy, Solzhenitsyn was fond of interspersing large numbers of proverbs into the speech of central characters and protagonists of his fiction. A case in point is his novel *In the First Circle*, which shares a number of features in common with Tolstoy’s masterpieces *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*: in particular, the predilection of his predecessor to resolve the ethical-moral crisis faced by his protagonist through the introduction of a Russian peasant into the narrative, whose folksy wisdom and speech succeed in shedding light on the existential search in the novel, undertaken by the protagonist.

**Keywords:** Russian proverb; peasant speech; Russian folk wisdom; Russian Literature; *War and Peace*; *Anna Karenina*; *In the First Circle*; Pierre Bezukhov; Platon Karataev; Konstantin Levin; Fyodor the peasant; Gleb Nerzhin; Spiridon Yegorov.

In discussing Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s fiction, scholars often point to the influence of Fyodor Dostoevsky—particularly with respect to the polyphonic structure of the latter’s novels. Numerous scholarly articles and several monographs attest to this influence.<sup>1</sup> The present study, however, will examine the influence of another writer—Leo Tolstoy—especially with regard to the moral-didactic voice that underlies much of the major thematic message expressed in his two major novels and the thematic connection they have with Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s novel, *In the First Circle*.<sup>2</sup> I will argue, furthermore, that much of the underlying force of this moralistic message in the major novels of both authors is driven by the didactic suasion of the Russian proverb, what Gary Saul Morson refers to as its “absolute language.”<sup>3</sup>

Tolstoy's attraction to Russian proverbs has received considerable scholarly attention.<sup>4</sup> From at least the 1860s, he was particularly drawn to the simplicity and native folk wisdom of the Russian peasant as reflected in their fondness for proverbial speech. Similar to the later practice of his twentieth-century successor, Solzhenitsyn, Tolstoy developed a habit of copying large numbers of proverbs from Vladimir Dal's Dictionary, *Poslovitsy russkogo naroda/Proverbs of the Russian People*, as well as from other lexicographers. In addition, Tolstoy was often inclined to eavesdrop on the Russian peasant speech of countless passers-by at his elaborate country estate at Yasnaya Polyana.<sup>5</sup> The fruit of this enterprise on Tolstoy's part has recently been calculated by prominent Russian paremiologists, Valery Mokienko and Olga Lomakina, to number more than 1,200 proverbs, proverbial expressions, and proverb variants.<sup>6</sup> Strangely, however, relatively little scholarship has been devoted to analysis of the eminent 19<sup>th</sup>-century Russian author's use of proverbs in his literary works.<sup>7</sup>

As we know from his novels as well as his literary autobiography, *Бодался телёнок с дубом/The Oak and the Calf*,<sup>8</sup> Solzhenitsyn shared a number of interests in ethical and moral issues with his 19<sup>th</sup>-century predecessor. Not the least of which was his fascination with the connection they bore with the moral certainty of the "absolute language" of the Russian proverb. Another scholar, Mary McCarthy has gone so far as to label this bond between art and morality "the Tolstoy connection."<sup>9</sup> This ethical link between art and the proverb is not surprising since, in Tolstoy's as well as in Solzhenitsyn's own views, both are associated, like the proverb, with the prescriptive qualities of truth understood through experience and morality.<sup>10</sup> In his speech before the Union of Soviet Writers in November 1967, for example, Solzhenitsyn declared:

The task of a writer is to select more universal and eternal questions, [such as] the secrets of the human heart and conscience, the confrontation between life and death, the triumph over spiritual sorrows, the laws in the history of mankind that were born in the depths of time immemorial and that will cease to exist only when the sun ceases to shine.<sup>11</sup>

Similar to Tolstoy and other nineteenth-century Russian writers, Solzhenitsyn's fictional works bring to mind a spirit of moral exhortation reminiscent, one might suggest, of the didactic spirit of the proverb. Also like Tolstoy and, for that matter the Russian proverb itself, Solzhenitsyn sees himself as a teacher of life and, in fact, assumes an inseparability between art and life itself. Further reminiscent of the properties of the proverb, Solzhenitsyn states in his Nobel Prize Lecture of 1972 that the "great and blessed property" of true art relates to its mission, which is both educational as well as prophetic. He goes on to note that the origin of art is spiritual and mystical, stating that art alone has the capacity to reveal a "portion of its mysterious inner light" and to warm even a chilled and sunless soul to an exalted spiritual experience."<sup>12</sup> Similarly congruent with the nature of the proverb, Solzhenitsyn argues that the prophetic mission of art is to address universal values and to inspire ethical behavior in the world.<sup>13</sup> "True art" in Solzhenitsyn's formulation clearly has an enormous mission: like the role of the proverb, its educational task is to teach individuals as well as whole nations. And, still, like the proverb, its prophetic mission is to alert humanity of its precarious path and to call it to acknowledge, if not return to, timeless universal and absolute values.

Another view shared by Tolstoy and Solzhenitsyn with respect to the proverb relates to a disinclination both authors feel for purely intellectual solutions to problems of human existence and ethics. This is certainly evident in the narrative development of both of Tolstoy's major novels, *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, where each of the main protagonists over the course of their respective novels sheds his preference for the intellect and philosophy as tools for understanding life's mysteries and, in time, instead adopts the age-old wisdom provided by a Russian proverb. The same is true for the various heroes of Solzhenitsyn's novels, especially Gleb Nerzhin in *In the First Circle*, who through the agency of a Russian peasant, clearly comes to prefer life experience drawn from Russian proverbs, whose wisdom represents the fruit of ethical actions taken from real life rather than from the speculative world of philosophy. Both authors understand that proverbs, unlike philosophy, yield understandings that have emerged over time from life lessons accumulated from human experience and real human acts. Because they represent

the existential evidence of lessons taken from actual life, proverbial wisdom and advice, especially of the Russian variety, assume a major role in the moral-ethical quests undertaken by Tolstoy's and Solzhenitsyn's heroes. Furthermore, the native, folk quality of living Russian proverbs in their respective fictional and publicistic works far exceeds the appearance and use of proverbs emanating from Western Europe. This is not surprising as both authors adhered far more to nineteenth-century Slavophile views than to the more logic-centered precepts of the West.<sup>14</sup>

Like Tolstoy, Solzhenitsyn's interest in Russian proverbs date back to his childhood when his mother's sister, Aunt Irina, had presented him a copy of Vladimir Dal's *Пословицы русского народа/Proverbs of the Russian People* (1862). Years later, when working as a Gulag camp librarian in Zagorsk, Solzhenitsyn would run across a copy of Dal's four-volume *Толковый словарь живого русского народа/Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Russian People* (1880) that to his delight contained examples of numerous proverbs taken from the Russian past. As Solzhenitsyn would later comment to his wife and others, he was especially drawn to the terse precision characterized by these gems of Russian folk wisdom. From an interview he gave to one of his biographers, Michael Scammell, Solzhenitsyn engaged in a variety of "literary gymnastics," wherein he would read a few pages from Dal' each day, attempting to commit to memory unusual words and popular expressions from the Russian language. According to his first wife, Natalya, he would mark particular proverbs taken from Dal's *Dictionary* and then pass them on to her to be typed and filed with the goal of one day filling a large vase bearing his favorite proverbs.<sup>15</sup>

Turning now to the relationship between Solzhenitsyn's *In the First Circle* and Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace*, we recall the quest that the three major protagonists in each novel experience in seeking profound answers to the eternal questions of life's meaning. Like his predecessor, Platon Karataev, in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and, for that matter, like Konstantin Levin in *Anna Karenina*, Gleb Nerzhin in Solzhenitsyn's novel brings to mind the famous Russian *pravednik* ("righteous person"), bent on sacrificing himself to identifying an eternal "truth" that will provide answers to an ever-elusive quest to live

properly and in harmony with the life force. For Gleb this mystery defines itself as the disparity between a just and proper life and one in which man rains evil acts upon his fellow man. Pierre Bezukhov, on the other hand, over the course of nearly a thousand pages, seeks to understand why his life is so empty and artificial. Neither the mystical practice of freemasonry nor his fancifully conceived mission to assassinate Napoleon succeeds in ridding Pierre of his constant feeling of doubt and disillusionment.

Konstantin Levin encounters a similar dilemma in Tolstoy's next novel, *Anna Karenina*. Confronted with the realization of death's inescapable cruel joke at the end of a lifetime of suffering and struggle, Levin considers suicide as a possible alternative to life. Not even his otherwise blissful marriage to Kitty succeeds in alleviating his constant doubts and endless soul-searching over this issue. In fact, he has become even more focused on philosophical musing following his marriage to Kitty and his new responsibilities as a father. Neither his readings in the classic literature of philosophical idealism nor his search for non-materialist answers to his questions about life's meaning bring him the guidance and consolation for which he has searched over the course of the novel. Mirroring the experience of Pierre Bezukhov in *War and Peace* as well as Gleb Nerzhin in *In the First Circle*, Levin achieves a resolution to his spiritual odyssey through the agency of the proverbial wisdom of one of his farm laborers, a Russian peasant named Fyodor.<sup>16</sup> Morose and perplexed at seeing his peasants on the estate and imagining them dead in just a few years as he, too, would be dead, Levin launches into a conversation with his grain feeder, Fyodor, about whether a mutual acquaintance, old Platon from a neighboring village, might rent a certain farm plot that Levin had previously leased. Learning that the plot of land is currently rented by the innkeeper, Kirillov, and that the wealthy and amiable Platon would never be able to make it profitable, Levin innocently inquires how it is that Kirillov is able to succeed where Platon could not. Fyodor explains with a proverbial expression that Mityukha (a diminutive form of Kirillov's first name) "*pushes till he gets his own/нажмёт да своё выберёт*" and never takes pity on a peasant (AK, 794/386; 578). By contrast, Fyodor explains with still another proverbial expression that Platon would never "*skin a man/драть шкуру с человека*" (AK, 794/II, 386; Mok.,

II, 754).<sup>17</sup> To emphasize his point, Fyodor directly employs two final proverbial expressions in explaining that Platon “*lives for the soul/для души живёт*” (AK, *ibid.*; Mok. II, 214) and that he “*remembers God/Бога помнит*” (AK, *ibid.*; Mok. II, 48). Struck by the profound insight of this peasant wisdom, Levin almost shouts, “How’s that? Remembers God? Lives for the soul?”

A new, joyful feeling came over him. At the muzhik’s words about Fokanych *living for the soul, by the truth, by God’s way*, it was as if a host of vague but important thoughts burst from some locked-up place and, all rushing towards the same goal, whirled through his head, blinding him with their light (AK, *ibid.*).

Throughout the novel Levin repeatedly has focused on conducting himself consonant with his own needs and personal advantage. Following his conversation with Fyodor, however, he once again reflects on his childhood lessons of “living for the good” and remembering God. In doing so, as he is reminded by Fyodor, one lives righteously and for others. Now galvanized with a new understanding of “how one should live,”<sup>18</sup> Levin realizes the sham value of life’s deceptions as well as one’s own self-deceptions. He understands Fyodor’s message to say that “one should not live for one’s own needs—that is, one should live not for what we understand, for what we’re drawn to, for what we want—but for something incomprehensible, for God, whom no one can either comprehend or define” (AK, 795/II, 387). The simplicity of Fyodor’s wisdom is reflected in Levin’s own simplistic resolve never to argue with others, only to be foiled when he unintentionally quarells with his driver on the way home after meeting his brother, Sergei, and his friend, Katavasov. He quickly catches himself, however, realizing that such small moral lapses are inevitable in life and that his new-found faith and understanding will certainly survive.<sup>19</sup>

While no less spiritual in nature, Gleb Nerzhin’s existential search in Solzhenitsyn’s novel is not grounded in the comfortable life of the landed gentry of nineteenth-century Russia but, rather, in the hellish world of *zek* (prison) labor camps in Joseph Stalin’s twentieth-century nightmare of an interconnected *gulag* system. Unlike the personal and existential quests of Levin and Pierre, Nerzhin’s journey more so takes on the character of a

moral test of conscience. As Rzhovsky observes in his study of Solzhenitsyn's *The First Circle*, Levin's ethical crisis of how to live reflects itself in Nerzhin's quest of how to conduct oneself under the conditions of all-penetrating violence in society.<sup>20</sup> His conscience does not permit him to work in the cushy environs of a *sharashka* (special camp for intellectuals), when doing so means that he must align his scientific skills to the construction of speech decoders designed to imprison innocent victims unaware that their conversations are being recorded for purposes of possible arrest and imprisonment. This moral challenge to his conscience ultimately will unfold in his decision to leave the *sharashka* for the cold and remote northern camps of the gulag that promise him a certain death.

As was the case in Tolstoy's two novels, Solzhenitsyn frames the resolution of Gleb's search for conscience in the form of age-old peasant wisdom borne by a Russian proverb. A comparison of the moments of spiritual discovery, respectively achieved by Levin, Pierre and Gleb, demonstrates the serious role assigned to proverbial speech by Tolstoy and Solzhenitsyn alike. In the case of Pierre in *War and Peace*, twelve books of the novel over the course of nearly one-thousand pages have brought Bezukhov to French imprisonment in a desolate camp outside of Moscow, where he has lapsed once again into a state of both physical and mental misery, confusion, and existential anguish. The meager and scraggly peasant Platon Karataev arrives almost as a beacon of hope for the forelorn Pierre.<sup>21</sup> When Platon responds to Pierre's concern that his new-found friend must be saddened with his lot as a prisoner in the French camps, he unconsciously calls upon two Russian proverbs:

“How can one see all this and not feel sad? *But the maggot gnaws the cabbage, yet it dies first*/Червь капусту гложет, а сам перед неё умирает; that's the way the folks used to tell us...”

“What? What did you say?” asks Pierre.

“Who? I?” said Karataev. “I say things happen not as we plan but as god judges/Не нашим умом, а Божьим судом,” he replied, thinking that he was repeating what

he had said immediately before....” (AK, 858/II, 437; Mok., 987)<sup>22</sup>

Significantly, Tolstoy selected the name Platon, the Russian version of the Greek philosopher Plato, who taught that one must look beyond the material world to a realm of greater spiritual harmony and certainty. Karataev, of course, would have no idea who Plato was or anything about the Greek philosopher's teachings. Nonetheless, both Tolstoy and Pierre immediately embrace the rustic peasant's aphoristic wisdom. It is not merely the two proverbs that Platon employs in this first scene, or even the successive nineteen that he eventually will insert into his speech over the course of a mere nine pages of the novel's action that capture Pierre's attention, but the overall personality and behavior of this strikingly unusual peasant. Throughout his conversations with Pierre, it is as if Platon speaks in a continuous stream of spontaneous proverbs and proverbial expressions, each of which manages to correspond to the given context or scene in which they are uttered. That is, what makes Karataev such a memorable and influential experience for Pierre is the lessons in life that he learns from his peasant mentor. As a result of his first encounter with Platon, for example, we read that Pierre considers that his «soul was once more stirring with a new beauty and on new and unshakable foundations» (W&P, 861/II, 441). Over the course of the four weeks that Pierre is confined to the prison shed with twenty-three other soldiers, only Platon remains “in his mind a most vivid and precious memory and the personification of everything Russian....” (W&P, 859/439). As Pierre later reflects on his peasant friend, he recalls the chief peculiarity of Platon's speech being its directness and appositeness (непосредственность и спорость). For example, when grieved at the news that Pierre's mother is no longer alive, Karataev immediately consoles with the Russian proverb, “*A wife for counsel, a mother-in-law for welcome, but there's none so dear as one's own mother/Жена для совета, тёща для привета, а нет милей родной матушки*» (W&P, 858/438; Mok, 335). And when he learns that Bezukhov does not regret not having children, the distressed Platon responds, «*Never decline a prison or a beggar's sack/От сумы да от тюрьмы не отказывайся*” (W&P, *ibid.*; Mok, 789), suggesting that one can-



not escape one's fate and fortune. Similarly, in preparing to retire every night, Platon would rapidly cross himself, repeating "Lord Jesus Christ, holy Saint Nicholas, Frola and Lavra!<sup>23</sup> Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and save us," concluding with the proverbial injunction, «*Lay me down like a stone, O God, and raise me up like a loaf*/Положи, Боже, камушком, подними калачиком" (W&P, 859/II, 440; Mok., 211). And when he awakens in the morning, Platon ritually pronounces, "*I lay down and curled up, I get up and shake myself*/ Лёг—свернулся, встал—встрянулся" (W&P, 860/*ibid.*; Mok., 484). In addition, as he begins to return to his former peasant habits during his French captivity, Karataev regrows his beard with a proverbial explanation, "*A soldier on leave—a shirt outside breeches*/ Солдат в отпуску—рубаша из порок" (W&P, *ibid.*; Mok., 850).

With regards to Platon's frequent habit of infusing Russian proverbs into his speech, Tolstoy informs his readers that they were not the coarse and indecent saws that soldiers often employed but, rather, "those folk sayings which taken without a context seem so insignificant, but when used appositely suddenly acquire a significance of profound wisdom" (W&P, *ibid.*). Pierre felt that his peasant friend adorned his speech with folk sayings often invented by Platon himself, but which always assumed a character of solemn fitness. This seemingly ordinary and insignificant Russian peasant acquires for Pierre an aura of saintliness as a representation of the shared native traditions of Russian rural life. Having traveled abroad in Western Europe, Pierre recognizes the truth and wisdom that eluded him there is rooted in the very heart of his native Russia in the person of Platon Karataev. It is what R. F. Christian refers to as the "popular gnostic element" of Platon's speech that so appeals to Pierre during their imprisonment.<sup>24</sup> While many of the liberal-minded elite in Tolstoy's time would have viewed Platon's frequent use of proverbial speech as a sign of his peasant class and low level of literacy, both Tolstoy and Pierre recognize, instead, the degree of wisdom reflected in his colloquial expressions. Clearly, Pierre has finally identified what he has searched so long to find—an honest person of true integrity, who lives justly and without pretense. It is as if Pierre discovers meaning in life simply by living everyday and interacting with Karataev. While the other prisoners looked upon Platon as an ordinary soldier, we read that to

Pierre “he always remained what he had seemed that first night: an unfathomable, rounded, eternal personification of the spirit of simplicity and truth” (*W&P*, 859/II, 439). As had been the case with Levin in the novel *Anna Karenina*, Pierre achieves a newly found peace of mind and tranquility through the agency of Russian proverbs relevantly pronounced by a peasant mentor:

He had sought in different ways...that inner harmony which had so impressed him in the soldiers at the Battle of Borodino. He had sought it in philosophy, in Freemasonry, in the dissipations of town life, in wine, in heroic feats of self-sacrifice, and in romantic love for Natasha; he had sought it by reasoning—and all these quests and experiments had failed him. And now without thinking about it he had found that peace and inner harmony only through...what he recognized in Karataev (*AK*, 895/II, 487).

Spiridon Yegorov, the wily janitor-*pravednik* of Solzhenitsyn’s *In the First Circle*, shares many of these same qualities represented by Platon Karataev. Similar to Tolstoy’s righteous hero, Spiridon comes from peasant roots, is in his fifties, and displays quite a fondness for interspersing Russian proverbs into his daily speech. The influence Spiridon renders Gleb is, perhaps, suggested by the diminutive form of his name (from the Latin *spiritus*, for soul or spirit). The name was borne by a fourth-century Cypriot saint, who was a hermit before becoming a bishop and playing a major role at the Nicene Council in 325. Of additional significance is the fact that St. Spyridon became the patron saint of the Tolstoy family early in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and remains so to this very day.<sup>25</sup>

Like Platon Karataev in Tolstoy’s novel, Spiridon reflects similar degrees of a rich and checkered biography, stability and resolve of character, innate integrity, and a strong sense of fairness. Even their physical features, as described by both authors, bind the two proverb-laden peasants together: Spiridon, for example, appears “roundheaded, with reddish hair” (*IFC*, 497), while his forbearer shares a round-like quality that is referred to 5 times in just one sentence, giving a description of his physical traits: “When Pierre saw his neighbor next morning at dawn the first impression of him, as of something round, was fully con-

firmed. Platon's whole figure...was round. His head was quite round, his back, shoulders, and even his arms,...were rounded, his pleasant smile and his large, gentle brown eyes were also round" (*W&P*, 859/II, 439). This *kruglyi* quality to Platon and Spiridon arguably serves to endear both characters to the reader. Also, similar to Pierre's attraction to Karataev, Nerzhin finds himself very much drawn to the mysterious, philosophical folk wisdom of Spiridon. At one point in the novel, for example, Gleb reflects, "Didn't this [Spiridon's actions] somehow tally with the Tolstoyan doctrine that in this world no one is ever right and no one is ever to blame? Perhaps the more or less instinctive actions of this red-headed peasant exemplified the universal philosophical system known as skepticism" (*IFC*, 509/535)?<sup>26</sup>

In his Tolstoyan quest for wisdom and understanding, Nerzhin embarks on a "khozhdenie v narod" or "going to the people," so reminiscent of Tolstoy's and many other nineteenth-century intellectuals' turning to Russian peasants and their traditional form of wisdom and system of values. Before his encounter with Spiridon towards the end of the novel, however, Gleb had already devoted considerable reflection on the nature of the Russian people. Earlier in the narrative, for example, he had entertained but soon rejected fellow *zek* Lev Rubin's view that it was futile to look for any degree of meaning in the peasant class since in his view only the collectivism and selflessness of the proletariat gave life a higher meaning. Similarly, Gleb comes to dismiss his friend Sologdin's opinion that the *narod* (people) was a term for the large mass of crude and simple people far too preoccupied in their unenlightened way with their daily existence (*IFC*, 493-494/519). It soon becomes obvious, however, that the janitor Spiridon's appeal for Gleb, like that of Pierre for Karataev, stems from his honesty and folk wisdom: "Far from wearying of Spiridon's stories [Gleb] felt refreshed by them; they were like the breath of a river at dawn, like the breeze that refreshes a field in the afternoon..." (*IFC*, 498/523). As Spiridon relates the various stages and difficulties of his life in the 1920s-1930s,<sup>27</sup> he sprinkles his stories with Russian proverbs much like Platon Karataev had done in his tales that had similarly captivated Pierre Bezukhov's attention. Returning to his home village following the Russian Civil War, for example, Spiridon recounts how he quickly put his land on a firm footing, concluding his

description with an apposite proverb, “*A good husbandman can walk down the yard and pick up a ruble/Кто хозяин хорош—по двору пройти, рубль найдёшь*” (IFC, 500/525; Mokienko, 961). A little later, in relating the close bond existing between himself and his wife, Spiridon called on the wisdom of another timeless Russian proverb, “*A good wife makes all the difference in life/Хорошо жениться—полжизни*” (IFC, *ibid.*; Mok., 342).

Bent on resolving the question of evil that has plagued him throughout the novel, Nerzhin waits breathlessly at every step of Spiridon’s description of his and his family’s adventures following the Civil War and leading up to the invasion of the Nazi army. Having secured his family’s safety, Spiridon describes the frantic chaos of the period in yet another metaphorical proverb, “*It isn’t my horse and it isn’t my whip, so off we go and I’ll never say ‘whoa’/Лощадь чужая, кнут не свой, погоняй не стой*” (IFC, 502/527; Mok., 494). Equally apposite in its wisdom is the proverb he employs upon hearing Gleb’s admission of his reluctant support of the new Soviet order, “*Well, it’s like that sometimes; we plant rye, and what comes up is goose-grass/Сеем рожь, а вырастает лебеда*” (IFC, 503/ 529; Mok., 763). Eager to learn from the lessons in life the janitor had accrued over the many trials and tribulations of his war-torn years, Gleb presses Spiridon for details about how he had fought for both the Soviets as well as the Germans during the war. Once again relying on a brief yet aptly selected proverb, Spiridon explains his decision to fight on the German side since the Soviet authorities would never believe his account of why he had not joined the Partisans during the war, “*He decided that he might as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb.../Уж семь бед один ответ*” (IFC, 504/529; Mok., 38).

Difficulties continued to beset Spiridon even after the war when he and his family are posted to an American camp for displaced persons, where he has gone blind in one eye following a tragic drinking bout. Unlike his children, who succumb to the temptation of Soviet repatriation, Spiridon recognizes the danger as he explains to his wife in proverb fashion, “*They’ll promise us a lake, old girl, but who knows whether they’ll let us lap from a stinking puddle/Озеро в рот сулят, а из поганой лужи лакнуть ещё дадут ли?*” (IFC, 508/533; Mok., 496). When his daughter laments the prospect of being unable to marry a Russian boy in

her home country, Spiridon uncomfortably acknowledges the fitting wisdom of the proverb, "But no, *it's only the burned child that fears the fire*/Нет, видать, обо всё обжечься надо—самому" (*IFC*, 508/534; *Mok.*, 540).

As Pierre had marveled at Platon's strength and forbearance in the face of life's endless challenges, Gleb, too, reflects on Spiridon's will and determination especially since Gleb, himself, faces the decision of a lifetime—whether to remain in the *sharashka* or to maintain his resolve to be sent to the frozen camps of the north rather than participate in voice decoding experiments that will lead to the arrest of innocent men: "Through all the difficult years, through all the cruel vicissitudes, self-doubt had never unmanned Spiridon at the decisive moment. Spiridon Yegorov was horrifyingly ignorant, his mind was closed to the highest creations of the human spirit and human society, but his actions and decisions were marked by a steady and unwavering common sense" (*IFC*, 504/530). Like that of Platon Karataev, Gleb understands that Spiridon's moral code was uncomplicated, yet quietly confident. He did not speak ill of others and killed only in times of war. He never stole, and fought only in defense of his wife and family. Although nearly blind and sentenced to die in prison, Spiridon was not inclined toward despondency nor bent on repenting or reforming his ways: "He simply took his busy broom in his hands and swept the yard from dawn to dusk, day in and day out, in a life and death struggle against the commandant and the operations officers" (*IFC*, 505/531).

With this understanding of his trusted friend, Nerzhin feels compelled to address the one question that has filled his mind over the course of the novel. Throughout the time that he lived in the *gulag* camps and, now, even in the *sharashka*, Gleb has witnessed first hand the cruelty and savagery that man inflicts upon his fellow man. In his various attempts to understand the evil he has seen as well as experienced, Gleb has toyed with the merits of Taoism and skepticism as possible existential approaches to life—although not finding them within himself to embrace entirely. Laying his hands on Spiridon's shoulders, he wonders, "Perhaps...this is when I will learn the fundamentals of home-spun peasant skepticism, so that I can base myself on it in the future" (*IFC*, 510/536). Clearly, Gleb seeks a counterbalance to the learned and rational approaches to life represented by his *zek*

friends Rubin and Sologdin. He finally braces himself by referring to one of Spiridon's oft-quoted proverbs in addressing the question that has so plagued him throughout the novel:

That saying of yours about *sowing rye and goose-grass coming up*....At least it was rye they sowed, or so they thought. It may be that all human beings want to do good or think they're acting for the best, but nobody is infallible.... They can convince themselves that they're doing good, but the results are bad.... Can anybody on this earth possibly make out who's right and who's wrong? Who can tell us that? (*IFC*, 510-511/536).

After several pages of cautiously framing and patiently developing his question, Nerzhin is shocked by the appositeness and speed with which Spiridon proverbially responds to his probing and lengthy query: "I can tell you—*killing wolves is right; eating people is wrong!* Волкодав—прав, а людоед—нет!" (*IFC*, 511/537; *Mok.*, 143). The shock with which Gleb responds, "What? What's that you say?" reflects nearly verbatim Pierre's own reaction to Platon Karataev's proverb about the *maggot gnawing the cabbage, yet dying first*, that is, things happening in life *not as we plan, but as God judges*. Also, like Pierre, Nerzhin is elated with the new insight he has gained from his peasant mentor. While Tolstoy's hero had sought peasant wisdom in order to unravel the meaning of life when it ultimately leads only to death, Gleb looks to Spiridon to test his conscience and resolve to do the right thing in life, much as he feels Spiridon has done throughout his own life.

Throughout the novel Nerzhin has demonstrated an instinctive awareness of the importance of one's acts and actions as well as a corresponding distrust of the philosophical and purely intellectual solutions to problems of human existence and ethics. His own experiments in Taoist philosophy as well as the respective influence of Rubin's dogmatic Marxism and Sologdin's pragmatic egotism have left only questions and doubt in Nerzhin's mind. Over the course of the novel, Gleb's interests gravitate to an understanding of life based more so on actions than on ideas. Unlike both Pierre and Levin, who spend most of their respective novels lost in philosophical speculation, Nerzhin intuitively understands that such intellectual soul searching will

be of little use to him. Actions themselves, certainly reflected in the lessons that he gleans from Spiridon's life history, come to represent for Gleb the concrete reality of human existence.<sup>28</sup> In listening to Spiridon's stories about his life, Gleb is struck by the certainty with which this simple peasant has made decisions of great personal and ethical resolve: "Not one of those eternally-damned questions about the criteria for truth in our emotional perceptions or about the adequacy of our inner awareness bothered Spiridon. He was certain of what he saw, heard, and smelled; he understood everything unmistakably" (*IFC*, 505/530). It can be argued that the folk wisdom of the proverb, cited by Spiridon differentiating the acts of the wolfhound from those of the cannibal, constitutes both the final link in the existential journey Nerzhin has taken during the novel, as well as the climax of the novel itself. With Spiridon's answer to his questions about justice, Gleb now feels fortified to set off on the next stage of his journey—one that will undoubtedly result in his death of cold and starvation in a northern arctic camp. Grounded in his newly acquired understanding of a life bound to a commitment not to perform evil toward others, Gleb is able to reaffirm his earlier refusal to cooperate with evil by rejecting Sologdin's offer at the end of the novel of a position in the latter's special new project involving absolute voice decoding at the Mavrino prison. By the final page of the novel, the reader feels that while a physical death certainly awaits him, Gleb's spiritual health and well-being remain intact and will sustain him through whatever trials he will face outside of this first circle of hell.

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#### *Notes*

<sup>1</sup> For the most thorough discussion of the relationship of the polyphonic novel in the works of Dostoevsky and Solzhenitsyn, see Vladislav Krasnov, *Solzhenitsyn and Dostoevsky: A Study in the Polyphonic Novel* (University of Georgia Press, 1980). One of the first commentators to note affinities of

Solzhenitsyn's fiction to that of both Dostoevsky and Tolstoy is Deming Brown in, "Cancer Ward and First Circle A Review Article," *Slavic Review*, vol. 39 (June, 1969), 304-313.

<sup>2</sup> There are many other affinities, of course, between Tolstoy's fiction and that of Solzhenitsyn beyond this moral-didactic voice. Stylistic devices (e.g. sparing use of figurative language; involved syntactic constructions; long, single-sentence paragraphs; word repetitions; parallel prepositional phrases and verb forms; authorial parenthetical interpolations into the text; etc.) are common in the works of both authors.

<sup>3</sup> For an enlightening discussion of Tolstoy's "absolute language," see Morson's seminal article, "Tolstoy's Absolute Language," *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 7.4 (1981), 667-687; also, his monograph, *Hidden in Plain View: Narrative and Creative Potentials in 'War and Peace'* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987). In this latter work, Morson argues that as a kind of absolute language, proverbs, "[L]ike biblical commands...can be attributed to no particular author.... Proverbs are never spoken, they are only cited; and to cite a proverb is to make its nonhistorical statement applicable to, but in no sense conditioned by, a particular historical situation. It is, rather, the historical situation that reveals its conformity to the timeless pattern described by the proverb" (14).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Gary R. Jahn, "Tolstoy as a Writer of Popular Literature," in *The Cambridge Companion to Tolstoy*, ed. Donna Tussing Orwin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 113-126; Henri Troyat, *Tolstoy* (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1967), trans. from the French by Nancy Amphoux, 463; О. В. Ломакина, "О функционировании фразеологизмов в текстологии Л. Н. Толстого," in *Язык. Человек. Дискурс* (Szczecin), 111-117; Ломакина, "Способы раскрытия смыслового содержания фразеологизма в тексте (на примере художественных произведений и писем Л. Н. Толстого), in *Грамматические категории и единицы: синтагматический аспект: К 100-летию профессора Анатолия Михайловича Иорданского: Материалы VII Международной конференции* (Владимир, 2007), 171-174.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Troyat, 463.

<sup>6</sup> V. M. Mokienko, "О словаре псковских пословиц и поговорок," in *Словарь псковских пословиц и поговорок*, compiled by V. M. Mokienko, T. G. Nikitkina (Sankt Peterburg: Olma, 2001), and Olga Lomakina, "фразеология Л. Н. Толстого : Типология трансформации, и паремии" in *Слово, Текст, Czas X: Jednostka frazeologiczna w tradycyjnych i nowych paradygmatach naukowych*, ed. Michał Aleksiejewski i Harrego Waltera (Greifswald: Szczecin, 2010), 251.

<sup>7</sup> Some recent exceptions to this statement include, Rebecca Hogan, "Set Phrases of Consolation and Exhortation: Judging Proverbial and Biblical Wisdom in *Anna Karenina*," in *Proverbs in Russian Literature: From Catherine the Great to Alexander Solzhenitsyn*, ed. Kevin J. McKenna (Burlington, Vermont: Supplement Series of *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship*, 1997), 75-89; Kevin J. McKenna, "If a



Claw Gets Stuck, The [Whole] Bird is Lost": Proverb Function in Leo Tolstoy's Play *The Power of Darkness*," *Res Humanae Proverbiorum et Sententiarum: Ad Honorem Wolfgangi Mieder*. ed. Csaba Foldes. Unter Narr Verlag (Tubingen, 2004), 197-204; Olga Lomakina, "Национальное в индивидуальном: пословицы и поговорки в художественных произведениях Л. Н. Толстого," in *Cuadernos de Rusística Española*, 5 (2009), 11-20; Kevin J. McKenna, "The Role of the Proverb in Leo Tolstoy's Novel *Anna Karenina*," *Proverbium*, vol. 28 (2011), 121-146. The author wishes to express his gratitude to friend, colleague, and mentor, Wolfgang Mieder, for sharing information about the Lomakina article.

<sup>8</sup> Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Oak and the Calf: Sketches of Literary Life in the Soviet Union*, trans. Harry Willetts (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1979)/*Бодался телёнок с дубом* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1975); for an analysis of the role of the proverb in this work, see my article "Didactics and the Proverb: The Case of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's Literary Memoirs, *The Oak and the Calf*," *Proverbium*, vol. 25 (2008), pp. 289-317.

<sup>9</sup> "The Tolstoy Connection," in *Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: Critical Essays and Documentary Materials* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1973), 332-350.

<sup>10</sup> In his *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, for example, one of Solzhenitsyn's characters argues that "literature must raise the right feelings," a sentiment very reminiscent of Tolstoy's theory in his *What Is Art?*, trans. A. Maude (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 198f. In *In the First Circle* another one of Solzhenitsyn's characters observes that literature must be rooted in the "conscience" and that it should assume the role of the "teacher of the people," *In the First Circle*, trans. Harry T. Willetts (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), 462.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted from Leopold Labedz, ed., *Solzhenitsyn: A Documentary Record* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 121.

<sup>12</sup> *Nobel Lecture*, trans. F. D. Reeve (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1972), 5-6.

<sup>13</sup> Shulubin, one of the characters in Solzhenitsyn's *Cancer Ward*, persuasively argues this goal: "We have to show the world in which all relationships, fundamental principles and laws flow directly from ethics and from them *alone*. Ethical demands must determine all considerations: how to bring up children, what to train them for, to what end the work of grownups should be directed, and how their leisure should be occupied." *Cancer Ward*: (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1974), 446/Александр Солженицын, *Собрание сочинений, том второй, Раковый корпус* (Frankfurt/Main, Germany: Possev-Verlag, 1970), vol. 2, 489-490.

<sup>14</sup> The Slavophile movement, originating in mid-nineteenth century Russia, opposed what it saw as the gradual Westernization of Russia. The Slavophiles held that Russia was culturally, morally, and politically superior to the West. While not formally members of this movement, both Dostoevsky and Tolstoy adhered to many of its views, as did Solzhenitsyn himself. For more

information on this movement, see Tomas G. Masaryk, *The Spirit of Russia: Studies in History, Literature and Philosophy*, 2 vols. (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1955).

<sup>15</sup> Michael Scammell, *Solzhenitsyn: A Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1984), 227.

<sup>16</sup> While Fyodor's peasant speech is larded with significantly fewer proverbs than that of either Platon Karataev or Spiridon Yegorov, the peasant wisdom he conveys to Levin in the form of Russian proverbs has the same revelatory effect on him.

<sup>17</sup> I have used the Richard Pevear/Larissa Volokhonsky English language translation of the novel (New York: Penguin Books, 2000); the citation from the Russian original is taken from Л. Н. Толстой, *Анна Каренина* (Ленинград: Художественная литература, 1967), в двух томах. Page numbers for citations from this English translation will appear in parentheses immediately following the citation in the text of this article. The second page number will refer to the Russian language text, preceded by a Roman numeral to indicate which of the two volumes is being used. Finally, the third page number following each proverb citation will refer to Valery Mokienko's (Mok.) source for the proverb in his recently published *Большой словарь русских пословиц/Great Dictionary of Russian Proverbs* (Moskva: OLMA media group, 2010). In some cases the source for a proverbial expression will appear as Mok., II to reflect Mokienko's earlier book, *Большой словарь русских поговорок/Great Dictionary of Russian Proverbial Expressions* (Moskva: OLMA media group, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> It is interesting to note that the proverbial expression serves both as the title to one of Tolstoy's short stories as well as the title of one of Solzhenitsyn's chapters in *Cancer Ward*.

<sup>19</sup> My reading of this scene concurs with that of Gary Saul Morson, who cautions against a misreading of this passage by many readers who interpret Tolstoy to be saying that Russian peasants are all wise. Fyodor's proverb-lesson here is, indeed, not the answer but the catalyst for Levin's eventually moving toward the answer he has been seeking throughout the novel. See Morson's "Anna Karenina" *In Our Time: Seeing More Wisely* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007) 209-210.

<sup>20</sup> *Solzhenitsyn: Creator & Heroic Deed*, trans. Sonja Miller (Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1978), 49-69. It should be noted that Rzevsky's book examines the earlier publication of Solzhenitsyn's novel, the one containing only 87 chapters from the Russian original that he had found necessary to censor in hopes of having it published in Russia in the early 1960s. In English translation this edition is titled *The First Circle*, trans. Thomas P. Whitney and was originally published by Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1968 and later by Northwestern University Press, 1997. The complete version of the novel, written between 1955-1958, containing the original 95 chapters, was published much later and correctly appears in English translation as *In the First Circle: A Novel, The Restored Text*, trans. Harry T. Willets (New York: Harper

Perennial, 2009). Regardless of Rzhnevsky's study being based on the shorter and censored text of the novel, its argument and analysis continue to hold considerable insight and understanding.

<sup>21</sup> In his analysis of the various drafts of Tolstoy's novel, R. F. Christian comments on the slow and gradual development of Karataev's character and, especially, the selection of proverbs finally assigned to him. According to Christian, in the earlier drafts of the novel Pierre does not undergo his regeneration and resolution of his moral search nearly as convincingly until Karataev's character is integrated into the action. *Tolstoy's "War and Peace": A Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 44.

<sup>22</sup> Hereafter, references to proverb citations from Tolstoy's *War and Peace* will be based on the Norton Critical Edition translation edited by George Gibian (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1996). Page numbers for citations from this English translation will appear in parentheses immediately following the citation in the text of this article. The second page number will refer to the two-volume Russian original (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaya literatura, 1967). Finally, the third page number following each proverb citation will refer to Valery Mokienko's (Mok.) source for the proverb.

<sup>23</sup> Brothers who were martyred under the Roman Emperor Diocletian, Florus and Laurus are included by the Russian Orthodox Church as saints and have been accounted the patron saints of horses by the peasants, who mispronounce their names.

<sup>24</sup> *Tolstoy's "War and Peace": A Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 162.

<sup>25</sup> For an interesting history of this name, see <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint\\_Spyridon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Spyridon)>.

<sup>26</sup> Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *In the First Circle*. All citations from the English translation are based on this translation and will follow the system used earlier for Tolstoy's novels: reference to the English translation will appear first, separated by a parallel bar (/) and, then, followed by the page number from the original Russian text, *В кругу первом. Роман* (Москва: ПРОЗАИК, 2009).

<sup>27</sup> The author of a recent monograph on Solzhenitsyn's novel observes that he manages to capture nearly the entire history of Soviet people through the lengthy description of Spiridon's adventures. See, Pekka Forrstedt, *Человек перед лицом зла: Мир героев Александра Солженицына "В кругу первом"/Man in the Face of Evil: The World of Heroes in Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's Novel "In the First Circle"* (JYVÄSKYLÄ: University of JYVÄSKYLÄ, 2001), 122.

<sup>28</sup> For an engaging discussion of the experiential basis of Nerzhin's thoughts and actions, see Natalie Rea, "Nerzhin: A Sartrean Existential Man," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 13, Nos. 2-3 (1971), 209-216.

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WOLFGANG MIEDER

“MY TONGUE – IS OF THE PEOPLE”: THE PROVERBIAL  
LANGUAGE OF FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE’S *THUS SPOKE  
ZARATHUSTRA*

**Abstract:** Friedrich Nietzsche repeatedly relies on elements of preformulated folk speech to add a certain metaphorical expressiveness to his thoughts and arguments, no matter whether they appear in aphorisms, fragments, poems, letters, essays or entire books. It is then surprising that the considerable secondary literature on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* has been almost completely silent on its obvious proverbiality, and this even though Nietzsche occasionally refers with distinct introductory formulas to Bible and folk proverbs employed by him. This might well be due to the fact that Nietzsche seldom cites proverbs in their traditional wording since they would be far too didactic and moralistic for his insistence on the reevaluation of all values. Thus he parodies, manipulates, alienates, and contradicts proverbs by changing them into innovative anti-proverbs while at the same time also creating his own pseudo-proverbs to argue for a life free of antiquated rules and regulations. Often he merely alludes to proverbs using their metaphors merely to enhance his expressive style without any agreement with their wisdom. After all, Nietzsche wants to show how everything is something becoming and not an end, and that the positive struggle with fate has to be undertaken in eternal return (repetition) without rigid guidelines as proverbs would be. In any case, proverbial matters accompany Zarathustra on his path towards self-recognition and the acceptance of life. The numerous proverbial expressions with their metaphors add much to the poetic style of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, while the usually varied Bible and folk proverbs are used to underscore the break with God and Christianity. There is no doubt that the message of this literary and philosophical work is to a considerable degree informed by the multifaceted nuances of its proverbial language.

**Keywords:** Allusion, alteration, anti-feminism, anti-proverb, aphorism, Bible, folk speech, German, God, language, literature, metaphor, misogyny, morality, mutation, Friedrich Nietzsche, philosophy, proverb, proverbial expression, pseudo-proverb, religion, reevaluation of all values, semantics, somatism, structure, style, wisdom.

In the lyrical prelude to Friedrich Nietzsche's *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (1882, *The Gay Science*) appears a short verse whose title serves as an indication that proverbial matters play an important role in this early work and also in his entire writings. Typically for Nietzsche's proverbial and Biblical language and style its five lines allude to the two Bible proverbs "Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves" / "Seid klug wie die Schlangen und ohne Falsch wie die Tauben" (Matthew 10:16) and "Unto the pure (clean) all things are pure" / "Den Reinen ist alles rein" (Titus 1:15):

*The Proverb Speaks*

Sharp and mild, rough and fine,  
 Strange and familiar, impure and clean,  
 A place where fool and sage convene:  
 All this I am and wish to mean,  
 Dove as well as snake and swine.<sup>1</sup>

*Das Sprüchwort spricht.*

Scharf und milde, grob und fein,  
 Vertraut und seltsam, schmutzig und rein,  
 Der Narren und Weisen Stelldichein:  
 Dieses Alles bin ich, will ich sein,  
 Taube zugleich, Schlange und Schwein! (KSA3, 355)<sup>2</sup>

This could well be considered as a poetic proverb definition, but Nietzsche hardly had a theoretical deliberation about folk and Bible proverbs in mind. To be sure, it is the proverb that is speaking, but one would hardly go wrong if one take the lyrical "I" to be Nietzsche himself, whose differentiated linguistic nuances and stylistic levels contain all the aspects referred to in the poem. That this interpretation is somewhat justified can be seen from a verse of three rhymed lines that Nietzsche had deleted from *The Gay Science* before its publication. Here it is clearly Nietzsche who is speaking:

Wise and foolish, rough and fine,  
 Sharp and mild, water and wine:  
 All of this my proverb shall be.<sup>3</sup>

Weis und närrisch, grob und fein,  
 Scharf und milde, Wasser und Wein:  
 Dies alles soll mein Sprüchwort sein! (KSA14, 234)

Here Nietzsche summarizes quite clearly what his proverbial intention will be, namely to appear intermittently as a sage, fool, roughian or gentleman and to pour questionable water (nonsense) or pure wine (wisdom) into his readers' glasses. Indirectly Nietzsche speaks of his linguistic and philosophical desire to express his cultural and moralistic criticism by way of all registers of language available to him. He is concerned about a philosophical and poetic penetration of human, all-too-human conditions. Wordplay with traditional formulas is part of this very conscious linguistic and stylistic endeavor, and it is part of Nietzsche's image as a magisterial "linguistic innovator" / "Sprachschöpfer" with a great "linguistic imagination" / "Sprachphantasie" and "linguistic potency" / "Sprachmächtigkeit".<sup>4</sup> The at times somewhat colloquial metaphors of folk speech are most certainly part of Nietzsche's creative thoughts and linguistic formulations. A quotation from *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1883-1885; *Thus spoke Zarathustra*), written about two years later, makes all of this quite clear and is most likely an allusion to the animal reference of the poem brought about by the rhyme "rein-Schwein": "'To the clean all is clean,' the people say. But I say unto you, 'To the mean [swine] all becomes mean'" (204) / "'Dem [sic] Reinen ist alles rein' – so spricht das Volk. Ich aber sage euch: den Schweinen wird Alles Schwein" (KSA4, 256).<sup>5</sup> Since the construction of the world includes the clean (pure) that has been drawn into the mire, Nietzsche feels compelled to expose antiquated moral attitudes and human falsehoods. It follows that Nietzsche's argumentative leit-motif of the revaluation of all values also confronts so-called virtuous and timeless Bible and folk proverbs that rather appropriately play a considerable role not only in his prophetic masterwork *Thus spoke Zarathustra* but also in his literary, philosophical, and epistolary oeuvre as such.

It is then surprising that the considerable secondary literature on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* has been almost completely silent on its obvious proverbiality, and this even though Nietzsche occasionally refers with distinct introductory formulas to Bible and folk proverbs employed by him. To be sure, Hans Morowa deals with Biblical

archaisms that Nietzsche took over from Luther's Bible language, but he failed to recognize the many phraseological units in his study on the language and style of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.<sup>6</sup> Joachim Goth and Marie Hed Kaulhausen mention at least a few proverbial expressions and proverbs from this work, but they say nothing about their rhetorical and semantic significance.<sup>7</sup> However, Siegfried Vitens' comments are noteworthy, since he refers to Nietzsche's inclination of parodistically negating and reversing fixed formulas, quotations, and proverbs, while also citing the altered Biblical expression "Not a few who wanted to drive out their devil have themselves entered into swine" (55) / "Nicht wenige, die ihren Teufel austreiben wollten, fuhren dabei selber in die Säue" (KSA4, 70; see Matthew 8:31) as well as the secularized anti-proverb "The prince proposes, but the shopkeeper disposes" (177) / "Der Fürst denkt, aber der Krämer – lenkt!" (KSA4, 223) as examples from *Zarathustra*.<sup>8</sup> Mention should also be made of Ludger Lütkehaus' anthology "*Stehlen ist oft seliger als nehmen*". *Nietzsche zum Vergnügen* (2000) whose title cites Nietzsche's shocking perversion of the Bible proverb "It is more blessed to give than to receive" / "Geben ist seliger als nehmen" (Acts 20:25).<sup>9</sup> In the short formulation "Stealing is often more blessed than receiving" / "Stehlen ist oft seliger als nehmen" (KSA10, 395) this anti-proverb is included in a collection of aphoristic fragments entitled by Nietzsche as "*Böse Weisheit*." *Sprüche und Sprüchwörtliches* (1883; KSA10, 383-413), but in a slightly expanded form this "new" piece of wisdom appears twice in the second and third part of *Zarathustra* (1883 und 1884): "I do not know the happiness of those who receive; and I have often dreamed that even stealing must be more blessed than receiving" (106) / "Ich kenne das Glück des Nehmenden nicht; und oft träumte mir davon, dass Stehlen noch seliger sein müsse, als Nehmen" (KSA4, 136) and "until finally you [Zarathustra] sat thirsty among drunks and complained by night, 'Is it not more blessed to receive than to give, and to steal still more blessed than to receive?' – then you were forsaken!" (184) / "– bis du [Zarathustra] endlich durstig und allein unter Trunkenen sassest und nächtlich klagtest 'ist Nehmen nicht seliger als Geben? Und Stehlen noch seliger als Nehmen?' – Das war Verlassenheit!" (KSA4, 232).

These texts and more than five thousand other proverbial references are cited in their contexts in the index of proverbs and proverbial expressions in Andreas Nolte's and my book "*Zu*



*meiner Hölle will ich den Weg mit guten Sprüchen pflastern*". *Friedrich Nietzsches sprichwörtliche Sprache* (2012). This voluminous study includes several chapters about the differentiated use and function of proverbial materials in Nietzsche's works. It is shown how he repeatedly relies on elements of preformulated folk speech to add a certain metaphorical expressiveness to his thoughts and arguments, no matter whether they appear in aphorisms, fragments, poems, letters, essays or entire books.<sup>10</sup> Quite appropriately, if perhaps a bit surprisingly for many Nietzsche scholars, the following programmatic statement appears in *Zarathustra*: "My tongue – is of the people: I speak too crudely and heartily for Angora rabbits. And my speech sounds even stranger to all ink-fish and pen-hacks" (191) / "Mein Mundwerk – ist des Volks: zu grob und herzlich rede ich für die Seidenhasen. Und noch fremder klingt mein Wort allen Tinten-Fischen und Feder-Füchsen" (KSA4, 241). The many variants of the German proverbial expression "to have an evil (quick, audacious, ungodly, rough, big, good, loose, unwashed) glib tongue" / "ein böses [flinkes, freches, gottloses, grobes, großes, gutes, loses, ungewaschenes] Mundwerk haben"<sup>11</sup> might well be looked at as a colloquial self-characterization of Nietzsche's multifaceted use of language. It must, however, be said that our study does not include a detailed interpretation of the proverbiality of individual books by Nietzsche. This essay then represents an attempt to show how Nietzsche's major work *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is informed to a considerable extent by the innovative use of proverbial language that adds much to his powerful style and his intended message.

Even though *Zarathustra* is generally considered to be Nietzsche's most prominent work, there is still much uncertainty about what exactly this controversial philosopher or literary author had wanted to say with it. Partially at fault about this open question is his aphoristic, esoteric, and poetic style that often is based on analogies and metaphors. The result are opaque and contradictory proclamations that are immediately put into question in an equally encoded way.<sup>12</sup> Thus readers are often not sure whether the prophet Zarathustra speaks for Nietzsche, whether either one envisions a clear goal for humanity, and what the call for a new and elevated humankind actually entails. The seemingly unconnected short chapters with their own open questions are part of this mystification, but altogether Nietzsche is expressing his idea of

the revaluation of all values beyond the old concepts of good and evil that will lead to an acceptance of human life as an eternal return (repetition) without any definite goal. This process demands that humankind abolishes God and religion as well as antiquated concepts of morality, thus going beyond Christian limitations. All of this entails a destruction of the traditional world order and a change or overcoming of humankind as it exists. In this regard Nietzsche's at times rather elitist and provocative concept of the overman must therefore be understood as a call for human beings to go beyond their present limited state. This has in fact nothing to do with a pathological overhuman will to power, as all of this was manipulatively interpreted by Adolf Hitler and other National Socialists.<sup>13</sup> There is a sententious leitmotif in *Zarathustra* that summarizes all of this, taking on, as do other such formulaic statements, "the character of true proverbs" / "das Gepräge von echten Sprichwörtern").<sup>14</sup> A better term would probably be "pseudo-proverb", and as such it appears for the first time right at the beginning of *Zarathustra* as an incredibly informative statement revealing the intended meaning and purpose of the entire book:

I teach you the overman. Man is something that must be overcome. What have you done to overcome him? (12)  
 Ich lehre euch den Übermenschen. Der Mensch ist Etwas, das überwunden werden soll. Was habt ihr gethan, ihn zu überwinden? (KSA4, 14)

When the pseudo-proverb "Man is something that must be overcome" is cited for a second time some thirty pages later, it appears in a typically contradictory context of which the meaning becomes clear only after careful deliberation. Apparently humankind must sink very low, symbolically perish or "die", so that a liberating renunciation of traditional concepts of virtue can take place:

Alas, my brother, have you never yet seen a virtue deny and stab herself?  
 Man is something that must be overcome; and therefore you shall love your virtues, for you will perish of them. (37)  
 Ach, mein Bruder, sahst du noch nie eine Tugend sich selber verleumden und erstechen?

Der Mensch ist Etwas, das überwunden werden muss: und darum sollst du deine Tugenden lieben, – denn du wirst an ihnen zu Grunde gehn. – (KSA4, 44)

It takes this symbolic death in order to bring about the rebirth of a new and liberated humankind as argued by Zarathustra and Nietzsche. This basic idea reappears numerous times as a pseudo-proverbial leitmotif in *Zarathustra*, providing this complex work with its philosophical red thread (roter Faden):

Your highest thought, however, you should receive as a command from me – and it is: man is something that shall be overcome. (48)

Euren höchsten Gedanken aber sollt ihr euch von mir befehlen lassen – und er lautet: der Mensch ist Etwas, das überwunden werden soll. (KSA4, 60)

O my friend, man is something that must be overcome. (57)

Oh, mein Freund, der Mensch ist Etwas, das überwunden werden muss. (KSA4, 72)

There it was too that I picked up the word “overman” by the way, and that man is something that must be overcome. (198)

Dort war's auch, wo ich das Wort “Übermensch” vom Wege auflos, und dass der Mensch Etwas sei, das überwunden werden müsse. (KSA4, 248)

Thus my great love of the farthest demands it: do not spare your neighbor! Man is something that must be overcome. (199)

Also heischt es meine grosse Liebe zu den Fernsten: schone deinen Nächsten nicht! Der Mensch ist Etwas, das überwunden werden muss. (KSA4, 249)

“I love the great despisers. Man, however, is something that must be overcome.” (267)

Ich liebe die grossen Verachtenden. Der Mensch aber ist Etwas, das überwunden werden muss. – – (KSA4, 332)

In the fourth part of *Zarathustra* (1885) the pseudo-proverb is cited one more time, albeit in dissolved form, in the chapter “On the

Higher Man”, who is well on his way to the new but not clearly definable overman:

The most concerned ask today: “How is man to be preserved?” But Zarathustra is the first and only one to ask: “How is man to be overcome?”

I have the overman at heart, that is my first and only concern – and not man: not the neighbor, not the poorest, not the most ailing, not the best.

[...]

You higher men, overcome the small virtues, the small prudences, the grain-of-sand consideration, the ants’ ruff-raff, the wretched contentment, the “happiness of the greatest number”! And rather despair than surrender. And verily, I love you for not knowing how to live today, you higher men! For thus you live best. (287-288)

Die Sorglichstn fragen heute: “wie bleibt der Mensch erhalten?” Zarathustra aber fragt als der Einzige und Ernste: “wie wird der Mensch überwunden”?

Der Übermensch liegt mir am Herzen, der ist mein Erstes und Einziges, – und nicht der Mensch: nicht der Nächste, nicht der Ärmste, nicht der Leidendste, nicht der Beste –

[...]

Überwindet mir, ihr höheren Menschen, die kleinen Tugenden, die kleinen Klugheiten, die Sandkorn-Rücksichten, den Ameisen-Kribbelkram, das erbärmliche Behagen, das “Glück der Meisten” –!

Und lieber verzweifelt, als dass ihr euch ergebt. Und, wahrlich, ich liebe euch dafür, dass ihr heute nicht zu leben wisst, ihr höheren Menschen! So nämlich lebt ihr – am Besten! (KSA4, 357-358)

That is no plan or prescription but “a reflective process [...] of free play, of oscillation between the text-immanent and text-external aspect” that includes “the irrational, the indecipherable and the arbitrarily interpretable” / “ein Reflexionsprozeß [...] des freien Spiels, des Oszillierens zwischen textimmanenter und textäußerer Seite”, der “Irrationales, Unentzifferbares oder beliebig zu Interpretierendes” einschließt.<sup>15</sup> Even “Zarathustra does not reach a final state of wisdom” or “a resting place”,<sup>16</sup> but by serious struggle he reaches the conviction, perhaps somewhat surprising for the

alleged nay-sayer Nietzsche, the “world-affirming ideal that expresses itself in self-affirmation” and “the celebration of life in eternal return [repetition].”<sup>17</sup> Thus one finds right at the beginning of *Zarathustra* the affirmative declaration:

Behold, I teach you the overman. The overman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: the overman shall be the meaning of the earth! (13)  
 Seht, ich lehre euch den Übermenschen!  
 Der Übermensch ist der Sinn der Erde. Euer Wille sage:  
 der Übermensch sei der Sinn der Erde! (KSA4, 14)

The same thought reappears more poetically expressed a few pages later, where Nietzsche once again leaves his idea of a new humankind somewhat in the dark:

I will teach men the meaning of their existence – the overman, the lightning out of the dark cloud of man. But I am still far from them, and my sense does not speak to their senses. To men I am still the mean between a fool and a corpse.  
 Dark is the night, dark are Zarathustra’s ways. (20-21)  
 Ich will die Menschen den Sinn ihres Seins lehren:  
 welcher ist der Übermensch, der Blitz aus der dunklen Wolke Mensch.  
 Aber noch bin ich ihnen ferne, und mein Sinn redet nicht zu ihren Sinnen. Eine Mitte bin ich noch den Menschen zwischen einem Narren und einem Leichnam.  
 Dunkel ist die Nacht, dunkel sind die Wege Zarathustra’s.  
 (KSA4, 23)

There is no doubt that Nietzsche walks on dark and challenging paths to convince humankind “To assume the right to new values” (27) / “Recht sich nehmen [sollen] zu neuen Werthen” (KSA4, 30), because “Around the inventors of new values the world revolves” (52) / “um die Erfinder von neuen Werthen dreht sich die Welt” (KSA4, 65). Humankind lies, as Nietzsche expresses it proverbially, “in fetters of false values and delusive words” (91) / “in Banden falscher Werthe und Wahn-Worte!” (KSA4, 117). Nietzsche also employs the somatic expression “to have one’s hands free” / “die Hände frei haben” in order to emphasize the messianic task of his Zarathustra as a life-confirming prophet: “I have be-

come one who blesses and says Yes; and I fought long for that and was a fighter that I might one day get my hands free to bless” (165) / “Zum Segnenden bin ich [Zarathustra] worden und zum Ja-sagenden: und dazu rang ich lange und war ein Ringer, dass ich einst die Hände frei bekäme zum Segnen” (KSA4, 209). But even if life is likened to a wrestling match, Zarathustra freely admits that “life was dearer to me than all my wisdom ever was” (227) / “war mir das Leben lieber, als je alle meine Weisheit” (KSA4, 285). But the problem remains, of course, that even Nietzsche’s chosen fellow human beings are not yet ready to follow Zarathustra on his novel path:

Well then, they still sleep, these higher men, while I [Zarathustra] am awake; these are not my proper companions. It is not for them that I wait here in my mountains. I want to go to my work, to my day; but they do not understand the signs of my morning; my stride is for them no summons to awaken. (325)

Wohlan! sie schlafen noch, diese höheren Menschen, während ich [Zarathustra] wach bin: das sind nicht meine rechten Gefährten! Nicht auf sie warte ich hier in meinen Bergen.

Zu meinem Werke will ich, zu meinem Tage: aber sie verstehen nicht, was die Zeichen meines Morgens sind, mein Schritt – ist für sie kein Weckruf. (KSA4, 405)

One could certainly observe that Zarathustra has given a hopeful wake-up call, making it possible for him to leave his spiritual mountain-top and to make his way confidently to the people at the end of this semiotic work. From darkness to light, from divine disempowerment to free development, as Markus Meckel has expressed it so well in his anthropologically oriented essay “Der Weg Zarathustras als der Weg des Menschen” (1980, “Zarathustra’s Path as the Path of Humankind”):

God is dead. Man alone is the topic. [...] “Death of God” is thought of as the task of man to comply with his manhood. The talk about God thus becomes the talk about man. In this way the differentiated use of the word “God” by Nietzsche always reveals anthropological statements. But the background for all statements is the turning away

for God, the rejection of the Christian, metaphysical God. [...] Man for Nietzsche is body and belongs to this earth; he cannot free himself for that. Man and world [that is the here and not the beyond] belong closely together. [...] Thus the turn to the earth as the place for man and the death of God depend on each other.

Gott ist tot. Der Mensch allein ist Thema. [...] "Tod Gottes" wird gedacht als die Aufgabe des Menschen, seinem Mensch-Sein zu entsprechen. Rede von Gott wird damit Rede vom Menschen. So eröffnet der recht unterschiedliche Gebrauch des Wortes "Gott" bei Nietzsche immer anthropologische Aussagen. Hintergrund aller Aussagen aber ist die Abwendung von Gott, die Ablehnung des christlichen, des metaphysischen Gottes. [...] Der Mensch ist für Nietzsche Leib und gehört zu dieser Erde; davon kann er sich nicht freimachen. Mensch und Welt [also das Diesseits und nicht das Jenseits] gehören eng zusammen. [...] So gehört Hinwendung zur Welt (=Erde) zum Grundbestand der Lehre Zarathustras. [...] Hinwendung zur Erde als Ort des Menschen und Tod Gottes bedingen einander.<sup>18</sup>

After this intriguing analysis Meckel cites the following reference from *Zarathustra*, but it is surprising that even as an anthropologist he ignores the ancient proverbial expression originating from the ostrich sticking his head into the sand. After all, this traditional phrase is such a clear indication for the fact that Nietzsche relies on folk language for some of his most fundamental statements:

It learns to speak ever more honestly, this ego: and the more it learns, the more words and honors it finds for body and earth.

A new pride my ego taught me, and this I teach men: no longer to bury one's head in the sand of heavenly things, but to bear it freely, an earthly head, which creates a meaning for the earth. (32)

Immer redlicher lernt es reden, das Ich: und je mehr es lernt, um so mehr findet es Worte und Ehren für Leib und Erde.

Einen neuen Stolz lehrte mich mein Ich, den lehre ich die Menschen: nicht mehr den Kopf in den Sand der

himmlischen Dinge zu stecken, sondern frei ihn zu tragen,  
 einen Erden-Kopf, der der Erde Sinn schafft!  
 Einen neuen Willen lehre ich die Menschen. [KSA4, 36-  
 37)<sup>19</sup>

Many pages later Nietzsche returns one more time to this proverbial expression in order to emphasize metaphorically that man has to liberate himself from his ostrich perspective:

He who will one day teach men to fly will have moved all boundary stones; the boundary stones themselves will fly into the air before him, and he will rebaptize the earth – “the light one.”

The ostrich runs faster than the fastest horse, but even he buries his head gravely in the grave earth; even so, the man who has not yet learned to fly. Earth and life seem grave to him; and thus the spirit of gravity wants it. But whoever would become light and a bird must love himself: thus I teach. (192)

Wer die Menschen einst fliegen lehrt, der hat alle Grenzsteine verrückt; alle Grenzsteine selber werden ihm in die Luft fliegen, die Erde wird er neu taufen – als “die Leichte.”

Der Vogel Strauß läuft schneller als das schnellste Pferd, aber auch er steckt noch den Kopf schwer in schwere Erde: also der Mensch, der noch nicht fliegen kann.

Schwer heisst ihm Erde und Leben; und so will es der Geist der Schwere! Wer aber leicht werden will und ein Vogel, der muss sich selber lieben: – also lehre ich. (KSA4, 242)

An explosive, winged self-liberation is necessary so that people can find their preordained purpose for a secular life. That liberating path, however, is filled with contradictions, and they hit a person in a proverbial way “in front of the head” in the sense of being stunned or dumbfounded: “They contradict each other, these paths; they offend each other face to face [hit each other in front of the head]; and it is here at this gateway that they come together. The name of the gateway is inscribed above: ‘Moment’” (157-158) / “Sie widersprechen sich, diese Wege; sie stossen sich gerade vor den Kopf: – und hier, an diesem Thorwege, ist es, wo sie zusammen kommen. Der Name des Thorwegs steht oben



geschrieben: 'Augenblick'" (KSA4, 199-200). Nietzsche as the "player" with thoughts is quick to rely on at times difficult to translate somatic expressions based on "head" / "Kopf" in order to show how momentary insights hit people into the head and how concepts literally need to be turned on their head so that new truths can come to light:

Too often, verily, did I follow close on the heels of truth: so she kicked me in the face [kicked me in the head]. Sometimes I thought I was lying, and behold, only then did I hit the truth. (274)

Zu oft, wahrlich, folgte ich der Wahrheit dicht auf dem Fusse: da trat sie mir vor den Kopf. Manchmal meinte ich zu lügen, und siehe! da erst traf ich – die Wahrheit. (KSA4, 340)

Lift up your hearts, my brothers, high, higher! And do not forget your legs either. Lift up your legs too, you good dancers; and better yet, stand on your heads! (294)

Erhebt eure Herzen, meine Brüder, hoch! höher! Und vergesst mir auch die Beine nicht! Erhebt auch eure Beine, ihr guten Tänzer, und besser noch: ihr steht auch auf dem Kopf! (KSA4, 366)

What? he [Zarathustra] cried. What did I hear just now? Verily, it seems to me that you [a scientist] are a fool, or that I am one myself; and your "truth" I simply reverse [stand on its head]. (302-303)

Wie! rief er [Zarathustra], was hörte ich da eben? Wahrlich, mich dünkt, du [ein Wissenschaftler] bist ein Narr oder ich selber bin's: und deine "Wahrheit" stelle ich rucks und flugs auf den Kopf. (KSA4, 377)

Such somatic expressions appear again and again in *Zarathustra* and add to its emotionally charged metaphorical expressiveness. Even though such textual references are normally intended seriously, a few humorous observations do appear as well. This play between seriousness and humor is yet another example of Nietzsche's contradictory thought and work process, as can be seen from the following somatic examples:

I have long known that the devil would trip me [by putting his leg in my way]. (20)

Ich wusste es lange, dass mir der Teufel ein Bein stellen werde. (KSA4, 22)

You shall build over and beyond yourself, but first you must be built yourself, perpendicular in body and soul. (69)

Über dich sollst du hinausbauen. Aber erst musst du mir selber gebaut sein, rechtwinklig an Leib und Seele. (KSA4, 90)

And when I talked in confidence [under four eyes] with my wisdom she said to me in anger [...]. (108)

Und als ich unter vier Augen mit meiner wilden Weisheit redete, sagte sie mir zornig [...]. (KSA4, 140)

And even if you are right – should that be said to my face? (109)

Und wenn du Recht hättest, – sagt man das mir so in's Gesicht! (KSA4, 141)

They watch each other closely [look each other on the fingers] and mistrustfully. (125)

Sie sehen einander gut auf die Finger und trauen sich nicht zum Besten. (KSA4, 161)

Eventually his own tongue was loosened as he listened, and the ice of his heart broke. (155)

Zuletzt wurde ihm im Zuhören die eigne Zunge gelöst, und das Eis seines Herzens brach. (KSA4, 197)

I walk among this people and I keep my eyes open. (168, 169)

Ich gehe durch diess Volk und halte meine (die) Augen offen. (KSA4, 212, 213)

You know it well: your cowardly devil within you, who would like to fold his hands and rest his hands in his lap and be more comfortable [...]. (180)

Du weißt es wohl: dein feiger Teufel in dir, der gerne Hände-falten und Hände-in-den-Schoss-legen und es bequemer haben möchte [...]. (KSA4, 227-228)

With lashes one should make your legs sprightly again,  
(207)

Mit Ruthenstreichen soll man euch wieder muntre Beine  
machen. (KSA4, 259)

Verily, you will yet have to drag him by the hair into his  
heaven. (207-208)

Wahrlich, ihr werdet ihn an den Haaren in seinen Himmel  
ziehen müssen. (KSA4, 260)

With his tongue hanging from lasciviousness [out of his  
throat]. But he calls it his "pity." (218)

Die Zunge hängt ihm aus dem Halse vor Lüsternheit. Er  
aber heisst es sein "Mitleiden." (KSA4, 273)

Immediately Zarathustra, who had opened his ears and  
eyes wide at this talk, rose from his hiding-place. (246)

Sofort erhob sich Zarathustra, der zu diesen Reden Ohren  
und Augen aufgesperrt hatte, aus seinem Schlupfwinkel.  
(KSA4, 306)

"Speaking in the confidence of three eyes," the old pope  
said cheerfully (for he was blind in one eye), "in what  
pertains to God, I am – and have the right to be – more  
enlightened than Zarathustra himself." (260-261)

"Unter drei Augen gesprochen, sagte erheitert der alte  
Papst (denn er war auf Einem Auge blind), in Dingen  
Gottes bin ich aufgeklärter als Zarathustra selber – und  
darf es sein." (KSA4, 323)

They unburden their hearts, good hours come back to  
them, they celebrate and chew the cud: they become  
grateful. (311)

Sie schütten ihr Herz aus, gute Stunden kehren ihnen  
zurück, sie feiern und kauen wieder, – sie werden  
dankbar. (KSA4, 387)

Of interest is also how Nietzsche connects the somatic expression  
"to have a cloven foot" / "einen Pferdefuß haben" with two twin  
formulas and an additional "devil" / "Teufel" phrase: "My foot is  
a cloven foot; with it I trample and trot over sticks and stones,  
crisscross, and I am happy as the devil while running so fast"  
(192) / "Mein Fuss – ist ein Pferdefuss; damit trapple und trabe ich

über Stock und Stein, kreuz- und quersfeld-ein und bin des Teufels vor Lust bei allem schnellen Laufen" (KSA4, 241). Forty pages later Nietzsche returns to the medieval twin formula "over sticks and stones" / "über Stock und Stein" in his prophetic description of the path to enlightenment: "That is a dance up high and down low [over sticks and stones]: I am the hunter; would you be my dog or my doe?" (225) / "Das ist ein Tanz über Stock und Stein: ich bin der Jäger, – willst du mein Hund oder meine Gemse sein?" (KSA4, 283). In one of his letters of November 19, 1886, to his friend Heinrich Köselitz, Nietzsche once mentioned that in his *Zarathustra* he uses "folk speech with all sincerity and delight just like a mother tongue" / "mit aller Herzlichkeit und Lust die 'Volkssprache', ganz wie eine Muttersprache" (KSB7, 284). Precisely, for elements of folk speech, even the simplest twin formulas, can be found everywhere. But Nietzsche, of course, integrates them in innovative ways into his philosophical context where they add much to a metaphorical expressiveness.

And here is yet one more somatic reference in which Zarathustra without any doubt employs an enlightening allusion to the proverb "If you offer someone the little finger, he will take the whole hand" / "Wenn man einem den kleinen Finger bietet (reicht), so nimmt er die ganze Hand". Zarathustra does not use this wisdom as a reproach but rather as an offer to help the "higher" men on their path: "[The offer], however, is my little finger. And once you have that, by all means take the whole hand; well, and my heart too!" (280) / "[Das Angebot] aber ist: mein kleiner Finger. Und habt ihr den erst. so nehmt nur noch die ganze Hand, wohlan! und das Herz dazu!" (KSA4, 348). What becomes clear here is that Nietzsche usually does not use folk proverbs in their known wording to be followed as pieces of wisdom. Instead he varies their vocabulary and breaks up their original structure so that they take on new semantic functions. Often such proverb alterations are mere generalized observations without any intended didacticism. In fact, one could say that such dissolved proverbs are to be understood merely as expressive metaphors, showing Nietzsche's keen interest in the images of folk speech. The following examples, first citing the original proverb in italics in each case, are ample proof of this:

*The drowning man will clutch at a straw.*

*Der Ertrinkende klammert sich an einen Strohhalm  
(auch: jeden Strohhalm ergreifen)*

They [the preachers of death] reach for sweets while mocking their own childishness; they clutch the straw of their life and mock that they still clutch a straw. Their wisdom says, "A fool who stays alive – but such fools are we. And this is surely the most foolish thing about life." (45)

Sie [Prediger des Todes] greifen nach Zuckerwerk und spotten ihrer Kinderei dabei: sie hängen an ihrem Strohhalm Leben und spotten, dass sie noch an einem Strohhalm hängen.

Ihre Weisheit lautet: "ein Thor, der leben bleibt, aber so sehr sind wir Thoren! Und das eben ist das Thörichste am Leben!" – (KSA4, 56)

*A steady drop makes a hole in the stone.*

*Steter Tropfen höhlt den Stein.*

You are no stone, but you have already become hollow from many drops. You will yet burst from many drops. (53)

Du bist kein Stein, aber schon wurdest du hohl von vielen Tropfen. Zerbrechen und zerbersten wirst du mir noch von vielen Tropfen. (KSA4, 66-67)

*When the eating tastes the best, one should stop.*

*Wenn das Essen am besten schmeckt, soll man aufhören.*

One must cease letting oneself be eaten when one tastes best: that is known to those who want to be loved long. (72)

Man muss aufhören, sich essen zu lassen, wenn man am besten schmeckt: das wissen Die, welche lange geliebt werden wollen. (KSA4, 94)

*Virtue is its own reward.*

*Tugend ist selbst ihr bester Lohn.*

You who are virtuous still want to be paid! Do you want rewards for virtue, and heaven for earth, and the eternal for your today?

And now you are angry with me because I teach that there is no reward and paymaster? And verily, I do not even teach that virtue is its own reward. (93)

Ihr wollt noch bezahlt sein, ihr Tugendhaften! Wollt Lohn für Tugend und Himmel für Erden und Ewiges für euer Heute haben?

Und nun zürnt ihr mir, dass ich lehre, es giebt keinen Lohn- und Zahlmeister? Und wahrlich, ich lehre nicht einmal, dass Tugend ihr eigener Lohn ist. (KSA4, 120)

*Fools' hands scribble on tables and walls.*

*Narrenhände beschmieren Tisch und Wände.*

My hand is a fool's hand: beware, all tables and walls and whatever else still offer room for foolish frill or scribbling skill. (192)

Meine Hand – ist eine Narrenhand: wehe allen Tischen und Wänden, und was noch Platz hat für Narren-Zierath, Narren-Schmierath! (KSA4, 241)

*Water has no planks.*

*Wasser hat keine Balken.*

When the water is spanned by planks, when bridges and railings leap over the river, verily, those are not believed who say, "Everything is in flux." (201)

Wenn das Wasser Balken hat, wenn Stege und Geländer über den Fluss springen: wahrlich, da findet Keiner Glauben, der da spricht: "Alles ist im Fluss." (KSA4, 252)<sup>20</sup>

*All that glitters is not gold.*

*Es ist nicht alles Gold, was glänzt.*

Let the shopkeeper rule where all that still glitters is – shopkeepers' gold. The time of kings is past: what calls itself a people today deserves no kings. (210)

Mag da der Krämer herrschen, wo Alles, was noch glänzt – Krämer-Gold ist! Es ist die Zeit der Könige nicht mehr: was sich heute Volk heisst, verdient keine Könige. (KSA4, 262-263)

*The mountain labored and brought forth a mouse.*

*Der Berg kreißte und gebar ein Mäuslein.*

Well then, you higher men! Only now is the mountain of man's future in labor. God died: now we want the overman to live. (287)

Wohlan! Wohlauf! Ihr höheren Menschen! Nun erst kreisst der Berg der Menschen-Zukunft. Gott starb: nun wollen wir, – dass der Übermensch lebe. (KSA4, 357)

The last reference by the classical philologist Friedrich Nietzsche is a colossal and semantically significant variation of the Latin proverb "Parturiunt montes, nascetur ridiculus mus",<sup>21</sup> where the mountain is now bringing forth the overman instead of the mouse and God as the creator is of no import any longer. It is utterly surprising that the secondary literature has not commented on this blasphemous reference and other such proverb manipulations in that they so obviously are key statements for the meaning and understanding of *Zarathustra*.

The declaration of the death of God and the turning of man to the world doubtlessly comprise the basis of the lyrical and yet proverbial philosophical treatise, as one might call Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*. Of course, Nietzsche's blasphemous claim that "God is dead" / "Gott ist tot" was at first neither poetic nor proverbial, but as a sententious remark it has long taken on a proverbial nature albeit with the distinct loss of Nietzsche's philosophically founded reasoning.

Actually Nietzsche had declared God dead already one year earlier in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (1882, *The Gay Science*), and it is this first reference that remains the best known: "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him"<sup>22</sup> / "Gott ist todt! Gott bleibt todt! Und wir haben ihn getötet" (KSA3, 481). Other occurrences from this book are above all "The greatest recent event – that 'God is dead,' that the belief in the Christian god has become unbelievable – is already beginning to cast its first shadows over Europe"<sup>23</sup> / "Das grösste neuere Ereignis, – dass 'Gott todt ist', dass der Glaube an den christlichen Gott unglaubwürdig geworden ist – beginnt bereits seine ersten Schatten über Europa zu werfen" (KSA3, 573) and "Indeed, we philosophers and 'free spirits' feel, when we hear the news that 'the old God is dead,' as if a new dawn shone on us"<sup>24</sup> / "In der That, wir Philosophen und 'freien Geister' fühlen uns bei der Nachricht, dass der 'alte Gott todt' ist, wie von einer neuen Morgenröthe angestrahlt" (KSA3,

574). Of greatest interest is, however, what Nietzsche expresses shortly afterwards with seemingly considerable more humility in the second part of his *Zarathustra* (1883). But here again it is of utmost importance, as always with Nietzsche, that one considers the context carefully, for it is not Zarathustra who is speaking in this case but rather the devil: “Thus spoke the devil to me once: ‘God too has his hell: that is his love of man.’ And most recently I heard him say this: ‘God is dead; God died of his pity for man.’” (90) / “Also sprach der Teufel einst zu mir: ‘auch Gott hat seine Hölle: das ist seine Liebe zu den Menschen.’ Und jüngst hörte ich ihn diess Wort sagen: ‘Gott ist todt; an seinem Mitleiden mit den Menschen ist Gott gestorben’ –” (KSA4, 115). That is for Nietzsche himself a devilish interpretation in contrast to his own liberating deed of annihilating the Biblical God, something that he later in *Zarathustra* repeats very directly in all its shortness and without any compassion: “For this old God lives no more: he is thoroughly dead. Thus spoke Zarathustra” (263) / “Dieser alte Gott nämlich lebt nicht mehr: der ist gründlich todt. – Also sprach Zarathustra” (KSA4, 326). Nietzsche’s claim caught on, and here are at least two of the numerous aphoristic reactions to Nietzsche’s infamous declaration of God’s death that refer directly to Nietzsche’s proverbial slogan:

God is dead, Nietzsche is dead – and I feel also pretty bad already.

Gott ist tot, Nietzsche ist tot – und mir ist auch schon ganz schlecht.

Anonymous (1982)<sup>25</sup>

*Short Sunday Sermon*

God has – according to Nietzsche – died,  
but as a multi-purpose weapon  
is still useful  
and traded worldwide  
because not protected by copyright.

*Kurze Sonntagspredigt*

Gott ist – laut Nietzsche – verstorben,  
doch als Mehrzweckwaffe  
immer noch tauglich  
und weltweit im Handel,



weil urheberrechtlich nicht geschützt.  
Günter Grass (1997)<sup>26</sup>

One wonders how Nietzsche might have reacted to such modern reactions to his claim that “God is dead” / “Gott ist tot”? He would hardly have been pleased to learn that his entire oeuvre prevails primarily in folk parlance by way of the three (un)winged words “God is dead”!<sup>27</sup>

The higher men, who possess the courageous insight that God would stand in their way to new values and a life-confirming existence could very well have been labeled as exceptional human beings by Nietzsche. They are those who will not submit to the will of God: “Against this submission, against this God stands the ‘I will’ of Zarathustra, the creating and loving one, who constructs himself and his living space by going beyond himself. In this going beyond oneself that is the essence of man is implied that men are different, differently advanced on their path to the overman” / “Gegen diese Ergebung, gegen diesen Gott steht das ‘ich will’ Zarathustras, des Schaffenden und Liebenden, der sich selbst und seinen Lebensraum im Über-sich-hinaus-gehen schafft. In diesem Über-sich-hinaus-gehen, das das Wesen des Menschen ausmacht, ist impliziert, daß die Menschen verschieden sind, verschieden weit auf ihrem Wege zum Übermenschen”.<sup>28</sup> It is then no surprise that Nietzsche had to deal quite critically with the two related democratic proverbs “All men are equal” / “Alle Menschen sind gleich” and “Before God all men are equal” / “Vor Gott sind alle Menschen gleich”. After all, his “higher men” / “höhere Menschen” are unique and elitist individuals, as is repeatedly pointed out: “I am Zarathustra the godless: where shall I find my equal? And all those are my equals who give themselves their own will and reject all resignation” (171) / “Ich bin Zarathustra, der Gottlose: wo finde ich Meines-Gleichen? Und alle Die sind Meines-Gleichen, die sich selber ihren Willen geben und alle Ergebung von sich abthun” (KSA4, 215). Consequently Zarathustra repeatedly contradicts the proverbial claim that all men are equal:

I do not wish to be mixed up and confused with these preachers of equality. For, to me justice speaks thus: “Men are not equal.” (101)

Mit diesen Predigern der Gleichheit will ich nicht vermischt und verwechselt sein. Denn so redet mir die Gerechtigkeit: “die Menschen sind nicht gleich.” (KSA4, 130)

For men are not equal: thus speaks justice. And what I want, they would have no right to want!

Thus spoke Zarathustra. (126)

Denn die Menschen sind nicht gleich: so spricht die Gerechtigkeit. Und was ich will, dürften sie nicht wollen!

Also sprach Zarathustra. (KSA4, 162)

You higher men, learn this from me: in the market place nobody believes the higher men. And if you want to speak there, very well! But the mob blinks: “We are all equal.”

“You higher men” – thus blinks the mob – “there are no higher men, we are all equal, man is man; before God we are all equal.”

Before God! But now this God has died. And before the mob we do not want to be equal. You higher men, go away from the market place!

Before God! But now this God has died. You higher men, this God was your greatest danger. It is only since he lies in his tomb that you have been resurrected. Only now the great noon comes; only now the higher man becomes – lord. (286)

Ihr höheren Menschen. Diess lernt von mir: auf dem Markt glaubt Niemand an höhere Menschen. Und wollt ihr dort reden, wohlan! Der Pöbel aber blinzelt “wir sind Alle gleich.”

“Ihr höheren Menschen, – so blinzelt der Pöbel – es giebt keine höheren Menschen, wir sind Alle gleich, Mensch ist Mensch, vor Gott – sind wir Alle gleich!”<sup>29</sup>

Vor Gott! – Nun aber starb dieser Gott. Vor dem Pöbel aber wollen wir nicht gleich sein. Ihr höheren Menschen, geht weg vom Markt!

Vor Gott! – Nun aber starb dieser Gott! Ihr höheren Menschen, dieser Gott war eure grösste Gefahr.

Seit er im Grabe liegt, seid ihr erst wieder auferstanden. Nun erst kommt der grosse Mittag, nun erst wird der höhere Mensch – Herr! (KSA4, 356-357)

Additional arguments also employ proverbs against the claimed equality of men, as for example in the case of the restricted behavior “of the little people: there one says ‘birds of a feather’ and ‘one hand washes the other.’ They have neither the right nor the strength for your egoism.” (291) / “der kleinen Leute: da heisst es ‘gleich und gleich’ und ‘Hand wäscht Hand’: – sie haben nicht das Recht noch Kraft zu eurem Eigennutz!” (KSA4, 362). Obviously Zarathustra is well aware of the extensive general knowledge of these two folk proverbs so that he does not need to cite them in their entirety. Egotistical or elitist is of course also his employment of the cautionary proverb “Trust, watch, whom” / “Trau, schau, wem” that is quickly changed into an aggressive anti-proverb in regard to the courageous higher men: “I love the valiant; but it is not enough to wield a broadsword, one must also know against whom [strike, watch, whom].” (209) / “Ich liebe die Tapferen: aber es ist nicht genug, Hau-Degen sein, – man muss auch wissen Hau-schau-Wen!” (KSA4, 262).<sup>30</sup> At least Zarathustra accepts a quotation by Pindar long turned proverb in the following self-characterization:

For that is what I am through and through: reeling, reeling in, raising up, raising, a raiser, cultivator, and disciplinarian, who once counseled himself, not for nothing: Become who you are! (239)

Der nämlich bin ich von Grund und Anbeginn, ziehend, heranziehend, hinaufziehend, aufziehend, ein Zieher, Züchter und Zuchtmeister, der sich nicht umsonst einstmals zusprach: “Werde, der du bist!” (KSA4, 297)

In this case Nietzsche shows himself as so often as a true philologist in his convincing and skillful use of various terms belonging to the word-field of “pull” / “ziehen”. They enable him to express Zarathustra’s difficult task to educate (pull along) at least some chosen people on their path from an expanded self-knowledge to a free life.

Part of this process, as has already been mentioned, is a definitive rejection of Christianity with its virtuous lessons of morality that are current among the folk in the form of uncritically accepted Bible proverbs. In the revealing chapter “On Old and New Tablets” / “Von alten und neuen Tafeln” of *Zarathustra* Nietzsche’s anti-Christian prophet thus demands very blatantly: “Break, break, O my brothers, these old tablets of the pious. Break the maxims of

those who slander the world” (205) / “Zerbrecht, zerbrecht mir, oh meine Brüder, diese alten Tafeln der Frommen! Zersprecht mir die Sprüche der Welt-Verleumder!” (KSA4, 257). From a paremiological point of view the word invention “zersprechen” / “to break by speaking” could be regarded as a linguistic description of the alienation of Biblical proverbs into secularized anti-proverbs. The language of the Bible forms the poetic-prophetic basis of this book, not the least because Nietzsche as the son of a minister and former student of theology had a special predilection for the powerful language of Luther’s Bible translation.<sup>31</sup> The fact that Nietzsche succeeds with this consciously employed religious and yet secularized style is in part at least due to the fact that he usually limits himself to well known Bible references, with proverbs and proverbial expressions from the Bible long ago having been accepted into colloquial speech.<sup>32</sup> In this regard it even happens once that Nietzsche cites a Bible proverb with just a small shortening as a repeated leitmotif. It is the proverb “He that has ears to hear, let him hear” / “Wer Ohren hat zu hören, der höre” (Matthew 11:15)<sup>33</sup> that Zarathustra takes almost verbatim from Jesus in order to convince his fellow human beings to listen to his message concerning the path to a higher existence:

Courage, however, is the best slayer [...]. In such words, however, there is much playing and brass. He that has ears to hear, let him hear! (157)

Muth aber ist der beste Todtschläger [...]. In solchem Spruche aber ist viel klingendes Spiel. Wer Ohren hat, der höre. – (KSA4, 199)

And then all the gods laughed and rocked on their chairs and cried, “Is not just this godlike that there are gods but no God?”

He that has ears to hear, let him hear! (182)

Und alle Götter lachten damals und wackelten auf ihren Stühlen und riefen: “Ist das nicht eben Göttlichkeit, dass es Götter, aber keinen Gott giebt?”

Wer Ohren hat, der höre. – (KSA4, 230)

And you shall first learn from me how to learn – how to learn well. He that has ears to hear, let him hear! (206)

Und auch das Lernen sollt ihr erst von mir lernen, das  
Gut-Lernen! – Wer Ohren hat, der höre! (KSA4, 258)

To this are added proverbial expressions that relate to the topic of listening well, as for example “Open your ears to me, for now I shall speak to you about the death of peoples” (48). / “Jetzt thut mir die Ohren auf, denn jetzt sage ich euch mein Wort vom Tode der Völker” (KSA4, 61); “that whoever pricks up his ears as he lies in the grass or on lonely slopes will find out something about those things that are between heaven and earth” (127) / “dass wer im Grase oder an einsamen Gehängen liegend die Ohren spitze, Etwas von den Dingen erfahre, die zwischen Himmel und Erde sind” (KSA4, 164); and “but it is precisely into their ears that I like to shout, “Yes, I am Zarathustra the godless!” (171) / “aber gerade ihnen liebe ich’s, in das Ohr zu schreien: Ja! Ich bin Zarathustra, der Gottlose!” (KSA4, 215). To be sure, Zarathustra, this new type of prophet, always has to be conscious of whether people are hearing and understanding him properly: “As yet my words have not moved mountains, and what I said did not reach men. Indeed, I have gone to men, but as yet I have not arrived” (146). / “Noch versetzte mein Wort keine Berge, und was ich redete, erreichte die Menschen nicht. Ich gieng wohl zu den Menschen, aber noch langte ich nicht bei ihnen an” (KSA4, 188). No wonder then that Zarathustra even picks up the folk expression “to speak German with someone” / “deutsch mit jdm. reden” in order to get the proper attention by speaking very directly (in German!) to them: “My guests, you higher men, let me speak to you in plain and clear German” (282). / “Meine Gäste, ihr höheren Menschen, ich will deutsch und deutlich mit euch reden” (KSA4, 350).

Zarathustra’s presumptuous claim that his words might some day move mountains is clearly an allusion to the Bible proverb “Faith can remove mountains” / “Der Glaube kann Berge versetzen” (1. Corinthians 13:2). But when he next uses the Bible proverb “Faith makes blessed” / “Der Glaube macht selig” (Mark 16:16) there is no arrogance involved. He simply wants to point out to his “disciples” / “Jüngern” that he is no fanatical leader but rather someone who explains and interprets and who points out a better way for life without any presumptuous didacticism:

The disciple answered, “I believe in Zarathustra.” But Zarathustra shook his head and smiled.

Faith does not make me blessed, he said, especially not faith in me. (127)

Der Jünger antwortete: "ich glaube an Zarathustra." Aber Zarathustra schüttelte den Kopf und lächelte.

Der Glaube macht mich nicht selig, zumal nicht der Glaube an mich. (KSA4, 163-164)

As the possible founder of a new religion he would most likely be very interested in this faith, but Zarathustra has no ready solutions at hand, as the negated proverb points out. He only wants to point out constellations and possibilities in an often symbolic and contradictory fashion that might just lead to a life affirming existence without God and religion. But as an existentialist atheist he most certainly does not want to be the founder of a new religion!

Doubtlessly Nietzsche has a predilection for Bible references that have entered folk speech, but he cites such proverbs and proverbial expressions in his own free way and interprets them in an innovative fashion. They are rarely quoted in their original wording but are instead distorted or negated in ever changing mutations. Sometimes it suffices simply to allude to a Bible reference with the original piece of wisdom adding much to the intended intertextual irony. The following chronologically arranged examples from *Zarathustra* should show with what virtuosity Nietzsche is able to deal with proverbs from the Old and New Testaments:

*Proverbs 3:12; Hebrews 12:6*: "Whom the Lord (God) loves he chastises" / "Wen der Herr (Gott) lieb hat, den züchtigt er".

I love him who chastises his God because he loves his God: for he must perish of the wrath of his God. (16)

Ich liebe Den, welcher seinen Gott züchtigt, weil er seinen Gott liebt: denn er muss am Zorne seines Gottes zu Grunde gehen. (KSA4, 18)

*3. Moses 19:18; Galatians 5:14*: "Love your neighbor as yourself" / "Liebe deinen Nächsten wie dich selbst".

My brothers, love of the neighbor I do not recommend to you: I recommend to you love of the farthest.

Thus spoke Zarathustra. (62)

Meine Brüder, zur Nächstenliebe rathe ich euch nicht: ich rathe euch zur Fernsten-Liebe. Also sprach Zarathustra. (KSA4, 79)

“Do love your neighbor as yourself, but first be such as love themselves” – (172)

“Liebt immerhin euren Nächsten gleich euch, – aber seid mir erst Solche, die sich selber lieben” – (KSA4, 216)

*Matthew 7:7*: “Seek, and you shall find” / “Suchet, so werdet ihr finden”.

Is it your wish, my brother, to go into solitude? Is it your wish to seek the way to yourself? Then linger a moment, and listen to me.

“He who seeks, easily gets lost. All Loneliness is guilt” – thus speaks the herd. And you have long belonged to the herd. (62)

Willst du, mein Bruder, in die Vereinsamung gehen? Willst du den Weg zu dir selber suchen? Zaudere noch ein Wenig und höre mich.

“Wer sucht, der geht leicht selber verloren. Alle Vereinsamung ist Schuld”: also spricht die Heerde. Und du gehörtest lange zur Heerde”. (KSA4, 80)

*Matthew 12:34*: “Out of the abundance the mouth speaketh” / “Wes das Herz voll ist, des geht der Mund über”, i.e., Whose heart is full will have his mouth overflow.<sup>34</sup>

Verily, you fill your mouth with noble words; and are we to believe that your heart is overflowing, you liars? (123)

Wahrlich, ihr nehmt den Mund voll mit edlen Worten: und wir sollen glauben, dass euch das Herz übergehe, ihr Lügenbolde? (KSA4, 158)

2. *Moses 3:8*: “Land flowing with milk and honey” / “Land, darin Milch und Honig fließt”.

He who has always spared himself much will in the end become sickly of so much consideration. Praised be what hardens! I do not praise the land where butter and honey flow. (153)

Wer sich stets viel geschont hat, der kränkelt zuletzt an seiner vielen Schonung. Gelobt sei, was hart macht! Ich

lobe das Land nicht, wo Butter und Honig – fließt!  
(KSA4, 194)

*Mark 16:16*: “Faith makes blessed” / “Der Glaube macht selig”.

“Sure! Sure! Faith makes him blessed, faith in him. That is the way of old people. We are no different ourselves.”  
(182)

“Ja! Ja! Der Glaube macht ihn selig, der Glaube an ihn. Das ist so die Art alter Leute! So geht’s uns auch!” –  
(KSA4, 229)

*Ecclesiastes 1,2*: “All is vanity (vain)” / “Es ist alles ganz eitel”.

It [self-enjoyment] also despises all wisdom that wallows in grief; for verily, there is also wisdom that blooms in the dark, a nightshade wisdom, which always sighs: all is vain. (190)

Sie [Selbstsucht] verachtet auch alle wehselige Weisheit: denn, wahrlich, es giebt auch eine Weisheit, die im Dunklen blüht, eine Nachtschatten-Weisheit: als welche immer seufzt: “Alles ist eitel!” (KSA4, 239)

*Revelation 1,8*: “I am the alpha and omega, saith the Lord” / “Ich bin das A und das O, spricht Gott der Herr”.

And if this is my alpha and omega, that all that is heavy and grave should become light; all that is body, dancer; all that is spirit, bird – and verily, that is my alpha and omega. (230)

Und wenn Das mein A und O ist, dass alles Schwere leicht, aller Leib Tänzer, aller Geist Vogel werde: und wahrlich, Das ist mein A und O! – (KSA4, 290)

5. *Moses 8,3; Matthew 4,4*: “Man does not love by bread alone” / “Der Mensch lebt nicht vom Brot allein”.<sup>35</sup>

“Bread?” countered Zarathustra, and he laughed. “Bread is one thing hermits do not have. But man does not live by bread alone, but also of the meat of good lambs, of which I have two. (284-285)

“Brod? entgegnete Zarathustra und lachte dazu. Nur gerade Brod haben Einsiedler nicht. Aber der Mensch lebt



nicht vom Brod allein, sondern auch vom Fleische guter Lämmer, deren ich zwei habe." (KSA4, 354)

From these very truncated contexts it becomes clear that these more or less independently appearing texts reflect Nietzsche's preoccupation with the revaluation of all values and his definite break with Christianity.<sup>36</sup> In order to illustrate this in a bit more detail, the following longer text from the chapter "On New and Old Tablets" / "Von alten und neuen Tafeln" is cited where Nietzsche proves his fascination with Bible and folk proverbs in a unique collage:

"Why live? All is vanity! Living – that is threshing straw; living – that is consuming oneself in flames without becoming warm." Such antiquarian babbling is still considered "wisdom"; it is honored all the more for being old and musty. Mustiness too ennobles.

Children might speak thus: they fear the fire before [i.e., because] it burned them. There is much childishness in the old books of wisdom. And why should those who always "thresh straw" be allowed to blaspheme threshing? Such oxen [i.e., fools] should be muzzled after all.

Such men sit down to the table and bring nothing along, not even a good appetite; and then they blaspheme: "All is vanity." But eating and drinking well, O my brothers, is verily no vain art. Break, break the old tablets of the never gay! (204)

"Wozu leben? Alles ist eitel! Leben – das ist Stroh dreschen; Leben – das ist sich verbrennen und doch nicht warm werden." –

Solch alterthümliches Geschwätz gilt immer noch als "Weisheit"; dass es aber alt ist und dumpfig riecht, darum wird es besser geehrt. Auch der Moder adelt. –

Kinder durften so reden: die scheuen das Feuer, weil es sie brannte! Es ist viel Kinderei in den alten Büchern der Weisheit.

Und wer immer "Stroh drischt", wie sollte der auf das Dreschen lästern dürfen! Solchen Narren müsste man doch das Maul verbinden!

Solche setzen sich zu Tisch und bringen Nichts mit, selbst den guten Hunger nicht: – und nun lästern sie “Alles ist eitel!”

Aber gut essen und trinken, oh meine Brüder, ist wahrlich keine eitle Kunst! Zerbrecht, zerbrecht mir die Tafeln der Nimmer-Frohen! (KSA4, 256)

That is most certainly not idle proverbial gibberish! This passage could hardly be more proverbial, and yet, it is just possible that Nietzsche has Karl Simrock's since 1846 repeatedly reissued proverb collection *Die deutschen Sprichwörter* with its 12,396 proverbs in mind, when he observes that “There is much childishness in the old books of wisdom” / “Es ist viel Kinderei in den alten Büchern der Weisheit”.<sup>37</sup> Be that as it may, the Bible proverbs “All is vanity” / “Es ist alles ganz eitel” (Ecclesiastes 1:2) and “You shall not muzzle the ox when he treads out the corn” / “Du sollst dem Ochsen, der da drischt, nicht das Maul verbinden” (5. Moses 25:4) as well as the folk proverbs “Work (also: virtue) ennobles” / “Arbeit [auch: Tugend] adelt” and “A burnt child dreads the fire” / “Gebranntes Kind scheut das Feuer” are mixed together in the form of repetitions, allusions, and anti-proverbs. The result is a passage that contains an important basic idea of *Zarathustra*, namely that it is “high time” / “höchste Zeit” that stone tablets with antiquated wisdom chiseled onto them must finally be broken so that the path for a new type of existence beyond old moral rules becomes free. No wonder that the phraseologism “It is high time” (see 130, 162, 242) / “Es ist höchste Zeit” (see KSA4, 167, 204, 301) reappears as a verbal sign for the extreme urgency of this fundamental change. However, typical for Nietzsche in the case of such calls for radical change, a precise description of the path is lacking. Thus all that remains is a questioning scream for certainty:

“What shall I think of that?” said Zarathustra; “am I a ghost then? But it must have been my shadow. [...]

And once more Zarathustra shook his head and wondered. “What shall I think of that?” he said once more. “Why did the ghost cry, ‘It is time! It is high time!’ High time for what?”

Thus spoke Zarathustra. (133)

“Was soll ich davon denken! sagte Zarathustra. Bin ich denn ein Gespenst?”

Aber es wird mein Schatten gewesen sein." [...]  
 Und nochmals schüttelte Zarathustra den Kopf und wunderte sich. "Was soll ich davon denken!" sagte er nochmals.  
 "Warum schrie denn das Gespenst: es ist Zeit! Es ist die höchste Zeit!  
 Wozu ist es denn – höchste Zeit?" –  
 Also sprach Zarathustra. (KSA4, 171)

But does Zarathustra really not know the answer? Or does he not want to elevate his own thoughts or his individual path to the sole way of life for all? A hidden proverbial statement offers a helpful hint: "And if a man goes through fire for his doctrine – what does that prove? Verily, it is more if your own doctrine comes out of your own fire." (93) / "Und wenn Einer durch's Feuer geht für seine Lehre, – was beweist diess! Mehr ist's wahrlich, dass aus eignem Brande die eigne Lehre kommt!" (KSA4, 119). This appears to say that Zarathustra as the spokesperson for Nietzsche does not want to offer a definitive doctrine. After all, human existence in a modern world without God depends on individuals who know how to find their own path after they have demolished the old world. Seen in this way, Nietzsche's obscure use of the classical but today in light of its use on concentration camps problematic proverb "To each his own" / "Jeden das Seine" starts making sense: "But how could I think of being just through and through? How can I give each his own? Let this be sufficient for me: I give each my own." (69) / "Aber wie wollte ich gerecht sein von Grund aus! Wie kann ich Jedem das Seine geben! Diess sei mir genug: ich gebe Jedem das Meine" (KSA4, 88).<sup>38</sup> Thus Zarathustra shows himself not as a prophet of established doctrines but rather as a companion and an adviser to equally free spirits on their path to earthly self-fulfillment.

There are then no ready-made lessons or directions given by Zarathustra since he himself is learning and developing. Certain insights come to him only by and by that lighten up his own path to liberation from old moral concepts: "The annihilator of morals, the good and just call me: my story is immoral." (68) / "Den Vernichter der Moral heissen mich die Guten und Gerechten: meine Geschichte ist unmoralisch" (KSA4, 87). When Nietzsche at the beginning of *Zarathustra* describes how Zarathustra wakes

up from a long sleep and how his prophetic task takes on a clearer meaning, he couches this new insight in an illuminating way into a twofold use of the proverbial expression “a light (insight) comes to someone” / “jdm. geht ein Licht auf”:

For a long time Zarathustra slept, and not only dawn passed over his face but the morning too. At last, however, his eyes opened: amazed, Zarathustra looked into the woods and the silence; amazed, he looked into himself. Then he rose quickly, like a seafarer who suddenly sees land, and jubilated, for he saw a new truth. And thus he spoke to his heart:

An insight has come to me: companions I need, living ones – not dead companions and corpses whom I carry with myself wherever I want to. Living companions I need, who follow me because they want to follow themselves – wherever I want.

An insight has come to me: let Zarathustra speak not to the people but to companions. Zarathustra shall not become the shepherd and dog of a herd. (23)

Lange schlief Zarathustra, und nicht nur die Morgenröthe gieng über sein Antlitz, sondern auch der Vormittag. Endlich aber that sein Auge sich auf: verwundert sah Zarathustra in den Wald und die Stille, verwundert sah er in sich hinein. Dann erhob er sich schnell, wie ein Seefahrer, der mit Einem Male Land sieht, und jauchzte: denn er sah eine neue Wahrheit. Und also redete er dann zu seinem Herzen:

Ein Licht gieng mir auf: Gefährten brauche ich und lebendige, – nicht todte Gefährten und Leichname, die ich mit mir trage, wohin ich will.

Sondern lebendige Gefährten brauche ich, die mir folgen, weil sie sich selber folgen wollen – und dorthin, wo ich will.

Ein Licht gieng mir auf: nicht zum Volk rede Zarathustra, sondern zu Gefährten! Nicht soll Zarathustra einer Heerde Hirt und Hund werden! (KSA4, 25)

In addition to repeating that an “insight had come to him“ (30) / “ihm war ein Licht aufgegangen” KSA4, 34), Zarathustra also repeatedly employs the expression “to bring something to light” /

“etwas ans Licht bringen” in order to allude to the fact that all inadequacies and mendacities of life must be put under a scrutinizing light if a break with Christian morality is truly to take place:

But like the boar's snout, my words shall tear open the foundation of your souls [of the supposedly virtuous ones]: a plowshare will I be to you. All the secrets of your foundation shall come to light; and when you lie uprooted and broken in the sun, then will your lies also be separated from your truths. (94)

Aber dem Rüssel des Ebers gleich soll mein Wort den Grund eurer Seelen [der angeblich Tugendhaften] aufreißen; Pflugschar will ich euch heißen.

Alle Heimlichkeiten eures Grundes sollen an's Licht; und wenn ihr aufgewühlt und zerbrochen in der Sonne liegt, wird auch eure Lüge von eurer Wahrheit ausgeschieden sein. (KSA4, 120)

Thus I speak to you in a parable – you who make souls whirl, you preachers of equality. To me you are tarantulas, and secretly vengeful. But I shall bring your secrets to light; therefore I laugh to your faces with my laughter of the heights. (99)

Also rede ich zu euch im Gleichniss, die ihr die Seelen drehend macht, ihr Prediger der Gleichheit! Taranteln seid ihr mir und versteckte Rachsüchtige!

Aber ich will eure Verstecke schon an's Licht bringen: darum lache ich euch in's Antlitz mein Gelächter der Höhe. (KSA4, 128)

For earthquakes bury many wells and leave many languishing, but they also bring to light inner powers and secrets. Earthquakes reveal new wells. In earthquakes that strike ancient peoples, new wells break open. (211)

Das Erdbeben nämlich – das verschüttet viel [*sic*] Brunnen, das schafft viel Verschmachten: das hebt auch innre Kräfte und Heimlichkeiten an's Licht.

Das Erdbeben macht neue Quellen offenbar. Im Erdbeben alter Völker brechen neue Quellen aus. (KSA4, 265)

Despite such sources of light there are also dark spots in *Zarathustra*, especially in regard to Nietzsche's obvious misogyny. Such

proverbial statements as “I should sooner believe in the man in the moon than in the woman” (121) / “eher noch will ich an den Mann im Monde glauben als an das Weib” (KSA4, 156) and “even the most cunning still buys his wife in a poke” (70) / “seine Frau kauft auch der Listigste noch im Sack” (KSA4, 91) are anti-feministic tirades that beg for justified criticism to this day. And surely criticism would also be leveled against Nietzsche by both genders regarding the following statement where Nietzsche by way of a degrading allusion to the proverb “Marriages are made in heaven” / “Ehen werden im Himmel geschlossen” he labels this institution as worthless:

That which the all-too-many, the superfluous, call marriage – alas, what shall I name that? Alas, this poverty of the soul in pair! Alas, this filth of the soul in pair! Alas, this wretched contentment in pair! Marriage they call this; and they say that their marriages are made in heaven. Well, I do not like it, this heaven of the superfluous. No, I do not like them – these animals entangled in the heavenly net. And let the God who limps near to bless what he never joined keep his distance from me! (70)  
 Das, was die Viel-zu-Vielen Ehe nennen, diese Überflüssigen, – ach, wie nenne ich das?  
 Ach, diese Armuth der Seele zu Zweien! Ach, dieser Schmutz der Seele zu Zweien! Ach, diess erbärmliche Behagen zu Zweien!  
 Ehe nennen sie diess Alles; und sie sagen, ihre Ehen seien im Himmel geschlossen.  
 Nun, ich mag ihn nicht, diesen Himmel der Überflüssigen! Nein, ich mag sie nicht, diese im himmlischen Netz verschlungenen Thiere!  
 Ferne bleibe mir auch der Gott, der heranhinkt, zu segnen, was er nicht zusammenfügte!<sup>39</sup> (KSA4, 90-91)

A philosopher or writer who gets carried away to the extent that he refers to married people as animals also would not shy away from the declaration “For man is the cruelest animal” (218) / “Der Mensch nämlich ist das grausamste Thier” (KSA4, 273). People also appear to be proverbial “dumme Esel” / “dumb asses” at times, as can be seen by the comment added to a pseudo-proverb about the challenges of life: “Life is hard to bear; but do not act so

tenderly! We are all of us fair beasts of burden, male and female asses" (41). / "Das Leben ist schwer zu tragen: aber so thut mir doch nicht so zärtlich! Wir sind allesammt hübsche lastbare Esel und Eselinnen" (KSA4, 49). The animal world, seen as representing human existence, appears as eagles, snakes, lions, camels, asses, monkeys, dogs, sheep, etc. throughout *Zarathustra*,<sup>40</sup> with corresponding animal expressions referring more or less indirectly to human behavioral patterns,<sup>41</sup> as for example:

When the fire hound heard this he could no longer bear listening to him [i.e., me]. Shamed, he drew in his tail, in a cowed manner said "bow-wow," and crawled down into his cave. (132)

Als diess der Feuerhund vernahm, hielt er's nicht mehr aus, mir zuzuhören. Beschämt zog er seinen Schwanz ein, sagte auf eine kleinlaute Weise Wau! Wau! und kroch hinab in seine Höhle. – (KSA4, 170)

Stop splashing about that, you raincloud in the morning! Do I not stand here even now, wet from your melancholy and drenched like a dog? (243)

Höre davon auf zu plätschern, du Regenwolke am Vormittag! Stehe ich denn nicht schon da, nass von deiner Trübsal und begossen wie ein Hund? (KSA4, 303)

In the end, a frog which has puffed itself up too long will burst: the wind comes out. To stab a swollen man in the belly, I call that a fine pastime. (258)

Zuletzt platzt ein Frosch, der sich zu lange aufblies: da fährt der Wind heraus. Einem Geschwollnen in den Bauch stechen, das heisse ich eine brave Kurzweil. (KSA4, 320)

And verily, he is the strangest sage who is also clever and no ass. (285)

Und wahrlich, das ist das Seltsamste an einem Weisen, wenn er zu alledem auch noch klug und kein Esel ist. (KSA4, 355)

Has there been anything filthier on earth so far than desert saints? Around them not only was the devil loose, but also the swine. (292)

Gab es Schmutzigeres bisher auf Erden als Wüsten-Heilige? Um die herum war nicht nur der Teufel los, – sondern auch das Schwein. (KSA4, 363)

Women might not be “filthy like desert saints” for Nietzsche, but they certainly are bad as far as he is concerned, to wit his infamous *Zarathustra*-quotation that has become current in folk speech as “When you go to a woman, don’t forget the whip” / “Wenn du zum Weibe gehst, vergiß die Peitsche nicht”.<sup>42</sup> Already in summer/fall 1882 Nietzsche had written down the following note: “You go to women? Don’t forget the whip! In the way how and what one honors, one always draws a distance around oneself” / “Du gehst zu Frauen? Vergiß die Peitsche nicht! In der Art, wie und was man ehrt, zieht man immer eine Distanz um sich” (KSA10, 97-98). This anti-feministic statement then appears in 1883 in the first part of *Zarathustra* in a varied form in the chapter “On Little Old and Young Women” / “Von alten und jungen Weiblein”, but it should be noted that it is actually uttered by a woman:

Then the little old woman answered me [Zarathustra]: “Many fine things has Zarathustra said, especially for those who are young enough for them. It is strange: Zarathustra knows women little, and yet he is right about them. Is this because nothing is impossible with woman? And now, as a token of gratitude, accept a little truth. After all, I am old enough for it. Wrap it up and hold your hand over its mouth: else it will cry overloudly, this little truth,”

Then I said: “Woman, give me your little truth.” And thus spoke the little old woman:

“You are going to women? Do not forget the whip!” (67)

Da entgegnete mir [Zarathustra] das alte Weiblein: “Vieles Artige sagte Zarathustra und sonderlich für Die, welche jung genug dazu sind.

“Seltsam ist’s, Zarathustra kennt wenig die Weiber, und doch hat er über sie Recht! Geschieht diess desshalb, weil beim Weibe kein Ding unmöglich ist?

“Und nimm zum Danke eine kleine Wahrheit! Bin ich doch alt genug für sie!

„Wickle sie ein und halte ihr den Mund: sonst schreit sie überlaut, diese kleine Wahrheit.”



“Gieb mir, Weib, deine kleine Wahrheit!” sagte ich. Und also sprach das alte Weiblein:  
 “Du gehst zu Frauen? Vergiss die Peitsche nicht!” –  
 (KSA4, 86)

As usually happens with a well-known quotation, people have reacted to this quotation in parodistic aphorisms and verses. Jürgen Christen even edited a book with the title *Vergiß die Peitsche nicht. Frauenfeindliche Sprüche* (1991).<sup>43</sup> Here are at least a few examples of such anti-quotations with some of them referring directly to Nietzsche:

As is well known, Nietzsche says: When you go to a woman, don't forget the whip. – Only a hopeless and revengeful weakling could have made such an utterance. Nietzsche sagt bekanntlich: Wenn du zum Weibe gehst, vergiß die Peitsche nicht. – Nur ein hoffnungsloser und rachsüchtiger Schwächling konnte einen solchen Ausspruch tun.

Erich Brock (1975)

*Love advice freely adapted from Nietzsche*

You go to women?  
 Don't forget the flowers!  
 You go to men?  
 Don't forget the pill!

*Liebestip frei nach Nietzsche*

Du geht zu Frauen?  
 Vergiß die Blumen nicht!  
 Du gehst zu Männern?  
 Vergiß die Pille nicht!

Heinrich Schröter (1977)

When you go to a woman, don't forget the dough.  
 Wenn du zum Weibe gehst, vergiß die Piepen nicht.

Anonym (1981)

If you go to a woman, don't forget to really whip yourself up beforehand. (Nietzsche the Elder)

Gehst du zur Frau, vergiß nicht, dich vorher tüchtig aufzupeitschen. (Nietzsche der Ältere)

Winfried Bornemann (1983)

You go to women? Don't forget the rubber [condom]!  
 Du gehst zu Frauen? Vergiß das Gummi nicht!  
 Ulrich Erckenbrecht (1991)<sup>44</sup>

Nietzsche advised men to take the whip along when they go to a woman. Did he not trust the intellectual supremacy of man?

Nietzsche riet den Männern, die Peitsche mitzunehmen, wenn sie zum Weibe gehen. Traute er der geistigen Überlegenheit des Mannes nicht?  
 Walter Rupp (2010)<sup>45</sup>

It must also be stated in addition that in the “whip” / “Peitsche” reference in *Zarathustra* yet another anti-feministic proverb comes into play. It is the Bible proverb “With God all things are possible” / “Bei Gott sind alle Ding möglich” (Matthew 19:26) that Nietzsche had already mutated twice in 1882/1883 into the questionable anti-proverb “With women no thing is impossible” / “Bei Weibern ist kein Ding unmöglich” before it appeared in the singular form of “woman” / “Weib” in *Zarathustra*. The two earlier variants show how such fragmentary texts serve Nietzsche as “preliminary studies” / “Vorstudien” to his larger works.

You do not know the women: how come that occasionally you are right about them? – With women no thing is impossible.

Du kennst die W<eiber> nicht: wie kommt es, daß du bisweilen über sie recht hast? – Bei den W<eibern> ist kein Ding unmöglich. (KSA10, 89)

It is difficult to say something false about a woman: with women no thing is impossible – answered Zarathustra.

Es ist schwer, über das Weib etwas Falsches zu sagen: bei den Weibern ist kein Ding unmöglich – antwortete Zarathustra. (KSA10, 160)

Perhaps Nietzsche also included positive abilities of women here, but more likely these are ironic statements that originate from his blatant anti-feminism. In his defense it might be said that Nietzsche otherwise does not cite traditional proverbs against women in his voluminous writings. He certainly would have had plenty

anti-feministic proverbs at his disposal since such unfortunate texts are current throughout the world.<sup>46</sup>

The formulation of shocking anti-proverbs is part and parcel of Nietzsche's consciously employed style with elements from folk speech. In his fragments from 1882 the short anti-proverb "A wrong shared is half right" / "Getheiltes Unrecht ist halbes Recht", i.e., Shared injustice is half justice (KSA10, 49 and 78) is listed twice, and it probably is based on the proverb "Shared suffering is half joy" / "Geteiltes Leid ist halbe Freud". Half a year later this longer and challenging variant found its way into his *Zarathustra*: "Did you already know this? A wrong shared is half right. And he who is able to bear it should take the wrong upon himself" (68) / "Wusstet ihr diess schon? Getheiltes Unrecht ist halbes Recht. Und der soll das Unrecht auf sich nehmen, der es tragen kann!" (KSA4, 88). Of interest is also Nietzsche's change of the proverb "What does not exist can still be [happen, take place]" / "Was nicht ist, das kann noch werden" into the anti-proverb "For, what does not exist cannot will [want]; but what is in existence, how could that still want existence?" (115) / "Denn: was nicht ist, das kann nicht wollen; was aber im Dasein ist, wie könnte das noch zum Dasein wollen!" (KSA4, 149). And the proverb "Everything has two sides" / "Jedes Ding hat zwei Seiten" ist quickly changed into the life-affirming anti-proverb "That you would learn my wisdom from me: even the worst thing has two good reverse sides" (295) / "So lernt mir doch meine Weisheit ab: auch das schlimmste Ding hat zwei gute Kehrseiten" (KSA4, 367).

Of course, Nietzsche also simply creates his own pseudo-proverbs when he appears to have no traditional proverb at hand to "play" with. But no matter how poetic and even mystical his style in *Zarathustra* might be, he is forever keen to include formulaic structures that add a colloquial and authoritative flavor, as for example:

But even the superfluous still make a fuss about their dying; and even the hollowest nut still wants to be cracked. (71)

Aber auch die Überflüssigen thun noch wichtig mit ihrem Sterben, und auch die hohlste Nuss will noch geknackt sein. (KSA4, 93)

In some, the heart grows old first; in others, the spirit.  
And some are old in their youth: but late youth preserves  
long youth. (72)

Andern altert das Herz zuerst und Andern der Geist. Und  
Einige sind greis in der Jugend: aber spät jung erhält lang  
jung. (KSA4, 94)

Or they spend long evenings watching a cunning,  
ambushing, cross-marked spider, which preaches  
cleverness to the other spiders and teaches thus: "Under  
crosses one can spin well." (181)

Oder sie sehen lange Abende einer listigen lauernden  
Kreuzspinne zu, welche den Spinnen selber Klugheit  
predigt und also lehrt: "unter Kreuzen ist gut spinnen!"  
(KSA4, 228)

And should we sweat, we are told: "Yes, life is a grave  
burden [hard to bear]." (193; see also 41: "Life is hard to  
bear")

Und schwitzen wir, so sagt man uns: "Ja, das Leben ist  
schwer zu tragen!" (KSA4, 243; see also KSA4, 49: "Das  
Leben ist schwer zu tragen")

There is much filth in the world; that much is true. But  
that does not make the world itself a filthy monster. (205)

Es giebt in der Welt viel Koth: so Viel ist wahr! Aber  
darum ist die Welt selber noch kein kothiges Ungeheuer!  
(KSA4, 256)

The higher its type, the more rarely a thing succeeds. You  
higher men here, have you not all failed? (292)

Je höher von Art, je seltener gerät ein Ding. Ihr höheren  
Menschen hier, seid ihr nicht alle – missgerathen? (KSA4,  
364)

Taking the popular proverbial structure "Rather (better) X than Y"  
/ "Lieber (besser) X als Y" as a basis,<sup>47</sup> Nietzsche creates the fol-  
lowing proverb-like statement: "Rather know nothing than half-  
know much! Rather be a fool on one's own than a sage according  
to the opinion of others! (250) / "Lieber Nichts wissen, als Vieles  
halb wissen! Lieber ein Narr sein auf eigne Faust, als ein Weiser  
nach fremdem Gedünken!" (KSA4, 311). The somatic expression

“to do something on one’s own (with one’s own fist)” / “etwas auf eigene Faust machen” is also included, and it is also present in the following text, albeit without the “than” / “als” comparison: “Rather no God, rather make destiny on one’s own, rather be a fool, rather be a God oneself!” (262) / “Lieber keinen Gott, lieber auf eigne Faust Schicksal machen, lieber Narr sein, lieber selber Gott sein!” (KSA4, 325). Both statements are of considerable importance for the actual message of *Zarathustra*, since the overman is supposed to manage his own affairs even if at times he feels like a fool in his affirmation of life. The key issue for Zarathustra is always that man must accept his existential fate without God.

This requires man, according to Nietzsche, to be “hard” / “hart” in committing himself to the revaluation of all values and in standing firm in the eternal struggle against antiquated moral concepts. Regarding this necessary liberation from God and Christianity Nietzsche has formulated a prophetic declaration that he repeated four years later at the end of *Götzen-Dämmerung* (1888, *The Demise of the Gods*) with the title “The Hammer Speaks” / “Der Hammer redet”. But who would have expected him to start this key passage about “become hard!” / “werdet hart!” with the pseudo-wellerism “Why so hard? the kitchen coal once said to the diamond. After all, are we not close kin?” / “Warum so hart! – sprach zum Diamanten einst die Küchen-Kohle; sind wir denn nicht Nah-Verwandte?”<sup>48</sup> This is yet another example that Nietzsche cannot make do without proverbial elements:

“Why so hard?” the kitchen coal once said to the diamond. “After all, are we not close kin?”

Why so soft? O my brothers, thus I ask you: are you not after all my brothers?

Why so soft, so pliant and yielding? Why is there so much denial, self-denial, in your heads? So little destiny in your eyes?

And if you do not want to be destinies and inexorable ones, how can you triumph with me?

And if your hardness does not wish to flash and cut and cut through, how can you one day create with me?

For creators are hard. And it must seem blessedness to you to impress your hand on millennia as on wax.

Blessedness to write on the will of millennia as on bronze – harder than bronze, nobler than bronze. Only the noblest is altogether hard.

This new tablet, O my brothers, I place over you: become hard! (214)

“Warum so hart! – sprach zum Diamanten einst die Küchen-Kohle; sind wir denn nicht Nah-Verwandte?” –

Warum so weich? Oh meine Brüder, also frage ich euch: seid ihr denn nicht – meine Brüder?

Warum so weich, so weichend und nachgebend? Warum ist so viel Leugnung, Verleugnung in eurem Herzen? So wenig Schicksal in eurem Blicke?

Und wollt ihr nicht Schicksale sein und Unerbittliche: wie könntet ihr mit mir – siegen?

Und wenn eure Härte nicht blitzen und scheiden und zerschneiden will: wie könntet ihr einst mit mir – schaffen?

Die Schaffenden nämlich sind hart. Und Seligkeit muss es euch dünken, eure Hand auf Jahrtausende zu drücken wie auf Wachs, –

– Seligkeit, auf dem Willen von Jahrtausenden zu schreiben wie auf Erz, – härter als Erz, edler als Erz. Ganz hart ist allein das Edelste.

Diese neue Tafel, oh meine Brüder, stelle ich über euch: werdet hart! – (KSA4, 268; und KSA6, 161)

Since Nietzsche is full of contradictions, it should not be surprising to find a textual reference in *Zarathustra* where hardness is replaced by something pleasant. After all, fate offers many possibilities and man has a free choice! And it is in this regard that Nietzsche’s very own formulation “One thing is more necessary than another” / “Eins ist notwendiger als das andere”, identified by him as a proverb, is of special interest.<sup>49</sup> It appears first as an aphorism in the fall of 1881 as “One things is always more necessary then another” / “Eins ist immer nöthiger als das Andre” (KSA9, 584). Four years later it is presented in *Zarathustra* without the word “always” / “immer” as Zarathustra’s proverbial wisdom:

But around the hour of noon, when the sun stood straight over Zarathustra’s head, he came to an old crooked and knotty tree that was embraced, and hidden from itself, by

the rich love of a grapevine; and yellow grapes hung from it in abundance, inviting the wanderer. Then he felt the desire to quench a slight thirst and to break off a grape; but even as he was stretching out his arm to do so, he felt a still greater desire for something else: namely, to lie down beside the tree at the perfect noon hour, and to sleep.

This Zarathustra did; and as soon as he lay on the ground in the stillness and secrecy of the many-hued grass, he forgot his slight thirst and fell asleep. For, as Zarathustra's proverb says, one thing is more necessary than another. Only his eyes remained open: for they did not tire of seeing and praising the tree and the love of the grapevine. (275-276)

Um die Stunde des Mittags aber, als die Sonne gerade über Zarathustra's Haupte stand, kam er an einem alten krummen und knorrichtigen Baume vorbei, der von der reichen Liebe eines Weinstocks rings umarmt und vor sich selber verborgen war: von dem hiengen gelbe Trauben in Fülle dem Wandernden entgegen. Da gelüstete ihn, einen kleinen Durst zu löschen und sich eine Traube abzubrechen; als er aber schon den Arm dazu ausstreckte, da gelüstete ihn etwas Anderes noch mehr: nämlich sich neben den Baum niederzulegen, um die Stunde des vollkommenen Mittags, und zu schlafen.

Diess that Zarathustra; und sobald er auf dem Boden lag, in der Stille und Heimlichkeit des bunten Grases, hatte er auch schon seinen kleinen Durst vergessen und schlief ein. Denn, wie das Sprichwort [*sic*] Zarathustra's sagt: Eins ist nothwendiger als das Andre. Nur das seine Augen offen blieben – sie wurden nämlich nicht satt, den Baum und die Liebe des Weinstocks zu sehn und zu preisen. (KSA4, 342)

Without a reference to the alleged proverbiality of this formulaic statement it reappears twice about ten pages later and the only half-cited proverb "A word at the right time is better than ten at the wrong time" / "Ein Wort zur rechten Zeit ist besser als zehn zur Unzeit" as well as the proverbial expression "not to have time to lose" / "keine Zeit zu verlieren haben" are added to boot:

For it was at this point that the soothsayer interrupted the welcome, pushed forward like one who has no time to lose, seized Zarathustra's hand, and shouted: "But Zarathustra! One thing is more necessary than another: thus you say yourself. Well then, one thing is more necessary to me now than anything else. A word at the right time: did you not invite me to supper? And here are many who have come a long way. Surely, you would not feed us speeches alone? [...]" (284)

An dieser Stelle nämlich unterbrach der Wahrsager die Begrüßung Zarathustra's und seiner Gäste: er drängte sich vor, wie Einer, der keine Zeit zu verlieren hat, fasste die Hand Zarathustra's und rief: "aber Zarathustra!

Eins ist nothwendiger als das Andre, so redest du selber: wohlan, Eins ist mir jetzt nothwendiger als alles Andere.

Ein Wort zur rechten Zeit: hast du mich nicht zum Mahle eingeladen? Und hier sind Viele, die lange Wege machten. Du willst uns doch nicht mit Reden abspeisen? [...]" (KSA4, 353)

After this not at all uncommon accumulation of proverbial texts, Nietzsche's invented proverb appears one more time in a letter of August 8, 1887, to his composer friend Heinrich Köselitz, where he cites it as a little explanatory justification: "But it is to be self-understood a hundred times over that 'One thing is more necessary than the other'; and lastly I would not know any more pleasant events for myself than a timely performance of your splendid work: even supposing, which unfortunately has to be supposed, that I am not present at it" / "Aber es versteht sich hundert Mal von selbst, daß 'Eins nothwendiger ist als das Andre'; und zuletzt wüßte ich für mich selbst wenig angenehmere Ereignisse als eine baldige Aufführung Ihres herrlichen Werks: selbst angenommen, was leider angenommen werden muß, daß ich bei ihr nicht zugegen bin" (KSB8, 121). Since Nietzsche places his own proverb into quotation marks, he points to its apparent currency as a formulaic statement, even though it has not been registered in any reference works, not even in Werner Ross's *Lexikon der Nietzsche-Zitate* (2001). Regarding the comprehensive meaning of *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche's intent with his pseudo-proverb appears to be that in view of the eternal return (repetition) of life it makes



not much difference what appears to be more necessary or more pleasant at a certain point in time. The missed opportunity will reappear sometime as long as life itself will be affirmed and returning opportunities will be taken by the forelock.

As an anti-absolutist, for whom everything is something becoming and not an end, Nietzsche developed a “linguistic relativity principle” / “sprachliches Relativitätsprinzip”<sup>50</sup> that makes the description of an open and free worldview possible. The conspicuous contradictoriness of *Zarathustra* is a result of this, for Nietzsche wants to show that the positive struggle with fate has to be undertaken in eternal return (repetition) without “straight” / “gerade” guidelines. Zarathustra says as much in the following comment by way of his semantic alteration of the proverbial expression “to go crooked paths” / “krumme Wege gehen”, where the adjective “crooked” / “krumm” is not to be understood as “bad” / “schlecht” but rather as “bent, imprecise, complicated, etc.” / “verbogen, ungenau, kompliziert, etc.”: “That I must be struggle and a becoming and an end and an opposition to ends – alas, whoever guesses what is my will should also guess on what crooked paths it must proceed” (115). / “Dass ich Kampf sein muss und Werden und Zweck und der Zwecke Widerspruch: ach, wer meinen Willen erräth, erräth wohl auch, auf welchen krummen Wegen er gehen muss!” (KSA4, 148). Later on there is also this additional reference: “Is not the perfect sage fond of walking on the most crooked ways? The evidence shows this, O Zarathustra – and you are the evidence” (315). / “Geht nicht ein vollkommener Weiser gern auf den krümmsten Wegen? Der Augenschein lehrt es, oh Zarathustra, – dein Augenschein” (KSA4, 392). There is then no prescribed goal in Nietzsche’s worldview but always only repetitive possibilities and situations to be confronted by man as an individual.<sup>51</sup> For this idea Nietzsche has coined yet another pseudo-proverb at the end of the long and hard Zarathustra-path. But it took Nietzsche more than two years until he declared his leitmotif based on the phraseologism “what does it (really) matter” / “was liegt (schon) daran” in the general meaning of “much, little, nothing of avail” / “viel, wenig, nichts auf sich haben”<sup>52</sup> as Zarathustra’s ultimate “proverb” / “Sprichwort” (see the second to the last reference in the following list). One gets the impression from the following references from between 1883 until 1885 that Nietzsche himself only slowly but surely advanced to this insightful point:

Then it spoke to me [Zarathustra] again without voice:  
 “What do you matter? You are not yet humble enough for  
 me. Humility has the toughest hide.” (146)

Da sprach es wieder ohne Stimme zu mir [Zarathustra]:  
 “Was liegt an dir? Du bist mir noch nicht demüthig  
 genug. Die Demuth hat das härteste Fell.” – (KSA4, 188)

But what could we do? Again and again you [Zarathustra]  
 pierced our ears and hearts with your maxims. So we said  
 at last: what difference does it make [what does it matter]  
 how he looks? (247)

Aber was half's! Immer wieder stachst du [Zarathustra]  
 uns in Ohr und Herz mit deinen Sprüchen. Da sprachen  
 wir endlich: was liegt daran, wie er aussieht! (KSA4, 307)

– what does it matter whether it [a reason] be great or  
 small? whether it be called swamp or sky? A hand's  
 breadth of ground suffices me [a scientist], provided it is  
 really ground and foundation. (250)

– was liegt daran, ob er [ein Grund] gross oder klein ist?  
 Ob er Sumpf oder Himmel heisst? Eine Hand breit Grund  
 ist mir [einem Wissenschaftler] genug [*sic*]: wenn er nur  
 wirklich Grund und Boden ist! (KSA4, 311)

A throw had failed you. But, you dice-throwers, what  
 does it matter? You have not learned to gamble and jest as  
 one must gamble and jest. Do we not always sit at a big  
 jesting-and-gaming table? (292)

Ein Wurf missrieth euch. Aber, ihr Würfelspieler, was  
 liegt daran! Ihr lerntet nicht spielen und spotten, wie man  
 spielen und spotten muss! Sitzen wir nicht immer an  
 einem grossen Spott- und Spieltische? (KSA4, 363-364)

Be of good cheer, what does it matter? How much is still  
 possible! Learn to laugh at yourselves as one must laugh!  
 (292)

Seid guten Muths, was liegt daran! Wie Vieles ist noch  
 möglich! Lernt über euch selber lachen, wie man lachen  
 muss! (KSA4, 364)

You higher men, the worst about you is that all of you  
 have not learned to dance as one must dance – dancing

away over yourselves! What does it matter that you are failures? How much is still possible! So learn to laugh away over yourselves! Lift up your hearts, you good dancers, high, higher! And do not forget good laughter. [...] Laughter I have pronounced holy; you higher men, learn to laugh! (295-296)

Ihr höheren Menschen, euer Schlimmstes ist: ihr lerntet alle nicht tanzen, wie man tanzen muss – über euch hinweg tanzen! Was liegt daran, dass ihr missriethet!

Wie Vieles ist noch möglich! So lernt doch über euch hinweg lachen! Erhebt eure Herzen, ihr guten Tänzer, hoch! höher! Und vergesst mir auch das gute Lachen nicht!

[...] Das Lachen sprach ich heilig; ihr höheren Menschen, lernt mir – lachen! (KSA4, 367-368)

They [Zarathustra's guests] are merry, he began again, and, who knows? perhaps at their host's expense. And if they learned to laugh from me, it is still my laughter that they have learned. But what does it matter? They are old people, convalescing in their own way, laughing in their own way; my ears have suffered worse things without becoming grumpy. (310)

Sie [Zarathustras Gäste] sind lustig, begann er wieder, und wer weiss? vielleicht auf ihres Wirthes Unkosten; und lernten sie von mir lachen, so ist es doch nicht mein Lachen, das sie lernten.

Aber was liegt dran! Es sind alte Leute: sie genesen auf ihre Art, sie lachen auf ihre Art; meine Ohren haben schon Schlimmeres erduldet und wurden nicht unwirsch. (KSA4, 386)

There are even some who relate that the ass danced too, and that it had not been for nothing that the ugliest man had given him wine to drink before. Now it may have been so otherwise; and if the ass really did not dance that night, yet greater and stranger wonders occurred than the dancing of an ass would have been. In short, as the proverb of Zarathustra says: "What does it matter?" (318)

Es giebt sogar Solche, die erzählen, das damals der Esel getanzt habe: nicht umsonst nämlich habe ihm der

hässlichste Mensch vorher Wein zu trinken gegeben. Diess mag sich nun so verhalten oder auch anders; und wenn in Wahrheit an jenem Abende der Esel nicht getanzt hat, so geschahen doch damals grössere und seltsamere Wunderdinge als es das Tanzen eines Esels wäre. Kurz, wie das Sprichwort Zarathustra's lautet: "was liegt daran!" (KSA4, 396)

"My suffering and my pity for suffering – what does it matter? Am I concerned with happiness? I am concerned with my work.

[...]

This is my morning, my day is breaking: rise now, rise, thou great noon!"

Thus spoke Zarathustra, and he left his cave [on the mountain], glowing and strong as a morning sun that comes out of dark mountains. (327)

"Mein Leid und mein Mitleiden – was liegt daran! Trachte ich denn nach Glücke? Ich trachte nach meinem Werke!"<sup>53</sup>

[...]

Dies ist mein Morgen, mein Tag hebt an: herauf nun, herauf, du grosser Mittag!" – –

Also sprach Zarathustra und verliess seine Höhle [auf dem Berg], glühend und stark, wie eine Morgensonne, die aus dunklen Bergen kommt. (KSA4, 408)

With this last excerpt *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* comes to its conclusion, and hopefully the case has now been made that Zarathustra's "proverb" / "Sprichwort" should no longer be ignored in the interpretation and comprehension of this work of world literature. But it also needs to be emphasized that Nietzsche would have done better to have labeled his "What does it matter!" / "Was liegt daran!" as a proverbial expression instead of a proverb. Regarding this matter, the following two English translations are quite informative:

In short, as the proverb of Zarathustra says: "What does it matter?" (318)<sup>54</sup>

In short, as Zarathustra's saying has it: "What does it matter!"<sup>55</sup>

In the case of the first translation the question mark is inappropriate because Nietzsche does not mean it as an interrogative but rather as an indicative as it is common with proverbs altogether. The second translator did well by employing the term “saying” which carries with it the connotation of proverbial expression. But be that as it may, Nietzsche has no intention to express a piece of proverbial wisdom but rather the conviction that there are many possibilities and paths to master life. Men are “dice throwers” (292) / “Würfelspieler” (KSA4, 363), who can deal with their fate by dancing and laughing, and the one who can do exactly that will, proverbially speaking, “jump over his shadow – and verily, into his sun” (117). / “über seinen eignen Schatten springen – und, wahrlich! hinein in seine Sonne” (KSA4, 151). One might even venture the guess that Nietzsche thought of his earlier proverbial statement “They (men) simply want to be the smiths [architects] of their own fortunes and misfortunes” / “Sie [die Menschen] wollen nun einmal ihres Glückes und Unglückes eigene Schmiede sein” (KSA2, 285)<sup>56</sup> from his *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* (1878, *Human, All Too Human*). Surely all of this is part of Nietzsche’s thought, but Zarathustra is not searching for fortune as such. He understands his calling as worthwhile work towards the renewal of humankind and the world as such. That means struggle, as it is announced proverbially already at the beginning of *Zarathustra*: “to crash through these ultimate walls with its [i.e., the] head, and not only with its [i.e., the] head – over there to ‘that world’” (31-32) / “mit dem Kopfe durch die letzten Wände, und nicht nur mit dem Kopfe – hinüber zu ‘jener Welt’” (KSA4, 36).

To be sure, Sisyphus does not appear in this work, but some of this conjures up the existentialist philosophy of Albert Camus, who knew and treasured his Nietzsche well. In his book *Le mythe de Sisyphe* (1942) he states existentially and life-confirmingly: “La lutte elle-même vers les sommets suffit à remplir un cœur d’homme. Il faut imaginer Sisyphe heureux.”<sup>57</sup> And there is a passage in *Zarathustra* that permits the assumption that Nietzsche and Camus had similar thoughts, even though Camus is less elitist and more humane. And sure enough, there is a significant “stone image” / “Steinbild” passage in *Zarathustra* that is reminiscent of the myth of Sisyphus. As is typical for such key statements in Nietzsche’s works, it is based on the leitmotif-like allusions to the proverb “Who throws the stone (high) above himself will have it

fall on his head” / “Wer den Stein [hoch] über sich wirft, dem fällt er auf den Kopf” and the proverbial expression “to search for the philosophers’ stone (stone of the wise)” / “den Stein der Weisen suchen”. But, as expected, the proverb is negated by Nietzsche, because the falling stone most certainly will not rob Zarathustra of his courage to confront the struggle of life:

A path that ascended defiantly through stones, malicious, lonely, not cheered by herb or shrub – a mountain path crunched under the defiance of my foot. Striding silently over the mocking clatter of pebbles, crushing the rock that made it slip, my foot forced its way upward. Upward – defying the spirit that drew it downward toward the abyss, the spirit of gravity, my devil and archenemy. Upward – although he sat on me, half dwarf, half mole, lame, making lame, dripping lead into my ear, leaden thoughts into my brain.

“O Zarathustra,” he [a dwarf] whispered mockingly, syllable by syllable; “you philosopher’s stone [stone of the wise], you slingstone, you star-crusher! You threw yourself up high; but every stone that is thrown must fall. Sentenced to yourself and to your own stoning – O Zarathustra, far indeed have you thrown the stone, but it will fall back on yourself.”

Then the dwarf fell silent, and that lasted a long time. His silence, however, oppressed me; and such twosomeness is surely more lonesome than being alone. I climbed, I climbed, I dreamed, I thought; but everything oppressed me. I was like one sick whom his wicked torture makes weary, and who as he falls asleep is awakened by a still more wicked dream. But there is something in me that I call courage; that has so far slain my every discouragement. This courage finally bade me stand still and speak: “Dwarf! It is you or I!”

For courage is the best slayer, courage which attacks; for in every attack there is playing and brass.

[...]

Courage, however, is the best slayer – courage which attacks: which slays even death itself, for it says, “Was that life? Well then! Once more!”

In such words, however, there is much playing and brass.  
He that has ears to hear, let him hear! (156-157)

Ein Pfad, der trotzig durch Geröll stieg, ein boshafter,  
einsamer, dem nicht Kraut, nicht Strauch mehr zusprach:  
ein Berg-Pfad knirschte unter dem Trotz meines Fusses.

Stumm über höhnischem Geklirr von Kieseln schreitend,  
den Stein zertretend, der ihn gleiten liess: also zwang  
mein Fuss sich aufwärts.

Aufwärts: – dem Geiste zum Trotz, der ihn abwärts zog,  
abgrundwärts zog, dem Geiste der Schwere, meinem  
Teufel und Erzfeinde.

Aufwärts: – obwohl er auf mir sass, halb Zwerg, halb  
Maulwurf; lahm; lähmend; Blei durch mein Ohr, Blei-  
tropfen-Gedanken in mein Hirn träufelnd.

“Oh Zarathustra, raunte er [ein Zwerg] höhnisch Silb’ um  
Silbe, du Stein der Weisheit! Du warfst dich hoch, aber  
jeder geworfene Stein muss – fallen!

Oh Zarathustra, du Stein der Weisheit, du Schleuderstein,  
du Stern-Zertrümmerer! Dich selber warfst du so hoch, -  
aber jeder geworfene Stein – muss fallen!

Verurtheilt zu dir selber und zur eignen Steinigung: oh  
Zarathustra, weit warfst du ja den Stein, - aber auf dich  
wird er zurückfallen!”

Drauf schieg der Zwerg; und das wahrte lange. Sein  
Schweigen aber drückte mich; und solchermassen zu  
Zwein ist man wahrlich einsamer als zu Einem!

Ich stieg, ich stieg, ich träumte, ich dachte, – aber Alles  
drückte mich. Einem Kranken glich ich, den seine  
schlimme Marter müde macht, und den wieder ein  
schlimmerer Traum aus dem Einschlafen weckt. –

Aber es giebt Etwas in mir, das ich Muth heisse: das  
schlug bisher mir jeden Unmuth todt. Dieser Muth hiess  
mich endlich stille stehn und sprechen: “Zwerg! Du! Oder  
ich!” –

Muth nämlich ist der beste Todtschläger, – Muth, welcher  
angreift: denn in jedem Angriffe ist klingendes Spiel.

[...]

Muth aber ist der beste Todtschläger, Muth, der angreift:  
der schlägt noch den Tod todt, denn er spricht: War das  
das Leben? Wohlan! Noch Ein Mal!”

In solchem Spruche aber ist viel klingendes Spiel. Wer Ohren hat, der höre. – (KSA4, 198-199)

Zarathustra, like Sisyphus condemned to himself, carries on by accepting and confirming the eternal return (repetition) of life. At the end Zarathustra dances, sings, and laughs and despite his hard existence is happy like Sisyphus. With enthusiastic joy he steps towards the morning sun, ready to accept the dynamics of life anew every day:

All anew, all eternally, all entangled, ensnared, enamored  
 – oh, then you loved the world. Eternal ones, love it eternally and evermore; and to woe too, you say: go, but return! For all joy wants – eternity. (323)  
 – Alles von neuem, Alles ewig, Alles verkettet, verfädelt, verliebt, oh so liebtet ihr die Welt, –  
 – ihr Ewigen, liebt sie ewig und allezeit: und auch zum Weh sprecht ihr: vergeh, aber komm zurück! Denn alle Lust will – Ewigkeit! (KSA4, 402)

Proverbial matters have accompanied Zarathustra on his path towards self-recognition and the acceptance of life. The numerous proverbial expressions with their metaphors add much to the poetic style of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, while the usually varied Bible and folk proverbs are used to underscore Nietzsche's break with God and Christianity. Anti-proverbs and pseudo-proverbs also do their part to emphasize Nietzsche's call for the revaluation of all values. Liberated men need no proverbial rule system and do not "run against open doors" / "offene Türen einrennen", as a proverbial expression would have it. Zarathustra's higher men (overmen) maintain self-assured and anti-proverbially: "We do not question each other, we do not complain to each other, we often [i.e., openly] walk together through open doors" (184). / "Wir fragen einander nicht, wir klagen einander nicht, wir gehen offen mit einander durch offene Türen" (KSA4, 232). Naturally the often repeated phrase "Thus spoke Zarathustra" / "Also sprach Zarathustra" has long become proverbial, but it would certainly be of great benefit, if modern men in their ever more absurd world would occasionally remind themselves what Friedrich Nietzsche actually said and meant with his not at all didactic *Zarathustra*.



*Notes*

<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*. Translated, with Commentary, by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> All German references are from the 23 volumes of the *Kritische Studienausgabe (Sämtliche Werke, vols. 1-15 "KSA" and Sämtliche Briefe, vols. 1-8 "KSB")*, ed. by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1980 and 1986).

<sup>3</sup> All translations of primary and secondary sources that are not otherwise identified are my own.

<sup>4</sup> For these three concepts see Walter Linden, "Friedrich Nietzsche als Meister der deutschen Sprache," *Muttersprache*, 48 (1933), cols. 65-71 (here col. 65); Marie Hed Kaulhausen, *Nietzsches Sprachstil. Gedeutet aus seinem Lebensgefühl und Weltverständnis* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1977), p. 106; and Hans-Martin Gauger, "Nietzsches Stil am Beispiel von *Ecce homo*," *Nietzsche-Studien*, 13 (1984), pp. 332-355 (here p. 335).

<sup>5</sup> The English texts are taken from Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Translated with a Preface by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1978 [first 1954]). This reference is also cited in Lutz Röhrich, *Das große Lexikon der sprichwörtlichen Redensarten* (Freiburg: Herder, 1991-1992), vol. 3, p. 1444.

<sup>6</sup> See Hans Morowa, *Sprache und Stil von Nietzsches "Zarathustra"*. Ein Beitrag zur Erkenntnis seines geistig-seelischen Ausdrucksgehalts (Diss. Berlin, 1958), pp. 65-67.

<sup>7</sup> See Joachim Goth, *Nietzsche und die Rhetorik* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1970), pp. 97-98; and Marie Hed Kaulhausen, *Nietzsches Sprachstil*, p. 122.

<sup>8</sup> Siegfried Vitens, *Die Sprachkunst Friedrich Nietzsches in "Also sprach Zarathustra"* (Bremen-Horn: Walter Dorn, 1951), p. 80.

<sup>9</sup> Ludger Lütkehaus (ed.), "*Stehlen ist oft seliger als nehmen*." *Nietzsche zum Vergnügen* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 2000), pp. 79, 82 and 87.

<sup>10</sup> See Andreas Nolte and Wolfgang Mieder, "*Zu meiner Hölle will ich den Weg mit guten Sprüchen pflastern*." *Friedrich Nietzsches sprichwörtliche Sprache* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> Hans Schemann, *Deutsche Idiomatik. Die deutschen Redewendungen im Kontext* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, 1993), p. 557.

<sup>12</sup> See Richard Perkins, "Analogistic Strategies in *Zarathustra*," in David Goicoechea (ed.), *The Great Year of Zarathustra (1881-1981)* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1983), pp. 316-338 (here pp. 321-323).

<sup>13</sup> See Theodore Ziolkowski, "Zarathustra's Reincarnations: Literary Responses to Nietzsche's Work," *Modern Language Review*, 107 (2012), pp. 211-229 (here pp. 214-216).

<sup>14</sup> Vitens, *Die Sprachkunst Friedrich Nietzsches*, p. 82.

<sup>15</sup> Barbara Naumann, "Nietzsches Sprache 'Aus der Natur'. Ansätze zu einer Sprachtheorie in den frühen Schriften und ihre metaphorische Einlösung in *Also sprach Zarathustra*," *Nietzsche-Studien*, 14 (1985), pp. 126-163 (here p. 126 and pp. 162-163).

<sup>16</sup> Kathleen Marie Higgins, *Nietzsche's "Zarathustra"* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), p. 231.

<sup>17</sup> Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching. An Interpretation of "Thus Spoke Zarathustra"* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 308.

<sup>18</sup> Markus Meckel, "Der Weg Zarathustras als der Weg des Menschen. Zur Anthropologie Nietzsches im Kontext der Rede von Gott im *Zarathustra*," *Nietzsche-Studien*, 9 (1980), pp. 174-208 (here pp. 174-175).

<sup>19</sup> The lines in the middle are also cited by Meckel, "Der Weg Zarathustras," p. 176.

<sup>20</sup> See Margot Paronis, "Also sprach Zarathustra". *Die Ironie Nietzsches als Gestaltungsprinzip* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1976), p. 31.

<sup>21</sup> See Franz Harder, "'Parturient [*sic*] montes, nascetur ridiculus mus,'" *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde*, 35-36 (1925-1926), pp. 278-280.

<sup>22</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, p. 181.

<sup>23</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, p. 279.

<sup>24</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, p. 280.

<sup>25</sup> Oliver Thomas Domzalski (ed.), *Das goldene Album der Sponti-Sprüche* (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn, 2006), without page reference. See the additional references in Wolfgang Mieder (ed.), *Verkehrte Worte. Antizitate aus Literatur und Medien* (Wiesbaden: Quelle & Meyer, 1997), p. 115.

<sup>26</sup> Günter Grass, *Fundsachen für Nichtleser* (Göttingen: Steidl, 1997), p. 111.

<sup>27</sup> See Georg Büchmann, *Geflügelte Worte. Der klassische Zitatenschatz*, ed. by Winfried Hofmann, 40th ed. (Berlin: Ullstein, 1995), p. 222; and Johann Prossliner, *Licht wird alles, was ich fasse. Das Lexikon der Nietzsche-Zitate* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2001), pp. 25, 134-135, 137 and 229.

<sup>28</sup> Meckel, "Der Weg Zarathustras," p. 192.

<sup>29</sup> These two lines are also cited by Meckel, "Der Weg Zarathustras," p. 192.

<sup>30</sup> Regarding this reference see also Richard M. Meyer, "Nietzsches Wortbildungen," *Zeitschrift für Deutsche Wortforschung*, 15 (1914), pp. 98-146 (here p. 142, repeated on p. 143).

<sup>31</sup> See Oskar Baumgartner, "Nietzsche und die Bibel," *Wissen und Leben*, 5 (1912), pp. 526-531.

<sup>32</sup> See primarily Carl Schulze, *Die biblischen Sprichwörter der deutschen Sprache* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1860; rpt. ed. by Wolfgang Mieder. Bern: Peter Lang, 1987); Paul Grünberg, *Biblische Redensarten. Eine Studie über den Gebrauch und Missbrauch der Bibel in der deutschen Volks- und Umgangssprache* (Heilbronn: Henninger, 1888); Heinrich Krauss, *Geflügelte Bibelworte. Das Lexikon biblischer Redensarten* (München: C.H. Beck, 1993); Heribert Steger, *333 biblische Redensarten* (Augsburg: Pattloch, 1998); and Hans Schmoldt, *Reclams Lexikon der Bibelzitate* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 2002).

<sup>33</sup> See Margot Paronis, *Die Ironie Nietzsches*, p. 59.

<sup>34</sup> For this proverb see John G. Kunstmann, "And Yet Again: 'Wes des Herz voll ist, des geht der Mund über'," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, 23 (1952), pp. 509-527; Timothy C. Nelson, "'Ex abundantia cordis os loquitur': Ein Beitrag zur Rezeptionsgeschichte eines umstrittenen Sprichworts," *Proverbium*, 3 (1986), pp. 101-123; and Wolfgang Mieder, "Martin Luther und die Geschichte des

Sprichwortes 'Wes das Herz voll ist, des geht der Mund über', in W. Mieder, *Sprichwörtliches und Geflügeltes. Sprachstudien von Martin Luther bis Karl Marx* (Bochum: Norbert Brockmeyer, 1995), pp. 13-22.

<sup>35</sup> See Wolfgang Mieder, "'Der Mensch lebt nicht vom Brot allein': Vom Bibelspruchwort über das Volksspruchwort zum Antispruchwort," in Michail Aleksiejenko and Harry Walter (ed.), *Słowo, tekst, czas. Jednostka frazeologiczna w tradycyjnych i nowych paradygmatach naukowych* (Szczecin: Wydawca Print Group, 2010), pp. 279-300.

<sup>36</sup> See also the comparative list of Bible- and *Zarathustra*-references in Vitens, *Die Sprachkunst Friedrich Nietzsches*, pp. 34-40.

<sup>37</sup> See the introduction to the new edition of Karl Simrock, *Die deutschen Sprichwörter*, ed. by Wolfgang Mieder (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1988), pp. 7-18.

<sup>38</sup> See Karin Doerr, "'To Each His Own' (Jedem das Seine): The Mis-(Use) of German Proverbs in Concentration Camps and Beyond," *Proverbium*, 17 (2000), pp. 71-90.

<sup>39</sup> This last statement is of course an allusion to the Bible reference that is part of the Christian marriage ceremony: "What therefore God has joined together, let not man put assunder" (Matthew 19:6; "Was nun Gott zusammengefügt hat, das soll der Mensch nicht scheiden").

<sup>40</sup> See David S. Thatcher, "Eagle and Serpent in *Zarathustra*," *Nietzsche-Studien*, 6 (1977), pp. 240-260.

<sup>41</sup> See Helmut Carl, "Unsere Haustiere in sprichwörtlichen Redensarten," *Muttersprache*, 72 (1962), pp. 333-339; Ulrich M. Meisser, "Tiersprichwörter und Verhaltensforschung. Zur gegenseitigen Erhellung von didaktischer Literatur und Naturwissenschaft," *Studium Generale*, 22 (1969), pp. 861-889; Rudolf Schmidt, *Tierisches in unserer Muttersprache* (Gerabronn-Crailsheim: Hohenloher Druck- und Verlagshaus, 1972); Jochen Sternkopf, "Tierbezeichnungen in phraseologischen Einheiten," *Muttersprache*, 103 (1993), pp. 324-331; and Dmitrij Dobrovol'skij and Elisabeth Piirainen, *Symbole in Sprache und Kultur. Studien zur Phraseologie aus kultursemiotischer Perspektive* (Bochum: Norbert Brockmeyer, 1996), pp. 157-226.

<sup>42</sup> See R. Hinton Thomas, "Nietzsche, Women and the Whip," *German Life and Letters*, 34 (1980), pp. 117-125.

<sup>43</sup> Jürgen Christen, *Vergiß die Peitsche nicht. Frauenfeindliche Sprüche* (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn, 1991). See also Friedemann Spicker, "Der mit der Peitsche geht: Friedrich Nietzsche," in F. Spicker, *Die Welt ist voller Sprüche. Große Aphoristiker im Porträt* (Bochum: Norbert Brockmeyer, 2010), pp. 88-93.

<sup>44</sup> All these references with bibliographical information are included in Wolfgang Mieder (ed.), *Ver-kehrte Worte*, pp. 333-335.

<sup>45</sup> Walter Rupp, *Hieb- und Stichsätze. Aphorismen* (Neckenmarkt: Novum Publishing, 2010), p. 50.

<sup>46</sup> See especially the annotated collections by Mineke Schipper, "*Never Marry a Woman with Big Feet*". *Women in Proverbs from Around the World* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2003); and Christa Rittersbacher, *Frau und Mann im Sprichwort. Einblicke in die sprichwörtliche Weltanschauung Großbritannien und Amerikas* (Heidelberg: Wunderhorn, 2002).

<sup>47</sup> See Gerhard Peukes, *Untersuchungen zum Sprichwort im Deutschen. Semantik, Syntax, Typen* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1977), pp. 145-146.

<sup>48</sup> See the impressive number of 2093 wellerisms that Edmund Hoefler includes in his collection *Wie das Volk spricht. Deutsche Sagwörter* (Stuttgart: Adolph Krabbe, 1855; rpt. of the much expanded 9th edition of 1885 ed. by Wolfgang Mieder. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1995); and see also Wolfgang Mieder, "'Irren ist menschlich, sagte der Igel': Aphoristische Sagwörter aus Literatur und Medien," in W. Mieder, *Aphorismen, Sprichwörter, Zitate. Von Goethe und Schiller bis Victor Klemperer* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000), pp. 127-158.

<sup>49</sup> See also Higgins, *Nietzsche's "Zarathustra"*, pp. 241-242.

<sup>50</sup> See Jörn Albrecht, "Friedrich Nietzsche und das 'sprachliche Relativitätsprinzip'," *Nietzsche-Studien*, 8 (1979), pp. 225-244 (here p. 226).

<sup>51</sup> See David B. Allison, *Reading the New Nietzsche* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), p. 120.

<sup>52</sup> Hans Schemann, *Deutsche Idiomatik*, p. 491.

<sup>53</sup> The last two references, without any indication to their proverbiality, are also cited in Higgins, *Nietzsche's "Zarathustra"*, pp. 216 and 236.

<sup>54</sup> See also the earlier translation "In short, as the proverb of Zarathustra saith: 'What doth it matter!'" in Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra. A Book for All and None*. Translated by Thomas Common (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1967 [first 1909]), p. 355.

<sup>55</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra. A Book for Everyone and Nobody*. Translated with an Introduction by Graham Parkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 278. By but one year later the following translation appeared: "In sum, as Zarathustra's saying goes, 'What does it matter!'" in Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra. A Book for All and None*. Translated by Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 259.

<sup>56</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human. A Book for Free Spirits*. Translated by Marion Faber (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 210.

<sup>57</sup> Albert Camus, *Le mythe de Sisyphe. Essai sur l'absurde* (Paris: Gallimard, 1942), p. 166. See also Bianca Rosenthal, *Die Idee des Absurden. Friedrich Nietzsche und Albert Camus* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1977), pp. 41-51 (here p. 50).

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DIETMAR PEIL

## DAS SPRICHWORT IM SCHULACTUS DES CHRISTIAN GRYPHIUS<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** Der Beitrag stellt ein deutsches Theaterstück vor, das Christian Gryphius für das Schultheater in Breslau geschrieben hat und das auch für die komparatistische Parömiologie relevant ist. Aus dem Teil, der die Sprichwörter behandelt, werden der Auftritt des Arabers und der die *Scena* beschließende 'Sprichwortchor' geboten, um daran einen Einblick in die Komplexität der Kommentierungsarbeit zu geben, die für eine Edition unverzichtbar ist.

**Keywords:** Schultheater, Christian Gryphius, Martin Opitz, Sebastian Brant, Johannes Agricola, Gabriel Rollenhagen, Andreas Tscherning, Adam Olearius

Im breit gefächerten Œuvre des schlesischen Autors Christian Gryphius (1649-1706) nehmen die für das Breslauer Schultheater geschriebenen Stücke einen breiten Raum ein.<sup>2</sup> Aufgrund der erhaltenen Einladungsschriften ist seine Verfasserschaft für 28 Schulactus gesichert; 20 davon sind lateinisch geschrieben, acht wurden in deutscher Sprache aufgeführt (mit lateinischen und griechischen Einsprengeln).<sup>3</sup> Den Weg in den Druck fand zunächst nur der Schulactus *Der Deutschen Sprache unterschiedene Alter und nach und nach zunehmendes Wachsthum*, mit dem Gryphius die Serie seiner deutschen Schulactus eröffnete und den seine Tochter Susanna Rosina Leubscher zwei Jahre nach seinem Tod in Breslau veröffentlichte.<sup>4</sup> Sie konnte dabei auf die Vorarbeiten ihres ebenfalls schon 1706 verstorbenen Mannes Johann Theodor Leubscher zurückgreifen. Gewidmet ist der Druck dem Breslauer Kaufmann Johann Kretschmer, der 1690 den deutschen Schulactus am Magdalenaeum gestiftet hatte. Die weiteren deutschen Schulactus des Christian Gryphius, in denen er sich unter dem Titel *Der Teutschen Rätzel=Weißheit* mit verschiedenen literarischen Gattungen auseinandersetzte,<sup>5</sup> waren zunächst nur handschriftlich überliefert bzw. nur ausschnittsweise noch zu Lebzeiten des Dichters in den *Poetischen Wäldern* gedruckt worden,<sup>6</sup> während die

Einladungsschriften vollständig erhalten sind.<sup>7</sup> Einige der Handschriften sind inzwischen als Verlust zu beklagen. 1985 hat Konrad Gajek den Actus über die Helden-Bücher kommentiert herausgegeben.<sup>8</sup> 2003 hat Stefan Schöbi den Actus über die Tragödien in einer Züricher Lizentiatsarbeit abgedruckt, und die Edition des ersten gattungsbezogenen Actus über Rätsel, Sprichwörter und Fabeln bereite ich seit mehr als 15 Jahren vor.

Die deutschen Schulactus des Christian Gryphius sind einem bestimmten Grundmuster verpflichtet, das aber durchaus Variationsmöglichkeiten bietet. Es handelt sich dabei jedoch nicht um eine dramatische Form, deren Handlung dadurch bestimmt ist, daß unterschiedliche Charaktere unterschiedliche Ziele verfolgen und dadurch in Konfliktsituationen geraten und Spannung erzeugen, sondern maßgeblich ist die Präsentation eines Gesprächskreises, der sich einem bestimmten literarischen oder kulturellen Thema zuwendet und dieses Thema aus der Perspektive der vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft abhandelt. Gryphius verbindet in seinen deutschen Schulactus die überkommene Form des spätmittelalterlichen Fastnachtspiels in der Ausprägung des Reihenspiels (oder der Revue) mit der Dialogliteratur der Renaissance. Auch die Assoziation zu den Talkshows im heutigen Fernsehen liegt nahe. Allerdings sind die Gesprächsteilnehmer des Schulactus fiktiv und verdanken ihre Redebeiträge weitgehend dem Einfallsreichtum des Breslauer Gymnasialrektors.

Der Schulactus, den es hier im Hinblick auf seine parömiologische Relevanz vorzustellen gilt, trägt auf der Einladungsschrift als Titel den vollständigen Satz:

*Der Teutschen Rätsel=Weißheit Ersten Auß Räzeln /  
Sprüch=Wörtern / und Fabeln bestehenden Theil Bemühte  
sich Mit Entgegenhaltung anderer Völcker Den 17. und 18.  
Tag Herbst=Monats Des 1692sten Jahres Umb 1 Uhr nach  
Mittag In dem Magdaleneischen Gymnasio Vorzustellen  
Christian Gryphius.*<sup>9</sup>

Das Präteritum in der Titelei ist irreführend, suggeriert es doch die Vorstellung, die Aufführung sei bereits ein längst vergangenes Ereignis. Tatsächlich ist die Vorrede auf den 16. September datiert, und wir wissen, daß die gedruckten Einladungsschriften öffentlich ausgehängt worden sind.<sup>10</sup> Sie enthalten im Anschluß an die

Vorrede eine kurze Inhaltsangabe und abschließend das Personenverzeichnis mit den Namen der Darsteller bzw. Redner. So gesehen haben die Einladungsschriften mehrere Funktionen: Sie werben für das unmittelbar bevorstehende Ereignis, halten Thema, Inhalt und Verfasser der nur selten gedruckten Schulactus fest und überliefern die Namen der Akteure, sind also auch der Memorialfunktion in mehrfacher Hinsicht verpflichtet.

Der Actus von 1692, in dem insgesamt 86 sprechende Rollen zu besetzen sind, ist in sechs *Scenae* recht unterschiedlicher Länge gegliedert. Die erste *Scena* bestreitet die *Thorheit* mit einem Lied, das sechs Strophen mit je vier Versen umfaßt, während die fünfte *Scena* sich in der Handschrift auf mehr als 40 Seiten erstreckt. Die sechste *Scena* bietet als Beschluß des Stücks ebenfalls ein Lied, dessen sechs Strophen mit je sechs Versen vom *Verstand* vorgetragen werden. Während die *Thorheit* davon singt, daß es zuweilen notwendig sei, die Wahrheit zu verkleiden, verkündet der *Verstand*, daß mit Kaiser Leopold I. (1640-1705; Kaiser seit 1658) und seinem Sohn Joseph (1678-1711; Kaiser seit 1705) die Zeit angebrochen sei, in der die Wahrheit auf dem Thron ihren Platz gefunden habe und nicht länger verborgen bleiben müsse. Mit solchen deutschen Gesangseinlagen hat Gryphius auch seine anderen deutschen wie lateinischen Stücke ausgestattet. Ein großer Teil davon ist in den *Poetischen Wäldern* unter der Rubrik *Dramatische Gedichte* abgedruckt.<sup>11</sup> Nicht immer ist eindeutig zu entscheiden, ob diese Texte gesungen vorgetragen worden sind, aber in einigen Fällen wird ausdrücklich auf den Gesangsvortrag verwiesen.<sup>12</sup> Gereimte, aber wohl nicht gesungene Passagen finden sich auch an anderen Stellen, während die deutschen Stücke sonst vornehmlich in Prosa abgefaßt sind.

In der zweiten *Scena*, die mit sieben Seiten in der Handschrift die kürzeste der Spielszenen ist, präsentiert sich gewissermaßen das Podium. Sebastian Brant (1458-1521), Martin Opitz (1597-1639), Johannes Agricola (1494?-1564), Marquard von Sachs<sup>13</sup> und Gabriel Rollenhagen (1583-1619?)<sup>14</sup> sind die Moderatoren und Kommentatoren über den Verlauf des ganzen Stückes hinweg. In der Einladungsschrift begründet Gryphius die Zusammensetzung seines Gremiums mit entsprechenden literarischen Leistungen:

*Sebastian Brand/ der im Anfang des verwichenen  
Jahr=Hunderts gelebet/ hat mit seinem Narren=Schiffe*

*und zusammen getragenen Fabeln andern gleichsam die Bahn gebrochen. Margvard von Sachs / ein edler Francke / übersetzte umb eben selbige Zeit den Ritter vom Thurm auß der Frantzösischen Sprache in die Unsrige / zu nicht geringem Anwachs der damals sehr beliebten Rätzel= und Fabel=Weißheit. Johannes Agricola sammlete und erklärte über 400. Teutsche Sprüch=Wörter / welches noch keiner vor ihm gethan hat. Und Gabriel Rollenhagen zeigte in seinen wunderbarlichen Reisen / daß wir Teutschen so artig / alß immermehr vor diesem Lucian bey den Grichen / etwas Ernsthaftes mit dem Saltz eines zierlichen Schertzes würtzen können. Unsern Opitz habe ich / ob er gleich hirinnen nicht so gar vil gethan / dennoch deßwegen den andern beygefüget / weil ich gänzlich darvor halte / daß Jhm und sonst keinem andern die Teutsche Sprache alle jzige Zierde und Artigkeit zu dancken habe.*

Das Anliegen des Autors ist es, die deutsche Sprache aufzuwerten und den Beweis zu führen, daß die Deutschen gegenüber den anderen Völkern sprachlich und literarisch gleichwertig sind. Das Programm, das dabei abzuarbeiten wäre, skizziert Rollenhagen wie folgt:<sup>15</sup>

*Jch meines theils halte davor, man könne hie erstlich von den eigentlich so genannten Rätzeln, nachmals von den Sprüchwörtern, folgens den fabeln, hernach von den verborgenen und versteckten Arten durch zeichen und Gemähldde zu reden und zu schreiben, wie auch von den Sinn=Bildern, der Heroldt=Kunst, denen nachdencklichen Rätzeln, Müntzen, artigen Spielen, lehrreichen Schau= Spielen, Musicalischen Vorstellungen, Balletten, Feuerwercken, Traum-Auslegungen und andern dergleichen Artigkeiten ausführlich reden, und augenscheinlich darthun, daß wir Deutschen in allen diesen Stücken unter einer hervor scheinenden Thorheit offtmals die tieffsinnigste Weißheit verbergen. (S. 6)*

Brand rät jedoch, die Unterredung auf die drei zuerst genannten 'einfachen Formen' zu beschränken, denen je eine *Scena* gewidmet ist. Das Grundmuster des Gesprächs ist für alle Gattungen gleich.



Nacheinander erscheinen Vertreter verschiedener Nationen und legen Rechenschaft ab über das, was ihre Landsleute (oder sie selbst) in der jeweiligen Gattung geleistet haben. Dabei wird auch die Forschungsliteratur teilweise berücksichtigt. Die anderen Gesprächsteilnehmer beteiligen sich mit Zwischenfragen, Kommentaren und manchmal auch mit Übersetzungen an der Diskussion. Der Beitrag der deutschen Literatur wird jeweils am Ende der *Scena* erörtert. Mit Proben aus der gerade behandelten Gattung schließt jede *Scena*.

Um die Sprichwörter geht es in der vierten *Scena*. Anfangs verständigt man sich über die Vorgehensweise:

- Rollenhagen:** *In unserer Sprüchwörter Arbeit / werden wir wohl / wie vorhin den Anfang von den Hebreern machen.*
- Brand:** *Sonder Zweifel / doch werden ihnen / eh<sup>1</sup> wir auff die Grichen kommen / noch wol ein paar andere Morgenländer beyzufügen seyn. Maßen diese Leute durchgehends / sonderlich viel auff die Sprüchwörter gehalten. [S. 33]*
- Opitz:** *Meinem Erachten nach / wird sich niemand beßer darzu schicken / als ein Araber und Sinese / die nächst den Hebreern vor andern Orientalischen Völckern den Preis der Scharfsinnigkei erhalten.*
- Agricola:** *Wen werden wir aber unter den Hebreern vorstellen.*
- Sachs:** *Wen anders / als den berühmten König Salomon / deßen noch vorhandene und der H[ei]ll[igen] Schriftt einverleibte Sprüchwörter billich den Vorzug vor viel tausend andern erhalten.*
- Brand:** *Wohlan / so last ihn denn herein treten. (S. 32f.)*

Nach Salomon treten ein Araber und ein Chinese auf, bevor Zenobius<sup>16</sup> und Erasmus von Rotterdam sich über griechische und lateinische Sprichwörter äußern. Dann kommen die Vertreter Spaniens, Frankreichs, Italiens, Englands und Polens zu Wort. Wie

die Materialfülle bewältigt werden soll, hat Opitz bereits am Ende der dritten *Scena* erwogen:

*Mein Rath ist / wir laßen bey der menge vieler Völcker /  
weil sich nebst denen itzt erschienenen auch Araber /  
Sinesen, Engelländer und Pollacken einfinden werden / nur  
ettliche auserlesene von jedes Landes Sprichwörtern  
hersagen / und nachmals uns berichten / wer die andern  
zusammen getragen. (S. 32)*

Der Auftritt des Arabers mag exemplarisch den eingeschlagenen Weg verdeutlichen, obwohl er (wie auch die anderen) Opitzens Rat insofern nicht folgt, als er zunächst über die einschlägigen Sprichwortsammlungen informiert, bevor er seine Beispiele vorträgt. Daß dem Araber ein vergleichsweise weiter Raum gewährt wird, ist darauf zurückzuführen, daß seine Sprichwortzitate zusätzlich auch in den gereimten Versionen des Andreas Tscherning (1611-1659)<sup>17</sup> und des Adam Olearius<sup>18</sup> (1599-1671) geboten werden:

**Der Araber:**

*Daß meine Nation / o ihr berühmten Männer /  
die ihr mich hieher gefordert / sich mit weisen  
Sprüchen und sinnreichen Reden nicht  
weniger als die Hebreer sehen laßen / erhellet  
nicht allein aus den Hundert Sprüch=Wörtern  
des Saracenischen Kaysers Alis / die / wie ich  
hier auff dem Parnaß erfahren / ein bekandter  
Schlesischer Poet Tscherning in lateinische  
und deutsche Verse übersetzt / und mit  
einigen gewiß lesenswürdigen Anmerckungen  
gezieret / sondern auch auß des Sadi Persiani-  
schen Rosen=Thal / welches Georgius Gentig  
zu Amsterdam lateinisch / und Adam Olearius  
nachmals deutsch herausgegeben. Ich unter-  
scheide mit Fleis das Persische nicht sonder-  
lich von dem Arabischen / weil es nur eine  
gewiße Mund=Art ist / die ihren Ursprung  
dennoch aus dem Arabischen hat. Wenn euch  
beliebt zum Beweißthum unserer Geschick-  
ligkeit anzuhören / so wil ich aus beiden et-  
was / wiewohl gar wenig anführen.*

- Sachs:** *Es wird uns nichts anders als angenehm fallen / zumahl wenn unser Opitz sich zugleich so viel bemühen / und die Poetischen Übersetzungen / so wohl des Tschernings als Olearij beyfügen wird.*
- Opitz:** *Ich steh euch hierinnen gantz willig zu diensten / werthe Freunde / wenn mich auch nichts anders als das [S. 37] Andencken meines ehemals von mir so sehr geliebten Tschernings hiezu bewegen sollte. Nur muß ich bey des Olearij seiner Übersetzung erinnern / daß sie nicht allemal zu rein und ungezwungen herauskommt.*
- Brand:** *Sie seih wie sie wolle / aus einem Munde / wie der eurige ist / kan nichts übel klingen.*
- Opitz:** *Ich bedancke mich vor die Höfflichkeit. Wohlan laßt hören / mein Araber / was ihr im Vorrath habt / entdeckt uns aber vor allen Dingen / wer Alis und Sadi gewesen.*
- Araber:** *Alis ist ein treuer Geferte unsrers Gesetzgebers des Muhameds / und zugleich nach seinem tode ein Kayser / oder wie sie nennen / ein Chalifa der Saracenen gewesen. Die Perser halten biß auff den heutigen Tag sein Gedächtniß so hoch / daß sie die drey andern Freunde und Nachfolger des Muhameds den Abubeoker / Omar und Othmar als Ketzer verfluchen / und den Ali vor heilig halten.<sup>19</sup> Wannhero die tödtliche Feindschafft zwischen den Türcken. Wie auch fast allen andern Mochumedanern / die es mit diesen dreyen halten / und den Persern entstanden / die dem letztern auff das euserste anhangen. Sadi aber war ein zu Schiras gebohrener Persischer Poete / der über das Rosen=Thal noch ein ander Werck / welches er den Obstgarten nennt / verfertiget / das aber / meines Wißens noch in keine andere Sprache übersetzt worden / auch den wenigsten bekindt ist.*

- Sachs:** *Wir sind mit dieser / obwohl kurtzen Nachricht / nicht übel zu frieden. So last nun demnach hören / was Alis und Sadi guttes geredet.*
- Araber:** *Es bleibet / wie ich vor erwähnt bey einem wenigen / denn alles herzubringen wäre unnmöglich. Die Güttigkeit der Rede / sagt Alis / besteht in der Kürtze.*
- Sachs:** *Freylich: denn wir haben ja keinen zärteren Sinn als das Gehör. Weßwegen es sonderlich bey diesem Sinne heist / **kurtz und gutt**. Ich meines theils muß gestehn / daß ob ich gleich ein großer Liebhaber der Musick [S. 38] bin / selbige dennoch / wenn sie auch noch so herrlich wäre / aber zu lange taurete / bey mir ein sonderbahres Miß=Vergnüen erwecken sollte. Wie lautet aber dieses bey **Tscherningen** / Opitz?*
- [Opitz:]** *Befleiß dich / wo noth / im reden kurtz zu seyn /  
Wo kürztlich wird geredt macht **einer** Rede Schein.<sup>20</sup>*
- Araber:** ***Ein Loch** / fährt er fort / **das die Begierde macht / wird nur mit erde verstopfft.**<sup>21</sup>*
- Brand:** *Mir fallen hiebey die Worte ein / mit denen die Parther den entleibten Crassum / als sie in seinen abgehauenen Kopf geschmeltztes Gold gegossen / angedet: *Satia te auro quod sitisti / cujusque insatiabilis semper fuisti.* Wiewohl andere sie der Tomyris zueignen / die des Cyri abgehauenes Hautb in ein mit Blut gefülltes Lägel werffen laßen.<sup>22</sup>*
- Opitz:** *Es ist ein weniger Unterschied. Die Sache laufft doch fast auf eines hinaus. Tscherning hat des Ali Worte also gegeben:  
Ein Geitzhals wird nicht satt von seinem Gold und heerde /  
Von einem wird der hals ihm letztlich voll / von Erde.<sup>23</sup>*

- Araber:** *Des Geitzigen Pfenning / spricht Alis /ist ein Stein.*
- Opitz:** *Bey Tscherningen heist es:  
Vom Gelde kanstu nichts zu heben  
mächtig seyn:  
Nicht wunder: dann dein Geld / du  
Geitzhals / ist ein Stein.<sup>24</sup>*
- Araber:** *Der Könige Speisen / sagt eben er / verbrennen einem das Maul.<sup>25</sup>*
- Agricola:** *Wir werden in der deutschen Sprüchwörter= Vorstellung / hernach ein gleiches haben.<sup>26</sup>*
- Opitz:** *Tscherning spricht:  
Wer sich gen Hoffe giebt / muß kalt und heißes kennen.  
An Fürsten=Taffeln kan / sich einer bald verbrennen.<sup>27</sup> [S. 39]*
- Araber:** *Das Schweigen ist des Narren Decke.<sup>28</sup>*
- Opitz:** *Ein Thor scheint klug zu seyn / solange erschweigen kan.  
Durch Rede wird ein Narr entdeckt u[nd] aufgethan.<sup>29</sup>*
- Rollenhagen:** *Si tacuisses Sapiens mansisses spricht der Lateiner.<sup>30</sup>*
- Araber:** *Noch eins vom Alis. Der Schatten eines Lahmen ist krumm.<sup>31</sup>*
- Brand:** *Krumm kan nicht schlecht werden / sagt Salomo in seinem Prediger.<sup>32</sup>*
- Opitz:** *Was wil doch in der Sonn ein krummer grade seyn?  
Wohin ein krummer geht da volgt ein krummer schein.<sup>33</sup>*
- Araber:** *Genung vom Alis / itzt wil ich auch ettwas aus dem Sadi vorbringen. Wenn du den stachel nicht vertragen kanst / so stecke den Finger in kein Scorpionen Nest.<sup>34</sup>*
- Opitz:** *Olearius giebt es:  
Kanstu nicht leiden daß ein Scorpion dich sticht /  
So steck auch wo er sitzt / ins Loch / den Finger nicht.<sup>35</sup>*

- Araber:** *Wenn eine Cistern voll Rosen=Waßer wäre /  
und ein einiger Hund fiele hinein / so wird  
sie verunreiniget.*<sup>36</sup>
- Opitz:** *Bey dem Oleario find ich es also:  
Wenn auch ein gantzer Teich voll  
Rosen=Waßer wär /  
und fiel ein Hund darein / wers doch so werth  
nicht mehr.*<sup>37</sup>
- Sachs:** *Die Reim=Worte sind nicht nach eurer  
Mund=Art eingerichtet / lieber Opitz.*<sup>38</sup>
- Opitz** *Hab ich es doch vorher erinnert. Olearius ist  
ein gelehrter Mann / aber nicht eben ein gar  
sonderlicher Poete gewesen.*
- Araber:** *Ein armer der in einer Wüsteney von der  
Sonne gebrent wird / nimbt eine gekochte  
Riebe vor ein Stück gemengt Silber.*<sup>39</sup> [S. 40]
- Opitz:** *Olearius hat ich weis nicht warum / dieses nur  
in ungebundener Rede gegeben / da es doch in  
dem Grund=Texte Verse sind: Ich wil aber  
den Mangel in der Eil / so gutt als möglich  
ersetzen:  
Gieb einem Gold und Geld in einer  
Wüsteney /  
frag aber ob ihm nicht ein Rübchen lieber  
sey?*<sup>40</sup>
- Agricola:** *Wir müssen aufhören / mein Araber / und  
nunmehr den Sinesen reden lassen. (S. 36-40)*

So wie die dritte *Scena* beschlossen wurde mit einem Chor von *Jünglingen*, die unterschiedliche Rätsel vortragen, treten am Ende der *Sprichwort-Scena*, nachdem *Agricola* über die einschlägigen deutschen Sammlungen informiert hat,<sup>41</sup> 34 *Knaben* auf, um Proben der deutschen Sprichwortweisheit zu präsentieren. Bereits am Ende der dritten *Scena* hatte *Opitz* vorgeschlagen:

*Unsere (Sprichwörter) aber wollen wir wieder / durch  
etzliche Knaben / und zwar nur stumm vorstellen / die aber  
hernach ein Knabe mit dem Lehrsatz / worauf sie zielen,  
versweyse erklären sol. So wird weder uns / noch denen die  
uns zuhören /die weile zu lang fallen. (S. 32)*

Was hier angekündigt wird, läßt eine pantomimische Darbietung von Sprichwörtern erwarten, die jeweils in einem zweiten Schritt in 'Klartext' überführt werden. Davon ist zu Beginn des revue-ähnlichen Auftritts jedoch nicht mehr die Rede, es gibt keinerlei entsprechende Regieanweisungen. Sachs fordert Rollenhagen auf, die Knaben eintreten zu lassen, und erinnert daran, daß man sich jederzeit in die Aufführung einbringen könne; doch dürfen die ersten acht *Knaben* ihre Verse ohne Eingriffe der 'Moderatoren' vortragen:

- Sachs:** *Es ist nunmehr hohe Zeit / daß wir auff die Vorstellung der deutschen Sprüchwörter bedacht seyn. Rollenhagen last die Knaben herein treten / es wird uns doch immer frey stehn / eins und das andere zu erinnern.*
- I. Der erste Knabe:** *Trau nicht wenn zwey zusammen spielen / Der dritte muß den schaden fühlen.<sup>42</sup>  
Er schlägt / gieb acht auf deine Ruh /  
Der eine nur mit Fleis den Ball dem andern zu.<sup>43</sup>*
- II. Knabe:** *Wie die alten sungen /  
So pfeiffen auch die Jungen.<sup>44</sup>  
Sind bey den Königen und Eltern schlechte Sachen /  
So wird es Unterthan und Kind nicht beßer machen.*
- III. Knabe:** *Wie mancher dünckt sich klug zu seyn /  
Der Witz / zeucht wie er glaubt mit Hauffen bey ihm ein /  
Und dennoch läst er sich / man kan es leichtlich spüren /  
Vom andern bey der Nase führen.<sup>45</sup>*
- IV. Knabe:** *Der und jener schenckt mir was /  
aber was bedeutet das?  
Soll ich meine Sinne schärfften?  
Er wil mit einer Wurst nach einen Schincken werffen.<sup>46</sup>*
- V. Knabe:** *Oft denckt ein gutter Tropff er werde sich durch Schreiben /*

*Von angenehmer Hand hoch in die Lüffte  
treiben:*

*Doch merckt er daß zu letzt der Thon gar übel  
pffiff /*

*Warumb? Sein Schreiben ist nur ein **Urias  
Brief**.<sup>47</sup>*

**VI. Knabe:** ***Kalt und warm aus einem Munde /***

***Bläst man oft in einer Stunde /<sup>48</sup>***

*Aber treuer Freundschaft Pflicht /  
ändert sich so schleunig nicht. [S. 57*

**VII. Knabe:** ***Hart gegen hart / thut selten ettwas gutts<sup>49</sup> /***

*gieb nach / mein werther Freund / und wärstu  
noch voll Muths /*

*So kan doch wo du dich zu sehr gedenckst zu  
rächen /*

*Ein stärkerer dir bald den Muth und Kräfte  
brechen.*

**VIII. Knabe:** *Lauff / lauff einfältiger man öffft dich in die  
Wette /*

*Ach wenn es in der Welt nicht so viel Thoren  
hätte!*

*Du denckst was treffliches / doch lieber  
Bruder still /*

*Es ist mit deinen Thun / ein närrischer **April**.  
(S. 56f.)*

Jedem der acht Sprecher wird ein paargereimter Vierzeiler zugestanden. Das Versmaß variiert sehr stark. Der erste *Knabe* setzt mit drei vierhebigen Knittelversen ein, die er mit einem Alexandriner abschließt. Der zweite, dritte und vierte Sprecher kombinieren Vierheber mit Alexandrinern, während der sechste sich mit vier Vierhebern begnügt und die anderen drei ausschließlich Alexandriner anbieten. Auch die Sprecherhaltung wechselt. Der erste, siebte und achte *Knabe* wenden sich an ein Du, das als *werther Freund*, aber auch als *einfältiger* charakterisiert wird (dann ist die Anrede *lieber Bruder* natürlich ironisch gemeint), der sechste trägt sein Sprichwort und die konträre Verhaltensweise als autoritative Belehrung vor, während der vierte gleichsam ein Selbstgespräch zu führen scheint. Inhaltlich sind nur die Verse des zweiten Sprechers als förmliche Erklärung eines bildhaften Sprichworts



aufzufassen, während ansonsten nur Hinweise gegeben werden auf Situationen, in denen die Sprichwörter bzw. Redensarten verwendet werden könnten. Wer z. B. nicht weiß, was es mit dem *Urias Brief* auf sich hat, dem helfen die Alexandriner des fünften Sprechers kaum weiter. Auch die Aussage des achten *Knaben* ist mehr andeutend als erklärend, aber hier kann Opitz mit einem Kommentar weiterhelfen, der einen vergleichenden Blick auf Frankreich richtet:

- Opitz:** *Die Frantzosen haben ein fast gleiches Sprüchwort / und sagen: Ein Aprill Fisch: Wiewohl derjenige / welcher ihre Sprüchwörter zusammengetragen / darvon hält / das Wort Poisson so ein Fisch heist / sey falsch / und man solle Passion lesen / anzudeuten / daß ein solcher Mensch / der zum Spott an viel Orten herumgeschickt wird / fast wie der Herr Christus von einen zum andern geführt wird. Welche Außlegung aber / wie er bekennet / und der Gebrauch an sich selber ziemlich nach einer Ruchlosigkeit und Verspottung heiliger Dinge schmeckt.<sup>50</sup>*
- Rollenhagen:** *Es ist selbiger Nation eben nichts neues: Wenn ich an das Esels=Fest gedencke / daß sie vor diesem an dem heiligen Christ=Tage zu Rom in der Haupt=Kirche gefeyret / so muß ich theils lachen / theils aber auch mich sehr darüber ärgern.<sup>51</sup>*
- Opitz:** *Es ist mir selbiges schönes Fest aus dem ersten Theil des Lateinischen Glossarij / das Du Fresne herausgegeben / bekand worden / aber wenn nur unsere Deutschen von dergleichen Alfanzereyen frey wären / so sind ihrer auch genung bey uns selber verhanden.<sup>52</sup>*
- Sachs:** *Wir werden vielleicht zu anderer Zeit darvon reden: Last indessen die Knaben nur fortfahren. (S. 57)*

Nach dieser Aufforderung setzt eine Gruppe von 22 Knaben die Sprichwörter-Revue fort. Neben Vierzeilern werden nunmehr auch Zweizeiler, aber auch Sechszweiler eingesetzt. Neben dem Paarreim

werden mehrmals auch der umarmende und der Kreuzreim verwendet. Jeder der drei Sechszeler weist ein eigenes Reimschema auf. Das Spektrum der Verstypen wird um fünf- und achthebige Verse erweitert:

- IX. Knabe:** *Du spannest allzuhoch / die Saiten / müssen  
springen<sup>53</sup> /  
Es läst sich durch Gewalt nicht jede Sache  
zwingen.*
- X. Knabe:** *So muß wenn einer Gähnt / der gantze  
Hauffe gähnen<sup>54</sup> /  
So steckt ein reudig Schaff auch gantze herden  
an<sup>55</sup> /  
Seht was in solchem Fall offt die Gesellschaft  
kan /  
und sucht euch böser Arth bey zeiten zu  
entwähnen.*
- XI. Knabe:** *So breche wer sich nicht bißweilen biegen  
kan<sup>56</sup> /  
Ein Mensch der immerdar auff seinen Sinne  
bleibet; [S. 58]  
wird oft zu einem Spott den Thoren einver-  
leibet/  
und lernt daß störrig seyn gar selten gut  
gethan.*
- XII. Knabe:** *Nachdem die Gäste sind / brat jedem eine  
Wurst<sup>57</sup> /  
Mit Waßer nicht mit Wein lösch eines Bauren  
Durst<sup>58</sup> /  
Wofern du wilst den Sack mit zarter Seide  
nähn<sup>59</sup> /  
So ist es lieber Freund umb deine Müh'  
geschehn.*
- XIII. Knabe:** *Geh wo du dich nicht selbst verschwatzter  
Mensch betörst /  
Und rede nicht so bald / das was du sagen  
hörst /  
auf allen Plätzen nach / man wird vom hören  
sagen /*

*Nicht selten **auf das Maul** mit Schand und Spott **geschlagen**.*<sup>60</sup>

**XIV. Knabe:** *Sey dienstbegierig / denn ein Dienst  
Hat diesen Vortheil zum Gewienst /  
daß niemand ihn so leicht verlöscht /  
**Weil eine Hand die andre wäscht.***<sup>61</sup>

**XV. Knabe:** *Wenn es glückt so kan sich auch der geringste  
trefflich weisen /  
und ein blinder findet offit im Versehn ein  
guttus **Eysen.***<sup>62</sup>

**XVI. Knabe:** *Steht weil ihr stehen könnt / und sieget weil ihr  
siegst /  
Sonst wo ihr fallt / so frists / der / **welcher  
liegt / der liegt.***<sup>63</sup> (S. 57f.)

Der 17. *Knabe* zeichnet sich dadurch aus, daß er daktylische Vierheber mit alternierenden Alexandrinern kombiniert:

**XVII. Knabe:** *Wie mancher Schmarotzer gesellt sich zu dir /  
Trau aber nicht jeden und lerne von mir.  
Ein solcher Vogel giebt dir einen schlechten  
Lohn;  
**Er wischt das fette Maul / und eilet bald  
darvon.***<sup>64</sup>

**XVIII. Knabe:** ***Bringt** Feur und Stroh ja nicht zusammen /  
Sonst giebt es wahrlich solche **flammen** /  
daß ob man gleich zu wercke geht /  
Der Brand doch nicht zu löschen steht.*<sup>65</sup> (S. 58)

Der 19. Redner trägt seine Redensart nicht im Sinne einer Belehrung vor, sondern als Reflexion über die eigene Situation:

**XIX. Knabe:** *Es mag ein anderer sich ietzt nach mir  
bemühn /  
Ich habe zwar das Spiel vermeßen ange-  
fangen;  
Doch schauen diese zu / Die neben mir  
gegangen /  
Ich kann vor mich **den Kopf** schon aus der  
**Schlinge ziehn***<sup>66</sup> / (S. 58)

Während bisher die Sprichwortpräsentationen der *Knaben* beziehungslos aufeinander folgten, können die beiden nächsten Aussagen durchaus als Wechselrede verstanden werden. Der 20. *Knabe* wird wegen seiner recht derben Redensart vom Folgeredner zurechtgewiesen:

- XX. Knabe:** *Wilstu verständig heißen /  
Und soll man dich nicht beißen /  
So mustu keinem **Kind und Gecken** /  
**Die Finger in die Freße stecken.**<sup>67</sup>*
- XXI. Knabe:** *Ach laß den Unrath bitt' ich stehn /  
Es kan dir sonst nicht anders gehn:  
Pfui lieber Freund / Pfui schäme dich /  
**Wer Pech angreiff't besudelt sich.**<sup>68</sup>*
- XXII. Knabe:** *Es ist was artiges auf der verkehrten Welt:  
Je mehr du Gelder hast: je mehr bekommstu  
Geld. [S. 59]  
**Wer Brod hat / diesem beut man Brod.**<sup>69</sup>  
Den Armen läst man in der Noth.*
- XXIII. Knabe:** *Ach! ich dachte mich bald hier / und bald  
wieder her zu wenden /  
Und vermeint ich hätte schon Glück und Nutz  
in meinen händen:  
Aber itzt ist alles aus: Alles ist mir gantz zu  
wieder:  
Denn **ich setze mich umbsonst zwischen  
zweyen Stülen nieder.**<sup>70</sup>*
- XXIV. Knabe:** *Verhöle wie du wilst mit Lügen dein Ver-  
brechen /  
Und wend' an Schmiinck' und Farb' und an-  
strich deinen Fleiß;  
Du kanst dich deiner Schuld / doch nimmer-  
mehr entbrechen /  
Und **wäschest dich** / o Thor! o Kind / **mit  
Kohlen weis.**<sup>71</sup>*
- XXV. Knabe:** *Thu nur nicht allzu groß /  
Du gibst dich selber bloß /  
Geh' hemme dein Verlangen /  
Es weist sich allzuviel /*

*Du bist noch weit vom Ziel /  
Und hast **das Lied zu hoch** mein Bruder  
angefangen.<sup>72</sup> (S. 58f.)*

Die Äußerungen des 26. und des 27. *Knaben* sind thematisch aufeinander bezogen, denn es geht um zu hohe Ansprüche und Unentschlossenheit bei der Partnerwahl, was letztlich zu einem negativen Resultat führt; statt des erhofften süßen Honigs muß man mit bitterer Myrrhe vorlieb nehmen, denn man findet keinen Partner mehr. Dieser Sachverhalt wird zunächst aus der Perspektive der Frau gesehen:

**XXVI. Knabe:** *So gehts wenn man zu lange wartet /  
Wenn einem keine Heyrath taugt;  
So ist es denn also geartet /  
Daß man vor Honig Myrhen saugt /  
Und wenn man lang umbher gewandelt /  
zuletzt mit **Fleder=Wischen** handelt.<sup>73</sup> (S. 59)*

In der Gegenrede wird der Mann, dessen Heiratsanträge wiederholt abgelehnt worden sind, ermahnt, sich nicht über die 'alten Jungfern' lustig zu machen, sondern sich seine eigene Situation zu vergegenwärtigen:

**XXVII. Knabe:** *Mich däucht wer so mit Körben ist beladen<sup>74</sup> /  
darff wohl nicht erst nach Feder=Wischen  
sehn /  
Er schaue nur auff seinen eignen Schaden  
So fühlet er wie weh' ihm ist geschehn. (S. 59)*

Die thematische Nähe der beiden Äußerungen führt zu einer Schlußfolgerung, die beide *Knaben* gemeinsam vortragen und die auf das Sprichwort "Wer den Schaden hat, darf für den Spott (vors gespot) nicht sorgen" anspielen:<sup>75</sup>

**Beide Knaben:** *So geht es in der Welt / nimbt man sich nicht  
in acht /  
So wird man bey Verlust zuletzt noch  
ausgelacht. (S. 59)*

Der 28. *Knabe* präsentiert eine Sprichwortweisheit, die bereits zu Beginn der *Scena* thematisiert worden ist. Salomon als Vertreter der

Hebräer bietet als erstes ein sozialkritisches Sprichwort, das die Moderatoren zu unterschiedlichen Reaktionen veranlaßt:

- Salomon:** *Kan wol etwas artiger seyn / als wenn sie sagt[en]: Es sey nichts abgeschmackters / als daß die Knechte auff Pferden sitzen / und die Herrn zu Fuße gehen.<sup>76</sup> [S. 35]*
- Opitz:** *Nichts abgeschmackters freylich / aber auch nichts gemeiners zumahl heutiges Tages.*
- Sachs:** *Lieber Opitz / macht ihr die Auslegung nicht zu deutlich / sonst werdet ihr ein übel Tranckgeld zu lohne tragen; ihr wißt ja das bekandte deutsche Sprüchwort wohl.<sup>77</sup>*
- Brand:** *Wo er es nicht weiß /so sollen es ihm unsere Knaben / hernach deutlich genug vorstellen. (S. 34f.)*

Diese Vorankündigung kann nur auf das Sprichwort des 28. Knaben bezogen werden:

- XXVIII. Knabe:** *Spielt einer nur die Wahrheit auff / mich däucht er wird bey diesem Lauff Der Zeiten seinen Lohn bekommen Ich hab' es gar zu oft vernommen: Wer von der Warheit spielt / den schlägt man ungescheut / Die Fiedeln umb den Kopff / vor seine Redligkeit.<sup>78</sup> [S. 60]*
- XXIX. Knabe:** *Glaubt wenn man hir und dort / von Zeitungen gesprochen / Die euch höchst angenehm / glaubt Freunde / nicht zu leicht. Der Bote / der da hinckt / kommt plötzlich angestochen<sup>79</sup> / Und macht daß alle Lust gantz schleunig von euch weicht. (S. 59f.)*

Der 30. Knabe scheint mit seinen Redensarten die Diskrepanz zwischen Wunsch und Wirklichkeit oder Täuschung und Realität verdeutlichen zu wollen, wenn er auf die Mode der Fontangen hinweist:

**XXX. Knabe:** *Was heist es **Schlößer in der Luft**<sup>80</sup> /  
und Häuser in den Wolcken **bauen** /  
Es heist bey einer Weibs=Persohn  
die prächtigen Fontangen schauen.<sup>81</sup> (S. 60)*

Die Moderatoren reagieren mit selbstkritischer Zurückhaltung und nutzen die Gelegenheit zum Tadel der Modetorheiten, bevor Opitz auf das Ende des Auftritts drängt:

**Opitz:** *Mich däucht wir haben mit unsern großen  
Pariücken nicht eben viel Ursach dem  
Frauenzimmer die Fontangen vorzuwerffen.*

**Sachs:** *Unsere alte Deutschen hielten von beyden  
nicht viel / indeßen muß es doch bey den  
meisten seyn / weil es mode ist.*

**Rollenhagen:** *Drumb ist es auch bey Gott / wenn ich also  
reden darff / mode / dass er uns durch eben  
die Völcker / denen wir so thöricht nachaffen /  
auff das hefftigste strafft.*

**Opitz:** *Hirvon wäre viel zu reden / aber wir müssen zu  
dem Ende eilen / fahret ihr fort. (S. 60)*

Mit einem Vielspruch wird die Sprichwörter-Revue fortgesetzt:

**XXXI. Knabe:** ***Es ist nicht alles Gold was gleißet.**<sup>82</sup>  
Nicht alles keusch was Jungfrau heißet /  
Nicht alles Tugendhafft / was sich nach  
Tugend nennt /  
Glückseelig / wer hirbey den Unterscheid  
erkennt.*

**XXXII. Knabe:** ***Mit Großen eß' ich nicht zu gerne reife  
Früchte**  
Sie werffen mir gewiß die Schalen ins  
Gesichte.<sup>83</sup>*

**XXXIII. Knabe:** ***Viel Köch'** ich sag es schon / es sey auch wie  
es sey  
**Versaltzen** insgemein / die Speisen und den  
**Brey:**<sup>84</sup> (S. 60)*

Der letzte *Knabe* wendet sich mit einer weiteren Redensart an das Publikum, beansprucht Glaubwürdigkeit für die vorgetragenen

Sprichwortweisheiten, die nicht auf eigenen Einfällen beruhen, und schließt mit einer Abschiedsformel:

**XXXIV. Knabe:** *Jhr möget werthen Freund' auff unsre Sprüche bauen /  
 Diß laß ich euch zuletzt / wir saugen unser Kunst /  
 ja aus den Fingern nicht / drumb könnt ihr sicher trauen /  
 Lebt wohl und schliüst uns stets in eure Lieb' und Gunst.*<sup>85</sup> (S. 60)

Nach dieser Präsentation kann Agricola zufrieden feststellen: Ich meine diese kurtze Vorstellung hat genung dargethan / daß wir den Außländern in der Menge und Scharffsinnigkeit der Sprüchwörter nichts nachgeben (S. 61). Mit den letzten Äußerungen der vierten Scena leiten die Moderatoren bereits zum nächsten Thema über:

**Sachs:** *Bey den Fabeln dürfft es mehr zu thun setzen.*  
**Opitz:** *Jch höre die Ticht- und Redner=Kunst / wie auch die Sitten= und Staats=Lehre werden sich angeben / und jede ihr die Erfindung und den Nutz der Fabeln zueignen. Ist also sehr wohlgetan / daß wir vor dieses mal die Helden=Tahten / und was denselben anhängich / auf die Seite gesetzt haben / indem wir Arbeit genung vor uns finden / und alle Hände wohl zu thun haben werden.*

**Sachs:** *Es wird ja doch auch endlich eine Maß müßen gehalten werden / damitt wir den Zuhörern keinen Überdrus und Eckel erregen.*

**Rollenhagen:** *Die Zeit wird hierinnen / wie in andern stücken / der beste Lehrmeister seyn. Doch ist es freylich gewiß / daß die Fabeln noch mehr als die Rätzel und Sprüch=Wörter in sich begreifen / und wir also je weiter wir kommen / je mehr gleichsam in ein tiefes Meer gerathen / worinnen wir uns vor den Klippen / der übrigen Weitläufigkeit / und allzusehr umbschränckten Kürtze genau hütten müßen.*



**Agricola:** *Nun frisch an das Werck geschritten / und den Anfang gemacht / das Ende wird sich schon finden. Wir wollen aber doch zum mindesten vorher eine kleine Ruh' schöpfen / und hernach desto getroster an die Arbeit gehen. (S. 61)*

Gryphius verwendet nicht nur in der vierten *Scena* Sprichwörter und sprichwörtliche Redensarten. Im Nachspann der fünften *Scena* erscheint *Marcolphus* auf dem Schauplatz und gibt seine Sprichwortweisheiten zum besten<sup>86</sup>, und die Äußerung der *Catualda*, *Gut Dinge will Weile haben*,<sup>87</sup> dürfte im Schulactus *Der Deutschen Sprache unterschiedene Alter* keineswegs das einzige Sprichwort sein. Wander hat aus der vierten *Scena* viele, aber keineswegs alle Sprichwörter zitiert. In seinem Quellenverzeichnis wird nur das Programm des Schulactus genannt;<sup>88</sup> doch die übernommenen Sprichwortzitate sind teilweise mit Stellenangaben versehen, die nur im Hinblick auf die Handschrift sinnvoll sind. Dies erlaubt vielleicht den Schluß, daß die Sprichwörter des Christian Gryphius in Wanders Lexikon der Lektüre eines Mitarbeiters aus Breslau zu verdanken sind, der die Handschrift gelesen hat, aber nur das gedruckte Programm als Quelle gewürdigt wissen wollte.

Der Schulactus des Christian Gryphius über *Der Teutschen Rätzel=Weißheit Ersten (...) Theil* hat durchaus Nachwirkung gezeigt. 30 Jahre später brachte Gottlieb Wilhelm Keller (1688-1757) am Magdalenaum *Das in Sprüch=Wörtern redende Schlesien* zur Aufführung. In seiner Einladungsschrift beruft er sich nicht nur auf die Sprichwortsammlungen des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts, sondern erinnert auch Christian Gryphius, der A. 1692. *einen gelehrten Actum von den Rätzeln, Sprüchwörtern und Fabeln gehalten*, aber *in demselben wegen angewachsener Materie nur etliche und 30 (habe) erklären können*, während er selbst etwa 1200 *habe anbringen können*.<sup>89</sup> Kellers Text scheint nicht überliefert zu sein,<sup>90</sup> aber die in der Einladungsschrift abgedruckten Gesangseinlagen zeigen eine hohe Sprichwortdichte, ohne jedoch Erklärungen zu vermitteln. Insofern vergleicht Keller wohl *Äpfel mit Birnen*,<sup>91</sup> aber: *Klappern gehört zum Handwerk*.<sup>92</sup>

**Anmerkungen**

<sup>1</sup> Die folgenden Ausführungen überschneiden sich in den einleitenden Passagen mit meinem Beitrag: Christian Gryphius und das Breslauer Schultheater, in: Christel Meier / Angelika Kemper (Hgg.): Europäische Schauplätze des frühneuzeitlichen Theaters. Normierungskräfte und Diversität (Symbolische Kommunikation und gesellschaftliche Wertesysteme. Schriftenreihe des Sonderforschungsbereichs 496, Bd. 34), Münster 2011, S. 153-168. Die Ausführungen über das Breslauer Schultheater und über die Biographie des Christian Gryphius bleiben hier ausgespart.

<sup>2</sup> Zum Breslauer Schultheater generell Konrad Gajek (Hg.): Das Breslauer Schultheater im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert. Einladungsschriften zu den Schulactus und Szenare zu den Aufführungen *förmlicher Comödien* an den protestantischen Gymnasien (Rara ex bibliothecis Silesiis 3), Tübingen 1994 (Nachwort). Mein daran anknüpfender Beitrag *Das Breslauer Schultheater im Dienste der memoria. Mit einem Anhang: Der Spielplan des Breslauer Schultheaters von 1613 bis 1783* befindet sich im Druck.

<sup>3</sup> Zur tabellarischen Übersicht vgl. Peil (wie Anm. 1), S.166-168.

<sup>4</sup> Dietrich Eggers / James Hardin (Hgg.), Christian Gryphius: Der deutschen Sprache unterschiedene Alter und Wachstum. Faksimiledruck der Ausgabe von 1708 (Nachdrucke deutscher Literatur des 17. Jahrhunderts 18), Bern [u. a.] 1985.

<sup>5</sup> Dazu Paul Moser: Christian Gryphius. Ein schlesischer Dichter des ausgehenden XVII. Jahrhunderts, Würzburg 1938, S. 80f.; Eggers / Hardin (wie Anm. 4), S. 9f.\*

<sup>6</sup> James N. Hardin/Dietrich Eggers (Hgg.): Christian Gryphius: Poetische Wälder. Faksimiledruck der Ausgabe von 1707 (Nachdrucke Deutscher Literatur des 17. Jahrhunderts, Bd. 24), Bern [u. a.] 1985.

<sup>7</sup> Abgedruckt bei Konrad Gajek; Einladungsschriften zu den Aufführungen der Schulactus von Christian Gryphius, in: Germanica Wratislaviensia 85 (1989), S. 302-426.

<sup>8</sup> Konrad Gajek (Hg.): Christian Gryphius: Actus von den Helden-Büchern oder Romanen (1694). Aus der Handschrift hg., erläutert und mit einem Nachwort versehen (Regensburger Beiträge Bd. 9), Frankfurt a. M. [u. a.] 1994.

<sup>9</sup> Als Faksimile abgedruckt bei Gajek (wie Anm. 7); vgl. VD17 12:186505B; ausführlicher zu diesem Actus insgesamt Dietrich Eggers; Die Bewertung deutscher Sprache und Literatur in den deutschen Schulactus des Christian Gryphius (Deutsche Studien Bd. 5), Meisenheim am Glan 1967, S. 88-103.

<sup>10</sup> Vgl. Gajek (wie Anm. 2), S. 43\*.

<sup>11</sup> Gryphius, Poetische Wälder (wie Anm. 6), S. 665-741.

<sup>12</sup> Vgl. Gryphius, Poetische Wälder (wie Anm. 6), S. 725: *Bey dem Deutschen Actu von der Rätzel=Weißheit sang zuerst Die Thorheit*. Vgl. ebd., S. 726: Zuletzt in eben selbiger Vorstellung sang der Verstand.

<sup>13</sup> Gemeint ist Marquard vom Stein (\*1425/1430-1495/96), der die von Geofroy IV. de la Tour (1326-1404?) verfaßte Exempelsammlung *Le Livre du chevalier de la Tour Landry pour l'enseignement de ses filles* (1371/72) unter dem Titel *Der*

*Ritter vom Turn von den Exempeln der gotsforcht unn eberkeit* (Basel 1493; Nachdruck Unterschneidheim 1970) übersetzt hat. Diese Übersetzung wurde 1538 überarbeitet und mehrfach nachgedruckt; dazu Werner Röcke, *Der Ritter vom Turn*, in Walther Killy (Hg.): *Literatur Lexikon. Autoren und Werke deutscher Sprache*, Bd. 9 (1991), S. 488.

<sup>14</sup> Gryphius scheint Gabriel Rollenhagen auch den Froschmeuseler seines Vaters Georg Rollenhagen (1542-1609) zuschreiben zu wollen, denn in der *Scena 5* gibt Homer den 'auf der Bühne' anwesenden Rollenhagen als Übersetzer seiner (ihm lange fälschlicherweise zugeschriebenen) *Batrachomyomachia* aus: *Im übrigen / wenn man sich ja ettwan einbilden wolle / daß meine Fabeln nur von tiefsinnigen und ernstlichen / nicht aber wie des Æsopi zugleich von lustigen Sachen handelten / so schlage man nur meinen Frosch= und Mäuse Krieg auf / den du / o Rollenhagen / so artlich deutsch gegeben / und unter dem Tittel des Froschmäußlers deinen Lands=Leuten mitgetheilet hast* (S. 71).

<sup>15</sup> Ich zitiere nach der (fehlerhaft) durchpaginierten Handschrift UB Wrocław, R 2020 mit der entsprechenden Seitenangabe am Ende des Zitats. Seitenzahlen in eckigen Klammern markieren einen Seitenwechsel in der Handschrift. Nasalstricher werden stillschweigend aufgelöst. Durch Unterstreichung hervorgehobene Textpassagen erscheinen hier im Fettdruck. Damit wird der Anweisung in der Handschrift entsprochen: *Die unterstrichnen Wörter in den Reimen / müssen etwas gröber gedruckt werden* (S. 56).

<sup>16</sup> Gemeint ist der griechische Sophist und Philologe Zenobios, der zur Zeit Kaiser Hadrians in Rom lebte; dazu Der Kleine Pauly, *Lexikon der Antike*, Bd. 5, München 1979, Sp. 1493.

<sup>17</sup> Andreas Tscherning: *Centuria Proverbiorum Alis Imperatoris Muslimici distichis Latino-Germanicis expressa*, Breslau 1641.

<sup>18</sup> Adam Olearius: *Persianischer Rosenthal, in welchem viel lustige Historien, scharffsinnige Reden u. nützliche polit. Regeln u. Sprüchwörter*, Schleswig 1654. Die lateinische Ausgabe von Georg Gentig (*Musladini Sadi rosarium politicum, sive amoenum sortis humanae theatrum de persico in latinum versum*) ist für 1651 und 1655 nachweisbar. Saadi († um 1290) gilt als volkstümlichster Poet Persiens.

<sup>19</sup> Ali Ibn Abi Talib, ein Vetter Mohammeds, ist nach Abu Bakr, Omar I. und Othmann der vierte Kalif; nach seiner Ermordung 661 kam es zur Trennung von Sunniten und Schiiten.

<sup>20</sup> Vgl. Tscherning (wie Anm. 17), S. 21. Karl Friedrich Wilhelm Wander, *Deutsches Sprichwörter-Lexikon*, Bd. 2, Sp. 1731, zitiert dieses Verspaar im Kommentar zur Redensart *kurtz vnd gut* (mit Verweis auf Franck, Egenolff und Gruter) und behauptet: "Unser »Kurz und gut« wird aber durch den Tscherninger Vers nicht in Schatten gestellt." Bd. 3, Sp. 1550, bringt Wander dieses Verspaar als Gryphius-Zitat ohne Verweis auf Tscherning.

<sup>21</sup> Vgl. Wander, Bd. 3, Sp. 214.

<sup>22</sup> Zu Crassus vgl. Cassius Dio, 40,27; zu Tomyris und ihrem Ausspruch vgl. Herodot, 1,214.

<sup>23</sup> Vgl. Tscherning (wie Anm. 17), S. 16.

<sup>24</sup> Vgl. Tscherning (wie Anm. 17), S. 41.

<sup>25</sup> Vgl. Wander, Bd. 2, Sp. 706.

<sup>26</sup> Wahrscheinlich spielt Agricola hier auf das Sprichwort des 32. Knaben an (dazu s. o. vor Anm. 81).

<sup>27</sup> Vgl. Tscherning (wie Anm. 17), S. 33.

<sup>28</sup> Vgl. Wander, Bd. 4, Sp. 435.

<sup>29</sup> Vgl. Tscherning (wie Anm. 17), S. 56.

<sup>30</sup> Zitiert bei Wander, Bd. 3, Sp. 921: "Si tacuisses sapiens (philosophus) mansisses."

<sup>31</sup> Vgl. Wander, Bd. 4, Sp. 106.

<sup>32</sup> Pred. 1,15. Das Adjektiv schlecht ist hier als Synonym für gerade zu verstehen.

<sup>33</sup> Vgl. Tscherning (wie Anm. 17), S. 66.

<sup>34</sup> Vgl. Wander, Bd. 4, Sp. 759.

<sup>35</sup> Vgl. Olearius (wie Anm. 18), S. 22.

<sup>36</sup> Vgl. Wander, Bd. 2, Sp. 866.

<sup>37</sup> Vgl. Olearius (wie Anm. 18), S. 45.

<sup>38</sup> Vgl. Martin Opitz: Buch von der Deutschen Poeterey, Breslau 1624, Cap. VII: Erstlich / weil offte ein Buchstabe eines doppelten lautes ist / soll man sehen / das er in schliessung der reimen nicht vermengtet werde. Zum exempel: Das e in dem worte ehren wird wie ein griechisch ε, in dem worte nehren wie ein η außgesprochen: kan ich also mit diesen zweyen keinen reim schliessen. Zitat nach der online-Ausgabe: <http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/5431/1>.

<sup>39</sup> Wander, Bd. 5, Sp. 476, bringt unter Berufung auf Gryphius das Sprichwort "Wer in der Wüste durstet, dem ist eine frische Rübe lieber als eine Perle", liefert im Kommentar aber das wörtliche Zitat nach.

<sup>40</sup> Vgl. Olearius (wie Anm. 16), S. 78: Einem Menschen an dürren und wüsten Orten ist eine gekochte Rübe viel werther und nützlicher als alles Golt und Gelt / darumm sol man dieses nicht über alles schätzen.

<sup>41</sup> Dazu Eggers (wie Anm. 19), S. 94-98.

<sup>42</sup> Wander, Bd. 5, Sp. 1740, zitiert das Verspaar als "Wenn zwei zusammen spielen, muss der dritte den Schaden fühlen." Offensichtlich wird die Unterstreichung nicht konsequent zur Markierung der Sprichwörter eingesetzt.

<sup>43</sup> Vgl. Wander, Bd. 1, Sp. 225 (mit Verweis auf Tappius und Henisch), und Bd. 2, Sp. 543: "Die Herren schlagen einander den Ball zu."

<sup>44</sup> Vgl. Wander, Bd. 1, Sp. 58f. (mit Verweis auf Tappius), Bd. 4, Sp. 1667, und Bd. 5, Sp. 742f.

<sup>45</sup> Vgl. Wander, Bd. 3, Sp. 952 (mit Verweis auf Franck, Tappius und Eyerling), und Sp. 956 (mit Waldis-Zitat und engl. und frz. Parallelen).

<sup>46</sup> Vgl. Wander, Bd. 5, Sp. 468 und 471.

<sup>47</sup> Dazu Wander, Bd. 1, S. 1497 (mit Verweis auf Eyerling).

<sup>48</sup> Zitiert bei Wander, Bd. 2, Sp. 1118 (mit Waldis-Zitat).

<sup>49</sup> Vgl. Wander, Bd. 2, Sp. 365: "Hart gegen hart nimmer gut ward" (mit Verweis auf Gruter und Lehmann und mit verschiedenen fremdsprachigen Varianten).

<sup>50</sup> Zur Redensart 'in den April schicken' vgl. Lutz Röhrich, Das große Lexikon der sprichwörtlichen Redensarten, Freiburg [u. a.] 1991, Bd. 1, S. 94f.; zum Aprilscherz vgl. auch Wander, Bd. 1, Sp. 114; Bd. 5, Sp. 787f.

<sup>51</sup> Zum Eselsfest referiert Wander, Bd. 5, Sp. 1239f.: "Schon im 9. Jahrhundert findet man Spuren von dem Eselsfeste in Frankreich, welches viele Jahrhunderte dauerte, ohne dass es abgeschafft werden konnte. Man beging das zum Gedächtniss der Flucht der Jungfrau Maria nach Aegypten. Man suchte das schönste Mädchen in der Stadt aus, putzte es so prächtig als möglich und gab ihr ein ordentliches Knäblein in den Arm. Hierauf setzte man es auf einen kostbaren angeschirrten Esel und führte es in diesem Aufzuge unter Begleitung der Geistlichkeit und des Volkes in die Kirche oder Hauptkirche, wo der Esel neben den hohen Altar gestellt wurde. Mit grossem Pomp ward die Messe gelesen, doch jedes Stück derselben: das Kyrie, Gloria und Credo mit dem lächerlichen Refrain: Hinham, hinham geendigt. Schrie der Esel zufällig dazu, desto besser. Wenn die Ceremonie zu Ende war, sprach der Priester nicht den Segen oder die gewöhnlichen Worte, mit denen er das Volk sonst auseinander gehen liess, sondern er iate dreimal wie ein Esel und das Volk, anstatt sein ordentliches Amen zu singen, iate ihm dreimal wieder entgegen."

<sup>52</sup> Im *Catalogus Bibliothecae Gryphianae*, Breslau 1707, S. 115, ist das *Glossarium mediae et infimae Latinitatis* des Charles du Fresne DuCange als dreibändige Ausgabe, Paris 1678, verzeichnet.

<sup>53</sup> Wander, Bd. 3, S. 1842, bringt das Gryphius-Zitat im Kommentar zum Sprichwort "Zu hoch gespannte Saiten reissen gern."

<sup>54</sup> Wander, Bd. 1, Sp. 1316, zitiert die Variante "Wenn einer gehnet, so gehnen sie alle" nach Henisch.

<sup>55</sup> Wander, Bd. 4, Sp. 57, verweist für das Sprichwort "Ein rüudiges (grindiges) schaf steckt die gantze heerde an" auf Franck, Henisch und Lehmann.

<sup>56</sup> Wander, Bd. 1, Sp. 372, bietet die Variante "Was sich nicht biegen lassen will, muss brechen".

<sup>57</sup> Wander, Bd. 1, Sp. 1354, bietet die Variante "Wie der Gast ist, so wird die Wurst gebraten".

<sup>58</sup> Wander, Bd. 1, Sp. 255, bietet nur die Variante "Bauern darf man keinen starken Wein geben, es thut's ein frischer Brunnen" (nach Henisch).

<sup>59</sup> Wander, Bd. 3, Sp. 1807, bietet die Varianten "Alte Säcke näht man nicht mit Seide" und "Wer wird den Sack mit Seide nähen" (Sp. 1817).

<sup>60</sup> Wander, Bd. 2, Sp. 782, weist die Varianten "Vom Hörensagen und Wieder-sagen wird man mit Recht aufs Maul geschlagen" und "Vom Hörensagen wird mancher aufs Maul geschlagen" erst für das 19. Jahrhundert nach.

<sup>61</sup> Wander, Bd. 2, Sp. 298, verweist für "Eine Hand wäscht (kraut, reibt) die andere" auf Franck, Petri, Egenolff und Eyring.

<sup>62</sup> Vgl. Wander, Bd. 1, Sp. 401: "Ein blinder findt auch ein Hufeisen" (nach Lehmann).

<sup>63</sup> Wander, Bd. 3, Sp. 188, weist die Variante "Wer da ligt, der ligt, dem hilfset niemand widder auff" für Agricola, Franck, Tappius, Petri, Lehmann und Schottel nach.

<sup>64</sup> Wander, Bd. 3, Sp. 513, bietet die Redensart “Das Maul wischen vnd davon gehen” nach Agricola.

<sup>65</sup> Wander, Bd. 4, Sp. 915, bietet die Variante “Stroh und Feuer gethan zusammen, geben leichtlich grosse Flammen” ohne Beleg.

<sup>66</sup> Wander, Bd. 2, Sp. 1522, weist die Redensart “Den kopff auss der schlingen ziehen” für Tappius und Schottel nach.

<sup>67</sup> Wander; Bd. 3, Sp. 924, bringt unter Hinweis auf Tappius, Franck, Eyering und Henisch die Variante: “Wer den narren vnd kinderen die finger ins maul steckt, der were gern gebissen.”

<sup>68</sup> Wander, Bd. 3, Sp. 1200, bietet die Variante “ Wer Pech angreiff, der besudelt sich” und verweist auf Sirach 13,1, Henisch und Lehmann.

<sup>69</sup> Wander, Bd. 1, Sp. 478, bringt unter Hinweis auf Tappius, Franck und Henisch die Variante “Wer brod hat, dem beütt man brod.”

<sup>70</sup> Zu dieser Redensart vgl. Röhrich (wie Anm. 50), S. 1581f.

<sup>71</sup> Vgl. Wander, Bd. 2, Sp. 1460, mit Hinweis auf Franck und Lehmann.

<sup>72</sup> Vgl. Wander, Bd. 3, Sp. 183.

<sup>73</sup> Wander, Bd. 1, Sp. 1051, bietet die Variante “Sie hat Flederwische feil” und dazu die Erklärungen “ Kehrt jeden Freier ab” und “Kann keinen Mann bekommen” Die von Röhrich (wie Anm. 50), S. 458, zitierten Belege sprechen eher für die zweite Bedeutung.

<sup>74</sup> Wander, Bd. 2, Sp. 1539, kann die Redensart “Er ist mit Körben beladen” nur mit dem Hinweis auf Gryphius belegen. Informativer sind seine Erläuterungen zur Redensart “Er hat einen Korb bekommen” (ebd., Sp. 1538f.); vgl. dazu auch Röhrich (wie Anm. 50), S. 872-875.

<sup>75</sup> Dazu Wander, Bd. 4, Sp. 48f.

<sup>76</sup> Zitiert bei Wander, Bd. 2, Sp. 1424 (mit holländischer Variante).

<sup>77</sup> Vgl. Wander, Bd. 4, Sp. 1760: “Wer die Wahrheit sagt, bekommt schlecht Trinkgeld.”

<sup>78</sup> Wander, Bd. 4, Sp. 1760, bietet die Variante “Wer die Wahrheit geigt, dem schlegt man die Geigen (die Fiedel, den Bogen) um den Kopf” unter Hinweis auf Petri, Henisch, Lehmann, Eyering, und Schottel.

<sup>79</sup> Wander, Bd. 1, Sp. 442, zitiert nach Henisch: “Der hinkende bot kompt allzeit hernach vnd bringet die gewisseste zeitung.”

<sup>80</sup> Wander, Bd. 4, Sp. 245, verweist für die Redensart “Ein schloss in die lufft bawen” auf Franck, Eyering, Egenolff und Schottel. Für die Variante “Er bawt Häuser in Lufft” beruft Wander sich auf Lehmann (Bd. 5, Sp. 1416).

<sup>81</sup> Johann Heinrich Zedler: *Universal-Lexicon*, Bd. 9 (1735), Sp. 1456: *Fontange, oder Aufsatz, ist ein von weissen Flor oder Spitzen über einen absonderlich dazu gebogenen und umwundenen Drat in die Höhe gethürmte und Falten=weiß über einander gesteckte Haube, 2. 3. oder 4fach hinter einander aufgezogen, um, die Ohren herum abgeschlagen, gefältelt, und mit geknüpfften Band=Schleiffen von allerhand Couleur und Sorten, sowohl von forne als hinten gezieret und besteckt; die gehörigen Theile dazu, woraus die Fontange geknüpfft und zusammen gesteckt wird, sind, der Hauben=Drat, die Commode, das Nest von Drat, der Keller darüber, die Pavilote und das Band (...)* Die Art und Aufsteckung der Fontangen

*sind unterschiedlich und variren gar öffters.* Zedlers Erklärung ist wörtlich übernommen aus dem *Frauenzimmer=Lexicon*, Leipzig 1715, Sp. 555f.

<sup>82</sup> Das Sprichwort “Es ist nicht alles golde, das do gleisset” kommentiert Wander, Bd. 1, Sp. 1789, ausführlich, ohne in der langen Liste seiner Belege auch Gryphius anzuführen. Den Vielspruch scheint Wander nicht zu kennen.

<sup>83</sup> Wander Bd. 2, Sp. 560f., kennt nur die Variante “Mit grossen herrn ist nit gut (aus einem hute) kirssen essen, sie werffen eim die stil ann hals (ins Gesicht).”

<sup>84</sup> Wander bietet die Varianten “Viel Köch versaltzen den Brey” (Bd. 2, Sp. 1447) und “Viel Köche versalzen das Mus (die Suppe)” (Sp. 1448).

<sup>85</sup> Wander, Bd. 1, Sp. 1021, weist die Redensart “Er hat es auss den fingern gesogen” für Tappius, Eying und Franck nach.

<sup>86</sup> Dazu Peil (wie Anm. 1), S. 164.

<sup>87</sup> Gryphius, Alter (wie Anm. 4), S. 46.

<sup>88</sup> Wander, Bd. 1, S. XXXVI.

<sup>89</sup> Gajek (wie Anm. 3), S. 409.

<sup>90</sup> Gajek (wie Anm. 3), S. 52\*, weist für Keller nur auf insgesamt 31 Einladungsschriften hin.

<sup>91</sup> Vgl. Röhrich (wie Anm. 50), S. 93.

<sup>92</sup> Wander, Bd. 2, Sp. 1366.

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“IF THERE WERE NO CLOUDS, WE SHOULDN’T ENJOY  
THE SUN”: THE CROSSCULTURAL VIEW AND MULTI-  
FACETED MEANING OF A PROVERB

**Abstract:** This study discusses an experiment with the semantics of the English proverb “If there were no clouds, we shouldn’t enjoy the sun.” The individual interpretations of this proverb by thirty six Bulgarian bachelor students fluent in English are compared with the definition(s) of the proverb and its linguocultural semantic analysis involving the application of the cultureme. The findings reveal a large area of semantic overlap between the proverb meaning and its perception by non-English respondents.

**Keywords:** rhetoric, ethics, semantics, associations, cultureme, proverb meaning, imagery, linguistic culturology

Ethics and rhetoric in Europe have since classical times been following two distinct lines of development, although there have also been times when they would work jointly. When composing their speeches, Roman orators as a rule used rhetorical devices to put across their ethical or political messages in a more persuasive way. As regards the ethical value of political communication, the eminent European rhetorician Quintilian viewed this aspect of public life in the same way as Cicero did before him: he was convinced that only good and knowledgeable persons could and should become writers and orators and that only persons of wisdom and integrity should be entrusted with the task of shaping public opinion and acting as leaders of the community (Quintilian 1982: 36, 702, 704). Proverbs have always been among the tools most frequently used by orators in speeches meant to persuade the audience into thinking and acting in the desired ways. For practically millennia they have served in instilling ethical norms, wisdom and common sense in both young and old, rich and poor, rulers and ruled, educated and uneducated, citizens of advanced societies and tribal communities alike (cf. Whiting 1994: 34–35). But proverbs have found their way not only in public speaking; they were also widely used

by lawyers, as a teaching aid in schools and universities, as well as in sermons in the church (Bradbury 2002: 264–65). In everyday life, these short, pithy sentences have helped people see through the illusions in life and assess soberly the situations they find themselves in. Proverbs are indeed among people's best friends.

But how have proverbs made their way into the spoken languages of today? Many of these concise, witty, miniature texts we hear circulating freely in oral use date back to early antiquity, while others are of more recent origin. Linguistic culturology claims that the proverb genre belongs to the group of *precedent texts*, which make up the very core of linguocultures (Karaulov 2007: 16)<sup>1</sup>. When the first collections of such texts began to be compiled, proverbs would often be grouped together with folk narratives, fables, parables, poems, myths and legends, riddles, gnomic verses, nursery rhymes, legal codes, and various other folk and literary genres (cf. Paxton & Fairfield 1980: xi; Mieder 2004: xii). Like the lexicons of languages, the larger part of the proverbs making up the paremiological corpora of the linguocultures known to us today are certainly of native stock, but there may also be numerous borrowings from other languages in the form of calques and literary translations as well as excerpts and quotes from authoritative philosophical, literary, or religious works transformed into folk wisdom. A good example is the Bible, which has become the source of several hundred proverbs in English (cf. Mieder 1990), Bulgarian (Trendafilova 2004 and 2006; Petrova 2006) and, certainly, other languages. Interestingly, the ancient proverb genre continues to thrive in our era of global communication and the Internet: we are now almost on a daily basis witnessing the rise of new sayings in the English language like 'Garbage in, garbage out,' 'There is no such thing as a free lunch,' or 'Repeating a lie doesn't make it true,' all coined over the last century or so (cf. Dictionary of Modern Proverbs), and this state of affairs probably holds good for other languages too.

But are these archaic and sometimes enigmatic sentences losing their appeal among the younger generation today? An experiment I carried out in 2002 showed that Bulgarian students are still interested in the proverb genre. The respondents (forty bachelor students fluent in English) were asked to list out all the English and Bulgarian proverbs they knew. The results showed that they were best familiar with 'A friend in need is a friend indeed', 'All's well that ends well', 'It's no use crying over spilt milk', 'Every cloud has a

silver lining', 'Better late than never', 'An apple a day keeps the doctor away', 'Love is blind' and several others (Petrova 2002b). They may have acquired these sayings during their English classes at school, at the English courses they had attended, or from personal reading and communication. In the nineteen years of teaching Anglophone Area Studies I have often resorted to using English proverbs, especially when trying to illustrate some cultural traits typical of the English people, and have repeatedly found how appealing they are to our students. This prompted the inclusion in my book *Anglophone Area Studies: An Introduction*, of a chapter about the English character with a selection of proverb illustrations (Petrova 2010). Everyday practice shows that in teaching English or disciplines related to Anglophone culture, these 'old, generationally tested gems of wisdom,' as the world's leading proverb scholar Wolfgang Mieder has so fittingly termed the proverb genre, continue to be a 'gold mine' that provides teachers and researchers with a practically inexhaustible range of opportunities (Wilson 2004, Nuessel 2003: 396, 404–8).

In May of 2012 I carried out another experiment involving the English proverb 'If there were no clouds, we shouldn't enjoy the sun', which I gave as a written assignment to the thirty six Bulgarian students taking my class in Academic Writing in English. The respondents were instructed to give their own interpretations of the proverb in the form of a composition of two pages. This not very popular English proverb can be found in Ridout and Witting's collection *English Proverbs Explained* (1981), in the second edition of *Facts and File Dictionary of Proverbs* compiled by Manser, Fergusson, and Pickering (2007), and in Kunin's *English-Russian Phraseological Dictionary* (1984). Being well familiar with the tricky problem of the ambiguity and the semantic indefiniteness of proverbs (discussed in great depth by Arvo Krikmann (Krikmann 2009) and many other proverb scholars), the compilers of some of the more recent proverb dictionaries and collections have wisely abstained from providing 'fixed' definitions or explanations of the items included, although some may offer (occasional) short illustrations from literary texts with the proverbs used in literary contexts. In the case of this proverb, Ridout and Witting's dictionary (Ridout and Witting 1981) offers the following definition and a note about its usage: 'We can have too much of a good thing; and happier times seem all the happier if they are interrupted now and again by

gloomy spells ... sometimes basely used as an excuse for accepting poverty, overwork and hardships,' while Manser, Fergusson, and Pickering's dictionary (Manser, Fergusson, and Pickering 2007) offers the synonymous definition 'we cannot fully appreciate the good things in life unless they are interspersed with bad times', and a literary illustration.

I chose this proverb for a written assignment because of its appealing imagery and its simple main idea, which the students could easily illustrate with examples from their own personal experience. As with many other figurative proverbs, through using familiar images this proverb sums up a dialectical law of life: the good things we receive can be appreciated only when contrasted with the negative aspects of the human condition, which ultimately makes misery a necessary ingredient of life. Its practical message as a strategy for dealing with a specific situation, to use Kenneth Burke's apt characterization (Burke 1941), is that instead of shunning from the occasional spells of bad luck that beset us, we should accept them with gratitude, knowing that, in the long run, they will help us see and enjoy the good things we have fully and with a clean conscience.

In paremiology and paremiography, culling primary data with the help of questionnaires has long established itself as a reliable research method. Proverb scholars resort to using interviews and questionnaires with various purposes in mind such as checking proverb meaning, compiling paremiological minima, summarizing popular attitudes to certain concepts, comparing popular views expressed in proverbs, eliciting proverb definitions, and so on. Such experiments may involve asking a set of questions about a proverb or a proverb group, posing an 'open answer' question, using a combination of both, or other similar arrangements ( cf. Arora 1994, Doctor 2005, Honeck 1997, Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1973, Permyakov 1971 and 1985, Lyudmilla Petrova 2007, Mieder 1985 and 1993, etc.). Recently, the questionnaire method has been used successfully in phraseology by Elisabeth Piirainen, who conducted extensive research to establish the meaning, origin and dissemination of a large number of idioms current in all European languages and beyond the boundaries of the European continent (Piirainen 2012). We find a detailed account of one such experiment in an article of 1997 by Wolfgang Mieder, describing how the meaning of the ethnic slur 'No tickee, no washee' was found. This experiment was conducted in 1995 with students of the University of California

in Berkeley, who were asked to fill in a one-page questionnaire designed by Alan Dundes about its origin, meaning and usage of this proverb. The answers, discussed in Mieder (1997: 160–189) show that part of the respondents do not perceive this sentence as a derogatory expression, but as a regular metaphor meaning simply ‘something is necessary for the exchange of something else.’ This example comes to prove once again that the meaning of a proverb and its perception are not written in stone, but vary with time and some other factors. But let us also add, that the questionnaire method should elicit ‘valid’ results when used with respondents that belong to the same linguoculture as that of the proverb(s), while when used with non-native speakers, one may expect that their answers will deviate from those of the former group.

In this paper, I will try to show that when viewed from a linguocultural perspective, the English proverb ‘If there were no clouds, we shouldn’t enjoy the sun’ reveals additional layers of meaning, which, while being synonymous with the dictionary definitions quoted earlier, significantly broaden and complement them; these meanings can be explicated with the help of the culturematic analysis, which I am going to demonstrate later. I will also show that when comparing the results of this analysis with the students’ interpretations of the proverb, we can obtain good evidence of their level of Anglophone linguocultural competence, firsthand knowledge of their own culture specific attitudes, views and personal experience, and solid proof of the universal, ‘species-wide significance’ (Honeck 1997: 35) of the proverb under study.

The culturematic analysis belongs to the research methods of linguistic culturology, a scholarly field that has been developing over the last decade and a half at the intersection of linguistics and culturology. Linguistic culturology attaches special importance to phraseology and the proverb genre, regarding them as the domains of language that provide us with truthful and detailed representation of a people’s character, way of life, prevailing values and mentality, or, in a word, of a people’s specific culture (Telia 1996; Maslova 2001; Dobrovolskij 1997; Vorobyov 1997; Dmitrieva 1997; V. I. Karassik 1994 and 2002; A. V. Karassik 2001; Vorkachov 1997 and 2002; Palashevskaya 2001; Savenkova 2002; Hrolenko 2004; Kushneruk 2005; Petrova 1996, 2002a, 2002b, 2004, 2006 and 2012; Nedkova 2010). In much the same way, some proverb scholars that do not claim any relationship with linguistic culturology

tend to view the proverb lore of a people as a storehouse of its specific generational knowledge and *Weltanschauung* and as a tool for teaching specific behavioural rules and practical wisdom to the folk (cf. Romanska 1976, Kolessov 1989, Tarlanov 1993). There are of course other scholars who make the equally valid claim that proverbs represent not specific, but universal values and attitudes common to all people regardless of their nationality (e.g., Whiting 1994: 43). On this issue I take a middle road. I have done extensive research proving that a great deal can be learned from the proverbs in a language about the prevailing cultural traits of the people who speak this language and about their specific conditions of life, but also that some of these traits may be shared by people from other cultures as well (Petrova 2006). In this study, we will be interested in one typical characteristic of proverbs, namely, that they perform their pragmatic functions of advising, ridiculing, amusing, criticizing, warning, etc., through attaching positive or negative evaluations to certain entities. The axiological nature of proverbs takes us very close to explaining their culture specific role. My work on English and Bulgarian proverbs over the years confirms that all true proverbs are, overtly or implicitly, axiologically ‘charged,’ which is to say, culture specific, as long as it is agreed that culture ultimately means a system of values (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov 2010: 7–10; Maslova 2001: 22; Pivoev 2011: 5. 8, 14–24). Each proverb has one (and, very rarely, more than one) main cultureme (the main entity to which it attaches positive or negative evaluation) and each conveys a specific lesson, or message, that focuses on this cultureme. For example, the proverb ‘Who hesitates is lost’ focuses on indeterminacy, evaluating it negatively. This entity can be brought to the surface through applying a technique I call *linguocultural method* (demonstrated in detail in Petrova 1996, 2002a, 2002b, 2004, and 2006); it is analogous to the technique used in school for finding the different parts of the sentence and involves asking a question similar to the ‘who’ or ‘what’ questions for finding the subject or the object of a sentence, and eliciting the needed answer, which may sometimes need to undergo some kind of semantic transformation (e.g., paraphrasing, nominalization, contraction, turning a literal into a figurative meaning, etc.). This method is demonstrated in examples (1), (2), and (3) below:

(1) A friend in need is a friend indeed.

Question for establishing the cultureme: What does this proverb approve of / disapprove of? – It approves of true friendship.

Question for establishing the message and checking the positive or negative sign of the cultureme: What does it teach us to do / to be (not to do / not to be)? – It teaches us to be true friends.

The cultureme of this proverb is ‘true friendship’ and it is positive, hence its full name: ‘true friendship (+)’.

(2) Familiarity breeds contempt.

Question for establishing the cultureme: What does this proverb approve of / disapprove of? – It disapproves of familiarity.

Question for establishing the message and the sign of the cultureme: What does it teach us to do / to be (not to do / not to be)? – It teaches us not to behave in an intrusive way, not to trespass another person’s privacy.

The cultureme of this proverb is ‘familiarity (-)’.

Proverbs (1) and (2) above belong to the literal type, and in this are similar to maxims, aphorisms or sententiae. Our third example is a figurative (metaphorical) proverb.

(3) Many commanders sink the ship.

Question for establishing the cultureme: What does this proverb approve of / disapprove of? – It disapproves of bad management.

Question for establishing the message and the sign of the cultureme: What does it teach us to do / to be (not to do / not to be)? – It teaches us not to let too many people take charge of a situation.

The cultureme of this proverb is ‘bad management (-)’.

Let it be stressed that although further and more detailed answers can be given to the questions above, they would all be synonymous.

In English (as well as in Bulgarian), the partly or wholly figurative (metaphorical) type of proverb seems to be by far much more common than the literal type, a fact that has been proved empirically in Petrova’s dissertation (2006), where the ratio of the figurative English and Bulgarian proverbs to the non-figurative ones in the

English and Bulgarian corpora under study is the same: ca. 75% to 25%. In the last example above, instead of being verbally stated, the idea of bad management is expressed with the help of images. The surface structure of this proverb (the phrases *surface* and *deep structure* are not to be confused with Chomsky's terms in syntax), which serves as a vehicle of its deep structure (or definition), depicts a hypothetical situation – a ship and many commanders in charge of it instead of only one, the result being the sinking of the vessel. The deep structure, or definition, of this proverb is 'Too many persons in charge, where only one is needed, are sure to ruin an undertaking.' It is obtained via semantic transformation consisting in translating the literal meaning into an implicit, figurative meaning (for an in-depth discussion of this very complex process see Honeck 1997). On hearing this proverb, the native speaker would automatically link it to this definition and to no other and to some similar situations of poor management drawn from his own personal experience, simultaneously picturing to himself the images in the proverb: the sea, the ship, the many captains on board the vessel scurrying about, shouting commands and confusing the sailors, while it is sinking beneath the waves.

The proverb 'If there were no clouds, we shouldn't enjoy the sun' belongs to the figurative type. By applying to it the linguocultural method, we find its cultureme – 'misery and suffering (+)', and its message – 'people should value misery and suffering in life and try to see in them their best teachers.' But if it undergoes culturematic analysis, as will be shown later, still further, richer, and more refined extensions of this meaning will be discovered.

The culturematic analysis is an extension of the linguocultural method (for a detailed explanation of this analysis see Petrova 2010b, 2012). In essence, it takes into account the supposition that while the *raison d'être* of the proverb is its deep structure (definition), summarized in the proverb cultureme and its message, its surface structure (i.e., the sum of individual meanings of the sentence constituents) is no less culturally significant: the axiologically marked concepts and images denoted by the sentence constituents are seen as equally culture specific, and so are the associations invoked by them. For example, the images of the clouds and the sun in this proverb are also important in that they give us valuable knowledge of the climate of its place of origin (presumably not equatorial Africa), while the associations they invoke in the mind of



the user or recipient – e.g., light, warmth, profusion, abundance, luck, love, enthusiasm, optimism, and joy, contrasted with darkness, rain, cold, lack, want, pain, disillusionment, despondency, worry, misery, poverty, toil, suffering, death, etc. – also add significantly to this knowledge: the constellation of such associative meanings acquires a life of its own, which cannot and should not be reduced to the abstract moral of the proverb. Thus, the whole rich interplay of associative meanings that fill the space between the literal meaning of the proverb and its definition bridges the gap between the concrete and the abstract and makes the proverb lesson easier to perceive.

This kind of analysis should begin with parsing the proverb sentence into its immediate constituents. From them, the axiologically marked collocations should be singled out and the non-nominal ones of them should undergo nominalization (i.e. transformation into noun phrases or nominal clauses); next, to each should be attached a positive (plus) or a negative (minus) sign, and, if there are images, as is the case with this proverb, each should be translated into its cluster of figurative meanings. To these must be added the nominalized proverb message. The result will be the sum total of all culturemes, which completely exhausts the cultural content of the proverb, as shown in example (4) below:

(4) If there were no clouds, we should not enjoy the sun.

i. clouds (–)

ii. a sky overcast with clouds (–)

iii. misery and suffering (unhappiness, pain, hardship, bad luck) (–)

iv. the sun (+)

v. happiness (joy, abundance, love, luck, ease, success, hope) (+)

vi. enjoying the sun (+)

vii. feeling happy (+)

viii. inability to see the sun (–)

ix. something bad that stands in the way of happiness (–)

x. the need for suffering, which enables us to appreciate the good things in life (+)

xi. misery and suffering (unhappiness, pain, hardship, bad luck) (+)

Like the perception of a poetical work, because the associations evoked by the clouds and the sun in this proverb arise from each recipient's mental powers of imagination, they can never be exactly the same and will vary from person to person. The last two culturemes (x. and xi.) are the nominalized proverb message, which is fully synonymous with the dictionary definitions given earlier, and the main cultureme of the proverb. We can see how this kind of analysis explicates a whole rich spectrum of culturally determined attitudes to the natural images and to the host of associations they evoke, turning the proverb into a vivid fragment of the multifaceted physical and cultural life of the people that have created it and among whom it has acquired currency.

### *The experiment*

The thirty six Bulgarian students of both sexes taking part in the experiment are aged 19 through 24 and are fairly fluent in English: prior to the experiment they each passed successfully an entrance examination in English at the intermediate level, covered two to four disciplines in English, and studied, or were completing, a course in Anglophone Area Studies course that is taught in two consecutive semesters. Before discussing the answers, I will list these excerpts from the compositions, which best summarize each writer's personal perception of the proverb. In order to provide context, I will list whole excerpts instead of single words or phrases. For the sake of authenticity the exact wording will be given; let us stress that no attempt has been made to correct errors.

### *Answers*

1. Every single person knows, and has been through this, to have 'clouds' in his life, and every single one of us knows how amazing fills [sic], and how joyful the 'sun' is after that. Some people have never had even one cloud up their heads [sic] ... they don't really appreciate anything in their lives ... One should appreciate the 'clouds' in their life as much as the 'sun'. And people can wait for a storm to pass, just to see a little glim [sic] of sunlight in their lifes [sic].
2. If there were no problems, we cannot realize how nice is life [sic] when we overcome these problems.

3. We would not know what is [sic] bad if there was no good. If we never lived in such a society [communism] we would never know the sweetness of the power to be heard and to live in democracy and to have the constitutional right of choice.
4. How can a person learn to deal with the consequences of his actions if there weren't any 'clouds'. How can we explain to our children which deeds and action are right if a bad deed did not exist? This proverb tells us that we shouldn't act as if the world has come to an end when something bad happens. ... If I haven't done [sic] a single mistake, how can I know to do my work right? ... Only a sick person can appreciate the treasure that health is. ... This is a model that nature follows, this is a model that God created.
5. All the misfortunes that have happened to me have a reason for entering my life. Not only do we learn from our mistakes but we try not to repeat them. ... Life without losses and bad luck is not a complete life. One cannot be happy all the time; if that is the case, they are either crazy or on drugs! ... The bad things are always followed by happy ones [sic]. This English proverb is concerned more with the spiritual side of life. ... we cannot be happy all the time, but but if we simply try to be better people and to remember that life goes on, we will feel the happy side of life.
6. We all appreciate something when we have lost it. ... But it is possible to enjoy the sun when there are clouds. ... We shouldn't wait for the clouds to come to appreciate the sun. We should enjoy it while we have it. Losing some things some time [sic] can be the best thing that can happen to you as then you realize what is really important to you. [The student gives an example with people from countries with sunny climates who take sunshine for granted – R.P.].
7. Grasp the moment's pleasure, but don't count too much on it. Know that luck is fleeting.
8. If we don't know sadness how can we define what happiness is? ... What is life without death? Without it life becomes meaningless. One thing without its opposite is meaningless. ... joy and sorrow, evil and good, right and wrong are a natural part of life and even though we are sometimes sad, or do bad things, it is this

that makes us so very human. It is by suffering that we learn to enjoy what is good and pleasurable.

9. Why [sic] should we feel the joy of being alive if there were no difficulties in our lives? Would life be interesting?

10. This proverb can be understood in two different ways. One way is that a person feels a lot more satisfaction out of accomplishing something difficult rather than something easy to do. If there were no hurdles along the path of completing whatever the task may be and if one can see his goal clearly from the very beginning then in the end one won't feel as much satisfaction as when he actually had to work hard for the same results. 2) When one gets too much of something with time he can get sick of it. One should treasure even a smallest [sic] thing because even a food that one hates may save him from starvation...

11. Sun is the joy of life, the jocund dance of the little boy or girl laughing and playing in the field. Clouds – we shiver from [sic] the thought of anguish, misfortune and fear itself. We 'enjoy the sun' when we see it, but we forget that without the 'clouds', the tiny miserable moments in our existence, the 'sun' would burn us. Life is a mixture of laughter and sorrow, one cannot have the one without the other, it is like the sun and the moon, the cat and the mouse, God and the devil. ... If there was no pain, how could we value the 'gain'? If we did not have any clouds, ... who or what would keep the balance on earth? The sun and the clouds are like 'compare' and 'contrast'. Our mission on earth is to develop every day... – this can only be achieved through happiness and misfortune. I believe that there is a strong eternal connection between good and bad in life.

12. If we had such clear starry nights people would be nocturnal. ... Since most rain comes from clouds, the natural plant life on earth would die out and the planet would be reduced to an arid, lifeless desert.

13. It is the end of the world. We would have only one season and that would be summer. The English proverb gives me the idea and impression of an evolution of humanity, a new chapter in our future. So it has a good side to it, apart from the Armageddon caused by climate changes. One thing at the expense of another.

14. [T]he ability to improve after every failure or disappointment. Everything happens for a reason and we should embrace even the hardships with enough positive energy and courage. Be happy with what you have and what you are now.

15. There must be ups and downs in our life because that is how we appreciate what we have. ... Sometimes it is good to fall down so when we get back to our feet [sic] we could know how to enjoy the sun.

16. This proverb shows how really important for people is [sic] to see the simplest things and to look in a different perspective. After every problem comes a resolution.

17. Humans don't value the things until they lose them. How can we define good without evil? How can we describe God's work if there was no Devil?

18. You understand how valuable a person was when he is gone. [A story follows about a terminally ill young person, who knows the value of life. – R.P.] It is necessary for something bad to happen to us to realize how valuable life is.

19. A proverb of paradox meaning that the world would be a boring place and people would have no stimulation [sic] to develop themselves, the human race, and the civilization on the whole [sic]. Why should we be happy if there is nothing bad which we have surpassed [sic] to achieve this happiness? Happiness must be deserved.

20. People are always complaining. But people can appreciate the good things only in moments of sadness. To see how beautiful love is, you must know what it is to have a broken heart. Even the kids get happier when they get punished for having done mischief like breaking a glass or having a low grade at school. If there is no rain, there will be no rainbows.

21. The clouds give us water to drink. If there were no clouds, it would be very boring.

22. The clouds are the ugly part of the sun. The clouds illustrate the different people. We all should accept the clouds, the different people – if there was no sun, we shouldn't enjoy the clouds. Seeing something ugly makes you appreciate the beautiful world.

23. We grow up so fast without having the chance to understand the world and tell the difference between good and bad. It is part of our nature to feel miserable for what others have and not be happy with what we have. We start to appreciate something or someone only after we lose him/her. People are blind for what they have but after a moment of sadness we see the different world [sic].

24. We often forget to enjoy the little things in our lives, especially born [sic] rights (like freedom) – we don't pay much attention go them. The sun symbolizes these things and the clouds symbolize the darkness. In a strange way the existence of the clouds is like a reminder to us to enjoy the 'light of hope'. Without the sun there would be no life on the planet, ergo we should never stop enjoy [sic] it.

25. We won't be able to appreciate and enjoy our lives if there weren't our troubles and problems in them [sic]. [If you have everything you want,] the moment will come when you get bored and tired of it all. There should be some bad at all [sic], so that we appreciate the good, some black so that the white looks more white ... Being young forever is also an interesting concept. Imagine staying 25 years young when your wife grows to be 85 and your children 60 is no fun. Or you live forever. ... Then unique things like the first kiss, the first love, first girlfriend, first child – would you be able to enjoy them? You will be so sick of it all.

26. When a husband loses his wife only then does he start thinking about the time he wasted working instead of being with her. The English proverb is about the little things in our life which you should learn to appreciate before losing them.

27. When the summer is hot we look for cooler places. An artist would sit on a bench in the park and look at the clouds in the sky with a brush in his hand – they will make his drawing more beautiful. Photographers too prefer cloudy weather for taking pictures. I remember on board the plane once the sky was covered with big mountains of white clouds. Everyone should enjoy the clouds and also the sun beams [sic], letting it [sic] into your room to brighten your day.

28. If there were no clouds there would be no rain and no life. But believing that there is something over [sic] the clouds can make you

happy. Sometimes our lives are like a sky, sometimes cloudy, sometimes sunny. We all have to achieve [sic] something to receive happiness. If there were no clouds, we won't have anything to fight for. Remember, everything happens for a reason.

29. If we get used to too much joy, we will forget the sorrow and the pain. When you are happy, don't make plans, when you are mad, don't take decisions. Happiness is expensive. Every person's sky is what he makes it. I too had bad moments but took note of them and grew stronger because of them. I am grateful I had my friends to offer me raincoats and umbrellas when it was cloudy. ... You shouldn't run [away] when you see them [the clouds] but face them with a smile on your face and friends by your side.

30. Thanks to the bad things that happen to us we appreciate every sweet moment. The clouds are the pain, the grey, the sorrow. We know, well, clouds in love, at home, even at school. But we dream of a shower [on] a hot day. Money is sun, when earned by hard work, for a poor person who won a green card and went to live in the USA. The clouds in this person's life made him what he is now – rich and happy, with wife and two children.

31. This proverb contains the essence that is part of every single one of us on this planet and makes us human beings. It describes a very simple law in life ... if someone has gone through some bad things in life he will appreciate all the good things he experiences. The bad things give us something good and this is knowledge and wisdom that they some day are just bad memories from which we could learn. Could there be peace without war and happiness without suffering ? That could make our life dearer. A proverb of the contrast that exists in life.

32. The sun is the reason for the people to feel happy and to be in a good mood. There are many cloudy countries where people feel sad and depressed. At the same time people from warmer countries are complaining that it is too hot. For that reason it is best there [sic] to be clouds sometimes in order to be glad [sic] when the sun appears. Losing something sometimes might be the best thing that can happen to you and to realize what is really important in life – it is a lesson that everybody should learn.

33. The proverb ... can be deciphered as “If there is no bad, there will not be any good as well [sic]” ... without a certain negative quality we will not feel, know or enjoy any positive quality. This is false because not having clouds is much better. ... What more can a person want than a place with no wars, no corruption, no selfishness, no disputes [presumably meaning strife, discord – R.P.], no criminals. But it is also possible that without the clouds we would stop appreciating the sun, hence we could stop enjoying it. This means that the world can be empty in emotions, deeds, and sensations. Such a world will be extremely boring.

34. We do not value how precious is [sic] something for us until we lose it. We take them [sic] for granted. The proverb proves the connection between people and nature. The balance of nature couldn't be more perfect. It teaches us to see into ordinary and simple things and find in them their beauty and necessity [sic].

35. [This is a proverb] about our world of opposites and dualism. The problems and the good moments in life cannot exist one without the other. Darkness is lack of light. We wouldn't be able to make [sic] the difference between them if both of them didn't exist. The clouds illustrate [sic] the problems we have and the sun, the joy, love, the moments when we feel mentally satisfied. Also, people need variety. We become a little wiser with every mistake we have made. The clouds are a necessary part of life. Problems and happiness are a natural part of our life.

36. The clouds are those obstacles and challenges that motivate people because the will to succeed or fail lies within the individual jurisdiction. No matter how sunny, with or without clouds, life's a challenge. In every black cloud there is always a silver lining.

### ***Discussion***

We see that the figurative meaning of the proverb is wholly or partly missing in five of the thirty six answers, in which the words are taken in their literal senses (cf. nos. 12, 13, 21, 27, and, partially, 32). The remaining thirty one respondents have fully grasped the metaphorical meaning of the proverb images and have provided interpretations.

The first list below presents the sum of 78 figurative meanings of the word *clouds*. They are numbered in the order they appear in



the list of excerpts above. The repetitions within an individual answer are not counted, i.e., only one example is listed when there are two or more identical examples given by the same respondent.:

1. problems; 2. [something that is] bad; 3. communism; 4. a bad deed; 5. making a mistake; 6. being sick; 7. something bad; 8. mistakes; 9. losses; 10. bad luck; 11. the loss of something [presumably good and valuable]; 12. sadness; 13. death; 14. evil; 15. wrong; 16. doing bad things; 17. suffering; 18. difficulties; 19. something difficult; 20. hard work; 21. anguish; 22. misfortune; 23. fear; 24. the devil; 25. the tiny miserable moments in our existence; 26. pain; 27. misfortune; 28. bad (n); 29. failure; 30. disappointment; 31. hardships; 33. the downs [in one's life]; 34. falling down; 35. problems; 36. being terminally ill; 37. something bad happening to us; 38. bad (n); 39. moments of sadness; 40. having a broken heart; 41. rain (fig.); 42. the ugly part of the sun (fig.); 43. the different (i.e. the bad) people; 44. something ugly; 45. bad (n); 46. feeling miserable for what others have (i.e. being envious); 47. not being happy with what we have; 48. losing someone [a significant other]; 49. a moment of sadness; 50. darkness; 51. trouble; 52. problems; 53. bad (n); 54. black (n); 55. a husband losing his wife; 56. working hard for something; 57. sorrow; 58. pain; 59. clouds (fig.); 60. pain; 61. grey; 62. sorrow; 63. hard work; 64. bad things in life; 65. bad memories; 66. war; 67. suffering; 68. losing something [valuable to you]; 69. bad (n); 70. a negative quality; 71. wars; 72. corruption; 73. selfishness; 74. disputes [i.e. strife, discord]; 75. criminals; 76. losing something precious; 77. problems; 78. obstacles.

The second list comprises the sum of 82 figurative meanings of the words *sun* in the way thirty-two of the respondents (including answer no. 32) have interpreted this image. Again, all repeated identical words or phrases within one individual answer are left out:

1. life being nice; 2. good (n); 3. the sweetness of the power to be heard; 4. living in democracy; 5. having the constitutional right of choice; 6. right deeds and actions; 7. doing one's work right; 8. health as a treasure; 9. being happy; 10. happy things [i.e. happy states]; 11. happy side of life; 12. a moment's pleasure; 13. luck; 14. life; 15. joy; 16. good (n); 17. right (n); 18. what is pleasurable; 19. the joy of being alive; 20. satisfaction; 21. something easy to do; 22. getting something; 23. the joy of life; 24. the jocund dance of the

little boy or girl laughing and playing in the field; 25. laughter; 26. God; 27. gain; 28. happiness; 29. good (n); 30. the ability to improve; 31. the 'ups' in one's life; 32. getting up on one's feet (fig.); 33. the resolution to a problem; 34. the things one has; 35. good (n); 36. God's work; 37. having someone by one's side; 38. life; 39. being happy; 39. good things; 40. rainbows (fig.); 41. good (n); 42. positive aspects of life; 43. the little things in life; 43. some [civil] rights one is entitled to; 44. freedom; 45. 'light of hope'; 46. having everything you want; 47. the good; 48. white (n) / whiter; 49. being young forever; 50. staying twenty five years young forever; 51. living forever; 52. the first kiss; 52. the first love; 53. first girlfriend; 54. the first child; 55. the little things in our life; 56. something beyond the clouds can make you happy; 57. a life which is sunny (fig.); 58. happiness; 59. joy; 60. being happy; 61. happiness; 62. every sweet moment; 63. love; 64. money; 65. a green card; 66. living in the USA; 67. being rich; 68. being happy; 69. having a wife and two children; 70. the good things one experiences; 71. something good; 72. knowledge; 73. wisdom; 74. good (n); 75. some positive quality; 76. something precious we have; 77. good moments in life; 78. joy; 79. love; 80. the moments when we feel mentally satisfied; 81. sunny life (fig.); 82. silver lining (fig., i.e. hope).

The final list below comprises the 64 sentences (some of them slightly edited) showing how thirty three of the thirty six respondents (all except nos. 12, 13 and 27) have perceived and articulated the proverb message:

1. One should appreciate the 'clouds' in their life as much as the 'sun';
2. People should wait for a storm (fig.) to pass;
3. We need problems to appreciate the positive things in life;
4. Living in communism helps us appreciate the value of democracy;
5. A person learns to deal with the consequences of his actions;
6. We shouldn't act as if the world has come to an end when something bad happens;
7. We learn to appreciate the treasure that health is;
8. This contrast is a model that nature follows;
9. This contrast is a model that God created;
10. We learn from our mistakes and that misfortunes have a reason for entering one's life;
11. We try not to repeat our mistakes;
12. We should try to be better people and to remember that life goes on;
13. We should learn to enjoy the [good] things we have while we have them;
14. A loss helps us realize what is

really important to us; 15. Grasp the moment's pleasure as luck is fleeting; 16. By suffering we learn to enjoy what is good and pleasurable. 17. Difficulties make life interesting; 18. Satisfaction comes with accomplishing something difficult; 19. One learns to treasure even the smallest thing; 20. Pain helps us learn the value of gain; 21. [The alternation of] happiness and misfortune help us develop every day, which is our mission on earth; 22. One good thing [can be had] at the expense of another; 23. The ups and downs in our lives help us appreciate what we have; 24. [We learn that] after a problem comes its resolution; 25. [Our confrontation with] evil and the Devil help(s) us value good and God's work; 26. Losing someone makes us value him/her more; 27. Being ill makes us value the treasure that health is; 28. Happiness must be deserved, e.g., by overcoming something bad; 29. Having a broken heart makes you see how beautiful love is; 30. Kids get happy when punished for having done mischief; 31. Clouds [understood figuratively] save us from boredom; 32. Seeing something ugly [such as different people, meaning bad people] makes you appreciate the beautiful world; 33. We learn the difference between good and bad; 34. Losses make us appreciate what we have; 35. Sadness opens our eyes and we see the different world [i.e., the bright side of life]; 36. We learn to enjoy the rights we take for granted, liker freedom; 37. Clouds [fig.] are a reminder to us to enjoy 'the light of hope'; 38. Troubles and problems help us appreciate and enjoy life; 39. They save us from boredom; 40. Some bad is needed in order for us to see what is good, and black makes white even whiter; 41. When you have lost your wife, you realize how much she meant to you; 42. One must learn to appreciate the little things in life before losing them; 43. If there were no clouds [fig.], we won't have anything to fight for; 44. We learn that everything happens for a reason; 45. [We learn that] happiness is expensive; 46. The bad moments I had made me stronger; 47. Don't run away from your 'clouds', but face them with a smile on your friend and friends by your side; 48. Thanks to the bad things that happen to us we appreciate every sweet moment; 49. By getting a green card, going to live in the USA and working hard there one can earn a contented life [with money and a family of wife and two children]; 50. The bad things in life help one appreciate all the good things one experiences; 51. The bad things give us something good and this is knowledge and wisdom that they some day are just bad memories from which we could learn; 52. War makes peace dearer;

53. Happiness is appreciated through suffering; 54. Losing something sometimes might be the best thing that can happen to you to realize what is really important in life; 55. If there is no bad, there will not be any good; 56. Without a certain negative quality we will not feel, know or enjoy any positive quality; 57. Clouds [fig.] enrich life with emotions, deeds and sensations; 58. They save the world from boredom; 59. The proverb teaches us to appreciate the precious things in our life instead of taking them for granted; 60. It teaches us to see into ordinary and simple things and find in them their beauty and necessity; 61. We wouldn't be able to tell the difference between the problems and the good moments in life if both of them didn't exist; 62. We become a little wiser with every mistake we have made; 63. Obstacles and challenges motivate our will to succeed; 64. We learn that in every black cloud [fig.] there is a silver lining [fig.].

Let us now compare the first list above with no. iii. *Suffering and misery (unhappiness, pain, hardship, bad luck) (-)* from the culturematic analysis. The comparison shows a very rich and diverse spectrum of interpretations of the 'clouds' image. Some are found in more than one answer: *bad* is found in 14 answers, and *problems* – in 4 answers. On the whole, the larger part (46) of the 78 answers are closely synonymous to those in our analysis (nos. 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39, 45, 49, 51, 52, 53, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 62, 63, 64, 67, 69, 70, 76, 77, and 78). But there also interpretations that, although not contradictory in meaning to *suffering and misery (unhappiness, pain, hardship, bad luck) (-)*, are different in that they seem to be more distantly related to them. Among them are *fear, darkness, wars, corruption, living in communism, criminals, obstacles, death, having a broken heart, being terminally ill, feeling envious, not being happy with what one has, the devil, evil, wrong, doing bad things, bad people, something ugly, the ugly part of the sun, bad memories, mistakes, selfishness, strife, darkness, rain, grey, black*.

Next, we shall compare the second list above with no. v. *happiness (joy, abundance, love, luck, ease, success, hope) (+)* from the culturematic analysis. Of the 82 answers, 47 provide interpretations that are fairly synonymous with the 'sun' image (nos. 1, 9, 10, 11, 2, 13, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 31, 34, 39, 40, 42, 43,

45, 46, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 68, 70, 71, 75, 76, 78, 79, 80, 81, and 82). Among them, *happy / happiness* is found nine times, and *joy / joyous* or (*jocund*) – six times. But there are also other, more distantly related interpretations in this group. These are abstract concepts such as *good* (four times), *right*, *knowledge*, *wisdom*, *God*, and *God's work*, and others such as *right deeds and actions*, *doing one's work right*, *love* (twice), *life* (twice), *health*, and *having a companion*. *Getting up on one's feet* and *solving a problem successfully* are also associated with the sun image. There are also several socio-political associations, e.g. *democracy*, *the constitutional freedom of choice*, *civil rights*, *the right to be heard*, as well as answers related to the American Dream (*going to the USA with a green card*, *becoming rich*, *having a wife and two children*).

Lastly, let us compare the message in our definition, x. *the need for suffering that enables us to appreciate the good things in life* (+), with the 64 interpretations of the students. 26 are largely synonymous (nos. 1, 3, 13, 14, 16, 19, 23, 26, 34, 35, 37, 38, 40, 41, 42, 47, 48, 50, 53, 54, 56, 59, 60, 61, and 63), but 36 (2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 21, 22, 24, 25, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 36, 39, 43, 44, 45, 46, 49, 51, 52, 55, 57, 58, 62, and 63) provide rather different although not contradicting interpretations: *the bad*, *the ugly*, *the bad people* and *the Devil*, for instance, are seen as a means to appreciating good and goodness; *mistakes*, *obstacles* and *difficulties* are seen as stimuli for personal growth; according to some respondents *problems* and *losses*, interestingly, add excitement to life and are even a welcome break from boredom; *just punishments* are found to be enjoyed by [some] children, while *contrast* is seen as a natural aspect of Creation.

### **Conclusion**

We can see that almost all of the thirty-six respondents (except three) have grasped the message of the English metaphorical proverb correctly: in terms of semantics, their interpretations do not contradict the dictionary definitions of the proverb or the synonymous culturematic analysis. Similarly, the interpretations of the images provided by the respondents (except the four students who have focused on its literal, or weather, aspect) almost wholly coincide with the ones explicated by the culturematic analysis. This may serve as good evidence of their level of Anglophone linguocultural competence. The experiment thus confirms that a foreign metaphor-

ical proverb can be perfectly intelligible to representatives of a culture that is very different from that of the proverb, provided they are sufficiently mature and experienced and fairly fluent in the language of the proverb. This experiment, then, shows that under certain conditions some proverbs do have a wider, crosscultural appeal.

A further reflection is also prompted by the findings of this experiment, which is related to the additional interpretations based on each student's individual mindset and sociocultural experience and then 'superimposed' onto the English text. We saw that while not contradicting the general proverb meaning, these diverse interpretations represent a truly wide gamut of entirely new, original and highly personal ways of seeing one and the same (proverb) 'reality'. We should then perhaps be right to suppose that these additional perceptions will in turn reflect back on the meaning of the English proverb "If there were no clouds, we shouldn't enjoy the sun," enriching it significantly.

Finally, this experiment shows that some proverbs do behave like autosemantic texts, which do not need contexts in order for their meaning to be perceived. This is not to say that proverbs are not used in discourse or that their meanings are not actualized in contexts. They indeed are, but learners of a foreign language may sometimes have no other recourse to certain proverbs, but dictionaries and collections, where they are listed without any explanations. Interestingly enough, some of these entries can still be understood. This is because like other literary works, e.g., tales, fables, or folk and fairy tales, the semantics of such highly generalized proverb sentences seems to be transparent. As we have seen, both the figurative images and the lesson of some proverbs, whether directly or metaphorically stated, can be immediately perceived and related to the personal experience of the listener or reader.

#### *Notes*

<sup>1</sup> The term *precedent text* is a key term in linguistic culturology. It was first coined by the Russian scholar Yuriy Karaulov in the latter half of the 1980s. The precedent texts are well known and emotionally appealing to generations of people that belong to a particular linguoculture. They represent this culture and are among the texts most often recalled and referred to by the authors writing in this language.

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## AN INQUIRY INTO THE NATURE OF TIBETAN PROVERBS

**Abstract:** Proverbial sayings and expressions are extremely popular in Tibetan literature. However, in Tibetan scholarship there is no clear definition of the Tibetan proverb. Indigenous genres such as *tampé*, *pechö*, *legshé*, etc. all approximate the genre of proverbs in one way or another, yet at the same time add features that also contradict the genre definition. The essay explores the notion of *tampé* and related genres and highlights the importance of a universal definition in order to not only differentiate between closely related genres but also in order to classify entries in the proposed dictionary of Tibetan popular figurative literature.

**Keywords:** Tibet, folk literature, proverb, *gtam dpe*, terminology

Like speakers of most languages worldwide, the Tibetans too are immensely fond of expressing themselves proverbially and idiomatically. The traditional vernacular, oral as much as written sayings and idiomatic phrases take up a prominent and substantial share of their literature and diction. Proverbial expressions are one of the most stable components throughout languages, so also in Tibetan, where we find a number of terms for this sort of language. Most readily and generally *tampé* (tib. *gtam dpe*), literally “speech example,” a term that signalizes phrases which in one way or another contain a simile or an exemplum, but also additional terms are used by the Tibetans. While generally being translated and understood as proverbial, the genre of *tampé* denotes a much broader and wider spectrum of utterance. It is the objective of the present article to attempt to take a closer look at these indigenous terms and categories in order to understand what the Tibetans actually mean by *tampé*. Surely, the sheer wealth of such language features is staggering, since the allusive and metaphorical genre is easily recognizable, plainly communicative and highly appealing, allowing the listener or reader to

understand a complex issue with the help of a few idioms or words. Yet, such features often are elusive when it comes to defining what exactly is meant with a proverb or a proverbial phrase. It easily resists a proper characterization due to its broad and incommunicable usage. Attempts to define proverbs and the criteria required for classifying proverbs have also been the subject of a sheer endless number of theoretical papers written over the years by numerous paremiologists.

Tibetans nevertheless regularly take recourse to the allusive language and rich imagery inherent in their literary heritage; the capability of using especially skillful and witty language and diction contributes greatly to the esteem of a speaker and strengthens his or her argumentative, oratory or rhetorical faculties. Furthermore, proverbial expressions offer the possibility to indirect a statement and as such are an important means to express ridicule, criticism, and protest while not being held personally responsible but rather delegating responsibility by invoking tradition.

One important element of eloquent and quick-witted speech and diction are phraseologisms such as paremia and sundry idiomatic phrases. This is highlighted in a Tibetan *tampé* or proverb which reads: "Speech (*gtam*) without illustration (*dpe*) is difficult to understand. A vessel without a handle is difficult to hold."<sup>1</sup> The inimitable wonder and great appeal is that the genre is universally appreciated and much cherished both by the illiterate person as well as by a man of letters and learning, irrespective of social setting and background. Consequently, they can be semantically and rhetorically simplistic as much as exceedingly refined and sophisticated both in form and content. Often characterized as an oral folk genre, it frequently appears in literary texts and spoken language, evident from early examples of Tibetan literature and sources up to most recent novels and short stories published in journals.

In this paper we attempt to take a look at the Tibetan notion of *tampé* both in its ethnographical and linguistic definition, touching upon some closely related pithy genres in order to come to a better understanding of the term as a designation for short gnomic, often didactic texts of acclaimed folk origin that deploy exempla. We will further explore the genre of *tampé* and analyze exempla along established paremiological concepts and catego-

ries in order to identify and distinguish Tibetan proverbs from proverbial phrases and figurative idioms.

*Establishing the Notion of tampé in Tibetan Discourse*

Before attempting to apply universal definitions of proverbs to the Tibetan genre of *tampé*, an understanding of the genre in form of an ethnographic definition as proposed by Norrick is useful:

For the purposes of ethnographic definition, however, we must differentiate the proverb from other genres (of folklore) recognizable in the culture under investigation. In particular, we should be careful to distinguish the proverb from the proverbial phrase, the riddle, the curse etc. The parameters of classification should be derived from and must be appropriate to the culture under investigation, but not necessarily to any other culture or universally (Norrick 1985: 59).

With this precaution in mind, the standard Tibetan term for what we may regard as a proverb of sorts is *tampé* or, sometimes, *khapé* (tib. *kha dpe*). Evidently both terms are rather modern or at best pre-modern. *Tampé* are universally accepted by Tibetan indigenous scholarship to constitute their own literary genre often overlapping with related genres such as aphorisms (tib. *legs bshad*), riddles (tib. *lde'u*), songs (*glu*), fables (*dpe chos*)<sup>2</sup> or oaths (*gna' tshig*)<sup>3</sup> etc. The term *tampé* is commonly defined as:

“*Tampé* are a form of folk literature; [they] are pithy, easy to understand and appealing to the ear. Hence, they are extremely popular in Tibetan folklore” (Rma-rgya, Khro-go, and Rta-ko 1981: Inner Cover)

In addition to this rather imprecise and superficial definition, remarks are frequently added as to their anonymous authorship<sup>4</sup> as well as to the content of proverbs and their ability to describe cultural properties reflecting the specific mentality, idiosyncratic lifestyle and the psychological disposition of the Tibetan people.

Tibetan *tampé* are the essence of common wisdom and wit created and collected over many generations and

centuries by the Tibetan people. [They are] broad in content covering every aspect of social life. They are also essential phrases that have been established through their repeated practical application. (Lhag-pa chos-'phel 2006: 99)

Indigenous scholars classify *tampé* thematically as political, economical, ethical and so forth or according to form:

Judged from their content, Tibetan *tampé* can be differentiated into political, economical, cultural, common-sensual, and class struggle, etc. *tampé*. In terms of form they can be differentiated into *tampé* found in narrations and those which are not. Furthermore, in terms composition *tampé* may be differentiated among others into *tampé* which consist of both a literal and figurative statement, *tampé* directly expressing their meaning (literal), highly compounded *tampé*, as well as *tampé* employing only one illustrations or such employing two. However, there does not exist an unified classification. (Lhag-pa chos-'phel 2006: 99)

The definitions quoted appear to be representative for Tibetan research on *tampé* and represent as a whole what one may call a traditional definition of proverbs following Norrick's detailed critique.<sup>5</sup> He offers a traditional definition in a rather abbreviated and minimal form: "Proverbs are consistently described as self-contained, pithy, traditional expressions with didactic content and fixed, poetic form" (Norrick 1985: 31). Similarly, Mieder's slightly more detailed definition:

A proverb is a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorable form and which is handed down from generation to generation (Mieder 1985: 119).

As Norrick demonstrates, such a traditional definition is rather limited as the single elements (self-containedness, pithiness, didactic nature, etc.) are, despite being very common features, no necessary characteristics of all proverbs.

*Origin and History of the Term tampé*

Early texts from the imperial time (7-9<sup>th</sup> century, and for those traced in Dunhuang also stemming from the 10<sup>th</sup> century) demonstrate the fondness of Tibetans for idiomatic and proverbial expressions. Some of the earliest available *tampé* in Tibetan language, though arguably of foreign provenance and translated into Tibetan, are those contained in the anthology *Sum-pa-ma Shags-chen-po*.<sup>6</sup> Albeit, here they are not denoted *tampé* but shag (tib. *shags*). However, most Tibetan scholars generally identify *shag* as *tampé*.<sup>7</sup>

The existence of similar proverbial material is also documented in other early Tibetan texts from Dunhuang, already discussed by Chab-spel Tshe-brtan phun-tshogs (2007) among others. But such early Tibetan examples again were never coined *tampé*. In P.T. 1283, one of the most interesting sources containing proverbial material, for instance, these samples are phrased “old sayings.”<sup>8</sup> Chab-spel interprets this phrase and merely paraphrases it as “ways of expression of former times” and reads it as an early incident of what he assumes to constitute what later became *tampé* (Chab-spel Tshe-brtan phun-tshogs 2007: 86). In the same breath, he readily admits, “but of course, [we] cannot decidedly say the term *tampé* appeared in this certain [i.e. early] century” (Chab-spel Tshe-brtan phun-tshogs 2007: 87).

Samples of age-old sayings, reminiscent of what we should regard as *tampé*, are also attested in the huge Gesar of Gling Epic. The proverbial samples here too are legion and occasionally introduced with the phrase “as a saying of the Tibetan people of yore goes...”<sup>9</sup> Chab-spel takes this, and Tibetan scholarship is generally following him, as an indication that the term may have emerged together with the epic at the end of the imperial period.<sup>10</sup> The dating of the grand epic of Gesar is hugely problematic, since it was steadily expanded over the centuries. Its dating to the 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> century is probably not much amiss. But frankly speaking, we have no way of making sure when and under what circumstances such “sayings” (*tampé*) actually were introduced into the Gesar Epic. In other words, it may represent later interpolations and the latter is not a promising source in trying to clarify when this very term was initially coined and used by the Tibetans.

### *The Structure of the Tibetan tampé*

As already mentioned, most Tibetan scholars regard *tampé* as an indigenous oral and literary genre that provides a vast resource for the study of Tibetan folklore and mentality. However, only few have devoted their time to the study of the form and structure of Tibetan *tampé*. Theoretical reflection of the genre has been rare and seems to only recently have started among Tibetan scholars. The discovery and collection of huge amounts of *tampé* followed by the concerted research by the Tibetans themselves into these folk genres have increased dramatically within recent years. In the 1980's, the Chinese launched a nationwide documentation project in order to record and collect and eventually safeguard traditional and vibrant popular literature, covering the three foremost folk genres, in short folk songs, folk stories and popular sayings/proverbs.<sup>11</sup> The precious, largely oral material already collected in Tibet alone is staggering. The local and regional character of these collections allows us to access a large variety of folk literature from all regions of Tibet and assess the regional distribution of *tampé* in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>12</sup>

In analyzing proverbial structure, Tibetan scholars maintain that a proper *tampé* is generally characterized as being condensed (tib. *don bsdus pa*), consisting of only a few syllables (tib. *tshig 'bru nyung*), being arranged in verses (tib. *tshig rkang*) numbering from one to five, so according to Pad-ma dbang-rgyal 2005, or even up to ten and more verses according to Bstan-go 2009.<sup>13</sup> The length of verses may range from three syllables up to fifteen. Even though there are exceptions, most *tampé* are isosyllabic.<sup>14</sup>

Bstan-go 2009 offers an analysis of *tampé* according to verse number and length in syllables (tib. *tshig khyim*). He leaves aside quadrisyllabic units as a different genre of four-syllable *pechö* (tib. *dpe chos 'bru bzhi ma*).<sup>15</sup> and states that *tampé* with one verse (tib. *tshig rkang gcig can*) must have at least five syllables and at most no more than ten. He gives examples up to thirteen syllables, explaining that more than thirteen are rare because the ease of language would fade with the length of the verse. For the *tampé* with two verses (tib. *tshig rkang gnyis can*), he starts with pairs of three syllables. The longest *tampé*, he explains, consists of 32 verses. This statement, however, strongly poses the ques-



tion if such a lengthy piece shouldn't be rather called a song (tib. *glu gzhas*) or speech (tib. *bshad pa*)?<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, the vast corpus of *tampé* traced in the Gesar Epic and frequently termed *ling-drung* or *drung-pé* (tib. *gling sgrung*, *sgrung dpe*) seems to be regarded as a separate type of *tampé* characterized by greater numbers of verses and even stanzas (tib. *tshan pa*) setting them apart from “ordinary *tampé*” as pointed out in an early anthology:

The *tampé* of the Gesar Epic have a special form. While most of the ordinary *tampé* have no more than one or two verse lines (tib. *tshig rkang*), the *tampé* of the Gesar epic, on the contrary, only rarely consist of one or two verse lines and are [generally] consisting of many stanzas (tib. *tshan pa*) and numerous verse lines. In fact, the longest *tampé* even consist of four stanzas and twenty-five verse lines (Li Wu'u-dbyang and Las Dang-len 1984, 12–13).

The authors go further in describing the intriguing nature of *drung-pé* comparing them to poetry and folk songs:

Some *tampé* have gradually evolved from folksongs, therefore, though they resemble songs, they are not songs; though they look like poetry they are not. [...] *tampé* with stanzas and many verses are the most dominant characteristic of *drung-pé* and also constitute its very essence (Li Wu'u-dbyang and Las Dang-len 1984: 13).

To be sure, these reflections serve merely as general assessments, and the contention that *tampé* may vary to such a degree strongly suggests that the key to a better understanding of this genre is not to be found in the prescriptive structure, but within the area of semantics. The term *tampé* –commonly translated as proverb or saying<sup>17</sup>– denotes a much broader genre and encompasses proverbs as well as longer texts often described as *khata* (tib. *kha ta*) or *labja* (tib. *bslab bya*). While this may be interpreted as gnomic or ‘didactic’ in content and therefore qualify as proverb, formally many examples show characteristics of related genres such as songs, speeches, etc., and transgress the basic quality of a proverb as a short, syntactically and discursively in-

dependent statement or sentence. Another qualifier in the Tibetan discussion of *tampé* is the reference to the “nameless religion” (tib. *mi chos*)<sup>18</sup> as opposed to the Buddhist doctrine and lore (tib. *lha chos*). Buddhist (Indian or indigenous) literature indeed offers a broad range of related genres such as *pechö* (tib. *dpe chos*), aphorisms (tib. *legs bshad*), or pithy metered advice (tib. *bslab bya*). *Tampé* furthermore are differentiated from other folk genres such as riddles (tib. *khad* or *lde'u*), songs (tib. *glu gzhas*), speeches (tib. *bshad pa*)<sup>19</sup> and traditional folk stories (tib. *dmangs sgrung*).

### ***Related Genres Deploying Exempla***

At this point it is necessary to introduce some related genres that in structure and content sometimes resemble, sometimes contain proverbial or idiomatic phrases. Tibetan scholarship so far has been rather lax in defining literary genres. When alluding *tampé*, the definition of the term is usually regarded as common knowledge or self-evident, thereby avoiding the task of defining it. As Dga'-ba pa-sangs argues during a conversation in Lhasa (May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2012), there are at least two understandings of the term *tampé*; the wider notion includes almost all didactic and mostly oral (*gtam*) genres employing *dpe* or examples, a notion which encompasses proverbs, stories (tib. *sgrung*) or didactic-gnomic fables (tib. *dpe chos*) as well as songs (tib. *glu gzhas*) and speech discourses (tib. *bshad pa*). Only the narrower understanding of *tampé* as a short, didactic statement/sentence would approximate the notion of the term proverb.

### ***Pechö***

*Pechö* (tib. *dpe chos*), composed in a vernacular tongue and ascribed to the Kadampa master Po-to-ba Rin-chen-gsal (1027-1105), are generally regarded as indigenous short narratives that exemplify (tib. *dpe*) some higher Buddhist truth or doctrine (tib. *chos*). *Pechö* are couched in a literary as well as a vernacular diction and are phrased in a fairly understandable language, often with images or narrative allegories and parables gleaned from Buddhist stories, but also using similes from folklore. Even though highly condensed, at the root of a *pechö* is always a small story of sorts.<sup>20</sup> The allusive, often four- or five-syllabic one- or two-liners often remain incomprehensible without the relevant

background story to which it alludes to. While the genre of *pechö* may have Tibetan forerunners and display strong Indian influences and models especially in the narrative plots and frame stories, the genre of *pechö* genre is certainly a Tibetan indigenous product.<sup>21</sup>

The original *pechö* are clearly no proverbs *per se* and should, as indicated, rather be translated as fable.<sup>22</sup> However, given the popularity and wide currency of Po-to-ba's gnomic fables, some of the catch words or "punch lines" have acquired the status and function of proverbs just as Friedman observed for Turk and other languages: "[...] punch lines of well-known anecdotes can have the evaluative and general content of proverbs, and can function as complete contexts in the cultures where they are known." (Friedman 1999: 140)

A new and extended usage of the term *pechö* has been introduced in recent years, either due to the lack of more appropriate terms or due to the function and format that the traditional *pechö* genre enjoys. As we may gather from a large number of published collections and anthologies of *pechö*<sup>23</sup>, the term is currently used to translate popular Chinese four-character folk similes (*chengyu*) into Tibetan as A-khyig writes:

The term *pechö* has recently become widely disseminated. The Chinese *pechö*, the folk simile (chin. *chengyu*) are widely disseminated and have left a very strong impression in Tibetan language. Therefore, this sort of *pechö*, different from the earlier types of Tibetan *tampé* and *khapé*, are in fact translations from Chinese. Since most Chinese *pechö* have four syllables, similarly, the vast majority of Tibetan language *pechö* have four syllables (tib. *tshig khyim bzhi*) as well (A-khyig 1992: 75).

More significantly, it is also used to represent and document any, preferably but not only quadrisyllabic one-liners. Such collections include sample of Po-to-ba's original *pechö*, but also any proverb, idiomatic phrase and apothegm, including even slogans and maxims found in Tibetan literature, for the most part only understood and appreciated upon hearing or knowing the story where the phrase stems from. The compilers of those motley and heterogeneous *pechö* collections have registered any such sayings gleaned from all sorts of literature down through

history. To be sure, most of these brief *pechö* sayings and phrases often appear to be proverbs, characterized by being discursive and syntactically independent as well as allusive.<sup>24</sup> Tibetan quadrisyllabic phraseologisms often show semantic parallelism, or display an antithetic, synonymic, or asyndetic structure, such as “white from outside [but] black inside (tib. *kha dkar gting nag*)”, “hitting with the fist on a rock (tib. *kha tshur brag rgyab*)”, etc. Given the wide currency and popularity as well as its function in Tibetan texts, *pechö* have to be considered, if not as full proverbs, at least as phraseologisms with proverbial status.

### *Khapé*

Tibetan dictionaries usually do not offer major definitions neither for *tampé* nor for *khapé* (tib. *kha dpe*). Still, there are some deliberate attempts by some to see a distinction between those terms. So for instance A-khyig makes the following claim:

The majority of so-called *khapé* among the people are usually said to convey a special meaning constructed by the oral tradition of the populace [...] Generally, *khapé* are of folk origin and are used as illustration when conveying a particular [regional] meaning, whereas *tampé* are used to convey a general meaning. In terms of its composition *khapé* have uneven numbers of syllables, whereas *tampé* have an even number (A-khyig 1992: 75f).

In the light of A-khyig’s explanation, besides the formal criteria of isosyllabism, the basic difference between *tampé* and *khapé* (tib. *kha dpe*), in his eyes, seems to be found in the semantic denotation. *Khapé* accordingly denotes a concrete instance only regionally current, whereas *tampé* generalize a concrete situation well known throughout the Tibetan language community. However, besides A-khyig’s remarks above, we do not have any evidence for this terminological distinction in Tibetan and will treat the terms as synonyms.

*Folk songs*

The terms *lu* and *shä* (tib. *glu gzhas*), both are generally translated as songs, here refer to folk songs (tib. *dmangs glu / dmangs gzhas*, cf. Sørensen 1990: 11). Traditional Tibetan folk songs usually consist of any number of stanzas, each of four verses, and each verse consisting of six or seven syllables. The main feature of folk songs is the extensive use of metaphors (*dpe*), sometimes allowing for isolated verses as *tampé*. As said earlier, the Tibetan understanding of *tampé* is fairly broad including didactic or gnomic genres employing examples (*dpe*). Hence in many collections of *tampé* songs as well as lengthy gnomic and song-like material from the Ge-sar epic is cited. However, the longer examples with six or more verses or even two or more stanzas show clearly characteristics of *glu*, i.e. a series of different metaphors—one per verse, couplet, or stanza—is applied to or exemplifies a single situation. A-khyig calls such examples “*gtam ma glu*”(A-khyig 1992: 76).<sup>25</sup>

*Aphorisms*

Aphorisms (tib. *legs bshad, lugs*; skt. *subhāṣita, nīti*) form a literary scholastic genre in Tibet in the first place closely associated with the scholar Sa-skya Paṇḍita (1182-1251) and his celebrated and widely-used compendium *Treasure of Elegant Sayings*. While this collection as well as others certainly have been influenced by and also contain proverbial material, they are generally not regarded as folk literature because they are usually written and the author is generally known. At the same time, the genre of aphorisms borrows greatly from Indian culture and Sanskrit literature and as such constitutes a special case and can only be considered as marginal to the genres concerned here.

As this brief examination of traditional Tibetan genres of folklore has shown the genre definitions as well as the genres themselves are blurry and Tibetans, although engaged in a discussion, have so far failed to produce clear concepts of what makes up *tampé*. While there exists a genre terminology (*tampé*, *khapé*, *pechö*, etc.), the classification of texts according to this terminology remains inconsistent. Reflecting the Tibetan notion of *tampé* we may summarize their prototypical characteristics as follows:

- pithiness (*don bsdus pa*)
- consisting of a minimum of four syllables
- ranging from a single verse to 32 verses
- anonymous authorship
- reference to “nameless religion” (i.e. everyday life and lore of people)
- contain worldly advice or commonsensical lore, as well as didactic-edificatory and gnomic content

Our attempt at finding an ethnographic definition shows that the genre of *tampé* shares many similarities with proverbs, nevertheless the emphasis is on the didactic-gnomic nature as well as the use of exempla and comparisons. However, in order to be able to decide whether a given *tampé* actually also qualifies as proverb further investigation remains necessary.

Norrick provides a feature matrix definition enabling us to differentiate between all folk genres including proverbs, proverbial phrases, riddles, songs, jokes etc. along structural and functional lines. Leaving aside the differentiation from non-folk genres such as aphorisms and epigrams for having a source, i.e. an identifiable author, Norrick defines: “The proverb is a traditional, conversational, didactic genre with general meaning, a potential free conversational turn, preferably with figurative meaning” (Norrick 1985: 78).

#### ***Classification of Tibetan Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases***

For our purpose of compiling a dictionary of Tibetan paremia and figurative idioms, the ethnographic definition of *tampé* only partly proves helpful. It enables us to assign a given expression to the appropriate Tibetan genre. However, we still do not know if this expression is a full proverb or a proverbial phrase or even some other phraseologism. Especially in the context of a dictionary, the definitions of entries need to be clear. Consequently we need a definition of the Tibetan proverb which can be distinguished both from proverbial phrases and other short and pithy folk genres. Such a definition needs to go beyond traditional classifications and has to take into account linguistic principles, among others. The Tibetan paremiological phenomenology offers some interesting insights into the plenitude of Tibetan potentially proverbial material both in form and content. Howev-

er, we have seen the ethnographical assessment of *tampé* varies considerably from e.g. Norrick's definition of a proverb. In his definition it is what he calls "free conversational turn" that mainly differentiates the full proverb from a proverbial phrase. Figuration, prosody, and maybe even traditionality are optional properties which, if existing, put emphasis on the proverbiality of the expression. Already in the traditional Tibetan definitions cited above, some general features of proverbiality have been mentioned: Generality of meaning, expression of traditional wisdom and traditionality or currency in the language community.<sup>26</sup> are properties which indicate proverbiality basically on the level of semantics. Tibetan definitions of *tampé*, besides the main property of figuration or metaphoricity (*dpe*) as pointed out earlier, clearly assign pre-eminence to prosody over the syntactical feature "free conversational turn". As a result, as already said, the Tibetan category of *tampé* encompasses a wide range of genres such as speeches, songs, fables etc. The syntactical feature "free conversational turn" may therefore be suitable to isolate full proverbs from the wealth of material included in the Tibetan categories. Moreover, it will serve as a criteria to further differentiate full proverbs.<sup>27</sup> from proverbial phrases. Accordingly, longer samples which serialize various images for a single situation throughout many verses or even stanzas must be regarded as song (tib. *glu gzhas*) and will not be treated as Tibetan proverbs *per se*.

Browsing through *tampé* anthologies one finds that most *tampé* consist of one or two verses which all are potentially independent and full statements and can be read as proverbs. Some samples for single-lined Tibetan proverbs:

When the goat is killed, the sheep shivers.<sup>28</sup>

The chief justice is worse than a spy on the mountain pass.<sup>29</sup>

The horn that grew on [your] head pokes [your] eyes<sup>30</sup>

The Lama's butter is eaten by the Lama's dog.<sup>31</sup>

However, most Tibetan *tampé* are two-liners:

Thinking it might be good, you built a temple  
[and] at worst it is the rest place for pigeons.<sup>32</sup>

You did the hard work  
[and] the [other] people enjoy.<sup>33</sup>

Locking the door from outside  
[while] the thief is [still] inside.<sup>34</sup>

Still, by far the vast majority of *tampé* employs a simile or comparison as the following example shows:

The depth of one human heart cannot be understood by  
another;  
the core of a stone cannot be plumbed by water.<sup>35</sup>

In order to better understand the differences between expressions such as e.g. “a paper-bag carried by the wind”<sup>36</sup> and “big corpse, small sharp”<sup>37</sup> we need to look at the application of such phrases in their syntactical context in order to decide whether it is a proverb or a proverbial phrase or merely an idiom.

In order to illustrate this, we shall look more closely at the syntactical functions when proverbs or proverbial phrases are involved in context. The following examples are taken from Dga’-bzhi Rdo-ring Bstan-’dzin dpal-’byor’s elegant memoirs *Music of Outspoken Speech (Zol med gtam gyi rol mo)*:32F<sup>38</sup>

“[...] since Zhamar Tulku and Dechos Tulku went for private purposes on a pilgrimage tour, without being on [there] on [an official Tibetan] governmental errand, there was no one hindering any of them from returning to their homeland [i.e. Tibet]. Firstly, they went to Nepal on their own without having specifically been dispatched from Tibet; Secondly, the [high incarnate] Tulkus stayed in Nepal (1) overly confident (lit: with an attitude of “buying the bow after knowing the arrow”, tib. *mda’ shes gzhu nyos*) without the Gorkha King and Ministers and the [two] keepers of the governmental sanctuaries having in mutual [agreement] told them to do so; Finally, in accordance with the saying (2) “the Demon does not recall, but the sick one does”(tib. *’dres ma dran nad pas dran*),<sup>39</sup> they (3) deluded the Nepalese court in many guileful ways (lit. “making paper bags fly in the air”, tib. *shog sbug rlung bskyod*), thereby causing different, hith-



erto unseen sorts of annoyance to the keepers of the [governmental] sanctuaries [...]"

In this short paragraph Dga'-bzhi employs three figurative phrases in order to criticize the vicious behavior of the Zhamarpa: two quadrisyllabics (1) *mda' shes gzhu nyos* and (3) *shog sbug rlung bskyod*, and the one-liner (2) '*dres ma dran nad pas dran* with the proverbial affix "according to the illustration" (tib. *dpe ltar*). While it is easy, especially through the use of a proverbial affix, to identify (2) as a proverb in accordance with Norrick's definition cited earlier, the quadrisyllabics are more difficult to classify. Example (1) is functionally integrated into the sentence structure as an adverbial phrase indicated by the instrumental particle *kyis*. Phrase (3) functions as qualifier to the phrase '*phrul las* to which it is subordinated by the genitive particle *gi* making possible an interpretation of *shog sbug rlung bskyod* as a phrase representing the adjective "guileful". Hence both quadrisyllabics are syntactical dependent and thus should be described as proverbial phrases.<sup>40</sup>

Proverbs take on their specific and usually semantically ambiguous meaning only when used in a conversational or textual context, and so the phrases in example (1) and (3) suggest, despite their metaphoricity, a clearly lexicalized and unambiguous meaning.

We conclude these preliminary reflections concerning Tibetan phraseologisms, yet we are fully aware of the fact that further research is required in order to bring some light unto the wealth of Tibetan idiomatic language. Still we hope we have been able to clarify the range of meanings associated with the term *tampé* and demonstrate that the term *tampé* as used in text and conversation in no way represents the English "proverb" according to the international standard definition of what a proverb is. However, while exploring the usage of *tampé* in context, we should like to emphasize *in praxi* that Tibetan proverbs do exist and that they can be further differentiated from what we call proverbial phrases. These differentiations and a proper understanding of them will be essential for the compilation of the envisaged *Dictionary of Tibetan Popular Figurative Language*.

*A Dictionary of Tibetan Popular Figurative Language*

The above considerations are part of the long-term objective of the present authors to present to the readership a dictionary consisting of a systematic lexicographical compilation of Tibetan phraseologisms and especially paremia primarily of popular origin traced in oral and literary discourse. It will focus on such expressions and collocations that remain beyond the ordinary or strictly contemporary colloquial tongue or vernacular usage (i.e. often entries already covered by other modern-day standard dictionaries). We are tempted but will restrain ourselves from including slogans, maxims, winged words etc. at this point for these usually lack figurative meaning and represent marginal sub-genres to the phraseologisms. Also exempted are, at least for the time being,<sup>41</sup> the traditional and conventional stock of lexemes and the vocabulary in use throughout Tibetan religious and literary discourse with its often academically fixed and stylized corpus of Indic-coined expressions culled from the standard lexicons of ornate and euphemistic synonyms (*mngon brjod*) such as those codified in the *Amarakośa* and its Tibetan adaptations.

As we hope to have been able to demonstrate, such phraseologisms pose interesting questions not only regarding semantics but also regarding Tibetan syntax, literary genres, folklore, customs and last not least Tibetan mentality and psychology. Hence the proposed dictionary will be a valuable tool to access Tibetan culture.

The preservation and documentation of Tibetan phraseologisms in form of a dictionary is not only a desideratum in Tibetological research, but also an important means to access the wealth of Tibetan literature, both oral and written. Preservation is especially urgent for numerous reasons, the foremost being the rapid development and change of Tibetan language under the pressuring influence of Chinese and other languages. As a result, a huge amount of expressions, idioms and proverbs are already rendered incomprehensible for a considerable part of Tibetan language speakers.

In order to be easily and widely accessible across nations and borders, with the generous support of David Germano and the University of Virginia, the dictionary will be integrated into the online *Tibetan Historical Dictionary* which is part of the *Ti-*

*betan and Himalayan Library* (thlib.org). The entered phraseologisms will then not only be translated and explained, but also classified along linguistic categories (proverbial phrase, full proverb, idiom etc.) as well as literary categories (*tampé*, *khapé*, *pechö*, etc.) next to other information such as the source, the regional provenance etc. which will be provided with each entry. Finally the phraseologisms will be interlinked through an indexing system which allows to group lexical but also thematic variants of the material presented.<sup>42</sup> Access to the dictionary, naturally, will be open and free and the present authors hereby should like to invite everyone to join us with contributions in order to make the dictionary a success.

### Provisional List of Tibetan Proverb Collections

#### I. Tibetan language Collections

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2. *Bod kyi kha dpe'i rin chen gter mdzod*. 2006. 2nd ed. Delhi: Shes-rig par-khang.
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6. *Gtam-dpe sum-brgya-pa*. 2010. Pe-cin: Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang.
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19. Gzhis-rtse sa-khul dmangs-rtso-m-rnam-gsum legs-btus spyi-khyab rtsom-sgrig u-yon-lhan-khang. 2001. *Gtsang khul gyi gtam dpe legs btus*. krung go'i dmangs rtsom rnam gsum legs btus sa gnas pod. Lha-sa: Bod-ljongs mi-dmangs dpe-skrun-khang.
20. Lho-kha zangs-ri-rdzong dmangs-khrod rtsom-rig legs-bsdus cha tshang-gsum rtsom-sgrig u-yon-lhan-khang. no d. *Bod ljongs lho kha sa gnas zangs ri rdzong gi dmangs khrod rtsom rig legs bsdus cha tshang gsum*. no pl. no publ.
21. Li Wu'u-dbyang, and Las Dang-len, eds. 1984. *Gling sgrung gi gtam dpe gces bsdus*. Pe-cin: Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang.
22. Ma'o Tsi-tsu, and Kru'u Kang. 1988. *Bod kyi gtam dpe 'dems bsgrigs: Bod rgya skad gnyis shan sbyar du sbyar ba'i deb*. Lan-gru'u: Kan-su'u mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang.
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26. Mtho-skar 'od-gsal, ed. 1992. *Rgyun spyod bod rigs gtam dpe bsags mdzod*. Zi-ling: Mtsho-sngon mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang.
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31. Rdo-rje bkra-shis. no d. *Gtam dpe 'phrul gyi lde mig*. no pl. no publ.
32. Rig-'dzin. no d. *Gtam dpe*. no pl. no publ.
33. Rin-chen tshe-ring. 2001. [*Mtsho byang*] *gtam dpe*. mtsho byang bod rigs rang skyong khul gyi dmangs khrod rtsom rig dpe tshogs. Zi-ling: Mtsho-sngon mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang.
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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> This proverb comes in many variants; the one cited here was found in Hor-khang Bsod-nams dpal-'bar 2004: 153. Cf. also Cüppers and Sørensen 1998: xxvii.

<sup>2</sup> "When compared to fables (*dpe chos*), *tampé* usually consist of more syllables and come in pairs. Mostly they are used over a long time and they are largely stable in form. Because it has the capability of serving successfully in being appealing as well as rendering elegantly syntax and lexic, they are not only widely applicable both in oral and written form, [but also] they have been handed down in the oral tradition from the moment they were created up to now [...]" ('Brug-'bum-rgyal 2007: 82–85). See also Bstan-'dzin don-grub 2010: 21–31.

<sup>3</sup> The term *natsig* (tib. *gna' tshig*) is used as a general term for oaths and swear words. The connection between *natsig* and *tampé* is briefly analyzed in Yul-lha-thar and Sgra-dbyangs lha-mo 2009. While swear words share many features of proverbs they certainly constitute a different genre.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. 'Bri-gung Rnam-rgyal 2008: 61. While this is generally true for proverbs, it is not very helpful to include authorship as a definition feature. Once associated with an author, the proverb often turns into a so-called winged word



or a maxim. An anecdote recounts that the 9<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama used to keep a parrot. One day he set the parrot free with the words: “When a man gets old he longs for his home and when a bird gets old he misses the top of the trees.” Thus arguably the famous proverb “When people get old, they miss home. When birds get old they miss the forest.” came into being. The story nevertheless serves to illustrate how a proverb easily turns into a winged word or *vice versa* (personal communication with Klu-ma-tshal Zla-ba tshe-ring, Lhasa, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2012). In truth, the saying is a well-known *tampé* of much older provenience, cited e.g. in Rdo-ring Paṇḍita’s celebrated Memoirs *Music of Outspoken Speech*; cf. Cüppers and Sørensen 1998: xx. Modern variants abound e.g. from eastern Tibet (tib. *kham*s) in G.yag-dgra khra-sbog and Rdo-rko Ngag-dbang dge-legs 2009: 402, or from north-eastern Tibet (tib. *a mdo*) in Mkhar Bskal-bzang blo-gsal 2005: 299.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Norrick 1985: 31ff.

<sup>6</sup> The collection was introduced to Western scholarship by F. W. Thomas in 1957. A few samples as cited and translated by Thomas 1957: 107f. from the Sum-pa collection of apothegms demonstrate their commonsensical, popular content and their genuine antithetical, proverbial structure.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. ‘Bri-gung Rnam-rgyal 2008: 61. The interesting term *shags* has different, related meanings, and is found in different combinations, like *glu shags*, *kha shags*, and verbally *shags rgyag / rtsod*, often with the meaning of (giving) an instructive answer, disputative argument, or serving as repartee retorts of sorts.

<sup>8</sup> Tib. *gtam rnying pa*.

<sup>9</sup> Tib. *gna’ mi’i bod kyi gtam dpe la*.

<sup>10</sup> Chab-spel writes: “In the songs of the Tibetan epic of *King Gesar of Ling* we often find allover [expressions like] ‘as a saying of the Tibetan people of yore goes’ when reflecting upon this, it is conceivable that the term *tampé* may well have originated at the beginning of the period of fragmentation of Tibet [i.e. 11<sup>th</sup> century]” (Chab-spel Tshe-brtan phun-tshogs 2007: 87). See also Chab-‘gag Rta-mgrin 2008, Lhag-pa chos-‘phel 2006, or ‘Ba’-stod Pad-ma dbang-rgyal and Bcud-dza G.yung-mo-skyid 2005.

To be sure, the diction in Chab-spel’s sample, however, bespeaks a fairly recent origin. It is difficult to decide whether we here should follow Chab-spel’s hypotheses concerning the presence of *tampé* as a term in the Gesar Epic. We withhold any judgment on this point until more evidence is available. Further linguistic corpus analysis will certainly help clarifying the history and the first occurrence of the term.

<sup>11</sup> The “Compilation of the Three Set of Folk/Popular Literature” (*minjian wenzue santao jicheng*, *dmangs khrod rtsom rig phyogs sgrigs khag gsum*) comprises folk-tales and popular stories, folksongs and ballads and popular, folk-based proverbs and idiomatic phrases. See Sørensen 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Sørensen 2010: 152.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Bstan-go and Lo-hong 2009: 79.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. ‘Ba’-stod Pad-ma dbang-rgyal and Bcud-dza G.yung-mo-skyid 2005: 329–31.

<sup>15</sup> In other words quadrisyllabics or quadrisyllabic *pechö* (tib. *dpe chos*) are either serving as a translation of Chinese folk similes (chin. *chengyu*) or as the shortest traditional Tibetan *pechö*, as discussed below.

<sup>16</sup> See Bstan-go and Lo-hong 2009: 79–86 for songs, and Rva Yum-skyabs 2001 for Tibetan speeches.

<sup>17</sup> So for example Jäschke 1987: 206, who interestingly does not have an entry for *kapé* (tib. *kha dpe*).

<sup>18</sup> The term *mi chos* is of course rather problematic and far from well defined. It seems to denote a huge range of non-Buddhist belief systems and folklore. The translation of the term as “nameless religion”, however problematic, was proposed by R.A. Stein 1972. Tibetan scholars frequently use the term when defining *tampé* and thus the currency of the term should be acknowledged.

<sup>19</sup> Examples of such speeches labeled as *tampé*, but arranged according to the occasion of speech making i.e. when meeting a high Lama or authority etc. are found in the recent collection Na-’ban a-nu thar-ba and Mgon-po tshe-brtan 2010. Cf. also to Rva Yum-skyabs 2001 for a brief introduction to different sorts of speeches (tib. *bshad pa*).

<sup>20</sup> This is highlighted by both Bstan-’dzin don-grub 2010 and Dga’-ba pa-sangs 2010. A comprehensive study and German translation of the *pechö* collection compiled by Po-to-ba Rin-chen-gsal is offered by Roesler 2011. The study also discusses the *tshig lab* genre equally ascribed to Po-to-ba. The religious-didactic genre enjoyed great popularity, was widely disseminated and repeatedly commented upon right up to most recent time.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Dga’-ba pa-sangs 2010. Most of Po-to-ba’s *pechö* can be found in the two collections *Dpe chos Rin chen spungs pa* and *Be’u bum sngon po* which are regarded as the first Tibetan collections of its sorts (Bstan-’dzin don-grub 2010: 19).

<sup>22</sup> See Roesler 2011: 163–64f.: “You cannot sew with a needle with two tips. There will be no success for someone without concentration. One dog alone does not catch two musk deers.”

<sup>23</sup> Such as contained in the collections *Dpe chos tshig mdzod* (Dpa’-ris Sangs-rgyas 1999) or *Dpe chos rna ba’i bdud rtsi* (Dpa’-ris Sangs-rgyas 1985), to mention but a few.

<sup>24</sup> The above mentioned collections include sayings traced in Dunhuang material, from the Gesar Epic (with plain proverbs like “water good, fish happy”), or from various literary, canonical or authored sources which cherished quadrisyllabics like “evil talk carried [by the] wind” or, “[to] repay beer with water”. But also hexasyllabic sayings and idiomatic axioms are cited: ‘the walnut dry, the inner rotten’; in fact they include material from earliest sources all the way up to slogans originating with Mao Zedong.

<sup>25</sup> For Dga'-ba pa-sangs most examples from the Gesar epic do not qualify as *tampé* proverbs, because they lack the characteristics of being a single pithy statement (Conversation in Lhasa May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2012).

<sup>26</sup> The greatest difficulty in defining proverbs is probably that all but one feature can be “faked” as Arora 1989 demonstrated. She argues that a proverb has to function as such from the very time of its invention and only a functioning proverb may gain currency or, to use Norrick’s term, traditionality. However, traditionality is the only property that cannot be “faked”. The markers of proverbiality, she concludes, vary from culture to culture. In English language the most important marker would be metaphoricity, while, say, in Spanish it would be prosody.

<sup>27</sup> Here we will include samples from classical as well as contemporary *pechö* if qualifying as proverbs according to the super-cultural definition.

<sup>28</sup> Tib. *ra bsad na lug 'dar*; from Bu-chung, Bde-skyid sgrol-dkar, and Bde-skyid mtsho-mo 1992: 410.

<sup>29</sup> Tib. *la kha'i so pa las / khrims bcos kyi 'go dpon sdug*; Bu-chung, Bde-skyid sgrol-dkar, and Bde-skyid mtsho-mo 1992: 410.

<sup>30</sup> Tib. *mgo la skes pa'i ra co mig la zug*; Bu-chung, Bde-skyid sgrol-dkar, and Bde-skyid mtsho-mo 1992: 411.

<sup>31</sup> Tib. *bla ma'i mar bla ma'i khyis bzas*; Bu-chung, Bde-skyid sgrol-dkar, and Bde-skyid mtsho-mo 1992: 412.

<sup>32</sup> Tib. *e yag bsam nas lha khang bzhengs / ma yag phug ron 'khor sa red*; Tshe-brtan nor-bu, Rdo-phun, and Byams-pa dngos-grub 1989: 190.

<sup>33</sup> Tib. *dka' las rang gis brgyabs / longs spyod mi yis btang*; Tshe-brtan nor-bu, Rdo-phun, and Byams-pa dngos-grub 1989: 195.

<sup>34</sup> Tib. *rkun ma nang la bzhag sgo lcags phyi la brgyab*; Tshe-brtan nor-bu, Rdo-phun, and Byams-pa dngos-grub 1989: 197.

<sup>35</sup> Translated by Padma-tshe-dbang 2012

<sup>36</sup> The phrase “a paper-bag carried by the wind” denoting guilefulness and cunningness. For an explanation, see the discussion of the phrase below.

<sup>37</sup> Tib. *che ba ro / chung ba rno*; “[If it is] big [it is] a corpse [and if it is] small [it is] sharp.” Taken from ‘Ba’-stod Pad-ma dbang-rgyal and Bcud-dza G.yung-mo-skyid 2005: 331.

<sup>38</sup> These to a large extent political memoirs detail the historical background as well as the various incidents leading to the Tibetan-Gorkha war of 1788-92. This passage deals with the activities of Zhamar Tulku Chos-grub rgya-mtsho, the younger brother of the Panchen Lama Pelden Yeshe (1738-1780). He attempted to mediate in the negotiations between the Nepalese on the one side and the Tibetan and imperial Chinese on the other side. While staying in Kathmandu, the high incarnate was suspected of colluding with the Nepalese side as seen from the perspective of the Tibetan government (Ganden Podrang).

The quoted examples were taken from Rdo-ring Bstan-'dzin dpal-'byor 2006: 558.

<sup>39</sup> According to Tibetan belief, demons and spirit are thought to be capable of inflicting sicknesses and maladies upon human beings or intruding into

human endeavors. We can thus identify the demon as agent and the sick person as patient. Ultimately, it indicates that someone causes trouble, suffering, or chaos, etc., yet others must bear the brunt or face the consequences. It may be worth noting that spirit of sorts are frequently used metaphorically in Tibetan literature, in songs, prophecies such as those found in Terma-literature (tib. *gter ma*), in order polemically and sardonically criticizing one's opponent.

<sup>40</sup> Recalling what has been said on *pechö*, the two quadrisyllabic examples (1) and (3) are likely to be potentially independent units and hence qualify at the same time for Norrick's definition of a proverb.

<sup>41</sup> It shall be considered that aphorisms (tib. *legs bshad*) are included since they contain material that at one point was proverbial (if only in India) or gained proverbial status later on due to the great popularity and wide currency of the genre.

<sup>42</sup> This brief paper leaves no room to discuss aspects of semantical classification or of a proverb typology, but we hope soon to be able to present our views in a separate publication. The task of developing a typology of phraseologisms and paremia was taken up by Matti Kuusi and G.L. Permjakov independently. Their proposed typologies, while certainly showing limitations and inconsistencies, nevertheless provide a tested foundation to model a typology and index system for Tibetan phraseologisms. For Matti Kuusi's typology, see Lauhakangas 2001 and Lauhakangas 2004; for Permjakov's concepts, see Grzybek 2000.

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NEREUS YERIMA TADI

THE CHANGING FACE OF ORATURE IN POSTCOLONIAL  
NIGERIA: PROVERBS IN EDDIE IROH'S *WITHOUT A  
SILVER SPOON AND BANANA LEAVES*

**Abstract:** The coming into being of creative writing in English in post-colonial Nigeria since independence and the eminence attained in it as an expressive form by Achebe, Soyinka, Clark, Okigbo and many others, is a cultural revolution. This Cultural Revolution has affected oral tradition in many ways, including a symbiotic relationship with the new forms of creative expression through incorporation, translation and appropriation. Orature has also been affected by new technological forms such as the radio, television, mobile phones, and the internet. The focus of this paper is on the written and we stress that the postcolonial writers continue to incorporate, in varying degrees, orature elements such as tales, myths, legends, riddles and proverbs in their works. The presence of the oral in the works of Achebe, Kunene, P'Bitek, Awoonor, Soyinka and others, has consequently ensured the continuity and dynamism of the genre in Africa. In this context, this paper examines Eddie Iroh's *Without a Silver Spoon* and *Banana Leaves* to show how the use of proverbs has enriched the two novels in terms of their narrative structure, thematic development, characterization and embellishment of language. The two novels deal with the growth and experiences of Chokwe in the village where he attends primary school, and in the city where he lives with his uncle, Ikenna. The contexts within which proverbs are used in the two novels are in tandem with their usage in face-to-face discourse. We therefore conclude that Iroh has guaranteed that all children who read the two novels, will, like Chokwe, come to know the proverbs and their value and also use them in appropriate contexts. There is therefore an envisioned dialectics of the oral moving to the written and at the same time giving birth to the oral.

**Keywords:** Orature, Proverbs, Contexts, Literary, Use/Usage, Chokwe, Dede, Uncle Ikenna, Poverty, Honesty.

*Orature and Creative Writing in Changing Contexts*

Scholars of the Evolutionary School such as Edward Burnett Tylor and R. Sutherland Rattray see orature as belonging to the early stages of man and hence to simple aesthetic forms which may exist in developed societies as mere residues of a primitive, savage and pristine era. This view does not therefore see orature as a dynamic, complex and aesthetically appealing and functional genre that it is. On the contrary, the Evolutionary School perceives orature elements as dying out and losing their relevance the more advanced a society becomes. Ruth Finnegan affirms that in the 1960s critics doubted the relevance of orature in modern society and that most anthropologists of that period never saw orature as worthy of serious intellectual study. Her words:

There was still a widespread assumption that studies of what could be called 'folklore' or the 'philological' collecting of texts were really more appropriate to nineteenth century antiquarianism than modern sophisticated scholarship. At best, it was often assumed, one might take some marginal account of structure or as emanations of man's mythic symbolism but not as something to be studied as literature in its own terms. (275)

This observation has equally been cogently captured by Alan Dundes who points out that some scholars considered orature materials as belonging to the past and consequently as being of no relevance to the present, modern experience. Dundes states:

It is still mistakenly thought that the only people who study folklore are antiquarian types, devotees of ballads which are no longer sung and collectors of quaint customs which are no longer practiced. Folklore in this false view is being equated with survivals from an age past, survivals which are doomed not to survive. Folklore is gradually dying out, we are told. Moreover, since folklore is defined as error, it is thought by some educators to be a good thing that folklore is dying out. In fact it has been argued that one of the purposes of education is to help stamp out folklore. As humans evolve, they leave folklore behind such that the truly civilized human is conceived to be folkloreless. (56-57)

Nelson O. Fashina (2011) also notes generally that historically literary criticism seems to undervalue works of previous writers or schools, to always categorise works in terms of a binary oppositions such as high/low, modern/primitive or past/present. He states: "Virtually all theories of literature attempt to demystify and inferiorize earlier ones. This frame of value-reading in literature assumes phenomenal significance with the incredible conception of oral lore as unworthy products of untutored minds whose nature and form abused the demands of New-Critical and later aesthetics for the unity and centrality of a work of art" (42).

This paper acknowledges that with societal advancement in all spheres of human endeavour, including information technology, and coupled with rural-urban drift, there has been a steady transformation of the nature of orature. The threat to the death of many African languages by the adoption of the languages of the colonizers has equally meant the gradual abandoning of verbal aesthetics by the people. The socio-economic dislocation of Nigerians has compelled a migration pattern that is largely from rural to urban and from the major custodians of orature to a more complicated socio-linguistic and cultural situation that distances people from traditional cultural forms. Ademola O.Dasylva notes that modern youths in particular have become disinterested in orature because of the changing realities of the times. He states that:

The fact that children are hardly interested in traditional festivals, or in oral literature performance, or in taking over their parents' traditional professions as entertainers, priests or cult heads, is a further threat to the continuity of orality and a matter for concern. Their adventurous minds broadened further by their exposure to western education have made the children's desires for advancement to modernity insatiable. This reality is a serious threat to the continuity of oral literary performance. (186)

However, most of the orature items have merely changed their settings and expressive structures because, in the new, modern societies they are spoken/performed in both the old and the new languages and through the radio, the television, video forms or on the internet. Many people today watch traditional oral forms such as storytelling, carnivals and other traditional festivals on the television or listen to them on the radio. Other aspects of verbal arts such as

songs and proverbs are incorporated into such literary texts as plays, poems and prose fiction. Certainly, some elements of the oral performance are lost in the new media but the point is that the kernel, the essence of the proverbs, songs and tales, are kept alive and rendered useful to the contemporary users, including the children.

Our focus in this paper is on the literary use of proverbs suggestive of an interface between the world of the oral and the written. From the 1960s to date Africa has witnessed a phenomenal rise in the number of writers and of books. In spite of this burgeoning of the written tradition, it has not been able to erase the oral. On the contrary, as Emmanuel Obiechina argues, the written becomes enriched by the oral.

Oral culture does not immediately disappear by the mere fact of its being in contact with writing, nor does the literature of the oral society disappear because of the introduction of written literature. Rather, a synthesis takes place in which characteristics of the oral culture survive and are absorbed, assimilated, extended, and even recognized within a new cultural literature. Also, vital aspects of the oral literature are absorbed into an emerging written literature of greatly invigorated form infused with vernacular energy through metaphors, images and symbols, more complex plots and diversified structures of meaning. (197)

Sade Omokore also argues that literary texts embody orature forms as writers try to explore their cultural landscape so that readers will still have a grasp on their traditional heritage. She states that “African writers have been greatly influenced by the artistic verbal composition of their people, and this is evident, in varying degrees in their work” (283). This view agrees with that of Tanure Ojaide who urges critics of African literature to familiarize themselves with orature so that they will better comprehend the subtexts of modern African writers. Ojaide adds that “African oral literature ... brings out formal, structural, and stylistic features and devices that many modern African writers borrow from the indigenous oral traditions in their literary works, which are often a blend of learned and borrowed Western and acquired indigenous African features” (2).

Perhaps more than any other orature form, the proverb finds itself interlaced into the structure of literary works. This has been so since the time of Homer, Sophocles, Virgil and Chaucer. Most of

the plays of Shakespeare are infused with proverbs or proverbial utterances and the Bible is generally also laced with proverbs, apart from the Book of Proverbs.

The marriage of orature and the written tradition is very much marked in the works of African writers. J.O.J. Nwachukwu-Agbada sees Chinua Achebe as a pioneer in the use of proverbs in African fiction. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God* and *Anthills of the Savannah* are modern fictive works that integrate traditional proverbs into their matrixes. In *The Wizard of the Crow* Ngugi wa Thiongo equally displays the integration of the oral and the written just as Wole Soyinka does in most of his plays, and Okot P'Bitek and Mazisi Kunene do in their poetry. The tradition continues in the works of writers such as Femi Osofisan, Niyi Osundare, and Tanure Ojaide. Abiola Irele highlights the function of orature as an imaginative recreation of society and its world view and as an expression of social experience. He speaks at length of its appropriation by modern African writers when he says that:

[I]n trying to formulate the state of disjunction between an old order of being and a new mode of existence, literary artists in modern Africa have been forced to a reconsideration of their expressive medium, of their means of address. In the quest for a grounded authenticity of expression and vision, the best among our modern African writers have had to undertake a resourcing of their material and their modes of expression in the traditional culture. Because the traditional culture has been able to maintain itself as a living resource, the modern literature strives to establish and strengthen its connection with a legacy that, though associated with the past, remains available as a constant reference for the African imagination. The oral tradition has thus come to be implicated in the process of transformation of the function of literature and in the preoccupation with the formal means of giving voice to the African assertion. (78)

African writers use proverbs in their literary works for the purpose of embellishment, thematic concretization, character delineation, and enforcement of social control, among others. Nwachukwu-Agbada quotes Achebe as saying:

A proverb is both a functional means of communication and also a very elegant and artistic performance itself. I think that proverbs are both utilitarian and little vignettes of art. So when I use those forms in my novels, they both serve a utilitarian purpose, which is to re-enact the life of the people that I am describing and also delight through elegance and aptness of imagery. This is what proverbs are supposed to do. (180-181)

Elena Zubkava Bertoncini sees the value of proverbs in fictional dialogues as that of making the narrative come closer to the actual social context. The proverb is an economic way of expressing ideas and of depicting a character. Bertoncini states that “proverbs in written prose fiction are always aesthetically appealing... probably the reason is that the proverbs themselves are beautiful: most of them contain in a nutshell a profound wisdom cast in a refined poetic language”. He adds that “a shallow narrative may improve with an appropriate use of proverbs, since the proverbs are expressed in metaphors, playing in this regard a role similar to other forms of figurative speech” (18).

Roger D. Abrahams and Barbara Babcock point out that in literary texts proverbs appear in the social discourse of the characters – the speaker-hearer relationship, and that such proverbs enrich the speech of characters and of the readers who see proverbs in ‘action’ as should be used in ordinary discourse. They stress that writing is capable of capturing the nuances of verbal discourse since the written is based on the spoken. In their view:

All dialogue is reported speech; but proverbs, along with footnotes and epigraphs, are reportings of reportings, or special kinds of quotations which function reflexively as a form of fictive self-commentary, as embedded devices reminding the reader of the authorial presence. Thus, proverbs may simultaneously be a device characterizing the speaker and a reminder to the reader of the author’s guiding hand. (430)

Proverbs thus serve various functions in literary texts but essentially they become carriers of the norms, values, and aspirations of the society. As Roumyana Petrova puts it, proverbs reveal to us the life of a people:

If we need to find out more about what kind of values this people hold in esteem, or what shortcomings, or vices, it deems unacceptable, then we have to explore their connotative meanings. Simply stated, what a proverb ridicules, mocks or denies is considered bad, negative, unacceptable, while what a proverb recommends, advises or stresses, is considered good and positive by this people. (338)

Oluwole Coker and Adesina Coker also stress the importance of proverbs in expressing a people's epistemology and philosophy and consequently as an agent of culture. They argue that "a people's art is a direct representation of their cultural understanding of the issues and events around them. Furthermore, verbal resources serve satirical ends. Hence, an artist is the harbinger of hope and by extension, 'righter' of social wrongs" (8). The proverbs consequently enrich the meanings of written texts and, because of their structure, serve as mnemonic devices to the readers. Recalling a proverb used in a written work triggers up memory of the surrounding, situational contexts from which the proverb arose.

Our study of the literary use of proverbs in Iroh's two books will, of necessity, be based on the contextualists' approach to paremiology. This is the view advocated by scholars such as Wilfred Van Damme, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Peter Seitel, Nwan-chukwu-Agbada, Kwesi Yankah and many others who feel that proverbs are by nature figurative and consequently polythematic. In order that we understand the meaning of a proverb we need to weigh the interaction situation in which it has been uttered. We need to know who is speaking to whom, where, when and with whom. The social situation is as important as the gestures or facial expression of the speakers. We need to know whether a speaker uses a proverb in an ironic, sarcastic manner or whether he wants to caution or stress a point. These concerns are true of proverbs in the oral, face-to face interaction and in written texts.

***Analysis of Eddie Iroh's Without a Silver Spoon and Banana Leaves***

Eddie Iroh has written *Toads of War* and *Twenty-Eight Guns for the General* both of which are novels that focus on the tragedy of the Nigerian civil-war. However, his *Without a Silver Spoon* and *Banana Leaves* fall within the genre of children literature as their

appeal is largely to children of primary and secondary schools. The two works have moral value, social relevance and are aesthetically engaging. The profundity of the two works are partly due to the author's use of proverbs, those tested words of wisdom that foreground language, encapsulate a people's world view and concretise the speaker's/writer's message.

*Without a Sliver Spoon* is the story of Ure Chokwe who grows up in a poor but honest and proud village family. The family's poverty almost makes Chokwe to abandon his education but the situation is saved when Teacher Steve takes him as his houseboy and pays his school fees. It is a typical story of children growing up and facing the various challenges in the society and in their primary schools, but the writer here highlights the themes of honesty, hard work and perseverance. Man's dignity and self-pride, the novel stresses, lie in being truthful in all his dealings. Iroh renders these concerns through a discourse that is loaded with proverbs.

Most of the proverbs in the novel are uttered by Dede, Chokwe's father, and this is largely when he is speaking to his children. This agrees with the practice in most traditional African societies where elders are the main speakers of proverbs as they are the custodians of the lores, mores and wisdom of the society. Chokwe acknowledges his father's profuse use of proverbs in conversation and states:

That was my father. He always talked in proverbs. For many years it was very hard for me to understand what he really meant. But in time, I found out that he did not really speak in proverbs as the Bible spoke in parables. Rather he used proverbs to explain more clearly what he was saying. As he once said, "Proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten". (11)

Iroh uses Dede to illustrate the power of oral tradition in society, for Dede is a griot who knows a lot about the origin and lore of his people. He is considered as the family's oracle because of his ability to recollect past deeds. Inevitably Dede is considered wise and people consult him on various social issues. Also, Dede's historical/mythical narratives and his use of proverbs to his school-going children ensure the continuity of tradition in the modern literate age. Helen Oranga A. Mwanzi notes that throughout the ages, mankind has used its creative power to invest in youths values that



will help them survive meaningfully in the community. She adds that “the challenges of globalization will be best met with a society whose children are indelibly marked as belonging to particular families that embrace certain values inherited from certain fore-parents of virtue and varlour” (49). Iroh consequently appropriates traditional, imaginative expressions to convey traditional values that assist in the cultural growth of children. In Mwanzi’s words, he places the community’s stamp on the young and thereby gives them a definite sense of direction.

A lot of the proverbs deal with poverty or the economy. Chokwe informs his father that Onye Ara, the village mad man who goes around seeking for a toad, did not come to their own house as feared, and Dede replies with a proverb: “You do not ask a toad to give you a chair when you can see that he is squatting” (11). This implies that Onye Ara is aware of their poverty and knows that he cannot get anything if he comes. The proverb is metaphorical and shows that even mad people are perceptive and know the state of things in society. Dede equally acknowledges the poverty of his family, the proverbial squatting toad. This same proverb sinks a lesson into the mind of Chokwe as he becomes reflective, wondering whether or not to broach the issue of his school fees with his father. He accepts that it would be foolish of him to ask his father in view of the proverbial wisdom he has just gained – the poverty of the family.

Dede attributes his poverty to change in the national economy from the traditional sale of palm oil to the new oil business that has rendered many people helpless. Since Shell Oil is the new god, agricultural products have lost their value. Dede then quotes a proverb to buttress his point: “Our people say that when a woman marries two husbands, she is in a position to choose the better of the two. Our people have chosen Shell Oil” (13). In this proverb Iroh hits at the neo-colonial Nigerian economy that has led to the neglect of agriculture and consequently ensured the poverty of the majority of the populace. When Dede says, “our people” he is citing authority and putting a traditional stamp on the utterance as the voice of wisdom and truth. A traditional proverb is brought out to highlight the cause of modern tragedy.

Also on poverty is the proverb, “What the eyes do not see, the mouth does not water for” (16) which Dede utters to express the need for contentment with one’s situation in life. People should not

long for what is far away from them and this makes Dede to take his fate without complaining since he knows that there is no money for his wife to buy soup ingredients that would make the soup more appetising. It appears a fatalistic, submissive philosophy but the significance of the proverb lies in the fact that Dede, as a character, is honest, teaches honesty to his children and would not tolerate theft. It is better for his children to be content with what they have than to engage in stealing. Incidentally, the incident that gives birth to the proverb becomes a good lesson to Chokwe who feels that if his father “could eat watery soup in silence, then it was a lesson for me to bear my caning at school in silence, too” (16). The caning is of course due to lack of payment of school fees.

In another situation Chokwe wonders why his school mate, Erugo, should steal money from his rich father, but remembers his father’s proverb that, “What the eyes do not see, the mouth does not water for”. Since Erugo sees a lot of money with his father he has developed the love for money and is therefore ‘justified’ in stealing it. This is the logic of the proverb but Chokwe however knows that his father will frown at any child that steals his father’s property. Chokwe reflects: “But was it not the same Dede who warned that a child learns to be a rogue by stealing his father’s property? Sometimes Dede confused me!” (36). Chokwe thus finds it bewildering that a person will utter a proverb and at the same time a counter to it. The point, however, is that the two situations are different and the proverb does not actually contradict itself. As Yankah points out, “the proverb as a cultural fact or truism ... is liable to contradiction” but “in contextual usage the truth ... is irrelevant” (127-128). Stealing is opposed to contentment and therefore if the spirit of the first utterance is negated in the second context, the subject will develop a negative capability, as Erugo has. It is hence ironic, in the context of the story that Erugo, who is born with a silver spoon in his mouth, learns to steal his father’s money and grows into a rogue while Chokwe, who is poor, learns to be contented and becomes honest. The ancient proverb, applied in modern context is actually expressive of the malaise of modernity: money and wealth in general degrade human beings. Chokwe’s meditation on his father’s insistence that a child should not steal his father’s property is an implied lesson in modesty and life-sustaining virtues.

Poverty does not mean losing one’s sense of responsibility. When Chokwe tries to persuade his father to allow him to live with

Teacher Steve so that his father would be relieved of the burden of paying school fees, Dede replies with the proverb: "The god that gives a man a large farm land also gives a hoe and the strength to till the land. I do not have more children than a hen, yet a hen manages to feed her chicks. Am I going to sell my sons into slavery in order to feed them?" (40). Dede implies that man should take care of his family and that having got a family we should use our skills in taking care of the members. Within the larger context of an oil economy that has rendered farming a fruitless venture, Dede uses the proverb just as a face-saving tool for, while the gods might have given one a family, one has to wrestle with the new multinational gods that are so oppressive and exploitative and who ensure that the chicks are scattered from the hen.

Chokwe however argues against his father's idea knowing fully well that Dede will not be able to pay his school fees. His persistence makes Dede to conclude that Chokwe must have thought deeply on the matter of staying with Teacher Steve. He tells Chokwe the next day: "My father once said that the thoughts that lead a person to take an important step do not come to his mind in a single day" (42) and therefore acknowledges that Chokwe must have weighed all the angles before arriving at the decision to leave the family. The proverb implies that all important thoughts, choices, decisions are cultivated over a long period of time and not rashly done. Dede consequently sees Chokwe as a perceptive child who is aware of the surrounding poverty and conscious of the need to provide a solution. Dede states: "It makes me happy to know that at your age you are able to think of the problems in my house. I must therefore encourage you..." (44).

The proverbial utterances of Dede help in moulding the character of Chokwe even when he leaves his poor family to live with Teacher Steve. Chokwe is conscious of his roots and does not reject it. To the gladness of his family he comes back home during vacations and the father states: "I know you are still my child, wherever you go. The chicken does not forget the road to its hut" (56). He is proud of Chokwe and the proverb he utters is an advice to Chokwe to maintain his self-dignity and not to look down on the family. The proverb has a wider cultural implication within the context of the modern Nigerian state for it suggests that despite modernization and globalization one should not throw away one's heritage. We should not alienate ourselves from our socio-cultural roots however far we

may embrace the wider world. In the novel *Iroh* affirms Mwanzi's significant statement that:

[T]here is a thread linking the concerns of both oral composers and authors of children literature across cultures and climes. This thread is the need to use the pleasurable experience of literature to pass salient messages of great social importance to children in order to influence their world-view, intellectual growth and taste. (50)

Chokwe examines his relationship with Erugo who deceives and steals his father's money. Having taken proverbial lessons from his father he uses one in order to caution himself against associating with Erugo. He states: "If a good goat goes about with a bad goat that eats people's yam tuber, the good goat soon learns to eat yam tuber" (61). He consequently decides to tell Erugo that their friendship is over. Chokwe equally recalls a modern, synonymous proverb used by their Primary Four teacher: "Show me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are" (61-62). The voice of the past is echoed in the present to warn the young ones. This equally indicates that modernization or education has not put an end to the use of proverbs. Toyin Falola has observed generally that the "past, in all its complications, remains relevant to Africa's present and to its future. Past cultures have shaped present cultures, which is why we have, at the same time, elements of the primordial and the civic competing within the same space" (160-161).

Another proverb that cautions youth arises when Teacher Steve loses his money and suspects Chokwe of stealing it. Chokwe becomes disturbed because he is sure of his innocence and wonders how the problem could be solved. He is confident however that if he tells his parents, they will believe him and this confidence is based on his recollection of a proverb his father once said: "The child who lies to his parents is a child who denies himself" (79). The father had then asked his children never to hesitate in telling him the truth, whatever happened outside the home. The proverb in context stresses the need for truth, honesty and confidence. This is in tandem with the didacticism that permeates children's literature in general. It is also at the heart of the thematic explorations of *Iroh* in this novel. The proverb thus enables Chokwe to take the right line of action by telling his father the truth of the matter.

Dede becomes disturbed over the issue and tries to go to a fortune teller in order to unravel the mystery of Teacher Steve's lost money. Chokwe however tells him that as a Christian he should not go to a fortune-teller. Dede then confronts him as to how he thinks the problem could be solved and Chokwe replies with a proverb that his father once told him when a parcel was misplaced by his mother: "Whatever is not stolen must someday be found where it has been misplaced" (84). This is a simple, plain proverb which Chokwe uses to buttress his belief that the money would be found one day. The proverb is used here as a means of assurance, of providing hope in a tight situation. After the utterance, Dede can only feel gratitude at having a perceptive son like Chokwe.

Poverty leads Chokwe to stay with Teacher Steve and the same poor family background makes Teacher Steve suspect Chokwe of stealing his money. When Teacher Steve finally gets his misplaced money in the drawer of his table he goes to Dede to seek for forgiveness. Dede responds with the proverb: "As you know, because all lizards lie on their stomach, we do not know which one has a stomach ache. It is not easy for us to know that most people in this village are poor" (105). Dede feels that the poverty of his own family has been exposed simply because he sends his children to school where school fees have to be paid. He is sad that because they are poor their children are considered to be culprits whenever anything is missing. Dede however acknowledges that members of his family do not steal: "It has never happened in this family and that is more important to us than being rich" (105). The proverb cautions people to avoid making hasty conclusions as external reality may hide certain inner qualities. The external similarity of lizards does not mean that there aren't differences among them. This metaphor from tradition is thus a very apt description of certain situations in the modern Nigerian state. The past still speaks with resonance to the present.

Hence most of the proverbs in *Without a Silver Spoon* hinge on the issue of poverty but, as Dede states, poverty is not the same with moral perversion. Indeed, the novel tries to show that it is the rich class that produces morally decadent children like Erugo, while the children of the poor, like Chokwe, are morally upright. The proverbs function like a chorus in the novel as they comment, criticize, caution, warn and assure in the various contexts of the story. They are very much part of the structure of the novel and are veritable instruments of characterization and thematization. They equally

embellish the discourse with their figurative, emblematic nature. Iroh continues to use proverbs for various purposes in his sequel to *Without a Silver Spoon, Banana leaves*

*Banana Leaves* continues with the story of Chokwe who, having completed his primary school is forced to move to the city to live with Uncle Ikenna who works in a cinema house. Uncle Ikenna soon turns Chokwe into a trader and refuses to send him to a secondary school on the pretence that the times are hard. Chokwe joins a gang of ruffians who ultimately engage in robbery and drug addiction. The theme of poverty and honesty which we encounter in *Without a Silver Spoon* is also found here but now we also have the corruptive influence of the city on innocent children like Chokwe. As in *Without a Silver Spoon*, proverbs punctuate the story. The proverbs are either uttered by Chokwe who recollects his parents' sayings or by Uncle Ikenna who still possesses the traditional wisdom of the people despite his city life. *Banana Leaves* reveals to us therefore that in spite of modernity aspects of orature are still in use by the people. However, as if to stress the evil, exploitative and oppressive nature of modern city life, we see, through Uncle Ikenna's discourse, the manipulation of proverbs for selfish, exploitative reasons.

The first part of the book deals with Chokwe in the village after he has finished primary school and wondering how he will get into secondary school in view of his parents' poverty. The proverbs in this section therefore focus on the father's attempt to mould Chokwe into a morally upright child who, despite his low social background, will be honest and maintain his dignity. As in *Without a Silver Spoon* the importance of material things or money is down played in favour of moral rectitude.

Having completed his primary school and with Teacher Steve gone, Chokwe tries to discuss the family's loss of source of livelihood with his father. Meditating on the idea, however, he predicts that his father may likely respond to him with a proverb that, "The man who had a good child was better off than the one who had pots of money but whose children were vagabonds" (36). This indeed is a consolatory proverb that would have been meant to placate Chokwe. It is a philosophical proverb which stresses the value of self-dignity, honour and righteousness over that of wealth. Though Teacher Steve is gone and the family has lost the valuable material

assistance that he used to give, the fact that Chokwe is a good son is quite comforting to the family.

Tied up to the issue of preference for moral goodness and the rejection of materialism is that of greed. Chokwe reports that whenever he or any of his brothers or sisters find lost money and bring it home to their father, Dede would always admonish them and say: "Anyone who hungers for what he does not own is training himself to become a thief...I have no taste for what I cannot afford; neither should my children" (37). The lesson here is for one to be satisfied with one's station in life and to shun avarice and materialism since the fact that one is poor does not mean that one should be greedy and dishonest. In the postcolonial, highly materialistic and corrupt Nigerian society, this proverb is apt in instilling moral discipline among our dispossessed and socially traumatized youth. The present thus appropriates succinct lessons from the past and this affirms the dynamic, transformative nature of proverbs.

Dede actually perceives poverty as a test of one's integrity and as a temptation to be withstood. He tells his children to be firm and to uphold the virtues of truth and honesty and warns them not to be proud of being morally upright until time has tried them. He ends his sermon with the proverb "Don't believe the man who boasts that his house is built on solid ground until it has withstood a storm" (37). There is therefore the need for caution and for perseverance in maintaining one's self-worth. The warning proves true in the case of Chokwe who towards the end of the story falls into bad company and engages in robbery. The proverb recalls Sophocles' immortal words in *King Oedipus*: "And none can be called happy until that day when he carries/His happiness down to the grave in peace" (68). The proverb thus is equally a call for humility, for unpretentiousness in this unpredictable world of denied needs and human suffering. It equally recalls Christ's allegorical teaching on building a solid house in Matthew 7: 24-27.

Part one of the story concludes on a note of uncertainty for Chokwe who will be going to Port Harcourt to stay with Uncle Ikenna. While discussing his departure, nobody talks about whether he will attend the Stella Maris Secondary School in Port Harcourt. Chokwe feels a sense of deprivation and disillusionment which he expresses in a proverbial statement: "It was like a thirsty man standing by the stream but unable to reach the fresh water to drink" (50). When he broaches the issue of schooling with them, Uncle Ikenna

utters the proverb: "Our people say that you do not count your chickens before the eggs are hatched by the mother hen" (51). Chokwe is being asked not to be in a hurry or to anticipate the future in the present. Patience is required of him. In the context of the story the proverb is used by Ikenna to forestall any promise of sending Chokwe to school in Port Harcourt. In the light of what happens later, it is a misuse of the proverb for selfish and wicked reasons. Hence a proverb can be used for a good or bad cause depending on the context. Chokwe already feels doomed on hearing this proverb which turns out to be a gloomy prelude to the sad reality that he will experience in the city.

Leaving the village and entering the city marks a turning point in the story and in the type of proverbs being used. In Port Harcourt Chokwe is not enrolled in school but rather kept to do domestic work for Ikenna. One day Ikenna talks to him and begins with a proverb: "You do not need to tell a deaf person that there is a stampede in the market place" (70), by which he wants to tell Chokwe that life is difficult for him and that Chokwe will have to help him in upsetting the cost of living by selling goods in the cinema hall. Ikenna thus uses the proverb to entrap Chokwe into work and, as it soon manifests itself, into a form of exploitation. It is a clear case of using traditional wisdom for a selfish reason. The issue of Chokwe's schooling is cast aside.

At a point Ikenna realizes that Chokwe is thinking about going to school and he comes out with another proverb that is aimed at persuading Chokwe to understand that hunger, not education, is their primary enemy. He says, "I know you may be thinking of school... But if we are not beaten by the sun or the rain, we will be beaten by hunger, as our people say" (72). Ikenna once more uses a proverb to make his victim acquiesce in his oppression, exploitation and deprivation. To him hunger, not schooling, is what they need to combat.

When Chokwe persists and wants to know if when their economic fortunes advance he will be sent to school, Ikenna, again, uses the force of traditional authority to drum his point: "You do not give a child a name when it is still in the womb" (72), and so Chokwe should wait for that indefinite time of self-sufficiency. This is another case of a proverb used with a negative, exploitative intent, as later events in the story reveal. The three proverbs above are used by Ikenna in order to forestall conflict with Chokwe. It is a means of



silencing Chokwe psychologically and therefore of ensuring a harmonious existence between them. Fountaine's argument on the use of proverbs for social control is pertinent here:

The stimulus for proverb performance is usually some human action, especially one capable of straining the social structure of the group, and one which might be interpreted in several ways. The user of the saying, or source, restores human harmony by categorising the situation and imposing order. This is accomplished by correlating the topic and comment of the item cited with the various elements or actors in the social situation, and asserting a correspondence (hence a 'similitude') between the two. (404-405)

In this case however, Chokwe, the addressee, is aware of the folly, deception and selfishness behind the utterance of the proverb. The authoritative nature of the proverb gets additional force from the fact that it is being uttered by an elder to a boy. Chokwe is not in a position to argue what he knows is wrong, particularly as traditional society frowns at a young person hurling a counter proverb to an elder. Ikenna might have silenced Chokwe with his proverb but Chokwe who is fully aware of Ikenna's sinister motives behind the utterances, psychologically lives in tension and apprehension.

The very first night Chokwe starts selling goods in the cinema hall a boy blows smoke into his face and he coughs. The tray falls from his hands and some of the contents are crushed. When later his Uncle accuses him for the crushed goods he defends himself but Ikenna calls him a liar. Chokwe asserts his innocence by saying that they don't tell lies in their family. Out of fury Ikenna says: "Everybody knows your father is an honest man, but you are not your father," and adds the proverb: "The monkey and the gorilla may claim to be relatives, but the monkey is a monkey and the gorilla is a gorilla" (79). Ikenna uses the proverb to show truth but in this case it is not really appropriate as readers attest to Chokwe's honesty. The proverb is negatively used here for a condemnatory purpose.

A similar proverb is used in a positive way by Uncle Diki who comes to settle the quarrel between Ikenna and Chokwe. After listening to the cause of provocation, Uncle Diki tells Ikenna that it is not good to ask Chokwe to sell cigarettes as it can make him develop a bad habit. When Ikenna defends his action by saying that other children are engaged in such business, Uncle Diki tells him that

people are not the same and that he has noticed that Chokwe is an intelligent boy that needs to be in school. He ends with the proverb, "The cat may look like the lion, but that does not make it a lion" (84). Chokwe is here portrayed as a good boy and he, Chokwe, is glad to hear the proverb thrown at his Uncle. He says: "To hear Mr. Dikibo throw my uncle's kind of wicked proverb back at him cheered me up and reduced my pain" (84). A proverb or synonymous proverb could thus be used either positively or negatively, depending on the social context. As Yankah points out, a proverb user is guided by the social situation and by "his choice of proverb, by his known position or attitude in the discourse interaction, what literal statements precede his proverb citation or statements he utters after the proverb he quotes" (136).

The last part of the book deals with Chokwe's realisation that nothing good will come out of his stay with Uncle Ikenna in terms of his burning ambition to be educated. He consequently begins to contemplate the way out, feeling that it would be foolish of him to allow himself to be oppressed and exploited again. He recalls a proverbial utterance of his father: "If a dog bites you the first time, it is the dog's fault; but if it bites you a second time, it is your fault" (85). The voice of the ancient comes to the aid of a modern child in the city. The dog's image as a metaphor for his uncle is appropriate in view of Ikenna's callous and exploitative nature. The proverb warns Chokwe to avoid the snares of his uncle.

Chokwe is however cautious in planning to run away and hopes to at least make amends with his uncle before he takes leave. This is because he realizes that, "It is only a stupid dog that barks at a lion" (86). Tact is therefore needed in dealing with someone that is very powerful. Once more a proverb gives him the wisdom to deal with situations in the city.

In the two novels, Iroh has employed traditional wisdom as a prop to his narrative structure. Apart from sustaining the plots of the novels the proverbs help readers in understanding the nature and world views of the principal characters – Dede, Chokwe and Ikenna. While Dede's use of proverbs portray him as the repository of traditional wisdom, the voice of truth, a man that possesses self-dignity and as a veritable custodian of traditional values, Ikenna is, on the contrary, emblematic of the distortion or manipulation of traditional values for selfish, individualistic purposes. He exploits the ambiguous nature of proverbs and flings them at Chokwe from

the position of power. Iroh implies that language, particularly rhetorical language of which proverbs are a part, is subject to manipulation as users try to persuade their listeners. Ikenna's use of proverbs demonstrates Fashina's argument that proverbs strategically deflect, diffuse and distract "from the pseudo-temporal nature of language". Fashina adds that

Proverbs impose affective discourse meaning; and strategically they persuade the hearer to succumb to their meta-functional logic. Indeed, proverbs are verbal nuclear disarmament. They detonate the inner conviction of the hearer. They physically mesmerise him/her thereby making the proverb speaker to earn some kind of compelling respect for his seeming inviolate wisdom and psychic energy of archetypal nature. (261)

Despite this all-powerful and conquering image of the proverb, however, submissiveness to it depends on the listener who may decide to throw in a counter proverb. In the context of Iroh's *Banana Leaves* Chokwe is indeed enraptured by his father's use of proverbs but completely averse to Ikenna's usage mainly because he knows that Ikenna uses the proverbs in order to keep him in a position of servitude. Hence though he listens to his uncle's proverbs without complaints he does not adhere to their logic. His inner conviction, inner truth is not 'detonated' by Ikenna's proverbs neither is he mesmerised by them. Ikenna's life is generally moulded by his father's use of proverbs and, as a keen learner of oral lore, he appropriates and uses the proverbs either in his meditations or when conversing with his friends.

Iroh uses some markers to set out the proverbs in the two novels. Most of the proverbs are set out in quotation marks but some of Chokwe's meditations are simply italicised or left unmarked but for the opening or concluding statements. Some of the opening or concluding formulas used by the speakers include: "As our people say", "our people say that", "but as the saying goes", "Dede would reply wisely", "but as my father would reply", "as Dede would say", "but as my father would say", "he replied with a proverb", "he concluded with another proverb" and others. The use of these opening or closing formulas is to confer authority on the proverb as a time-tested truth, the wisdom of the ancients that should be adhered to. Inevitably most of the proverbs are used in

situations of dialogue as is usually the case in real, oral situation. In the two novels we have the added advantage of 'listening' to proverbs being used reflectively in the interior monologues of Chokwe. In reality of course, people may ponder on certain issues which may lead to the recollection of proverbs or proverbial utterances that are appropriate to the circumstances, either by way of justification, evaluation or self-consolation. The only thing is that we cannot have access to such meditations.

As a realist, Iroh's proverbial store contains items from the traditional past and those that are obviously modern or non-African. Such proverbs include, "Show me who your friends are and I will show you who you are" (WASS. 61-62), "Wishes were not horses" (BL.48), "Do not count your chickens before the eggs are hatched by the mother hen" (BL.51), and the biblical "Man does not live by bread alone" (BL. 102). There is also a modern Nigerian proverbial utterance rendered in pidgin: "If man no die, man no go rotten" (BL.114). The title of the first novel, *Without a Silver Spoon*, is itself proverbial as it originates from the English idiomatic expression "to be born *with a silver spoon*". Hence, as society moves, so do proverbs.

### **Conclusion**

Eddie Iroh's two novels are primarily addressed to youth, those who are generally felt to be out of touch with traditional African values such as orature items. That he has incorporated orature elements, particularly the proverb, into the texture of his works, is significant. Literature generally entertains but equally edifies, and much as the proverbs in the two novels are aesthetically appealing and persuasive, they also teach the young readers the wisdom of yore which is still relevant today. Within the context of the two novels Chokwe's use of proverbs, both in the village and in the city, is Iroh's testament that orature items are very much alive, relevant and vibrant. That Chokwe is a child also suggests that there is continuity in the use of traditional oral expressive forms. It is hoped that the proverbs in the two novels will become familiar to all readers who will again use them in their day to day conversations. Just as most of us have come to know and use proverbs and idiomatic expressions from other lands through reading their literature, readers of Iroh's works would hopefully use the proverbs they read in the novels. In this way, the dynamic nature of proverbs reveals itself.

Orature has been appropriated in the written form and the written form gives birth to orature. Ironically therefore, secondary orality can be a source of primary orality. Such indeed is the miracle of transformation as it affects a precious gem whose usage ensures its indestructibility.

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BRIENNE TOOMEY

### OLD WISDOM RE-IMAGINED: PROVERBIAL CARTOONS FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

**Abstract:** Proverbs are frequently used in the media as a way to attract attention or to impart wisdom. As an attempt to bring new life into proverbial teachings, a weekly cartoon entitled “Proverb Place” was created in 2011 for the University of Vermont student newspaper, *The Water Tower*. Using a mix of proverbs and anti-proverbs, the cartoons aimed to re-introduce, or perhaps introduce, university students to important proverbial wisdom in a culturally relevant medium.

**Keywords:** proverbs, anti-proverbs, iconography, cartoons, art, media, newspaper, paremeology, language, culture

Cartoons have a refreshing way of modernizing ancient wisdom and making old proverbs culturally relevant. However, there is always the danger of a lack of cultural literacy when including proverbial wisdom in art. For example, how many young people today know the origins of the proverbs “Big fish to eat a little fish” or “Strike while the iron is hot” and would recognize an artistic reference to them? Older proverbs are modified and new ones are created as jargon transforms in the age of technology—a cleansing process that weeds out irrelevant sayings and preserves the favored ones. Cartoons and digital media help to keep proverbs like “First come, first served” and “An apple a day keeps the doctor away” relevant, although they may invoke very different images today than at the time of their inception.

Proverbs are often metaphorical and thus lend themselves well to cartoon art and satire. The weekly cartoon “Proverb Place” published in the twelve-page University of Vermont student newspaper *The Water Tower* between Fall 2011 and Spring 2012 aimed to illustrate this fact, while trying to inform a young audience that old wisdom is never out of style.

As the artist of the weekly comic series, I continually searched for a way to connect my education to my university social life

through my drawings. The idea occurred to me as I sat in Professor Wolfgang Mieder's lecture course *The Nature and Politics of Proverbs* at the University of Vermont in the fall of 2011. Professor Mieder was teaching a class about the countless proverb references in today's media—newspapers, advertisements, songs, poetry, etc. As part of a semester long project, the students were assigned to create a collection of fifty proverbial references and describe the context in which they were being used. Of particular interest to me, as an aspiring artist, were the cartoons that Professor Mieder had collected over the years from prominent magazines such as *The New Yorker*, *Time*, and *Playboy* as part of his international proverb archive at the University of Vermont. He suggested that if there was any difficulty finding cartoons, or if the students preferred to, they could create their own. At that moment I thought, well of course, I will make my own!

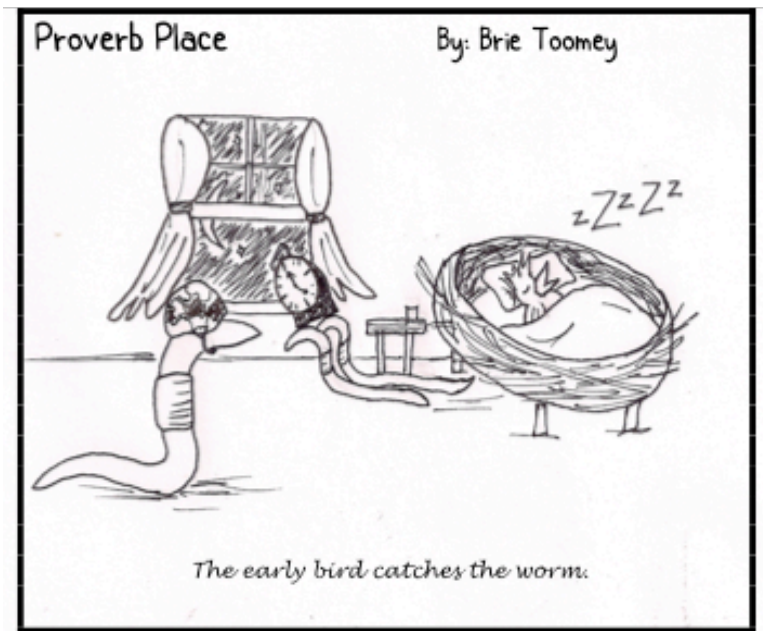
Art does not grow on trees. The idea for my first cartoon came to me as I was home visiting my parents and doodling images of the proverb, "The early bird catches the worm". I realized the potential that word play held, and the unlimited possibilities that came from combining text and art. With the encouragement of my professor, I decided to continue drawing proverbial cartoons, and I wanted them to be directly relatable to the undergraduate student body audience.

Once a week, usually the night before the deadline, I sat down with a fine-tip pen and stared at a blank piece of white paper. The cartoon ideas often did not come as an "ah-ha!" moment, but rather as the result of pure focus and concentration. I tried to think of proverbs that I knew were easily recognizable, and often ones that were more iconographic. I would choose a proverb, doodle some things that came to mind when I thought of the proverb, and see if anything could be created from the jumble of images. Often times, I was unsuccessful. Luckily there are thousands of proverbs, however, so if one didn't ignite a spark there was a chance that the next one might.

My cartoon series "Proverb Place" became a single-paneled weekly cartoon, which used proverbs and anti-proverbs to touch upon varying topics. The following eleven cartoons from the thirteen issue series take on a few different tones. Several of the cartoons mock the literal interpretation of proverbs, teasing a proverb-ignorant audience, while others use motifs from proverbs, such as an apple from the saying "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree",



to hint at the metaphorical theme. A few of the cartoons go so far as to mock the proverbs themselves, implying that people should be weary before adopting such statements as supposed universal truths.



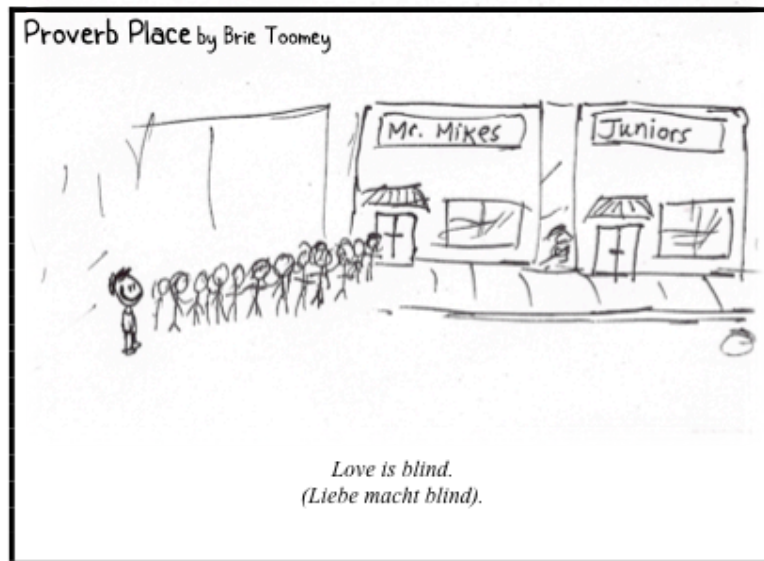
*The Water Tower*, vol. 10, issue 12 (November 29, 2011).

The first cartoon of the series was one of my favorites, and takes the opposing perspective on the widely used proverb “The early bird catches the worm”. Instead of the usual bird-dominant metaphor, the worms in this scenario are in control, tricking the bird into sleeping late. Because the illustration uses the motifs of a bird and a worm, the proverb is perhaps recognizable without the text. I felt that this proverb was one of the most frequently used in American culture, as the stress of a morning wake up and busy workday pervade American society. In this cartoon, the worms are concerned with their own safety, but there is also nothing wrong with a bird wanting to spend the morning sleeping in.



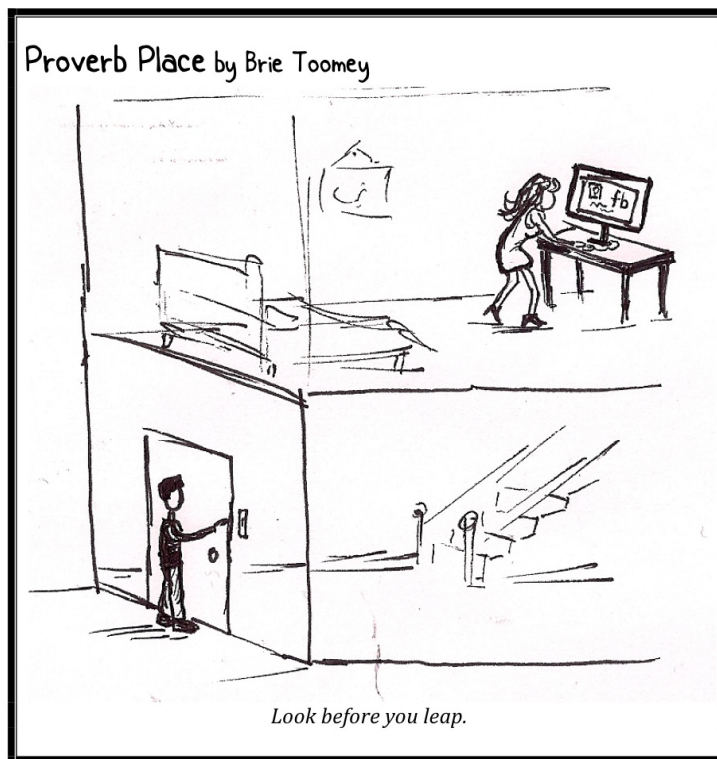
*The Water Tower*, vol. 11, issue 1 (January 24, 2012).

This cartoon was for the winter holiday issue of the student newspaper, and is a great example of the potential of proverbs in cartoons with its play on "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree". Motifs of the apple and the tree are used in a literal way, while the father and daughter characters hint at the metaphorical interpretation of the proverb. This proverb is used frequently in the English language and lends itself perfectly to this technological age and craze with Apple electronic products amongst all ages.



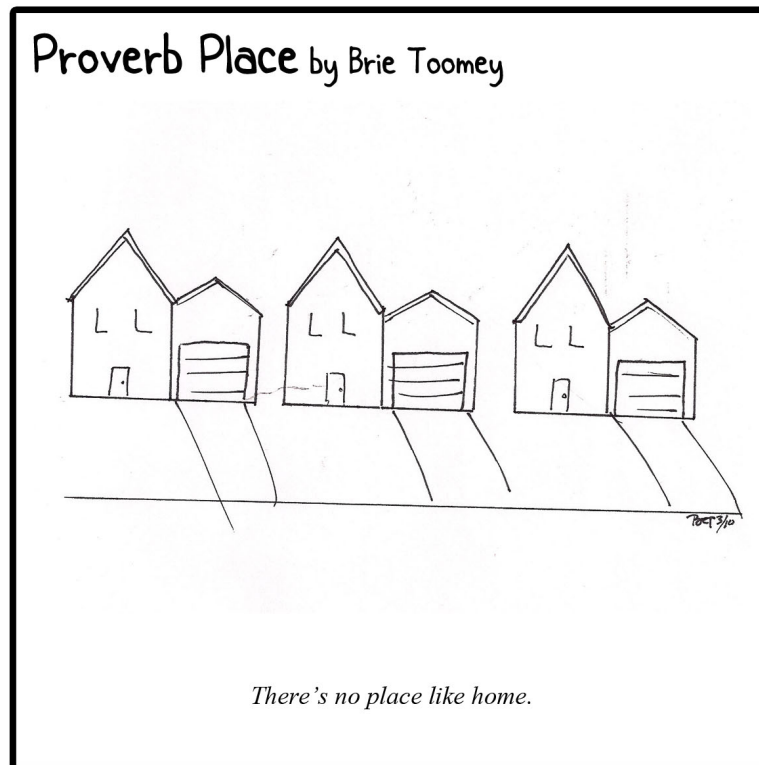
*The Water Tower*, vol. 11, issue 4 (February 14, 2012).

The “Love is blind” cartoon deals with the mundane topic of waiting in line at a pizza shop, but addresses the age-old issue of love-induced ignorance. Is it worth it to wait for a slice of pizza from your favorite restaurant when a similar product is instantly available? Letting love guide one’s choices can be a risky business, be it pertaining to a human or material relationship. The pizza shop example is exceptionally relatable for the American university audience and uses light humor to acknowledge the process of decision-making.



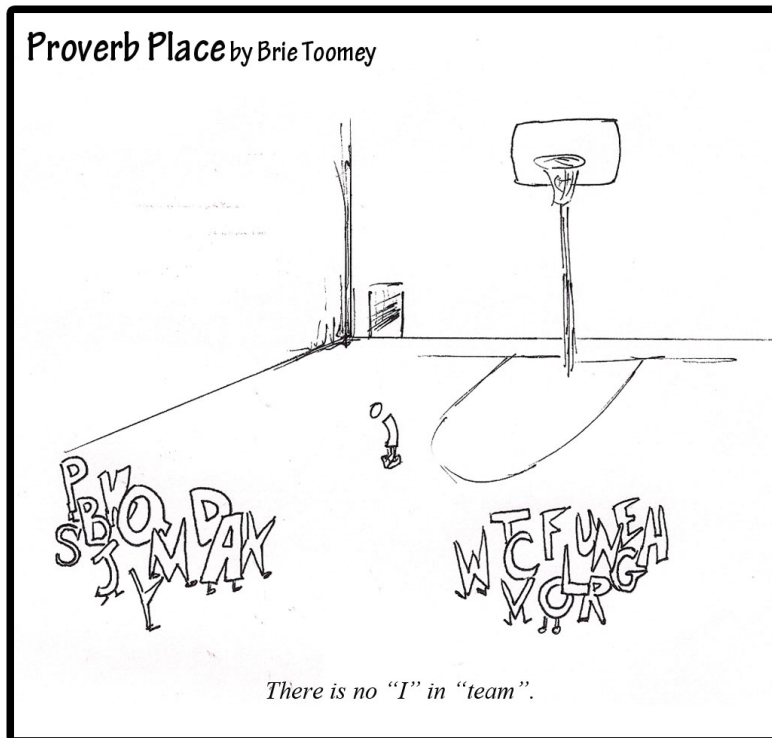
*The Water Tower*, vol. 11, issue 5 (February 21, 2012).

Today's Google generation is constantly immersed in the world wide web, and it has become customary to look up someone's online profile before hiring that person for a job or, in this case, going out on a date. The proverb "Look before you leap" is reimagined here in the relevant sense of physically looking something up online before making a decision, yet still hangs on to the precautionary wisdom of the proverb.



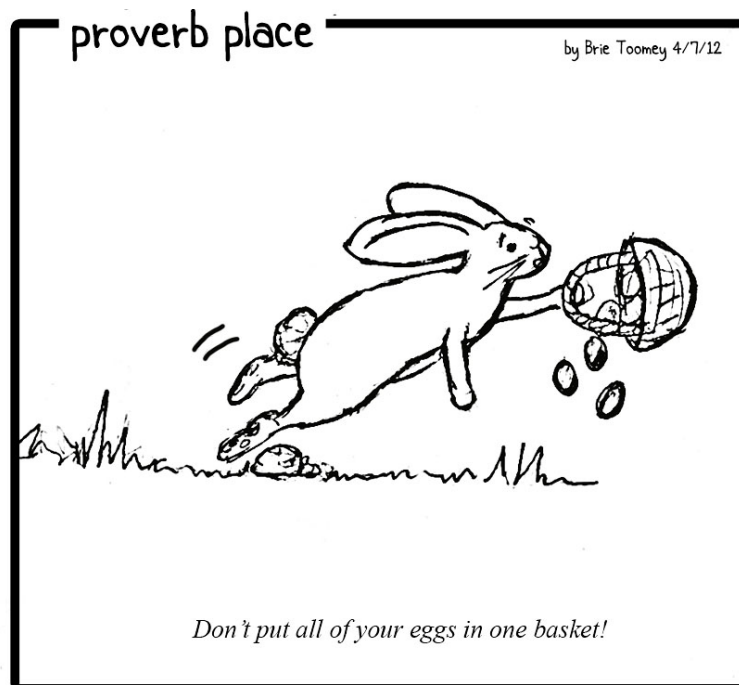
*The Water Tower*, vol. 11, issue 7 (March 13, 2012).

Proverbs can be extremely context specific. For example, the proverb “There’s no place like home” is often used to imply the positive, warm feeling one gets when thinking about home and family. But, as in this cartoon, it can also be used in a sarcastic tone, implying that there is nothing at all unique or special about such entities. The artistic reference to this proverb is simple and recognizable, but is intended to make the viewer feel slightly uncomfortable.



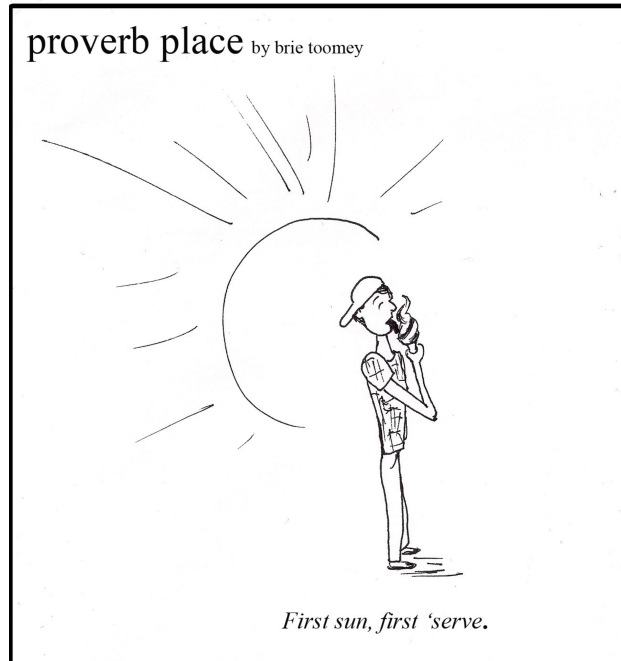
*The Water Tower*, vol. 11, issue 8 (March 20, 2012).

A traumatic tradition in American schools lets team captains pick their own players in gym class, often leaving the least athletic children until the very end. This cartoon plays with the proverb "There is no 'I' in 'team'" by literally spelling out the alphabet and turning a proverb about cooperation into one of isolation.



Unpublished (April 7, 2012).

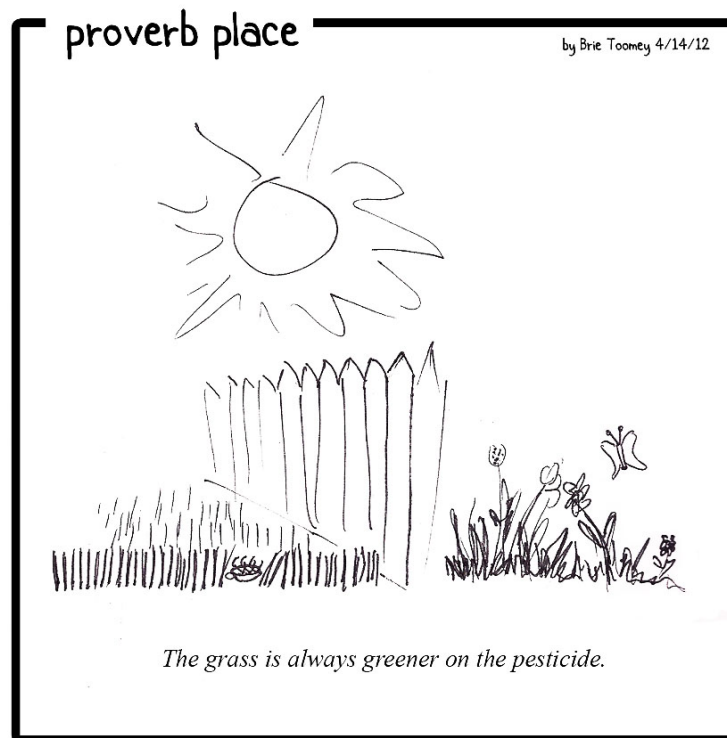
Created for the newspaper issue before Easter but unfortunately not printed, this image uses the motif of eggs to play off the American tradition of the Easter Bunny, while showing a literal interpretation of the proverb “Don’t put all of your eggs in one basket”. Metaphorical proverbs offer endless possibilities through such symbols for artistic interpretation. Whether or not a cartoon is literal, however, the proverbial reference still makes the viewer wonder about the true meaning of the proverb.



*The Water Tower*, vol. 11, issue 9 (March 27, 2012).

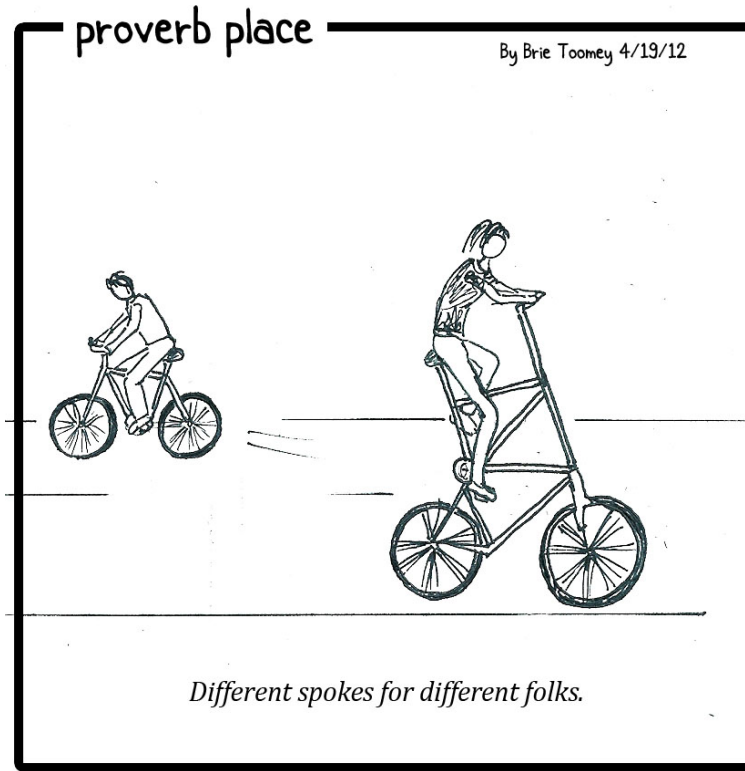
The anti-proverb “First sun, first ’serve” was the most controversial of the series. The interpretation of the proverb portrayed in the cartoon heavily relied on jargon that is only known to a small audience. The “’serve” reference comes from the New England word “soft-serve” to describe an alternative style of ice cream. To some New Englanders, however, the particular type of ice cream is known, fittingly to its texture, as a “creamee”. The image here was a reference to Vermont students eagerly hitting the ice cream stands as the first sun of the spring sprung out of a seemingly endless winter. This cartoon was an example of the fact that although proverbs may be ubiquitous, there is the danger of limiting the audience with a context specific reference.





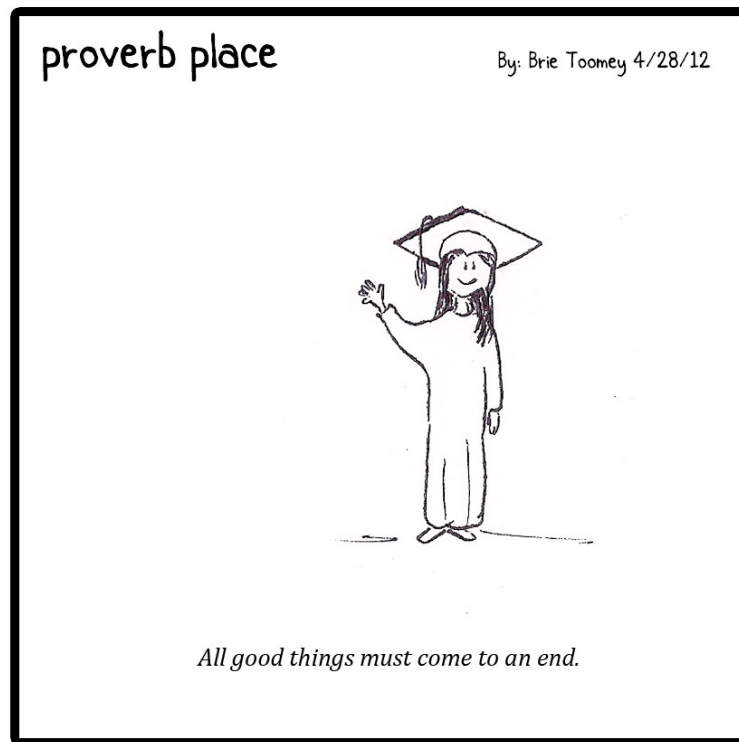
*The Water Tower, vol. 11, issue 12 (April 17, 2012).*

The ambiguity of proverbs makes them great tools for indirectly addressing sensitive topics. This environmental cartoon questions if a green lawn is truly the best lawn, and takes a stab at America's obsession with using deadly pesticides through the anti-proverb "The grass is always greener on the pesticide". It doesn't refer to the popular interpretation of being envious of something unattainable, but rather provokes the question, whether perfect actually is better than imperfect?



*The Water Tower*, vol. 11, issue 13 (April 24, 2012).

Anti-proverbs have a fascinating way of making people think twice—once about why they seem to recognize the phrase, and a second time to figure out what the new phrase is supposed to mean. This cartoon's play on words makes the reader look twice before perhaps laughing about the fact that in this age of individuality, even bikes have established unique personalities.



*The Water Tower*, vol. 11, issue 14 (May 1, 2012).

For the end of the series and the end of the school year, the proverb “All good things must come to an end” adequately describes the bittersweet feelings that often accompany change. Imagery has a beautiful way of claiming an otherwise ubiquitous phrase, and it is for this reason that proverbs will forever be redefined and reimagined.

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VILMOS VOIGT

PRÉCIS OF HUNGARIAN PAREMIOGRAPHY AND  
PAREMIOLOGY

*Vt sementem feceris, ita et metes* Az ki mint vet, vgy arat.  
(Baranyai Decsi: Adagiorum I.VI.IX.8)

**Abstract:** This is a review essay on the rich accomplishments of Hungarian paremiography and paremiology. There exists a long history of Hungarian proverb collections, and while many of them deal primarily with national or regional Hungarian proverbs, there are also numerous collections that include comparative materials from other European languages. It is shown that many aspects of culture, ethnography, folklore, and history are contained in the proverbial materials. The article also includes comments on genre issues, the classification system used in the collections, and their use for educational purposes. Of course, issues of linguistics and semantics are also discussed. An important bibliography of the accomplishments of Hungarian proverb research is attached as well.

**Keywords:** Bibliography, classification, collection, culture, education, ethnography, European, folklore, genre, history, Hungarian, linguistics, semantics, paremiography, paremiology

In spite of the interesting situation of Hungarian culture and the international contacts of Hungarian paremiologists—until now there is no substantial international (foreign language) summary of Hungarian paremiology. In old and well known handbooks and bibliographies (as e.g. by Archer Taylor and mainly by Wolfgang Mieder) there are references to Hungary, but not systematically. The excellent “International Bibliography of new and Reprinted Proverb Collections” and “International Proverb Scholarship: An Updated Bibliography” entries in the *Proverbium Yearbook* series (thanks to Gyula Paczolay and lately to Anna T. Litovkina) give an idea on Hungarian publications in the recent 20 years. But they are not complete and reflect the personal limits of the individuals involved. General folklore bibliographies (e.g. as the “*Internationale Volkskundliche Bibliographie...*”, 1917) give much less and very

uneven information. The main problem is that if in the above-mentioned publications there are hundreds of “Hungarian” items, the reader might think their information is, if not complete, still a fairly representative one—but in fact it is not always the case. Of course, it is the task of Hungarian paremiologists to register their own works. But there is still a wishful dream to make a “summarizing” bibliography of paremiography and paremiology in Hungary.

Just by reading Wolfgang Mieder’s recently released “International Bibliography of Paremiography. Collections of Proverbs, Proverbial Expressions and Comparisons, Quotations, Graffiti, Slang, and Wellerisms” (Burlington, Vermont, 2011, The University of Vermont) (*Supplement Series of Proverbium. Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship*—volume 34), with its astronomical number of 3615 entries—among them many Hungarian items—I felt it necessary to compile at least a minimal presentation of Hungarian paremiography (and to a lesser extent paremiology). In my work not the collecting but the selecting of data was the decisive factor. (And I feel well the burden of my ignorance of other, important works too...)

Hungarians have used proverbs over time just as long as the other peoples have done. From 19<sup>th</sup> century they made a difference between “proverb” (*közmondás* ‘common sentence’), an elaborated form, and “saying” (*szólás* ‘saying’), a more simple form. Both of them and the two-terms system have semantic parallels in many European languages. Hungarian paremiologists generally use the term *közmondás*, linguists prefer to use *szólás*. Once (around the 16<sup>th</sup> century) people used the term *agg szó* (‘old word’), which might be a borrowing from German. (See: Voigt 2004a, with comparative remarks). In spite of the fact that the Hungarian language belongs to the Finno-Ugric (Uralic) language family—nobody could find a “Finno-Ugric” word for ‘proverb’ in Hungarian. On the other hand the word *szó* dates back to the common Ugric vocabulary, probably being a loanword from an ancient Turkic language.<sup>1</sup>

Among Hungarian folklorists the dichotomy between *közmondás* and *szólás* is more or less clear. On the other hand Hungarian linguists often add a third term *frázis* (phrase), but the exact meaning of the terms is not always clear.

The first references to Hungarian proverbs and idioms appear in the Middle Ages and later they occur in practical lists of words

and dictionaries, first handwritten, then printed (already from the 16-17<sup>th</sup> centuries).

In the court of the Renaissance King, Matthias Corvinus, an Italian humanist, Galeotto Marzio compiled a booklet *De egregie, sapienter, iocose dictis ac factis regis Matthiae ... liber* (critical edition 1934) of clever sayings of the King, but it mentions perhaps only one or two in fact (then or later) existing proverbs. In his time an internationally highly esteemed humanist, János Zsámboky (Joannes Sambucus) published a collection of his emblems (1564). In the introduction he distinguishes *imagines, eikon, metaphora, fabula, Poësis, prouerbia, apophthegmata* etc., but in the poem texts in the work there is not a direct connection with paremiology.

From the 16<sup>th</sup> century some persons have used the Erasmian tradition of language teaching with the help of proverbs. The first separate printed publication was made by János Baranyai Decsi (*Adagiorvm graecolatinohvngaricorvm Chiliades quinque* Bartpha, 1598, reprint 1978),<sup>2</sup> a Latin—Greek—Hungarian collection of about 5000 “phrases and sentences”. The author (who learned philology in Germany and was an excellent scholar) closely followed the Erasmian tradition, knowing about some similar attempts in Hungary. In 1998 we have organized an international symposium on the 400 year anniversary of Baranyai Decsi’s work (Barna—Stemler—Voigt 2004), showing the international importance of Erasmian paremiology in Europe (Voigt 2004b). Gyula Paczolay is currently preparing a “critical edition” of Baranyai Decsi’s collection—with thorough comments to each item. In fact the majority of cases Baranyai Decsi’s texts are sayings, idioms and phrases and not proper proverbs. During the last few years Paczolay published a series of studies on “earlier” use of Hungarian proverbs. Voigt (2011a) summarized the same topic with additional source material.

Baranyai Decsi’s book was used by Albert Szenci Molnár for his Hungarian-Latin dictionary (1611), where we find more than 500 proverbs. Also the later, revised editions contained proverbs. (On Szenci’s proverbs see: Paczolay 2007.) It was massively used by Petrus (= Péter) Kisviczay: *Selectiora adagia Latino Hungarica* (Bartpha, 1713)—without mentioning Baranyai Decsi’s name. Thus Hungarian scholars only by the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century have realized the importance of the original book by Baranyai

Decsi. Péter Beniczky composed a volume of his poetic works, *Magyar rithmusok* ('Hungarian Verses', published 1664), the second part of which contains 250 proverbs composed in tripartite and rhymed verse form. The book had more than 20 editions, up until the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century. In later Hungarian proverb collections Beniczky's versified forms are often traceable. He versified also 220 proverbs in Slovakian, which have influenced the later use of Slovakian proverbs too. The comparison of Beniczky's Hungarian and Slovak proverbs would need a separate treatment. There is a critical edition (1987) of Beniczky's poetry. (Kisviczay used Beniczky's texts as well.)

It is a commonplace in Hungarian cultural history that Cardinal Péter Pázmány, the leader of the Jesuit counterreformation in Hungary was a great baroque writer, who used thousands of metaphors, poetic images and proverbs. Several papers dealt with his proverb data, but only recently a short summary of the topic was printed (Rajslí 2009). The problem is not as simple as it seems to be. E.g. in Pázmány's "Prayer book" (*Imádságos könyv*)<sup>3</sup> in fact we do not find many proverbs! Why? We can only guess: because proverbs in his view belonged to the stylistics in controversial debates with the Protestants—and not to the sacred texts. (See Voigt 2012).

By the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century several persons have collected proverbs, in order to develop the Hungarian literary language, especially in education. In some cases they have published their material. The direct model was a famous dictionary by an Austrian German Jesuit. Franz Wagner's *Phraseologia* (published first in Vienna 1713, then with additional Hungarian and Slovak parallels made by Hungarian priests in Nagyszombat, 1750, and again in 1775 and 1822) —but in spite of its title—the book does not have proverbs, and contains only very few sayings. It is a great Latin dictionary for the sake of schools. (Wagner's Latin—German "phraseology" has been a bestseller for generations in Bavaria and Austria, exactly as its Hungarian—Slovak mutation. The two books differ from one another. A comparative German—Hungarian—Slovak study of it would be of some interest.)

A Jesuit poet, Ferenc Faludi collected in his notebook 600 phrases, sayings and proverbs. The material was later published in a book, containing Faludi's poetic works (1787). A Franciscan priest, Alajos Noszkó published (in 1791) a practical book: *Virág-*



*Szó-Tár* (Flower-Dictionary—the Hungarian title refers to the term ‘Florilegium’). He arranged Hungarian poetic phrases and proverbs in alphabetical order. The book was used in school classes of Latin stylistics and rhetoric. Pál Kovács, Benedictine monk and teacher in the town Győr, published in 1794 his anthology *Magyar példa, és köz mondási* (Hungarian parables and common sayings), containing more than 3000 items, sometimes with Hungarian explanations or parallel Latin sentences. (There is a reprint edition: 2008.) He wrote the proverbs he remembered without any order. Another erudite Jesuit, Dávid Baróti Szabó in his book *A Magyarság virágyi* (‘Hungarian Flowers’—(Komárom, 1803) has arranged the texts into 234 semantic groups. It was the first attempt in Hungary to systematize the proverbs, but his actual scheme is chaotic.

In Hungarian cultural history there was a well accepted book by Antal Szirmay *Hungaria in parabolis. sive commentarii in adagia, et dicteria Hungarorum* (Buda, 1804, a second, enlarged edition: Buda 1807), which, as the subtitle tells us, is giving more anecdotes and explanations to the sayings, than their original texts. The book (written in Latin, but the phrases are included also in Hungarian) has also a list of common sayings, according to the order of their “key words” in Latin. Recently it was published in an excellent modern Hungarian edition (Csörsz Rumen 2008) with philological notes.

The noted poet Ádám Pálóczi Horvát compiled a list of proverbs and sayings he knew, and he tried at least two times (1815 and 1819) to publish it. There is a first, rough copy of the manuscript (with 800 items), then a second, well arranged copy (with more than 1800 items), which, however, remained unpublished. (See: Voigt 2011b). He lived in different regions of Hungary, thus his remarks about the use of proverbs and sayings and their different forms are of great importance.

The most important collection of the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century was made by the prolific Jesuit writer, scholar, and ardent Philo-Hungarian: András Dugonics. His collection was printed posthumously in 1820 in two volumes: *Magyar példa beszédek és jeles mondások* (Hungarian parables and noted sayings). He compiled about 12.000 entries and arranged them into 49 “thematic” groups (as e.g. punishments, bagatelles, dog, talkative people, rich persons, liars, clever persons, thieves, etc.). Dugonics has collected

his material from many parts of Hungary for forty years. His first manuscript dates back to 1792, the second, final version is from 1800. He translated some Latin sentences and often gave explanatory stories, anecdotes to the proverbs—using his very free fantasy. Hungarian folklorists dealt often with the explanations by Dugonics. Recently Zoltán Ujváry (2009) published a bulky volume, giving more than thousand modern folklore explanations to the texts by Dugonics. Tamás Forgács (2009) produced a facsimile edition, and in the postscript he characterized Dugonics as a paremiographer.

Between 1780 and 1810—thus during one and the same generation’s time—about 20.000 Hungarian phrases, sayings and proverbs have been collected, and in the majority they were also published. The activity was aimed at the development of the “new” Hungarian language and poetry. The authors have used old publications, and in some cases they knew about contemporary works by other enthusiasts too. The systematization of the texts was of a thematic character—rather chaotic. It would be an important task to construct a data bank of Hungarian proverbs from 1780 to 1820, placing into one order the several versions from several manuscripts.

After that boom of paremiography, the next century favoured a different kind of publications: special dictionaries of proverbs.

The first among them is the publication by Georg Gaal: *Sprichwörterbuch in sechs Sprachen, deutsch, englisch, latein, italienisch, französisch und ungerisch* (Wien, 1830). Gaal was an important figure in early Hungarian folklore publications and an influential person in German-Hungarian literary contacts. Gaal wanted to publish a larger collection in four volumes. He wrote down proverbs, sayings, phrases etc. he knew, then arranged them according to their German forms, adding to them the parallels from other languages. In the published “first” volume there are 1008 German texts, and only 804 Hungarian proverbs. The principle of arranging the German proverbs is not clear. In Gaal’s manuscripts (today in the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences) there are about 4240 German proverb texts and about 2000 Hungarian ones. It is surprising, how Gaal could find English, Italian texts too, even though living in the multilingual metropolis Vienna. The multilingual parallels wanted to serve the language ability of poets and learned persons. We do not know which prov-

erb collections he used. Later Karl Friedrich Wilhelm Wander in his *Deutsches Sprichwörterlexikon* (1867–1880) used the printed volume by Gaal. (As far as I know it is the only early international paremiological book, referring to Hungarian texts.) Hungarian paremiologists did not pay attention to Gaal's book, and they did not know about the other volumes in manuscript. (See for the evaluation: Voigt 1997.)

A young linguist, Mór Ballagi published his *Magyar példabeszédek, közmondások és szólások gyűjteménye* (Collection of Hungarian parables, proverbs and sayings) first in Szarvas, 1850—then the same book again in Pest, 1855. It has 8313 entries, and the systematization follows Wilhelm Körte's *Die Sprichwörter der Deutschen*, 1847—*i.e.* the alphabetical order of the “key words” in the proverbs. Ballagi does not refer to his sources, and there are many misunderstandings in the forms he published. Occasionally he points to international parallels.

The first serious anthology of Hungarian proverbs was made by the great folklorist in the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century, János Erdélyi. His *Magyar közmondások könyve* (1851) (Book of Hungarian proverbs) contains 9000 texts (according to the alphabetical key words). Only in some cases he refers to his sources, but we know that he consulted the earlier publications and that some colleagues sent their own collections to Erdélyi. At the end of the book there is a summarizing essay: *Közmondásokról* (On proverbs), giving a description of the genre, its language and poetic value, also a short history of Hungarian paremiology. It is the first noteworthy summary of Hungarian proverbs. Erdélyi's opinion is that proverbs are a genre of folk poetry and that they can be treated in a similar way. He was practical in making a “common style” of the proverbs he knew from different sources. His personal copy of the book contains many handwritten additions. (The copy is kept today in the archive of the family, and, since there was no reprint of the 1851 edition, it might be of interest to publish it.) In 1862 a shortened version of Erdélyi's collection was published, with 7360 items, and with a very few additions.

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century some proverb collections were made—but without greater significance. Books by Péter Pelkó (1864), who tried to explain the proverbs according to his own experience, or János Almásy (1890), who stressed the wisdom hidden in proverbs. Andor Sirisaka (1891) does not need a

thorough analysis as for the material; he has copied texts from all available sources to him, and he also asked his colleagues to add more texts. In the introduction he outlines the topics. There is a description of history of the Hungarian paremiography too (Often with mistakes.) His essay was published separately (1891) too. In the book the texts are arranged in alphabetical order, without source references or explanations.

In Hungary until the First World War, Latin was an integral part of secondary education, and German was taught in most of the schools as the modern language. Practical books appeared along that line. A noted linguist, Zsigmond Simonyi, published a medium size dictionary: *Német és magyar szólások* (Deutsche und ungarische Redensarten) (1896) with rich material, giving exact source data of all Hungarian sentences and phrases he used. He included 10.000 German expressions with fivefold more Hungarian equivalents. However, the book is not a product of paremiology—it was made for the sake of better translations.

The Saxonian teacher from Transylvania, Heinrich Schlandt, has published (1913a, 1913b) two “proverb dictionaries”, a German-Hungarian (with 4198 German data, and with 6836 Hungarian data) and a similar Hungarian-German one (with 4343 Hungarian and 6737 German data). He compiled his material from the books by Margalits, respectively from Wander). His later books were used in schools (Bíró—Schlandt 1937), and do not have many proverbs, only phrases. (See Paczolay 1979).

In 1896 for the millennium of the Hungarian state several representative works were published, among them the “great” anthology of Hungarian proverbs. Its editor, Ede Margalits was a Slavist, who organized a group of college teachers in order to collect the generally known Hungarian proverbs. His *Magyar közmondások és közmondásszerű szólások* (Hungarian proverbs and proverbial sayings) contains nominally 25.336 items, arranged by the alphabetical order of important words in the proverbs. It means that the same proverb may occur in more than one place. Practically under a “keyword” the variants follow in undistinguished order. For each sentence the source is given, but only by the initial of the publisher’s name, making it rather troublesome to find the original texts. The orthography of the proverbs was homogenized. About two thirds of the texts are proverbs, the rest are sayings and phrases. The book by Margalits is until today the most reliable Hungarian

anthology. A reprint (without any further remarks) appeared in 1993. There is a booklet containing and classifying all the names in the book of Margalits (Wolosz 1994).

It is less known (also in Hungary) that Margalits published other works belonging to paremiology. Besides his own collection of Slavic proverbs from South Hungary, the book *Florilegium proverbiorum universae latinitatis: proverbia, sententiae gnoma-eque classicae, mediae et infimae latinitatis* (1895) is a practical work, with 13.458 entries. Later he added 6700 more Latin proverbs in a book *Supplementum ad opus Florilegium...* (1910). Both served the secondary schools. A private scholar's work is his book in two volumes: *Isten a világ közmondásaiban* (God in the proverbs of the world—1910), containing altogether more than six thousand ones, *i.e.* about 1000 Latin, 500 Hungarian, 1700 German, 700 Croatian, 700 Serbian, 400 Slovene proverbs; in the second volume there is a similar amount of 400 Slovak, 270 Romanian, 800 Polish, 400 Czech, 200 Ruthenian, and 300 Italian proverbs, in separate chapters, giving sometimes general references to the original source of the items. But for the proverbs—except for the Hungarian texts—there are no source references. Sometimes Margalits hints to some Hungarian parallels.

Because such old publications were out of print, Tamás Forgács compiled (2004) a CD-ROM reprint of four works: Dugonics (1820), Erdélyi (1851), Margalits (1896), and Sirisaka (1891)—only with a short introduction (which appeared also in a form of an offprint), and without additional notes.

A practical book *Idézetek tára* (Treasury of Quotations) was published by an ardent Roman Catholic priest, János Dvorzsák (first edition 1883, second edition 1898), in which 4154 texts from Hungarian and international authors were grouped in thematic order, with careful indices. In the collection there are only some proverbs included. (Until now many similar books were published in Hungary—but I do not list them, because they represent other than paremiographic aspects.)

Hungarian literary men and linguists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century wrote a handful of essays on the meaning and rhetoric of proverbs. Lajos Katona (1895) in the encyclopaedia entry *közmondások* (proverbs) gives a concise definition, stressing the folklore character of the proverb. His Hungarian and international bibliography is a masterpiece of erudition. The linguist Vilmos Tolnai published a de-

tailed research history (1910), referring both to proverb collections and to (the few) theoretical essays. A generation later he wrote the chapter about proverbs in the four-volume handbook “Hungarian Ethnography” (1935, later edition: 1943). Tolnai characterized the proverbs according to their language use. His summary was a fine paper with some references to international and comparative paremiology.

Between the two world wars a specific trend arose: to give cultural historical explanations to some Hungarian proverbs, sayings, and expressions. Already by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Béla Tóth published several volumes of historical anecdotes, curiosities etc., and besides them compiled a book *Szájrul szájra. A magyarság szálló igéi* (From lips to lips. Verbal quotations in Hungary) (1895, also in later reprints), a Hungarian mutation of Georg Büchmann’s *Geflügelte Worte*. Manó Kertész started with essays on Hungarian greeting forms: *Szállok az úrnak. Az udvarias magyar beszéd története* (I raise a toast. History of polite speaking in Hungarian) (1932, reprint 1996), his other book of collected explanations of *clichés* from Hungarian historical sources (1922, reprint 1985) *Szokásmondások* (Stereotypes—Cultural history in the Hungarian language). Both books belong to the same trend. Gyula Csefkó (1930 and in reprint: 2001) *Szállóigék, szólásmódok* (Winged quotations and ways of sayings) used data from Hungarian historical semantics. Both linguists knew the curiosities of cultural history, and their explanations of Hungarian phrases are valid. But they did not use comparative paremiography. Ferenc Szécsi (1936) edited a popular book of “winged phrases”. Among the folklorists only János Berze Nagy (1929–1932) followed the same line, wishing to connect Hungarian proverbs with ancient Hungarian beliefs—not in a convincing way.

I will not refer to later publications of the same kind. But it is very impressive to look into such volumes “of yesterday”, full with similarities and dissimilarities both in the texts and in the use of the proverbs of today or yesterday.

The similar method is characteristic also to the next generation of Hungarian linguists. A prolific lexicographer, Gábor O. Nagy started with a volume of historical proverb explanations: *Mi fán terem? Magyar szólásmondások eredete* (On which tree it is growing? Origin of Hungarian proverbial sayings), which became a bestseller (editions 1957, revised editions 1961, 1965, 1988:

with a biography and a programmatic essay by O. Nagy.) It has more than 350 items, in alphabetical order of the keywords. Being a research worker in the Institute of Linguistics at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, he published the modern anthology *Magyar szólások és közmondások* (Hungarian sayings and proverbs)—another bestseller book (1966, 1976). It is an alphabetic dictionary, arranged by key words, altogether in 58.995 entries, containing 1005 sayings, 5560 proverbial comparisons, 319 proverbs, 21.280 phrases, etc. O. Nagy gives a number to each item, but does not give source references, and he constructed a “general form of the sayings”. With the = mark he gives the ‘meaning’ of the phrases, usually a plausible one, but not from any source, and following the author’s personal intuition. That is why it is an excellent book concerning Hungarian phrases and clichés—but not a paremiological handbook. It is accepted today as “the” linguistic anthology of Hungarian proverbs. In his essay *Mi a szólás?* (What is the saying?) (1954) he gave a linguistic definition of the phenomenon. In another booklet he summarized the study of Hungarian proverbs—referring to them as “phraseology”: *A Magyar frazeológiai kutatások története* (History of Hungarian phraseological studies—1977). It is a thorough survey, based upon earlier summaries, and ends with the year 1920.

An excellent Hungarian Slavist, László Hadrovics, made a linguistic monograph *Magyar frazeológia. Történeti áttekintés* (Hungarian phraseology. A historical approach - 1995). In the first part of the book in 141 sections there is a systematisation of linguistic constructions. Then follows a chapter “*képes beszéd*” (“figurative speech”) presenting such items as “the human body and its organs”, “the life”, “animals”, “hunting”, “fishing”, “the human society”, “customs”, “belief”. A separate chapter deals with “periphrases”. The sections 220–245 contain some hundred proverbs (in alphabetic order). Quotations from the Bible and the antiquity, or from modern time etc. are exemplified with some sample texts. In special parts the translated sayings are dealt with. As an Annex (sections 287–301), the detailed analysis of 15 sayings is presented. A few additions close the book. There we find references to paremiological literature too. Excellent indices make it easy to find the actual sayings and proverbs. The linguistic data are referred to very precisely. Thus, if somebody wants to know something about a special linguistic form or phrase—one should

look into the book by Hadrovics. The aim of the book was of a linguistic direction.

Because of the popularity of the studies written by the above mentioned linguists it seemed for a while that Hungarian paremiology does not need more works. Only the phraseology (in the strict sense of the word) developed, especially in bilingual and contrastive topics. In his recent survey the Germanist Tamás Forgács (2007) *Bevezetés a frazeológiába. A szólás- és közmondáskutatás alapjai* (Introduction to Phraseology. Basic study of sayings and proverbs) describes the various forms of “phraseological units”. In chapter IV, he deals separately with the proverbs. He finds trouble both in the definition of “proverb”, and its classification. He refers to recent international paremiology (e.g. Kuusi, Röhrich, Mieder, Permyakov, Grzybek etc., “paremiological minimum” tests, the EUROPHRAS meetings etc.) and he mentions his Hungarian colleagues. See especially the proceedings of the (4<sup>th</sup>) EUROPHRAS—Europäische Gesellschaft für Phraseologie conference, Veszprém 2006, edited by Csaba Földes (2009).

It seems to me that before 1964 (the founding year of the Helsinki-based journal, *Proverbium*) Hungarian paremiology was not part of the international proverb network. Even if some linguists sporadically referred to important international publications (e.g. to Archer Taylor), in practice they did not use their methods and their comparative material. In fact I had to introduce (fifty years ago !) the basic terms and subterms (even *proverbium* and *parömiológia*) into Hungarian, and suggested references to international handbooks and methods. When we made the then new university handbook *A magyar népköltészet* (Hungarian folk poetry), I wrote there the chapter of “shorter epic forms”, including proverbs and kindred genres (Voigt 1966). It was later extended (Voigt 1969), representing the international classification system of proverbs and related forms. In the later editions (Voigt 1979, Voigt 1998), I gave an updated picture of the actual paremiological scene, with hundred comparative and Hungarian references. In some other papers I described the then modern paremiology (Voigt 1975, 1980) especially in Hungary (Voigt 1996). In a specific paper I used the “Flemish Proverbs” of Bruegel, in order to show the way of making a possible historical reconstruction of proverbial lore in Hungary. In further papers I tried to present modern views, e.g. on the “phrases” (see latest Voigt 2006). One of my first uni-



versity students, Ágnes Szemerkenyi in her dissertation (published later: 1994) dealt exhaustively with the attempts to the definition of the proverb, and the use of proverbs in literature, press, advertisement, psychology, art, etc. She wrote the chapter “proverbs” (1988) for the multivolume (“academic”) handbook of *Magyar néprajz* (Hungarian Ethnography), which summarizes the same topics from the same point of view.

From the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were several attempts to translate “foreign” proverbs into Hungarian, or *vice versa*. Because of the limits of my sketch I do not quote them. Theoretically they do not go beyond their practical aims, as far as I can see. Already Lajos Katona stressed the importance of Finno-Ugric proverbs, collected and published by Hungarian philologists. The same might be said about Altaic and, in general, Oriental philology in Hungary.

19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century collections of Hungarian folk poetry often have chapters on proverbs. Their number is more than hundred. Just from the recent ones I mention only some of them. Usually they give a good selection of current sayings and phrases in a community, reflect on the dialectal forms, and mention the function or use of all kinds of sayings and proverbs. Usually they are not engaged in issues of theoretical paremiology and paremiography. In the 1970s “new sociolinguistics” under the direction of Professor Mihály Hajdú at the Eötvös Loránd University (Budapest) launched a series of booklets, devoted to dialects, language stratification topics, etc., reflecting also on various forms of modern phrases, sayings and proverbs. Among them “new” forms, graffiti, tattoo, greetings, ethnic slurs, slang etc. took also their own place. Thus by now it is possible to compare the contemporary proverbial lore of several villages or of social groups. However, nobody ever tried to make such summary. Even a complete list of such paremiographic publications (about one hundred at least!) is missing. I shall list here only six extraordinarily important works.

One masterpiece of recently collected proverbial lore is a local monograph by Károly Lábadi (and his wife) from the Drávaszög area (between the rivers Dráva and Duna, once in Yugoslavia, today in Croatia). Between 1978 and 1983 they collected proverbs in ten Hungarian villages there, totalling 11.395 items, *i.e.* variants of 2982 proverb texts (Lábadi 1986). In the introduction and systematization, as well as in the excellent indices they have closely

followed the instructions, and the systematization presented in our university handbook. It is my mistake that I did not urge them to consult Croatian (and Serbian) proverb parallels.

Gabriella Vöö (née Zattler) was a Hungarian folklorist in Kolozsvár/Cluj/Napoca, working at the Archives of Folklore there. First she published an anthology of Hungarian proverbs in Romania, kept there in the archives (Vöö 1989). (About it there is a curious anecdote, that the already fully printed book was waiting a long time for release, because it has the title “The right man speaks the truth”. It was the very first book published after Ceausescu’s death.) Vöö in her introduction gives a very good summary of “proverb theory”, refining the classification we made in Budapest. It is the best presentation of (Hungarian) proverbs in Romania. The book has a very thorough indexing system, all texts are retrievable. But there are no comparative remarks, in spite of the fact that Zanne’s epochal Rumanian proverb collection (ten volumes // 1895-1912, and in recent reprint too) had already distinctively registered the Transylvanian–Rumanian proverbs a century ago.

Her second invaluable collection is from the texts of the (State) folklore archive in Cluj (Vöö 1999), as a continuation and addition to the previous publication. It is based on the 38.000 large Hungarian proverbial texts in the Cluj archive. Vöö has selected the “true” proverbs in her previous (1989) book, and in 1999 the “sayings” followed, again with a good introduction, and all the texts might be traced back. The book was reprinted (2007) in Budapest.

József Gágyor, director of the primary school in Tallós (a Hungarian village in South Slovakia) has published dozen books of the folklore and language there. Among them he compiled a complete treasury of proverbs: *Mátyusföldi rózsák és bogáncsok. Szólások, közmondások és nyelvi fordulatok a tallósi nép ajkán* (Roses and thistles from the Mátyusföldje region. Sayings, proverbs verbal phrases told by the people in Tallós), in alphabetical order, five volumes (A–E 2007, F–J 2008, K–Ny 2010, O–Sz 2010, T–Zs and some additions 2011), altogether 12.310 items. In every case there is a full sentence, which contains the proverbial form. At the end of the final volume there are thematic indices.

University professor of folklore in Debrecen, Zoltán Ujváry, has collected Hungarian folklore on both sides of the Slovak-

Hungarian state border, in a region called Gömör. He has extensively noticed the proverb lore, with special emphasis on the use and the given meaning of the texts. His collection—*Szólás-gyűjtemény* (Collection of sayings—2001—about 3000 items) follows the literary language, and is arranged by alphabetic order of the keywords. To each item he gives remarks about the assumed meaning, sometimes several meanings. The collection does not give references to the time and place of the collection. It is plausible that many of the proverbs are known in different villages. In the introduction the author is expressing his views about the everyday use of the proverbs. According to him, “proverb” is a notion, the people do not know about it. They simply “use” the language.

Another book by Zoltán Ujváry, *Egy földműves szólásai és közmondásai* (Proverbs and sayings of one peasant) (1996), contains more than 1200 items, arranged in alphabetical order by keywords. János Lökös, a small land holder (!), schoolmate and life-long friend of Professor Ujváry wrote them down for many years, and he explains in his own words the meaning and the use of them. Unfortunately Lökös died before the completion of the work.

Professor of folklore in Transylvania, Vilmos Tánczos published a whole book (2008) on “language and world-view of a “common Székely peasant”. Accepting the above mentioned opinion by Ujváry (concerning the “only in the theory and not in the practice existence” of the proverb), Tánczos describes the language use and world view of the informant (who is the father of the folklorist), showing the “pictorial language” and the elaborated expressions at the end of the book with 730 proverbs.

In summarizing, we may say that there are other local proverb collections, usually with explanation of the proverbs (and other subgenres). Because they were made at the same time, they are well comparable and reflect the local and social differences too. I list here only a few of them. Jósa (2001) has 1000 items from the Kecskemét region; Bura (1987) 2312 items from the Szatmár region; Mrs. Enyedi (1992) from the village Öcsöd 2967 items, grouped thematically; Molnár (1993) 3772 items from the village Jászszentandrás; Kálnási (2008) 2341 items, expressing in the sayings the common opinion of traditional inhabitants in the town

Debrecen; Balogh (1995) has 3511 items from the West Hungarian, Göcsej region.

The late professor of Ethnography at the Szeged University, Sándor Bálint in a publication (1972) summarizing the proverbs from Szeged, used mainly the written historical sources, or previous collections. Bálint grouped the texts into 16 semantic-thematic chapters. He spent all of his life in Szeged, and compiled also a two-volume large “Szeged Dictionary”, thus he was well informed both about the ethnographic and linguistic context of the proverbs in Szeged..

Other leading Hungarian folklorists have often touched on the problems of proverbs. By name I mention here only Imre Katona (see his bibliography 2006), who has collected and studied proverbs (e.g. Katona 1980), and who wrote about their stylistics (Katona 1974).

An extraordinary publication is by a Jewish folklorist, Ilana Rosen (2011), who collected (or simply heard) proverbs from her Transylvanian—Hungarian—Jewish father-in-law. She registered a handful Romanian, 60 Yiddish, and 300 Hungarian texts. It is amazing to notice the *élan vital* of Hungarian (etc.) proverbs in the very much different Israeli way of life.

Perhaps here I should mention that the world famous Hebraist and Orientalist, Director of the Budapest Rabbinical Seminar, Sándor (Alexander) Scheiber in his philological studies has often quoted and explained Jewish proverbs and sayings (especially, if connected with the Haggadah, or representing the “Stoffgeschichte”). See his collected papers in English (Scheiber 1985) and in Hungarian (Scheiber 1977–1984) containing his bibliography.

From the just mentioned “local” proverb collections we can draw two important conclusions. The first is that from one thousand to ten thousand items may be characteristic to the proverbial lore of one community or of one person. The second is that there is no limit in numbers as reflected by the use of the proverbs. In some cases the paremiographers noted only spontaneous sayings; in other cases they were using Hungarian standard collections, asking the informants, if they know from there this or that proverb or saying? In both cases the results shall be endless. If we write down all proverbial comparisons, personal anecdotes or Biblical sentences, the amount of “proverbs” will increase. Such weakness

of generic definitions of the proverbs is notably an important (but unsolved) problem in paremiography.

In Hungary, during the recent ten years there was a boom in producing “complete proverb dictionaries”. The initiator was Gábor Kiss, director of a dynamic Linguistic Press “Tinta”. The great dictionaries were followed by small and practical ones, directly intended for the schools.

A Romanist linguist, Vilmos Bárdosi (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest), published the first (2003) edition of his “treasury of proverbs” with 13.000 entries, and then in an updated (2009) edition a large dictionary of phrases, sayings and proverbs. His other handbook (Bárdosi 2004) contains “situational sayings” too. A third variant is (Bárdosi 2012) a semantic dictionary of all important words which occur in proverbs and saying, with a short thematic index. For example the word *szamár* (Donkey) occurs in 30 sayings, with references to 8 further texts. The texts are standardized and no direct source is given. The number of items is between 20.000 and 25.000 and very modern forms (also erotic and slang versions) have been included. Bárdosi published (together with Gábor Kiss) a part of that material in small handbooks of proverbs.

The Germanist Tamás Forgács (2003) published a large dictionary (with about 6500 items) of contemporary (!) proverbs and sayings, using modern sources, electronic data bases, quotations from the press etc. For every entry there is at least one (sometimes long) quotation, with exact source data. The book in principle does not have old proverbial material. The time slot is from about the end of 19th century until today. In recent publications the author has also used the phrases and sayings from the “great” Hungarian (-English, -German, -French etc.) dictionaries. He edited also a small collection “about animals in the Hungarian proverbs” (Forgács 2005), in which he selected variants from about 26 animals or their groups (e.g. birds).

Anna T. Litovkina studied Hungarian (!) philology at the Moscow University. Her dissertation (Tóthné Litovkina 1983–1989) is about the language forms of Hungarian proverbs, as contrasted with the Russian. Her great proverb anthology (Litovkina 2005) is a collection of Hungarian sayings and proverbs (in more than 1000 entries), combining linguistic and folkloristic methods. She adds a meaning and stylistic characterization of the items, and

thorough quotations (mostly from contemporary press and literature). Because her interest was also in “anti-proverbs”, she added many new (and distorted) variants.

She proved the “paremiological minimum” method in Hungarian, and the experience led her towards parodies of proverbs. The completing and developing of proverbial forms was the topic of her book in English (Litovkina 2000). On anti-proverbs she published together with Wolfgang Mieder two books (Mieder—Litovkina 1999, Litovkina—Mieder 2006), interconnected one with another, and dealing with modern forms of traditional English proverbs (in the first book there are 3000 texts based on 320 proverbs, in the second book 5000 texts based on 580 traditional proverbs). Litovkina (ed. 2007) guest-edited a special issue “Anti-proverbs” of the journal *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica*. And she published, together with Katalin Vargha, three popular books of such material (Litovkina—Vargha 2005a, 2005b, 2006). Her interest was extended to humorous forms, and she was organizing three conferences on humour. A joint book with Mieder (Litovkina—Mieder 2005) is the first theoretical publication on modern paremiology in the Hungarian language. It deals with definitions of the proverb (and of similar forms), the analysis of proverbs, historic stratification of the proverbs, common and innovative use of the proverbs. The illustrative material contains both Hungarian and world proverbs. Litovkina also mobilized some of her colleagues (*e.g.* Hrisztalina Hrisztova-Gotthardt, Dóra Boronkai) to enter into proverb studies.

The folklorist Ágnes Szemerkenyi published after many years work her anthology of Hungarian sayings and proverbs (Szemerkenyi 2009). She wanted to present there the “classical Hungarian proverbs” from the 16<sup>th</sup> century until our days. She has selected a good part of the material also from the most important local collections. The texts are grouped by alphabetical order of the key words. Each entry starts with a standardized form, then a common meaning follows, and it is characterized by style and distribution markers. There we find the variants, in some cases up to twenty (usually in a standardized orthography, and in their possible historical order); to each one a source reference is given. At the end of the entry the meaning is described at length, sometimes with historic or ethnographic explanations. The book does not include the modern (mass culture) forms, nor simple quotations,

parodies, anti-proverbs etc. The book has about 15.000 entries with 40.000 variants. There are no indices or cross references added. Today this book is the true treasure of Hungarian proverbs in the strict sense of the word.

The four (and with their mutations more) recent grand anthologies (by Bárdosi, Forgács, Litovkina and Szemerkenyi) represent different aims: from linguistic, phrase-based collections and situational sayings to actualized clichés, proverbs with sentence-value etc. They are sometimes comparable, and in all they complete each other. As for the “amount” of proverbs (and sayings) we can state that about 20.000 items (with about double as much in variants) show the core of the Hungarian proverb stock. Since in all of the books the editors gave their own attempt to the “meaning” of the texts—it is a good idea to contrast them!

Actual international paremiography refers to Gyula Paczolay as one of its living masters. He is a most diligent self-made-man: he got his degrees in chemistry (!), and devoted his interest to paremiology only (!) in the last forty years. (See his bibliography until 2000: Voigt 2000). His world-wide known publications deal with comparative paremiology. He started with a practical Hungarian—English list of proverbs (Paczolay 1975), then a Hungarian—Estonian contrastive volume followed (Paczolay 1985), to which later German, English, Finnish, Latin, Cheremis and Zyryan proverbs were added (Paczolay 1987). European and Far-Eastern proverbs (about 200 Japanese and Chinese ones) are contrasted to the most common “European” ones. (Paczolay 1994). He edited a small volume of corresponding Hungarian—Japanese proverbs (1994b). A crown jewel in Hungarian paremiology is his *European Proverbs* (Paczolay 1997), listing 106 of the “most common” European proverbs in 55 languages. He did not compile a large anthology of Hungarian proverbs, but four “mini-volumes” appeared from his pen: 650 Hungarian proverbs (Paczolay 1989), 750 Hungarian proverbs with English translations—not equivalents—(Paczolay 1991a), and a similar German book (Paczolay 1990 and 1991b). As their continuation he edited (Paczolay 2000) 1000 Hungarian proverbs with English, Estonian, Finnish and German equivalents. The Hungarian data are exact, but without much source references.

During the last 20 years he has worked on the historical sources of Hungarian proverbs, before and after Baranyai Decsi’s

book. As was mentioned above, he is preparing a “critical edition” of Baranyai Decsi (1598), with the notes containing references to all of the later publications of the same proverb or saying.

A young professor of German and of theory of literature in Szeged, Zoltán Kanyó published his dissertation in German (1981). It follows both modern German text logic and the ideas of G. L. Permyakov, defining the proverb as a “simple form” (*Einfache Form*). For the logical analysis he used standardized German proverb texts, and not any first-hand collection. He used the then new “generative poetics” methods. (See my review: Voigt 1982.) Kanyó (1940-1985) died as a very young scholar, and thus left his system of the theory of simple forms unfinished.

A Romanist linguist (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest) Péter Barta deals with thematic groups of French proverbs, contrasting them to Hungarian ones. He also deals with anti-proverbs and wrote on the problem of proverb definition (Barta 1993, 1995a, 1995b etc.)

Speaking about 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century paremiography, I mentioned some bilingual publications. For learning Russian, English, and even the Japanese language such publications appeared until today. I do not refer to them, because they are mainly of practical purpose, and the proverbs used in both languages are without further accreditation. I list here only some of them. The Transylvanian linguist (by the way the husband of Gabriella Vöö), István Vöö compiled a Romanian-Hungarian concise contrastive proverb anthology (Vöö I. 1978), containing 2154 items. A parallel volume (Vöö I. 1984) contains Hungarian—Rumanian texts (2112 items). Those small books appeared in a similar series of a Rumanian publisher, and the texts are valuable—but not annotated.

A Japanese person and his Hungarian friend published a five-lingual booklet (Taiji 1989) including 110 Hungarian, English, German, French and Japanese sayings, without any further data.

Professor of Dutch language at Eötvös Loránd University, Erzsébet Mollay (2000) published a Dutch-Hungarian dictionary of proverbs. It has 406 items, with variants, source references, and two introductory studies.

Csaba Földes (1987) published a tri-lingual collection of Hungarian, German and Russian colloquial phrases. (Similar practical books appear regularly.)



It is a curious fact that ethnic minority studies in Hungary did not achieve too much in paremiology. However, there are a few publications, including Hocópán (1974), publishing the proverbs from a Rumanian village in Hungary, Méhkerék.

I do not list here the recent publications of Hungarian Finno-Ugrists, Turkologists, or Orientalists in general. They compiled a very rich material, which needs (but today lacks) its own bibliography. (Just recently my student, Rita Kuzder defended her PhD dissertation about the classification of Tibetan proverb genres—the very first attempt in Tibetan paremiology.)

The variety of works dealing with proverbs in Hungary is great. In order to prove it I call attention only to one interesting book: Bernáth (1986) wrote about thirty semantic groups of erotic phrases and sayings, with explanations from cultural history and folklore. He used Hungarian data, together with some (mostly German) parallels.

Throughout the history of lexicography and paremiography in Hungary valuable and useful publications appeared: several volumes collected citations, quotations, Biblical proverbs, *apophthegmata* or simply *salse dicta*. There are studies devoted to proverbs in famous writer's works. There are very many historical and semantic explanations of individual proverbs and sayings. Because of the size limits of my paper I do not list them.

It is surprising that “proverbs of a statesman/politician” type paremiological studies in Hungary are definitely a rarity. The same could be said concerning the “politician's anecdotes”. E.g. the Prime Minister of Hungary in his speeches around 1999 several times quoted “Dakota Indian proverbs” (which in fact do not exist, but their form and moral resemble the traditional proverbs). There was no scholarly treatment of the phenomenon.

The strength of the actual paremiography and paremiology in Hungary is that it is very diligent, combining linguistics, folklore and cultural history. Devoted specialists work in this field. We know about the actual situation in international paremiology as well. The weakness is that terminology is not always clear, and does not refer to genres, supergenres and subgenres of “proverbs” (in the broad sense of the term). And, in spite of bilingual dictionaries—there is no major collection of Hungarian proverbs, systematically referring to international proverbs. It is much more than to “translate” the sentence, in which there is a proverb, into

any other language. My training in paremiology was to find (for Matti Kuusi's *Proverbia septentrionalia*) Hungarian variants missing from "the Düringsfelds". It would be of great importance to publish a major volume of Hungarian proverbs, with comparative references, just made for the use of international proverb scholarship.

Another serious lack is—despite the works of Tolnai, O. Nagy, Hadrovics and others—that there is no thorough history of proverb studies in Hungary. And—there is no Hungarian paremiological bibliography either. It would be the task of today's young paremiographers.

We can characterize into three chapters the hitherto achieved results. First (to about the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century) people wanted to collect and publish Hungarian proverbs serving lexicography and education, in general fostering the development of the language. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century until today the folklore-type collections and publications dominated. There were attempts also to deal with theoretical problems of common sayings. However, a serious lack was that no multilingual, internationally systematized collection was made, like in the neighbouring countries. Cultural historical explanations were common. The third phase is of today: characterized by modern, large dictionaries of phrases, sayings and proverbs. International contacts became prominent. New phenomena were introduced into the research, thus we live now in a new golden age of Hungarian paremiology.

I do not want to outline here my "theory" of proverbs. But I make a distinction between paremiology, phraseology and semantics, all of those dealing with simple units of speech. I think the folkloristic—generic study of "simple forms" ("*ot pogovorki do skazki*" as Permyakov said, and this phrase is not the same as "from proverb to folk-tale") is another promising way of modern paremiology. I hope that both lines will cooperate also in the future. I always make a difference between two strata in semantics: direct *meaning*—and deep *sense*. I feel that this aspect may lead to results both in interpreting and comparing proverbs.

At the beginning of my paper I have stated that from 1964 on Hungarian paremiology became an inevitable partner in international paremiology. I finish my paper with the same remark. I was lucky to know personally Lutz Röhrich, G. L. Permyakov, Elza Kokare, Démétrios Loukatos, Kazys Grigas, Alan Dundes, Arvo

Krikmann, Wolfgang Mieder, Peter Grzybek and many more leading paremiologists. My first master in paremiology was, however, Matti Kuusi. Upon his request I continued (with the collaboration of Ágnes Szemerényi) his *Proverbium* in three (four) issues, as *Proverbium Paratum* (1980, 1981, 1982). It is today an inaccessible publication, and it existed in a mimeographed hard to read form. But the first issue was dedicated to Matti Kuusi, the second to Permyakov, and the third to Lutz Röhrich. (In fact the last publication appeared years later as Litovkina 1983-1989.)

Hungary has housed several meetings of paremiology. I have listed some of them. And Földes (2004) published an international *Festschrift* in honour of Wolfgang Mieder.

My final word is an apology. Realizing the limits of my paper, I did not mention here many important persons and their works (or some of their works). Especially I omitted non-book publications concerning paremiological matters, i.e. scholarly studies of proverbs and not collections. For this see Wolfgang Mieder's *International Bibliography of Paremiology and Phraseology* (2009) with its many entries dealing with Hungarian scholarship. But it was my aim to write (and finish) finally this concise report *debuisset iam pridem*.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>The Turkic loanword *sab* 'word, speech' occurs also in Vogul and Ostyak vocabulary. See the latest Hungarian etymological dictionary: Zaicz 2006. 801. But this fact does not mean automatically that „pre-Ugric” Turkic proverbs were absorbed into the Uralic (and thus into the Hungarian) languages.

<sup>2</sup>Here and in the following I give reference to Mieder 2011, by numbers in the Bibliography of my paper, if the publication exists in the International Proverb Archives at Burlington, Vermont.

<sup>3</sup>Here and in the case of later publications I tried to keep the original orthography, but sometimes with slight modernisation. Please note that I do not register all the quoted publications in my paper. See, however, the annual bibliographies in the *Proverbium Yearbook*. The latest *International Bibliography of Paremiology and Phraseology* by Wolfgang Mieder (2009. Berlin – New York: Walter de Gruyter, Vol. I-II.) has other Hungarian references (among them papers published in journals and collective volumes, etc.)

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PROVERB IS AS PROVERB DOES: *FORREST GUMP*, THE  
CATCHPHRASE, AND THE PROVERB

**Abstract:** This article examines the phenomenon of the movie catchphrase, arguing that many of these memorable, repeatable items draw both their form and their meaning from the proverb tradition. It particularly examines the movie *Forrest Gump* (1994), which coined such proverbial catchphrases as “stupid is as stupid does” and “life is like a box of chocolates: you never know what you’re gonna get,” and proposed fictive origins for modern proverbs such as “shit happens.” Examining both the origin and functions of these proverbial utterances, the article argues that people’s prior experiences of proverbs became a crucial aspect of their understanding of the film. It thus suggests that modern movies contribute to, and are shaped by, the intertextual process we know as the proverb tradition.

**Keywords:** Film, Literature, Popular Culture, Catchphrase, Cliché, Fable, Intertextuality, *Forrest Gump*.

Frankly, my dear, I don’t give a damn.  
(*Gone With the Wind*, 1939)

The problems of three little people don’t amount to a hill  
of beans in this crazy world.  
(*Casablanca*, 1942)

Go ahead, make my day.  
(*Sudden Impact*, 1983)

Hasta la vista, baby.  
(*Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, 1991)

Life is like a box of chocolates: you never know what  
you gonna get.  
(*Forrest Gump*, 1994)

Stupid is as stupid does.  
(*Forrest Gump*, 1994)

Some quotations from popular Hollywood films transcend their identities as snatches of movie dialogue to become part of people's vernacular speech traditions; the popular press refers to them by the term "catchphrases." But a closer examination of many of them reveals that they are themselves recycled, put together out of pre-existing vernacular utterances. Just as movies absorb and recycle popular speech patterns—including proverb use—so does American folk speech absorb and recycle certain movies. Clearly, the chain or web of intertextual reference that characterizes and defines proverbs is as active in movies as it is in other areas of American popular culture.<sup>1</sup>

Consider, for example, Humphrey Bogart's famous claim from *Casablanca*, namely that "the problems of three little people don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world." According to Whiting (1989:307), the proverbial comparison upon which this is directly based, that something does not "amount to a hill of beans," goes back at least to 1929, when K.C. Strahan included it in the novel *Footprints*. The idea of a "crazy world" is far older (though the expression "mad world" has been more popular). Comparing something's value to the value of beans goes back at least to Middle English, for Chaucer was fond of the expression "not worth a bean." Thus, the new movie line is really a combination of several proverbial phrases, drawn from our vernacular traditions of speech and writing, and made to fit the movie's plot.

Similarly, "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn," Rhett Butler's famous statement in *Gone with the Wind*, takes previously entextualized elements and builds them into a new utterance. The phrase "I don't give a damn" certainly predated the movie, as did the traditional term of endearment "my dear." Another great line from *Gone With the Wind*, "tomorrow is another day," was itself a proverb before the film took hold of it. Indeed, even the movie's title seems likely borrowed: "gone like the wind" appears in the book of psalms and in many other places besides.

In the last several decades, movies have been generating proverbial speech intentionally, as a marketing tool. The success of such stars as Clint Eastwood and Arnold Schwarzenegger in affecting the popular imagination through highly repeatable

catchphrases has dawned on marketing executives, and the efficacy of the soundbite in the news media and the slogan in advertising has also undoubtedly had an influence. Like the lines that caught on from older films, many of the recent catchphrases that passed into common use were put together from elements that already made up part of our tradition of vernacular speech.

As examples of this, consider Jim Carrey's "all righty, then," (*Ace Ventura, Pet Detective*) Arnold Schwarzenegger's "I'll be back" (*The Terminator*) and "Hasta la vista, baby," (*Terminator 2: Judgment Day*) and Clint Eastwood's "Go ahead, make my day," (*Sudden Impact*) all popular movie catchphrases during the 1980s and 1990s. All of these were traditional in some form prior to being used in the movies. "All righty, then" has been used as a simple affirmative for years, "I'll be back" and "Hasta la vista" were common leave-taking formulas before Schwarzenegger uttered them onscreen, and Eastwood's phrase was composed of two traditional metaphors: "to go ahead"<sup>2</sup> (*i.e.* to proceed with whatever task is at hand,) and "to make someone's day" (*i.e.* to make someone happy).<sup>3</sup>

Even what seem like original phrases may be proverbial in origin. One of the most famous catchphrases of the 1990s was "show me the money," uttered by Cuba Gooding Jr. in the film *Jerry Maguire*. Most people have assumed that this phrase was invented for the film, but reporter Amy Wilson (1997 E01) tells a different story. In Wilson's account, Phoenix Cardinals safety Tim McDonald was walked through the March 1993 NFL meetings by his agent, Leigh Steinberg, and a film director, Cameron Crowe. According to Wilson, Crowe later asked McDonald the reason for his appearance at the meetings. McDonald replied that he was trawling for a better deal, looking for someone to, as he put it, "show me the money."

The rest is both athletic and cinematic history. McDonald got a new position on the 49ers, and Crowe borrowed what Wilson calls "some emphatic athlete lingo," creating the catchphrase out of McDonald's answer. Wilson continues:

On the Sugar Bowl scoreboard, on CNN, on Oprah, wholesale adoption of the phrase occurs as more than a few folks intone with glee: "Show. Me. The Money."

So this is where a lot of catch phrases come from. Real life heard by writers who hand it to an accomplished actor who delivers it—and its double meaning—to a captivated populace that repeats it, applies it in various venues until it becomes shorthand...and we get to a point where we don't associate the phrase with the movie anymore. It is ours (Wilson 1997 E01).

Wilson is quite right about this, of course. But if, as she suggests, this was not an idiosyncratic statement but rather “athlete lingo,” if it was a traditional way to express the desire for a higher salary and greater recognition, wasn't it already “ours?” In this case, the movie apparently absorbed a proverbial phrase canonical among a certain occupational group, resulting in the popularization, or mainstreaming, of occupational folk speech. Movies, in other words, can take the colorful, vernacular proverbs of different folk groups and make them as widespread as our best-known saws.

In the rest of this paper, I will examine proverbial catchphrases in film, using *Forrest Gump* as my central example. In addition to general questions about the nature of such movie proverbs, I will examine the relationship of the catchphrase to the cliché, the use of proverbial intertextuality to create catchphrases, and the consequences of this intertextual process for the meaning of the phrases. I will explore how the existence of such proverbial catchphrases affects people's interpretations of the film as a whole, bringing my analysis of proverbs to bear on important questions of meaning and interpretation that are central to popular culture scholarship.

### ***Catchphrase, Proverbial Phrase and Cliché: Some General Considerations***

What exactly is a “catchphrase,” and how does it differ from a proverbial phrase? Most existing definitions make the catchphrase either a generally traditional saying, or a phrase that is repeated over and over like a leitmotif during a popular song or play. The first meaning seems to be what folklorists Iona and Peter Opie refer to when they write about “the way lines of current dance songs become catch phrases ... ‘See you later, alliga-

tor’-‘In a while, crocodile’, repeated ad nauseam in 1956.” (Opie and Opie 1959:17) The second meaning is exemplified in the following definition of the term “wheeze” from the online version of the *Oxford English Dictionary*:

2. orig. Theatr. slang, A joke or comic gag introduced into the performance of a piece by a clown or comedian, esp. a comic phrase or saying introduced repeatedly; hence, (gen. slang or colloq.) a catch phrase constantly repeated; more widely, a trick or dodge frequently used; also, a piece of special information, a ‘tip’.

Both of these definitions are used in both academic and popular writings, and both share the important characteristic of repetition; in the first definition, the phrase comes to be repeated by people outside of its original context, while in the second it is repeated over and over during the course of an artistic performance. A catch phrase, then, is an item of discourse subject to replication and recontextualization, two features that also characterize the proverb.

The first definition of the two is the more commonly accepted; for example, Eric Partridge (1977:vii) writes in his *Dictionary of Catch Phrases*:

Consult the standard dictionaries, the best and the greatest: you will notice that they tacitly admit the impossibility of precise definition. Perhaps cravenly, I hope that the following brief ‘wafflings’ will be reinforced by the willingness of readers to allow that ‘example is better than precept’ and thus enable me to ‘get away with it’. A pen-friend...tells me that the best definition he has seen is this: ‘A catch phrase is a phrase that has caught on, and pleases the populace.’ I’ll go along with that, provided these substitutions be accepted: ‘saying’ for ‘phrase’; and ‘public’ for the tendentious ‘populace.’

The definition we are left with, by Partridge’s account, is “a saying that has caught on and pleases the public.”

In reading this passage, a proverb scholar is inevitably reminded of Archer Taylor’s opening to *The Proverb*, in which he first speaks of definitions being too difficult, engaging in a little

of what Partridge calls “waffling” before settling for “a proverb is a saying current among the folk.” The two descriptions, in fact, are nearly identical. In both cases, the exact type of saying is not specified, and the only necessary attribute appears to be currency among some unspecified population, referred to as “the folk” by Taylor and “the public” by Partridge.

Partridge’s further stipulation, that a catchphrase “pleases” the public, actually confuses the issue; how could we hope to tell whether the people using a certain catchphrase find it pleasing or annoying? And how can an entity as amorphous as “the public” be pleased at all? In fact, an anonymous writer in the *Arizona Republic* (1996:A8) once explained that a sentence “is a catch phrase for sure if, each time you hear it, you want to falsely imprison the person responsible for it.”

Here we have entered into what Partridge calls a “vexed question”: where the catchphrase ends and the cliché begins. For by Partridge’s own account, clichés are also phrases that catch on. Some of them are idioms, some of them are proverbs, and some of them are quotations from literature.<sup>4</sup> The difference between catchphrase and cliché is that a cliché is “an outworn commonplace; a phrase, or short sentence, that has become so hackneyed that careful speakers and scrupulous writers shrink from it” (Partridge 1950:2). In other words, catchphrases and clichés are identical in their production (someone uses them either because they appear clever or because they save time), but different in their reception (“the public” enjoys catchphrases but “careful speakers and scrupulous writers” find clichés hackneyed). When Partridge compiled his *Dictionary of Catch Phrases* (1977) and his *Dictionary of Clichés* (1950), he apparently used his own enjoyment of the phrases as a criterion to decide which dictionary each would go into.

Partridge is quite aware of the arbitrary nature of his work. He writes that “the categories of Catch Phrase, Proverbial Saying, Famous Quotation, Cliché, may co-exist: they are not snobbishly exclusive, anyone of any other. All depends on the context, the nuance, the tone” (Partridge 1977:vii). Partridge here admits that the overlapping of our native genre terms is quite marked, and also that the catchphrase, the cliché and the proverbial phrase are indistinguishable by any formal means; all are



entextualized vernacular phrases subject to recontextualization in the ordinary flow of discourse.<sup>5</sup>

A mere glance over some of Partridge's entries will confirm that the phrases some consider to be "catchphrases" or "clichés" operate in a manner just as easily considered proverbial.<sup>6</sup> True proverbs like "monkey see, monkey do" and "as ye sow, so shall ye reap," proverbial phrases like "to spell it out for someone" and "to dot one's i's and cross one's t's," and even Wellerisms like "'nay, nay!' quoth Stringer, when his neck was in the halter," are all listed in one or the other of Partridge's dictionaries.<sup>7</sup> Although some of these have not been noted by proverb collectors, all clearly fit almost any definition of the proverb or proverbial phrase. This point is made not to challenge Partridge, but to point out that whether a saying is proverbial, a "catchphrase" or a "cliché" is often based on a personal reaction to the saying, not on any objectively measurable criterion. When I speak of "catchphrases" below, I could as easily be using the term "proverbial phrases" or "clichés."

The film industry believes that catchphrases are useful in marketing. As MGM executive Susan Pile has said, "if [a catchphrase] makes it into the streets, it definitely doesn't hurt the movie's grosses" (Shaw 1996:13).<sup>8</sup> However, the above analysis suggests that writers and directors who purposely mine the proverb tradition to fashion catchphrases walk a delicate line. On the one hand their catchphrases might please people and help the film, while on the other hand they might bore people as tiresome clichés. As we will see below, viewers have had both reactions to the catchphrases of *Forrest Gump*.

### ***Gumpism as Catchphrase, Cliché and Proverb***

More than any film before it, *Forrest Gump* created phrases that seemed traditional even though they were new. As historian Judith Zinsser (1996:91) puts it, Gump's new aphorisms "actually sound familiar," even to people who have never heard them before. Gump's proverbs in fact, "seem to be culture" in Greg Urban's (1996:21) sense: they are entextualized nuggets of discourse that appear to predate their actual creation. This textuality, this seeming, helped Gump's catchphrases to appear proverbial in the eyes and ears of the audience. Some viewers took that proverbiality seriously, and concluded that the phrases were wise

and witty; others reacted against the traditional authority of proverbial speech, deemed it hackneyed and vacuous, and rejected the gumpisms out of hand.

To frame the above dichotomy in another way, some writers, like Partridge's generic "people," were pleased by Gump's phrases as catchy nuggets of wisdom. Others, taking the position of Partridge's "careful speakers and scrupulous writers," shrank from them as worthless clichés. But the reactions of both camps suggest that Gump's sayings were experienced as proverbs.

Among the many positive reactions to Gump's proverbs are writers who find them to be "words of wisdom" (Anitai 1994: E11), "dead on the money" (May 1994: 4), and "endearing, down-home philosophy" (Bruning 1994:9). One writer goes so far as to say that it was in lines like Gump's "that some of us found the wisdom and the humor to cope with [life's] darker moments" (Boyar, 1994:E1). But the naysayers are more numerous, dubbing Gump's lines "faux wisdom" (Van Bierna, 1994: 82), "bland, empty platitudes" (Parks, 1994:10), and "meaningless fortune cookie-isms" (Verniere 1994:48). Many highlight the phrases' status as moldy clichés, including one who writes: "if I hear that 'life is like a box of chocolates' line one more time, I'll scream" (Creamer, 1994:SC1). Writers in both camps frequently acknowledge the gnomic quality of the gumpisms, employing such words as "proverb," "saying," "aphorism," and "homily."

One of the most positive reactions comes from Tatsuya Komatsu (1995:9), who considers the Gumpisms to be "natural, authentic English expressions." For Komatsu, Gump's phrases have all the features necessary to proverbs: they are pleasing and catchy and ring with authentic traditional wisdom. In his category of "expressions," Komatsu includes practically all of Gump's proverbs and proverbial phrases, including "life is like a box of chocolates," "stupid is as stupid does," and "like peas and carrots," along with verifiably preexisting proverbial speech like "a promise is a promise," "miracles happen every day," and "never take your eye off the ball," showing that he interprets them all as belonging in the same category of saying.

Like Komatsu, singer and songwriter Bruce Springsteen clearly puts traditional proverbs and Gump's new ones in the

same category, but for him they all constitute clichés. In his 1995 song “My Best Was Never Good Enough,” Springsteen includes two of the most famous Gumpisms in what is otherwise a long litany of traditional proverbs, slightly altered to fit the song’s rhyme and meter. These proverbs, including “every cloud has a silver lining,” “every dog has his day,” “when the going gets tough the tough get going,” “a quitter never wins and a winner never quits,” “when God gives you lemons, make lemonade,” “the early bird catches the worm,” “Rome wasn’t built in a day,” “a hit is as good as a run” and “the sun don’t shine on a sleeping dog’s ass,”<sup>9</sup> are apparently interpreted as hackneyed bits of pseudo-wisdom. At the end of the song, Springsteen changes from canonical proverbs to Gumpisms:

Now life’s like a box of chocolates  
 You never know what you’re going to get  
 Stupid is as stupid does  
 And all the rest of that shit  
 Come on pretty baby call my bluff  
 ‘Cause for you my best was never good enough

Here, Springsteen’s use of “all the rest of that shit” (which appeared once before in the song as well, this time as “all the rest of that stuff,” and referring to traditional proverbs) signals his mistrust of the supposedly wise sayings.

Putting Springsteen’s proverb song in the context of his career and his album makes one thing clear: he is not rejecting the proverbs out of doubt that they carry traditional authority. He is rejecting them *because* of their traditional authority. The album, entitled *The Ghost of Tom Joad*, is one of Springsteen’s most antiestablishment efforts, championing the poor, the rootless, the migrant worker and the homeless drifter against the action of hegemonic authority. His rejection of proverbs and Gumpisms signals that the catchphrases, like the older proverbs he quotes, represent the structures of power he is fighting.

The most important point of the above analyses is that different reactions can be evoked by both proverbs and catchphrases, reactions that classify them as catchy on the one hand or as corny on the other. Both reactions begin with the fact that proverbs encapsulate traditional wisdom, and, as Samper (1997) has pointed out, hegemonic authority. Most reactions to the

Gumpisms, both positive and negative, are based on their successful use of the proverbial frame to convey a feeling of age and authority, despite their actual novelty.

***The Proverbs of Forrest Gump: Simple Constructions***

The above analyses suggest that the new sayings of *Forrest Gump* were experienced as proverbs almost immediately after their creation. Like the catchphrases with which this chapter began, the gumpisms achieved this instant proverbiality by making direct and explicit intertextual reference to previous proverbial speech in addressing a recurrent and recognizable social situation. In the previous chapter, I outlined several theoretical ways of accomplishing this. Using *Forrest Gump*, a film that contains many such innovative proverbs, I will further explore these strategies of proverbialization, not as hypothetical examples, but as real-life case studies of proverbial innovation in popular culture.

The simplest method of creating a proverbial utterance is what Urban (1996) calls “replication,” the quoting of a previously-heard utterance in a new context; this is the type of proverb that fits best within a paradigm in which the proverb tradition consists of a canon of repeated phrases, and it is the type most often considered proverbial by scholars. Like practically any movie, play or book, *Forrest Gump* utilizes this strategy of proverbialization several times. As a single example involving a common proverb, when Forrest is learning to play ping-pong, another soldier offers him this unsolicited advice: “never take your eye off the ball.” Clearly, this is a variant of “keep your eye on the ball,” a venerable piece of sports wisdom which is listed in several dictionaries of proverbial speech. In this case, then, a recognized, canonical proverb of many years’ standing was introduced to the film to highlight the typical nature of a social situation: the complete novice being given his first lesson in a sport.

Unlike the above example, many of the canonical proverbs used in the film have not yet been placed in most proverb dictionaries. A quick reference to the Lexis/Nexis database is required to confirm their age and currency. For example, “death is (a) part of life,” a statement made by Mamma Gump, has been used more than 600 times, first appearing in the database in

1979.<sup>10</sup> Its variant, also quoted in the movie, is “dying is part of living.” This sentence also goes back to 1979 in the database. Most English-language proverb dictionaries fail to list either of these statements as a proverb.<sup>11</sup>

“Miracles happen every day,” “you make your own destiny” and “do the best with what God gave you” are more examples of Mamma Gump’s folk wisdom, also from outside the usually accepted proverbial canon; each of them predates the film by many years.<sup>12</sup> All of these proverbs express immediately recognizable social situations: the death of a loved one, faith in God and in oneself, the need to find meaning in daily life.

Similarly, when Gump says “I guess Lieutenant Dan figured there’s some things in life you just can’t change,” he is using an uncollected canonical proverb. It appears in a few variants in the Lexis/Nexis database, including Gump’s exact wording, “some things in life you just can’t change,” but more frequently merely as “[there are] some things you [we, I] can’t change.” Other variants include “you can’t change some things,” “certain things you can’t change,” “certain things in life you can’t change,” and “you can’t change certain things.”<sup>13</sup> Again, this proverb is used to signal a recognizable and recurrent social position: resignation to an unchangeable situation. In this case, Dan and Forrest need to preserve their dignity despite their physical and mental handicaps.

Besides this straightforward replication of previously heard proverbs, the simplest way to create a proverbial utterance is to use a “proverbial pattern.” This strategy was also employed by the film’s writers. After his friend Bubba dies, Forrest decides to travel to Bayou Le Batre and start a shrimping business because he made a promise to Bubba and “a promise is a promise.” This is, of course, a canonical proverb, but it is simultaneously an invocation of the “X is X” pattern, which can be used to generate other proverbs, such as “business is business,” “a man’s a man,” and “people are people.”<sup>14</sup> Other proverbial patterns are also used, but in more complex ways; I will show below that “like peas and carrots” and “life is like a box of chocolates” are, at least in part, created with reference to proverbial patterns.

One of the most common gumpisms, “stupid is as stupid does,” was created by following a proverbial pattern as well. It is unclear, however, whether the pattern was taken from tradition,

where it is rare, or abstracted from the single common proverb that uses it. This gumpism can therefore be said to fall between two strategies: the straightforward application of a pattern, and the use of a single proverb to create a new pattern.

The canonical proverb in question, of course, is “handsome is as handsome does,” a traditional way of saying that looks aren’t everything, that true beauty is to be found beneath the surface. This is only the most common of several versions, all of which are semantically and structurally very close: “pretty is as pretty does,” “lovely is as lovely does,” and “beauty is as beauty does” have all been noted as well. In more general terms, then, we may place positive judgements about someone’s looks into the pattern “x is as x does.”

Still, this is only part of the story; the pattern apparently did not originally refer to looks at all. According to Stevenson (1948:539), the pattern’s first recorded occurrence is in 1580, where it is rendered as “goodly is he that goodly dooth.” In 1600, it appeared as “he is proper that proper doth.” In 1670, it appeared with “proper” once again; it also first appeared in the preferred form, with “handsome” as the adjective. But soon thereafter, it appeared as “well is he that well does.” Clearly, with “goodly,” “proper,” “well,” and “handsome” among its first five occurrences, and with “proper” twice at that, this proverb was used to speak of things other than appearance.<sup>15</sup> In fact, in its earliest origins, “x is as x does” seems to have been a formula along the lines of “x is x,” into which any adjective that expressed approval could be placed. In this form, it foregrounded a person’s actions as the principal means by which to judge his or her character or worth. Its central idea—that the only truly good, or handsome, or proper, or well person is one whose deeds are good, proper, handsome or well—is rendered all the more forceful by its generality. It is deeds that make a person’s character what it is—no matter what it happens to be.

Given this general meaning, we might expect a proverbial formula such as this one to yield other proverbs. Indeed it has. In the *Dictionary of American Proverbs* we find “foolish is as foolish does,” quite possibly the direct source for Gump’s adage. “Ugly is as ugly does” appears fourteen times in American newspapers, some of them predating the movie. Since the film,

even more proverbs have surfaced that use this pattern. In talking about Tom Hanks, the *Houston Chronicle* has said that “talent is as talent does” (Westbrook 1995:5). More recently, Tamala M. Edwards (1998:66) of *Time Magazine* commented on the un-abomber case by saying that “crazy is as crazy does.” These proverbs demonstrate that “x is as x does” is a viable pattern that can spontaneously generate new proverbs. It may well be that the public reaction to *Forrest Gump* re-established or at least re-energized this pattern as a generative force in our proverb traditions.

***The Proverbs of “Forrest Gump”: Complex Constructions***

The above examples of Gump’s proverbs are the ones with the simplest and most transparent histories. The more interesting proverbs, on the other hand, are combinations of several previously existing proverbial images and patterns, much like *Sudden Impact*’s combination of “go ahead” and “make my day.” Some take their images from one or more proverbs and their structure from common proverbial patterns. These phrases are intertextually linked to the raw materials of the proverb tradition; they are classic examples of innovative proverb use. They include the proverbial comparison “like peas and carrots,” as well as the proverbs “life is like a box of chocolates: you never know what you’re gonna get” and “you’ve got to put the past behind you before you can move on.”

This last proverb, which is spoken by Forrest as he muses on his period as a long-haired runner, is a case in point. Like Gump’s other proverbs, it “sounds familiar” despite being new. Once again, this is due to deep connections with the tradition of metaphorical folk speech that produces proverbs. Specifically, the new phrase is made by juxtaposing two very common traditional metaphors: “to put the past behind you” and “to move on.”<sup>16</sup>

Like “to go ahead,” mentioned above, “to move on” might not strike every reader as metaphorical at all. Consider, however, that the phrase usually does not refer to physically moving at all. Like “to go ahead” it is a phrase that taps into our deepest traditional metaphors, which Lakoff and Johnson (1980) have deemed “metaphors we live by.” “To move on” can be used as an example of any of our major complex metaphors involving

journeys. For example, employing the metaphor that an academic argument is a journey, a scholar might write “let me *backtrack* a bit and return to my last point,” “without wishing to *get stuck* on a single idea, let me rephrase...” or, conversely, “let us *move on* to our next point.” In the case of *Forrest Gump*, the phrase seems to be used as an instance of a general “life is a journey” metaphor. In order to “move on” with, or continue, his life, Forrest needs to “put the past behind him.”

Like the metaphor of “moving on,” the concept of “putting the past behind” a person is but one aspect of larger metaphorical traditions. Most important among these is the orientational metaphor that the past is behind us and the future in front of us. We look back to the past, but look ahead to the future. “I *was* an axe murderer,” the released convict might say, “but that’s all *behind* me now.” We might accuse someone of wanting to “*go back* to the way things used to be.” The very idea of progressing to the future and regressing to the past is based upon the metaphorical idea that the past is, and belongs, physically behind our backs.

There is also another metaphor operating when we “put the past behind us.” Again, this is the metaphor of life as a journey. We are not merely stating that the past *is* behind us, but rather actively putting it behind us, in order to progress into the future—to “move on.” The image is one in which we constantly move forward, our future approaching up ahead and our past receding behind us. It is a common metaphor that English speakers use every day. “I’m *looking forward* to my trip next week,” we say, or “I can see we have a *long way to go* before this deal is settled.” Indeed, it is precisely because the two proverbial phrases “to put the past behind us” and to “move on” form part of the same larger metaphor (life is a journey), that the two are eminently suited to being combined, as Mama Gump combines them.

Even the combination of these two metaphors is not original to *Forrest Gump*. Between June 1989 and April 1997, the phrases appeared in close proximity (within three words) of one another fifty times in the newspapers catalogued by Lexis/Nexis. Over forty of these instances are quite simply versions of “to put the past behind one and move on,” though there are a few other very similar constructions. Only three of the fifty articles put the



two phrases in reverse order (“to move on” followed by “to put the past behind one”). As Mama Gump so rightly observes, “you’ve got to put the past behind you before you can move on,” at least in common usage.

The general structure of this phrase, “you’ve got to x before you can y,” was borrowed from vernacular speech traditions as well. “You must creep before you can crawl,” “you’ve got to crawl before you can walk” and “you’ve got to learn to walk before you can run,” all listed in the *Dictionary of American Proverbs*, use this pattern.<sup>17</sup> In addition to structure, these proverbs share two obvious traits with Gump’s: reference to the same recurrent situation (time-consuming but necessary preparation being necessary for progress in life), and the comparison of life events to journeying, whether by creeping, crawling, walking, running or simply “moving on.”

In the phrase “you’ve got to put the past behind you before you can move on,” we see a clear example of a “true proverb” that is proverbial but not canonical. It is not just a version of “to put the past behind one and move on,” because unlike that phrase it encapsulates wisdom; the phrase merely describes a recurrent social situation, but the proverb evaluates it as well. At the same time, it has origins in several specific proverbial phrases and a deep connection to our common stock of metaphorical language. Therefore, although this phrase did not become an item of repeated canonical folklore, it is nonetheless an item in the proverb tradition, which I would simply call a proverb.

This more complex way of building proverbs, out of bits and pieces of previously existing proverbial discourse, can introduce fascinating levels of ambiguity to the proverb’s meaning. The meaning of any utterance is intertextually determined, that is, determined in relation to other utterances as well as to speakers and listeners. Building a proverb out of pieces of older proverbs therefore involves what Babcock and Abrahams call “carryover of meaning” and Urban calls “transduction” from the older proverbs to the new one. When more than one proverb is used, more than one traditional meaning contributes to the final meaning of the utterance. We can see this in Gump’s utterances quite clearly: both the proverbial comparison “like peas and carrots” and the proverb “life is like a box of chocolate: you never know what you’re gonna get” have relationships to more than one pre-

existing proverb or pattern, and both have been interpreted by different people as having quite different meanings. All of these meanings seem to have been taken at least in part from the older proverbial speech on which the new proverbs were modeled.

As an example of such multiple meaning, consider “life is like a box of chocolates: you never know what you’re gonna get.” In reading the very large number of citations this proverb received in the newspapers,<sup>18</sup> a careful reader will notice a pattern. In the cases where it is used proverbially, to comment on a recurrent social situation, it occurs with two distinct meanings. Some writers use it with the meaning it obtains in the film: that you never know what you are going to get, that life is uncertain. But quite often, it seemed simply to mean “life is good.”

Perhaps the strongest proponent of the idea that a life “like a box of chocolates” is always good is the critic Michael Medved, who glosses Gump’s phrase by saying, “sure, you could get a nougat, you could get a covered almond, you could get a cherry cordial, but the most important thing about a box of chocolates is that everything it contains is sweet.”<sup>19</sup> Other examples of this use of the proverb include “just as life is not like a box of chocolates, the history of Western philosophy could not be reduced to easily digestible morsels” (Jeffries 1996 T19), “Life was like a box of chocolates for the Rio Mesa High boys’ basketball team, except the Spartans knew exactly what they were going to get” (Bresnahan 1997 C8), and “sometimes life is like a box of chocolates—sweet and free” (Santella 1996:11A). The first of these suggests that “like a box of chocolates” means “easily digestible”; the second chronicles the Spartans’ victory over another team, directly contradicting Forrest and his mother’s meaning and implying that the happy occasion of their victory was what made life “like a box of chocolates” for the Spartans; the third simply substitutes “sweet and free” for “you never know what you’re gonna get.” In all of these cases, the writers seem to say the opposite of what Gump means, which is that life is sometimes good and sometimes not, or that “you have to take the rough with the smooth,” to use another proverb.

Considering the hardships in Forrest’s life, why would a life “like a box of chocolates” always mean a gift from God? Could there never be a bad chocolate, one which you’d rather not eat?

Several satirical writers who used the “life is like a box of chocolates” proverb based essays around this very point: there are, in most boxes of chocolates, some disgusting selections. One points out that most chocolates are “that awful pink or orange nougat” (PR Newswire 1996) and another complains similarly of “ooky sorta-orange goo” (Lane 1995: 11B), while Frank Ronan (1994:46) reminds readers that “Life may be like a box of chocolates, but you can avoid those sick-making strawberry creams by reading the inside of the lid.” Considering that some people recognize the existence of bad chocolates, and that others, including Medved, recognize Forrest’s life as one with its own difficulties, why do so many writers take “life is like a box of chocolates” to mean “life is always good?”

Clues to this question can be found in the phrase’s history, and particularly in its intertextual connections to the proverb tradition. One obvious place to start is in the phrase’s direct origin: screenwriter Eric Roth and actor Tom Hanks based it on the opening line of the novel *Forrest Gump*: “Let me say this: bein a idiot is no box of chocolates.” A Lexis/Nexis search reveals that the phrase “no box of chocolates” was by then at least two decades old; it was thus a canonical proverbial phrase that was directly related to the catchphrase. Its first occurrence in the Lexis/Nexis database is in a 1978 Newsweek article (Saal 1978), in which the great pianist (and native Russian speaker) Vladimir Horowitz is quoted as saying “my dear, a revolution is no box of chocolates.” It also occurs several more times before the appearance of *Forrest Gump* (the novel) in 1986. Although it hasn’t been noted in most dictionaries of proverbial speech, then, the phrase “to be no box of chocolates” is clearly traditional in the classic sense, equivalent to the more common phrase “to be no bed of roses.”

Since “to be no box of chocolates,” in almost all of its usages, appears to mean “to be unpleasant” or “to be difficult,” its opposite “to be a box of chocolates” should, by intertextual extrapolation, mean “to be pleasant” or “to be easy.” The most commonly understood meaning for “life is (or is like) a box of chocolates”<sup>20</sup> is exactly that. There is, in fact, no other obvious source for this interpretation. This meaning for the catchphrase therefore makes more sense in the context of the proverb tradition than it does in the context of the film, where it clearly

means, “you never know what you’re going to get,” in other words, “it is sometimes pleasant and sometimes not.”

“To be no box of chocolates” is not the only nugget of proverbial speech that has intertextual resonances affecting the meaning of “life is like a box of chocolates.” There are many viewers who perceived the phrase’s obvious similarity to the proverb “life is just a bowl of cherries.” Clearly, the “box of chocolates” phrase was not intended to mean the same thing as “life is just a bowl of cherries”; one writer recognizes this, pointing out that “life may be like a box of chocolates, but this year has been more like a bowl of cherries for actor Tom Hanks, who has been named *Entertainment Weekly* magazine’s entertainer of the year” (Baltimore *Sun* 1996:2A). This anonymous wire-service scribe shows us simultaneously that the phrases’ meanings are perceived as intertextually related and that they are not perceived to be exactly the same.

However, most writers who have used the phrase lack this insight, and make the meaning of “life is like a box of chocolates” virtually identical to that of “life is just a bowl of cherries.” Many writers have clearly connected the two in their minds. The comedy troupe Forbidden Hollywood performed a parody song, “Life is like a box of chocolates,” to the tune of the 1934 Rudy Vallee song “Life is just a bowl of cherries.” Gary Dunford asks the question, “which two of these thoughts are close enough to provoke a literary lawsuit?” (Dunford 1995:6) The two he seems to mean are “Life is just a bowl of cherries” and Gump’s box of chocolates proverb. Judith Zinsser (1995:91) misquotes the proverb as “Life is *just* a box of chocolates (emphasis mine),” and leaves out the second half, “you never know what you’re gonna get.” From her argument, she clearly thinks that Gump’s statement has the same meaning as the “bowl of cherries” proverb. Finally, Diane Stoneback is one of several writers who have consciously combined the two phrases. Her version reads, “ever since Branca’s Philadelphia-based Falcon Candy Co. won the license to manufacture the candy bearing the Forrest Gump logo, his life has been like a bowl of plump, chocolate-covered cherries” (Stoneback 1995:D1). Clearly, the meanings that the phrase “life is like a box of chocolates” obtains in discourse situations have been affected by “life is just a bowl of

cherries”; again, an intertextual process of meaning-making connects the catchphrase to our proverb tradition.

Like “life is just a bowl of cherries,” another canonical phrase seems to have affected the meanings of Gump’s proverbs through the similarity of their images. This is, of course, “life is sweet,” noted by Whiting as a common saying in *Modern Proverbs and Proverbial Sayings*. Many who interpreted Gump’s proverb to mean “life is good” include the word “sweet” in their explanations. Above we saw examples from Medved and Santella; in addition, there is Weber’s (1995:5) gloss as “sweet and palliative” and Sandy Quadros Bowles’s (1997:4) observation that “chocolates are all sweet and creamy—How can you go wrong, whichever one you choose?”

In a letter to the editor of the Louisville *Courier-Journal*, Tom Louderback (1996:10A) summed up this perspective nicely: “In times like these we need to remember the wisdom of Forrest Gump: ‘It’s just like my mama always said, life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you’re going to get.’ Forrest Gump knew that each choice would be different, yet every choice would be sweet.” Finally, the most direct and obvious example came from CNN anchor Jim Moret: “Life is sweet ... like a box of chocolates” (*Showbiz Today*, 1995). As with “life is just a bowl of cherries,” the Gumpism’s main image has called to mind another proverb and assimilated that saying’s meaning into its own; once again, the proverb tradition has exerted its intertextual influence.

While we have concentrated so far on the first part of the gumpism “Life is like a box of chocolates,” the second part, “you never know what you’re gonna get” is also intertextually linked to the proverb tradition. By the reckoning of previous scholars, “you never know” is itself a free-standing proverb, a proverbial phrase, and a fragment of other proverbs such as “you never know your luck” and “you never know until you try.” When “you never know” is functioning as a proverbial phrase, its common meaning is that things are never certain, that one can never be sure. This is exactly the element of meaning that it contributes to the gumpism. Indeed, the proverb could probably be reduced to “in life, you never know,” and it would still retain Mama Gump’s original sense.

This provides the solution to the question of why the gumpism is used with two disparate meanings by people who presumably share an interpretive proverbial tradition within which to read it. Some have taken its relationships with “life is sweet,” “life is just a bowl of cherries” and “to be no box of chocolates” as the ones that define its meaning, while others have read the uncertainty traditional to “you never know” as the central element. There is one constant, however: both of the meanings commonly ascribed to this saying are being created with reference to the proverb tradition.

In addition to its images and its phrasing, this gumpism has a structure that intuitively suggests a proverbial interpretation. In fact, “life is like a box of chocolates: you never know what you’re gonna get,” fits a traditional proverbial pattern, namely, “life is (like) x : y,” where x is a noun phrase and y is an explanatory sentence or description. According to one standard source on proverbs (Stevenson 1948:1400-1401), defining life in this formulaic and analogic way is quite an old tradition. In 160 B.C., Terence wrote in his *Adelphoe* that “human life is like a game of dice: if you don’t get the throw you want, you must make the best of the throw you get.” Some five hundred years later, St. Jerome wrote that “this life is a race: we run it on earth that we may win a crown elsewhere.” Some examples of the formula at work among traditional, entextualized proverbs include the famous German example, “Life is like a chicken coop ladder: short and full of shit,” its variants such as “life is like a chicken coop ladder: a person can’t get ahead because of all the shit,” and its corollary, “life is like a child’s undershirt: short and full of shit.” In his extensive work on these German proverbs, Dundes (1984) avoids calling them “proverbs” and uses the vaguer word “expressions” most of the time, also referring to them as “folk definition[s] of life.” They nonetheless fit most definitions of the proverb, including Dundes’s own (Dundes 1981/1975).

In English, there are not many canonical proverbs that employ this formula, but the *Dictionary of American Proverbs* lists a few, including “life is a gamble: you win or lose” and its variant, “life is a lottery: most folks draw blanks.” Furthermore, the formula itself is widely known and employed. In a *Newsday* article about the internet, Fred Bruning quotes his nephew, Mi-

chael, who says that “life is like a gyroscope: The more you try to catch up, the faster it goes” (Bruning 1997:B04). Baseball player Howard Johnson, reflecting on his retirement, stated that “life is like a book: you go on to the next chapter” (Conway 1997:C1). And media tycoon Ted Turner has been quoted as saying that “life’s like a grade B movie: You don’t want to get up and walk out, but you also don’t want to sit through it again” (Hudis and Sacharow 1996). These are but a few of the many examples of this pattern at work in modern English.

Within the same overall formula of “Life is like x: y,” there have been many adaptations of Gump’s proverb; obviously, people are aware of the traditional structure and play with the proverb within its boundaries. Some of these variants do not preserve the root metaphor of the box of chocolates. An example is “Life is like a buffet, you never know what you’re gonna get; but you will get a lot,” (Rathgeb 1997:D14) noted in a smorgasbord advertisement in a supermarket tabloid. Others preserve the metaphor but not the conclusion, as for example, “life is like a box of chocolates. It costs too much, it’s bad for you, and you don’t know where the nuts are until it’s too late” (Ostler 1995:E1), “I heard someone comment the other day that their life was like a box of chocolates...it was full of nuts” (Algood 1995: 3F), and “Life is like a box of chocolates—sometimes sweet, usually hard, but mostly just plain nuts” (Advocate 1995:6B).<sup>21</sup> The least cheerful adaptation of all was a soliloquy by the villainous “Cigarette-Smoking Man” (played by William B. Davis) on the November 17th, 1996 episode of the TV series *The X-Files*:

Life is like a box of chocolates: a cheap, thoughtless, perfunctory gift that nobody ever asks for. Unreturnable, because all you get back is another box of chocolates. So you’re stuck with this undefinable whipped mint crap that you mindlessly wolf down.... Sure, once in a while there’s a peanut butter cup. English toffee. But they’re gone too fast and the taste is fleeting. They end up in nothing but broken bits filled with hardened jelly and teethshattering nuts. When you’re desperate enough to eat those, all you’ve got left is an empty box....

Clearly, this is not as tightly constrained a formula as “x is x.” There is a great deal more leeway in what specific images will be

picked, and in the precise wording of the resulting phrase. For this reason, we might think of members of this set as weaker on the scale of proverbiality, less firmly bound by rules of intertextual reference, less fully entextualized than a proverb like “a deal’s a deal.” Nevertheless, they participate in the process of proverbial communication. By their traditional formulaic structure, they announce themselves as separate entities, as “sayings embedded in what is said.”

There are some adaptations of the gumpism that compare something other than life to a box of chocolates. These include “birthdays are like a box of chocolates: after you have too many, you feel like crap,” “men are like a box of chocolates: you have to go through a bunch before you find one you really like,”<sup>22</sup> and “politics is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you’re gonna get. Sometimes you get nuts and soft centers” (Johnson 1994:D1). This stems from an even looser pattern in English, namely “x is like y: z,” in which x and y are noun phrases stated to be analogous and z is a clever description of the analogy’s key. This pattern has an even greater range of options, and can therefore be considered even more weakly bound by intertextual constraint, but nonetheless is a traditional resource of the language.

In analyzing this new proverb, then, we find in it a multitude of proverbial voices, affecting both its production and its reception. It has borrowed the box of chocolates from “to be no box of chocolates.” It has borrowed the outward shape, and with it an element of meaning, from “life is just a bowl of cherries.” It has borrowed some of the semantic force of “life is sweet,” and the entire text and meaning of “you never know.” It has then set these elements inside the traditional frame of “life is like x: y.” There is almost no part of this new proverb that was not already an element of the proverb tradition.

As we have seen, the extensive borrowing of varied proverbial elements, and the subsequent “transduction” or “carryover of meaning,” led to interesting ambiguities in the meaning of “life is like a box of chocolates.” These ambiguities arose through different social actors negotiating the saying’s precise position in an intertextual web of proverbial meanings. Similarly, the proverbial comparison “like peas and carrots” drew more



than one meaning from the proverb tradition. This phrase, used by Forrest to describe his inseparable friendship with Jenny Curran, also entered common vernacular tradition, appearing over fifty times in newspapers during the two years and seven months after the film's release.<sup>23</sup> As with the Gumpisms that follow the patterns of true proverbs, the quick acceptance of the comparison "like peas and carrots" into mainstream speech and writing is due at least in part to clearly discernable intertextual relationships between it and various pre-existing, traditional phrases.

Screenwriter Eric Roth was aware that "like peas and carrots" was based on a canonical saying, but he was unable to recall which one; he told reporter Stephen Schaeffer (1994:042) that "Forrest would confuse aphorisms, like 'Jenny and me, — we're like peas and carrots.' Whatever the real saying was, he fouled it up." But Tom Hanks, the actor who portrayed Gump, and who helped Roth coin all of Gump's new proverbs, did remember. Hanks told reporter Irv Letofsky (1994:E1) that Gump "doesn't say, 'I ran like the wind,' he says, 'I ran the way the wind blows.' He doesn't say, 'We're like two peas in a pod,' he says, 'We're like peas and carrots.'"

The metaphor "like two peas in a pod" is in fact part of a complex of traditional images in English that refer to peas; "as thick as peas," "as alike as two peas," and "as close as peas in a pod" have all been recognized as proverbial by Whiting (1989:476-477). All of them frequently include the stipulation that the peas be from the same pod. But they do not all have the same meaning. The first, "as thick as peas," essentially deals with closeness; it refers to people who "stick together," who are inseparable, or who are physically close to one another, as when they share a small living-space. The second, clearly, refers to resemblance. The third may refer to either; Whiting gives only two examples, one of which refers to inseparability and the other of which refers to resemblance. What we have, then, is a traditional root simile (people being like peas [in a pod]) which carries two different meanings: sometimes it means that the people are alike, sometimes it means that they are close or fond of one another.

In one telling invocation of Forrest Gump's phrase, a journalist notes that men and women are "like the peas and carrots that Forrest Gump talked about. We go together, but we're just

not out of the same pod” (Austin *American-Statesman* 1995:A8). This writer points out one of the most important facts about “like peas and carrots”: despite the fact that it was based on “like peas in a pod,” it is not usually interpreted to carry the same range of possible meanings. It does mean “close,” but it does not mean “identical.”

In this sense, “like peas and carrots” is a much better metaphor for Forrest and Jenny. He is a straight-laced, all-American boy whose main accomplishments are in football, the Army and big business, while she is a war protester, naked folk singer and flower child who becomes a disco queen and a drug addict. Still, they love each other and complement each other’s lives. In the common peas and carrots mixture, peas are green and carrots orange, peas are spheres while carrots are cut into cubes. In both cases, then, the items are totally different, but still seem to go together naturally.

Some writers nevertheless do understand “identical” to be the meaning of “like peas and carrots.” The clearest example of this is in a news story by Ed Bark (1994:7), who uses the expression to refer to Rupert Murdoch and Ted Turner, citing the similarities in their lives and work, rather than any indication that they are friends. Indeed, since the dislike Turner and Murdoch feel for each other is legendary (Turner has publicly called Murdoch a Nazi), Bark could hardly have meant that they seem to go together as natural friends. Instead, he seems to mean that they are nearly identical, have similar lives and similar approaches their positions as media moguls. Since “like peas and carrots” is never used in the movie to carry the meaning of “similar,” there is no obvious source for this interpretation besides the proverbial tradition. The Gumpism’s place in an intertextual web of proverbial speech therefore seems to have led to a shadow of a secondary meaning, at least for some viewers.

“Like peas and carrots” is worth mentioning for another reason as well: it is an example of how preexisting proverbial speech can affect not only the meaning but also the form of new proverbs. For the proverb tradition has not only adopted “like peas and carrots,” it has also adapted it according to established proverbial rules. Elihu Harris, mayor of Oakland, California, has been quoted as saying that “The terms Oakland and Raiders ...go

together like peas and carrots," (Hallissy 1995:A19). A professional sportswriter wrote that "Memorial and West went together like peas and carrots in the preseason outlooks provided by other coaches in the Big Eight Conference" (Hernandez 1995:30). And Pam Festge (1995:15A), the wife of defeated Wisconsin state assembly candidate Jim Festge, wrote in a letter to the editor that she and her husband "go together like peas and carrots." In all, more than half of the instances of "like peas and carrots" that I collected in the time after the film was released said that two people or things "go together like peas and carrots." The construction "go together like" appears nowhere in the film, and seems to be an innovation added by those who quote the phrase.

The key to this alteration appears to be another "proverbial pattern." A good clue to this is that at least one verifiable instance of the phrase "to go together like peas and carrots" predates the film: Harsila and Hansen's (1992:26) claim that "fresh and fish seem to go together like peas and carrots, meat and potatoes or peaches and cream." This quotation makes it clear that peas and carrots are not the only things that can be said to "go together" in English. Indeed, searching the database proves that other possible pairs include not only meat and potatoes and peaches and cream, but a host of others including love and marriage, a horse and carriage, bacon and eggs, salt and pepper, cheese and crackers, bagels and lox, cookies and milk, apple pie and ice cream, peanut butter and jelly, fish and chips, Batman and Robin, toast and jam, gin and tonic, and scotch and soda. The appearance of so many variations of this phrase in the Lexis/Nexis database suggests that "to go together like x and y" is a proverbial pattern in English, into which one can plug many pairs of items to make a new comparison.

Like the "x is x" pattern, "go together like x and y" is an entextualized piece of discourse that must absorb other discourse into itself in order to be used. The difference is that, in the case of "go together like x and y," the discourse that it absorbs tends itself to be in the form of an entextualized chunk. For many uses of the formula "go together like x and y," it seems, not only do x and y really seem to go together, but "x and y" is a commonly-stated phrase, what students of idiomatic speech call an "irreversible binomial idiom." "Gin and tonic," "peaches and cream," and "peanut butter and jelly" are examples; we often say these

pairs just as I have written them, outside the context of a comparison.

There is no example of anyone writing that any two things go together like “tonic and gin,” “cream and peaches” or “jelly and peanut butter” in the Lexis/Nexis database. It is always the same fixed, entextualized phrases, or irreversible binomial idioms, that we use to discuss the foods themselves.

A further search, this time on the phrase particle “go together like” shows that the particle can have almost any two things after it (“a telephone and a fax machine,” for example, or “Pat Buchanan and Courtney Love,” or even “blood and crumpled metal”) but that the instances in which an independently entextualized phrase is inserted are more common. Furthermore, they are more than five times as likely to occur more than once.<sup>24</sup> Those entextualized “x and y” phrases that pair up food items (bread and butter, bagels and lox or scotch and soda) are extremely likely to occur more than once.<sup>25</sup> Apparently, there are potent and traditional conventions of the language causing certain comparisons, embedded in a formulaic frame, to recur in vernacular usage.

It is not surprising that Gump’s phrase should be changed to conform to this rule. The pair “peas and carrots” fits all the criteria for easily fitting into the “go together like” frame: it is a pair of food items, commonly consumed together, and commonly referred to in a fixed phrase. The mixture “peas and carrots” is found in frozen and canned forms, always referred to as “peas and carrots” and never as “carrots and peas.” Thus, when this pair of terms occurred in the context of a comparison, within an extremely popular and well publicized movie, and with the clearly implied meaning of “going together,” it was only natural that the comparison should enter mainstream discourse. It was also natural that it should be changed by the powerful forces of entextualizing tradition into “go together like peas and carrots.”

One of the beautiful aspects of vernacular language traditions is that they allow for this sort of phrase, simultaneously traditional and newly created. Clearly, this phrase had all the hallmarks of our proverbial tradition the very first time it was used; it is created out of traditional elements in a fixed, traditional relationship, inserted into a traditional frame. Furthermore, it

would be largely meaningless without a proverbial tradition within which to read it. Most importantly, it draws on the traditional content and meanings of more than one previously existing proverbial phrase in order to achieve its own meaning, and then draws on a widespread proverbial pattern to achieve its final form. It is, in all these ways, a product of the proverb tradition.

***Forrest Gump's Proverbs: Fictive History, Real World History, and the "Natural History" of Proverbial Discourse***

In their 1996 book *Natural Histories of Discourse*, Michael Silverstein and Greg Urban define these "histories" as "indications of more originary interactional text(s) of inscription" lurking within present texts, or "the residue of past social interaction carried along with the sign-vehicle encoding the semantic, or denotational, meaning in denotational text" (Silverstein and Urban 1996:5). In essence, they read each text as a multilayered palimpsest, containing not only its denotational meaning, but a potentially infinite layering of metadiscursive clues to past contextualizations and past meanings. Sometimes these clues are genuine results of an utterance's being replicated, or recontextualized from past contexts, but sometimes they are encoded into a new text in order to make it seem to be shared culture. It is these metadiscursive clues that constitute entextualization, and they are a powerful part of the function of proverbs and other vernacular speech forms.

Despite their brevity, each of Forrest Gump's proverbs contains clues to different layerings of meaning within two orders of history, which I will call real-world history and fictive history. As I have shown above, each of Forrest Gump's proverbs has a real-world history. A proverb's coinage by Roth and Hanks, what previous proverbial and traditional resources it has drawn upon, and its emergence from the film into American discourse, all form part of this history. When the bounded proverb texts alone were not detailed enough to provide much evidence about their real-world histories, these histories were recoverable from metadiscursive commentaries in the larger texts in which they were embedded.

In addition to its real-world history, each proverb has an important element of fictive history. By fictive history, I mean its history in Forrest Gump's fictive world, as opposed to its history

in our own world. How did such a text come into being? Who said it before Forrest and on what occasions? Are there “residues of past (fictive) social interactions” to be discovered within Gump’s proverbs? There are such residues, albeit faint ones. Like the intertextual connections to real proverbs, these entextualizing residues help Gump’s new proverbs to seem as though they’ve been around for years.

The single most important mechanism of each proverb’s fictive history is its ascription. In many cases, Forrest ascribes the proverb to his Mama: “My mama always said,” he tells us, and follows with one of his proverbs. This suggests, even the first time that Forrest uses an utterance, that it enjoys a long history. He does not say that mama “once told me,” or even that “mama said,” which would imply that the phrase was heard only once before. Instead, we are told that she “always said” them, or that she “says” them, suggesting that her usage of them continues, or that it continued for some time. He implies, in other words, that the phrases are traditional, repeated proverbs heard on multiple occasions.

Within the fictive world, then, Gump frames his utterances as statements he heard from his mother on many occasions. This ascription of proverbs to Gump’s mother fits our expectations of proverbial speech; in Briggs and Bauman’s (1992) terms, it minimizes the intertextual gap between these utterances and our idealized mental image of proverb production, allowing them to seem even more clearly proverbial. We all know people with their own pet sayings, and this film makes Gump’s mother into just such a person. Furthermore, it is no coincidence that this folksy proverb-speaker should be a maternal figure in Gump’s life; it is a common perception that proverbs are the domain of older people, and even that proverbial wisdom is associated with older women.<sup>26</sup>

Another strategy used to suggest a history for Gump’s proverbs is repetition. Gump does not say that “stupid is as stupid does” just once, but three times. Likewise “peas and carrots.” “Life is like a box of chocolates” is said not only several times, but by several characters. These utterances, therefore, are clearly both externally separable from individual contexts and internally cohesive, “thing-y,” to use Silverstein and Urban’s (1996:1)

term, within Forrest's world. In the real (non-fictional) world, proverbial phrases and other entextualized utterances obtain their cohesion and separability partly from their formal characteristics, but partly also from the process of having been repeated. Here again the screenplay mimics the real-world history of proverbs, meeting our expectations of proverbial speech.

Sometimes, Gump's proverbial utterances are not only repeated but varied in the process. A good example of this, and of the construction of a fictive history for a gumpism, is the "box of chocolates" proverb. Gump routinely quotes his mama as saying that "life is like a box of chocolates." Near the end of the film, when Mama Gump is dying, we finally get to hear her utter the proverb. This has the effect first of all of confirming Forrest's claim that the proverb is traditional within his world—his mama really does say it after all. Interestingly, however, Mama Gump's version of the proverb differs from Forrest's. She does not tell him that "life is like a box of chocolates." Instead, she says that "life *is* a box of chocolates."

The minor variation in "life is (like) a box of chocolates" adds a further sense of "natural history" to the proverb. Everyone knows that utterances of this sort do vary in natural speech, and this variation thus makes the sentence resemble a traditional proverb even more by suggesting that it has been changed by the forces of oral tradition. Furthermore, the specific variation, the inclusion or exclusion of the word "like," is significant. As I mentioned above, the common "proverbial pattern" of "life is (like) x:y," can occur either with or without the word "like." The gumpism thus varies in the same way as the traditional pattern, once again suggesting its own traditionality within Forrest's fictive world.

*Forrest Gump*, then, displays a particularly clever technique of historical manipulations to create believable proverbs. Not only do Gump's proverbs have a real-world history, a connection to the real-world proverb tradition as outlined extensively above, each is also explicitly placed within a fictive proverb tradition which shares significant identifying features with the real-world proverb tradition. By minimizing the intertextual gap between these new proverbs and older ones, both orders of history achieved potent results, allowing the film to coin sayings that seemed traditional immediately. One outcome was that they

emerged rather easily from their localized contexts to enter oral tradition, but there were other important consequences as well.

***Forrest Gump and the Fable Tradition: "Fabular Reading"***

The ability of *Forrest Gump's* proverbs to mix real-world history with believable fictive history was crucial to the film's reception by the public because it allowed Gump's statements to be recognized by the audience as proverbs, even on the first hearing. This in turn made a certain kind of interpretation of the movie common, a style of interpretation that stressed morality and that frequently used one of Gump's proverbs as a starting point.

Most critics and moviegoers loved *Forrest Gump* when it was released, but a small group of critics from academia, politics, and the media began to interpret the film's political views. Soon, the screenwriter, the producer, the lead actors and even the author of the original novel were issuing disclaimers, avowing that the film was "non-political," attempting to distance themselves from the increasingly political interpretations that were being offered to the public. A surprisingly large number of these interpretations centered themselves on one or another of Gump's proverbs.

I call this tendency toward proverbial interpretations "fabular reading," because it follows the traditional pattern for reading fables. It is a commonplace of film criticism to refer to a movie as a "fable" if it has any didactic quality at all, and *Forrest Gump* is no exception; many reviews and interpretations in the popular press use the word "fable" to describe the film.<sup>27</sup> But *Gump* is exceptional in that the idea of its fabular nature seems to have been particularly powerful, and to have affected the way the film, and its proverbs, are interpreted.

The traditional relationship of proverb to fable has been extensively commented on from ancient times. Modern analysis of the relationship between these genres goes back to B. E. Perry's work in 1925, and, more recently, the two genres have been the focus of intertextual analysis (Dolby-Stahl 1988, Carnes 1988, 1991). Historically, proverbs and fables are related to one another in a number of complex ways. In some cases, proverbs were apparently created to "sum up" previously existing fables; in



others, fables appear to have originated as expansions upon a proverbial theme. Proverbs are frequently embedded in fables in the same way that they appear embedded in other narrative forms. Furthermore, there are some texts in existence that can meaningfully be said to belong to both genres.

What is most important for our purposes is that, when a proverb occurs within a fable, it is almost always taken to be a moral, or a summation of the fable's message, particularly when it comes at the beginning or the end of the fable. Moreover, as Pack Carnes has argued, in modern times the association in people's minds between the genre of fable and the summative moral in the form of a proverb has grown stronger, until "the epimythium has come to be an essential feature of the fable, and more often than not, that epimythium is to be expressed as a proverb or proverbial phrase" (Carnes 1991:62). In other words, when people today think of a fable, they almost always think of a story with an overtly stated moral, and they also imagine that moral to be a proverb.

Given this tradition, it is not surprising that so many critics have sought to interpret *Forrest Gump* by means of its proverbs. This is precisely the process that might be involved in reading an unfamiliar fable: look first at the moral. However, unlike a traditional fable, *Forrest Gump* contains many different proverbs. An examination of the interpretations of *Gump* shows that the debate is often over which proverb is to be selected as the moral.

Probably the largest number of critics selected "Life is like a box of chocolates" as the film's moral. This is also not surprising, since it is the proverb that occurs closest to both the beginning and the ending of the film. As I mentioned above, this proverb suggested to many interpreters that life would always be pleasant. The career of Gump himself, who goes from crippled child to football star, war hero, ping-pong champion, shrimp-boat captain and millionaire, seem to confirm and expand on that message, in much the same way that a traditional fable does with a traditional proverb. Some interpreters, like Medved, saw this proverb in its paradoxical fullness and produced similarly paradoxical interpretations; Medved's own, remember, was that "Forrest Gump" was a film about faith and optimism in the face of both success and adversity.

The conservative political commentator Pat Buchanan used another of Gump's proverbs as his "moral." For Buchanan, the film is really about the contrast of Forrest, who stands for conservative values and ends up fulfilled, happy and rich, and Jenny, who is involved in every counterculture movement from the folk boom to free love to SDS to the Black Panthers and beyond to the cocaine-filled discos of the 1980s, and who thus stands in Buchanan's mind for liberal values, which he calls "amoral and sluttish." Buchanan sums the film up thus:

"Stupid is as stupid does," is Forrest's retort to all who call him an idiot. That is the movie's message. Beautiful and intelligent, Jenny follows the trends of the 60s and 70s, lives in sadness and sorrow, and dies young. The stupid way. Forrest, crippled, with an IQ of 75, does what is right, and wins fame, wealth, honor, love. "Forrest Gump" celebrates the values of conservatism.... In "Forrest Gump," the white trash are in Berkeley and the peace movement; the best of black and white are to be found ...in the Army of the United States. (Buchanan 1994:C5)

The difference between the points of view of Buchanan and New York City public Advocate Mark Green, each of whom read the movie through one of its proverbs, provided a fascinating moment on CNN's *Crossfire* program on September 5, 1994.

MARK GREEN: the dominating metaphor of the film...is a feather buffeted by the breeze, and the dominating epigram of the movie is ... 'Life is a box of chocolates. You never know what you're going to get.' Randomness is not a conservative value.

PATRICK BUCHANAN: The theme of the film is, 'Stupid is as stupid does. Forrest Gump goes to Vietnam. He follows his Mama's advice. He goes into business. He is always honorable and decent and chaste and full of fidelity, and he triumphs ... doesn't it suggest that the trendy causes of the 60s...were false?

Here, Green interprets “life is a box of chocolates” differently from Medved, concentrating on the second half of the proverb, and concludes that it is a proverb about randomness. From this, he draws the further conclusion that the movie glorifies a life of random wandering over one of intelligently chosen direction; like Medved and Buchanan, he is using one of Gump’s proverbs as a key to the film’s interpretation.

In the academic sphere, scholars have also engaged in this form of “fabular reading.” Although he calls the film a parable rather than a fable, Peter N. Chumo II clearly believes the film has a message, and that that message is expressed in a proverb:

Gump cannot adequately explain his run across America but claims that it is probably about putting his past behind him: “My mama always said, ‘You’ve got to put the past behind you before you can move on.’” This could be the message of the film as a whole. For a nation often bitterly divided and fragmented, even unsure of its role in the world, *Forrest Gump* is a reassuring fantasy of a man who, in an almost mythic way, can transcend our divisions and heal the scars of the past (Chumo 1995:7).

Like Buchanan and Green, Chumo grounds his interpretation in one of the film’s proverbs, making it seem relatively solid and unassailable.

Interestingly, Thomas Byers finds his own interpretation on the same proverbial moment in the film, but has a far more incisive and critical approach. For Byers, *Forrest Gump* is a movie that is precisely about “putting the past behind us,” but not in the benign and happy sense Chumo means. Byers locates the film’s central contrast as the one between Gump’s claim that “I just felt like running,” with the slightly more honest one that “My momma always said you got to put the past the past behind you before you can move on.” He points out that, when Gump makes both of these claims, he is actually running in response to his grief at having been abandoned by his sweetheart Jenny. The first claim, that he just felt like running, is clearly an evasion. It is belied by his second claim, that he is running to put his past behind him. But he still never reveals just what aspect of his past

he is referring to, fooling himself (if not the critical interpreter of the film) about his real motivations.

For Byers, this is the central moment of *Forrest Gump*, because for him the film is about obfuscating the past and ensuring that it will be forgotten, so that a whitewash project can take place. It is a movie about fooling ourselves, telling ourselves lies about the past to make it more palatable in the present. In Byers's estimation, *Forrest Gump*'s "erasure of history...clears the space for a programmatic, highly politicized revision of the period that the film recounts" (Byers 1996:421). In other words, it puts the (real) past behind us, so that we can move on with a project of imagining a more pleasant past, present and future.

Another academic who has done work on *Forrest Gump*, Judith Zinsser (1995:91), admits that the film confused her. Her confusion, she says, is centered on a question about two of the film's proverbs, which she refers to as "mantras" (the quotation marks around the word are hers): "just how does 'you make your own destiny, Forrest,' reconcile with the serendipitous nature of 'Life is just a box of chocolates?'" As I noted above, Zinsser misquotes the box of chocolates proverb, assimilating it toward "life is just a bowl of cherries." She assumes that it means that everything in life is good, even if it does come as a surprise sometimes. On the other hand, "you make your own destiny" suggests a hands-on, active attitude towards life, where nothing is taken for granted. Zinsser cannot reconcile these two proverbs, but in the end, she decides, "perhaps I have understood. There simply are irreconcilable contradictions in the film..." (Zinsser 1995:97).

In misquoting "life is like a box of chocolates," Zinsser has missed a rich opportunity to show those contradictions coexisting within a single proverb. Still, her overall point, that the film contains a multitude of different, incompatible ideas, many of which are encapsulated in proverbial form, is quite true. Indeed, this is what some people who have engaged in fabular readings of the film have missed: that there is no single proverb that really sums up the movie's many ideas.

This is, of course, because *Forrest Gump* is not really a fable, in the stricter sense of the term. Like the so-called "fables" of the *Panchatantra*, on which B. E. Perry comments in his in-

fluent work on fables, the storyline of *Forrest Gump* is too long, too involved and too complex to be subordinated to a single principle. In its narrative style, it much more closely resembles the classic picaresque novel, with a central protagonist wandering through a set of episodic adventures, tempered with some of the *bildungsroman's* emphasis on a character's growth and development. Like the classic works of these genres, it stops to moralize along the way but cannot claim to have a single moral.

If "fabular readings" imply that the fables under scrutiny have a single, transparent meaning, so also do they ascribe that kind of meaning to the proverbs that serve as morals. Like traditional proverbs, however, Gump's new proverbs in fact speak with many voices and are subject to many interpretations. Mark Green's interpretation of the film, for example, takes for granted that "life is like a box of chocolates" is a proverb about randomness, even though that interpretation does not seem to have been a common one. Moreover, there are two different commonly understood meanings for "life is like a box of chocolates." Obviously, a single moral cannot so easily be extracted from a proverb, much less a fable.

Despite these shortcomings of fabular readings, particularly applied to a text like *Forrest Gump*, it remains true that many have read the film in this way, extracting a single sentence from the film, interpreting it, and taking that interpretation to be the movie's central point or theme. The frequency with which this key sentence is one of Gump's proverbs is another indication of the power of the kind of entextualization enjoyed by these catchphrases. Proverbs, as one of our smallest genres of folk poetry, have always functioned as condensed nuggets of discourse that can be deployed within other discourse to clarify and enhance meaning; this is how they become morals of the story. By their deep intertextual connections to the proverb tradition, Gump's catchphrases accomplished the same feat. This suggests that catchphrases are not only catchy marketing tools on the one hand, or annoying clichés on the other, but also (at least potentially) powerful contributors to the way a film is interpreted by its audience.

***Proverb History and World History in "Forrest Gump"***

In this final section, I will engage in the ongoing and public process of critical reading, or interpretation, of the film *Forrest Gump*. Like "fabular interpretations" of the film, my own reading will focus on its proverbial moments. However, unlike them, my interpretations will not attempt to extract a single, monologic meaning for each proverb, and use that as the more or less transparent meaning of the movie. Instead, my reading involves the process of using proverbs and relates that process to other ongoing processes in the film. Most prominently, it engages the process of representing history. My goal is emphatically not to provide a single and monologic reading of *Forrest Gump* as either conservative or liberal, but rather to problematize the readings that have been offered by showing that this film, like proverbs themselves, speaks with many voices.

The interpretation and representation of history was a crucial issue in most critical readings of *Forrest Gump*. The political fabular interpretations of *Forrest Gump* cited above from both academic and popular sources revealed that many people saw politics as central to the film's message. Indeed, readings of Gump from both the left and the right of the political spectrum have seen it as a politicized rewriting of the history of the sixties and seventies, only one of popular culture's many projects in this area (cf. Glover and Kaplan 1992).

Once again, examining *Forrest Gump*'s proverbs can help us gain insight into an important area of criticism; *Forrest Gump*'s treatment of American history is similar in many ways to its treatment of the histories of individual proverbs. For example, while the characters of Gump and his mama are purely fictional, we are told almost immediately after the film starts that Gump is a direct descendant of Nathan Bedford Forrest, one of the confederacy's Civil War heroes and a founder of the Ku Klux Klan. Forrest's family history, then, is a combination of real history that is common knowledge among educated Americans, and pure fiction, in the same way that each of Gump's proverbs mixes real world history (e.g. the "box of chocolates" metaphor) and fictive history (e.g. Mama always said...).

The film goes farther than merely to claim that Gump was descended from Nathan Bedford Forrest. In the first of the movie's celebrated special effects sequences, Tom Hanks (as Nathan Bedford Forrest) is digitally inserted into footage from the early feature film *The Birth of a Nation*, portraying a group of mounted Klansmen charging down a country road. This is a fascinating piece of revisionist cinema history; rather than merely showing the undoctored clip while Gump recounts his ancestry (in that context, it would have been obvious enough that one of the men on the screen was supposed to be Nathan Forrest), the director has taken the pains to insert Hanks into the scene, and to style the actor's hair and beard to resemble the general's. This makes the scene into a kind of cinematic collage, in which several layers of fictionalized cinema history are simultaneously visible.

It is oddly appropriate that the makers of *Forrest Gump* should choose *The Birth of a Nation* as the one feature film from which to quote. It is considered the first American feature film, so *Gump* is at once aligning itself within that tradition. But *The Birth of a Nation* is also the first American film to engender serious controversy surrounding a film's portrayal of history, much as *Gump* would later do.<sup>28</sup>

Further special effects sequences take the process of collage a step further. Instead of combining footage of Hanks with footage from other fictive-historical films, they insert Hanks into real footage of real people and events. Hanks is seen wandering around when the University of Alabama is desegregated, he is made to converse with several U. S. presidents, and he appears on *The Dick Cavett Show* with John Lennon. All of these scenes are textual collages similar to that of the *Birth of a Nation* footage in that real world history involving famous people is combined with fictive history involving Gump. In this case, however, the footage in question contains images of the real historical figures, not images of actors portraying them.

Historians who criticize historical film usually use some form of the argument that, in the words of film historian Robert Brent Toplin (1996:1), "Hollywood's interpretations of American history can make a significant impact on the public's thinking about the past." Therefore, historians like Pierre Sorlin (1980) Daniel Leah (1990), and Michael Parenti (1992) have criticized Hollywood films for their lack of historical accuracy

and their tendency to reduce complex situations into simple interpersonal conflicts. All of these tendencies, they argue, obscure rather than illuminate history for the majority of filmgoers.

A more severe critique of historical films is advanced by Michel Foucault, who argues that one of the *raison d'être* of the historical movie is the suppression of the truth about the past. Foucault's position is that historical films, like chapbooks and popular books about history, are at root an attempt to "obstruct the flow of...popular memory" (Foucault 1979:91). Foucault seems to see this "popular memory" as the collective memory of the working class, previously kept alive through oral history, folksongs and popular written accounts, but now atrophied due to the stream of false history foisted upon them from above. In this view, films about history are a deliberate assault upon the knowledge of ordinary people, a politically motivated attempt to deceive.

Foucault's ideas about the historical film are flawed in a few respects; for one, he maintains a romantic orientation towards the past, believing that the "popular memory" embodied in folksongs was objectively accurate, untainted by bias, and exclusively a product of the lower classes, which of course it never was. Nevertheless, his criticisms of historical movies are cogent and well-founded, and they have been influential. For example, Byers's interpretation of *Forrest Gump* follows Foucault's somewhat alarmist lead; for Byers, the film's manipulations of history are one-sided, serious and unforgivable. *Forrest Gump*, he argues, completely erases the past in favor of a new vision of history that serves only the most powerful of interests.

To a certain extent, all of these critical comments on historical films in general, and on *Gump* in particular, are valid. On a practical level, the frequent use of many of Gump's proverbs by the public indicates that the mixture of fictive history and real history is a potent force that allows the proverbs to be accepted as old by at least some people. This supports the most basic arguments of historians who critique historical films; clearly, if the combination of a proverb's real and fictive histories helps it seem genuine, the combination of real and fictive facts and events may likewise appear genuine in the public's imagination.

However, the more severe criticisms of *Forrest Gump* are harder to support. The textual collages scattered throughout *For-*



*rest* Gump, for example, argue against Byers' account of the film as a supremely successful whitewash project, in which real history is completely whited out and replaced by fiction. While this does occur at some points of the film, it is more common for the film to engage in the sort of blending of history and fiction discussed above. This is what gives the film's proverbs some of their memorability and verisimilitude, but it is also what undercuts the believability of the film's history.

As a single proverbial example, let us examine one of the film's most amusing scenes of proverb use. During his coast-to-coast jog, Forrest steps in what critic Jay Boyar (1994:EI) has politely called "malodorous droppings." Immediately, one of his followers tells him what has just happened. Gump, unmoved, merely shrugs and says "it happens." "What happens," the other man asks, "shit?" The next scene shows a bumper sticker reading "shit happens," with a voice-over by Hanks explaining how the man made good money by selling the expression. This scene is juxtaposed with another one in which Gump similarly originates the leave-taking formula "have a nice day" and its association with the ubiquitous yellow smiley-face.

These scenes are clearly unbelievable, farcical. Partly this is because the origins of our proverbial phrases and other entextualized items of culture seem ahistorical. But more than this, the fact that these two events are piled up on one another in this way contributes to their lack of reality. Previously in the movie, Gump has been seen to originate Elvis's hip-swinging dance, to be present at the integration of the University of Alabama, to be the man who turned in the Watergate burglars. In short, Forrest has been pivotal to history and culture in ways that affect everyone's life, and these two moments are merely more examples.

Our common sense tells us that no single person could have done all of these things. The effect of the film's claims therefore is to produce humor and laughter at the suggestion of what is impossible, rather than indignation at the suppression of history. While the film doesn't tell us how "shit happens" was really coined, it does, by the use of humor, tell us it was not the way the film depicts it. While there is no real clue in the movie as to the origin of Elvis's body language, we are sure that Forrest wasn't it. The piling up of all of these unlikely moments into the life of one person makes them even more farfetched.

Byers has pointed out that the humor inherent in the scenes of Forrest's insertion into history puts serious critics of the film's problematic historicity at a disadvantage:

By being overtly comic, they allow for a kind of "end of ideology" defense of the film, in which critics of the film's politics can be seen as humorless ideologues, tied to dogmas of "political correctness" that are seen as anachronistic and irrelevant in our postindustrial, post-Civil Rights, postfeminist, allegedly egalitarian contemporary America (Byers 1996:439).

Here Byers recognizes that the unreality of these scenes is not meant to be mistaken for reality, that the scenes are overtly playing with what did not happen and could not have happened. However, he ignores some of the deeper potential significances of laughter in art. Bakhtin was convinced, for example, that the festive laughter provoked by Rabelais' grotesque novels was of the highest political significance; he wrote that "festive folk laughter ...means the defeat of power, of earthly kings, of earthly upper classes, of all that oppresses and restricts" (Bakhtin 1968: 92), and furthermore that ordinary people use "festive comic images to express their criticism, their deep distrust of official truth..." (Bakhtin 1968: 269).

The scenes involving Gump coining well-known phrases, as well as some of the most memorable moments of collage, hint slyly at such Rabelaisian subversion. When Forrest slips in shit and inadvertently coins "shit happens," for example, we are shown a literalized or reversed metaphor involving what Bakhtin would call "the material bodily lower stratum."<sup>29</sup> Similarly, when "have a nice day" is coined, Gump is wiping mud from his face. Both of these involve figurative reversals, such as Gump's head being covered in dirt. Both show words of wisdom generated from filth. Both feature a man getting rich from Gump's getting soiled.

In both scenes, then, the American economy, popular wisdom (and the commodification thereof), and the ethical implications of catchphrase formation itself—in which one person gets rich by imitating what another person has said as part of natural speech—are shown to be laughable and farcical, as they are symbolically pushed down into mud and feces. Both scenes pro-

voke the kind of festive laughter of renewal that Bakhtin found so pervasive in Rabelais, an all-encompassing laughter at the economy and Hollywood as well as at Gump; the film is laughing not only at us, the consumers of Hollywood cinema, but at itself as well.

Gump's encounters with various American presidents, similar to the proverbs in their combination of real and fictive history, are part of this picture as well. When he meets John F. Kennedy, Gump has consumed about thirty bottles of Dr. Pepper, and can only answer the President's question ("How do you feel?") with the revelation: "I got to go pee." In another scene, he bares his buttocks for Lyndon Johnson, showing off his war wound. In both of these scenes, *Forrest Gump* debases the presidency by associating it with the body's lower regions and functions; the head of state becomes the butt of our laughter. In both of these scenes, a sense of festive laughter is introduced, of laughter aimed at the highest political office in the United States. This laughter is not merely frivolous, but an important part of experiencing *Forrest Gump*. It is far from conservative, and even smacks a bit of the radical.

Byers has his own ideas about the seriousness of these sequences, ideas that ignore their humor and attend instead to other effects:

By manipulating history, these techniques flatten it, turning it into a spectacle.... But these emptying out effects, we must note once again, are not ends in themselves; they clear the way for a renarration of the history of struggle that serves the most powerful of entrenched interests and carries a vicious edge under its carefully contrived demeanor of historical innocence (Byers 1996: 439).

These comments are perceptive, and he backs them up with strong arguments concerning the plot of the film. He demonstrates, for example, that *Forrest Gump* consistently portrays the counter-culture as violent, repressive and unenlightened; Jenny's boyfriend the war-protester is abusive, the Black Panthers are sinister posturing demagogues, and so on. Furthermore, he points out that involvement in the counterculture is shown as an aspect of Jenny's dysfunctional personality, which also leads her to co-

caine abuse, AIDS and death. All of these, he argues, serve the film's essentially reactionary agenda.

However, often in *Forrest Gump* a counter-narrative emerges that confounds even rich and complex analyses like Byers's. Byers points out, for example, that Forrest's experiences in the Viet Nam war and in the Peace movement argue unambiguously that the counterculture was "bad" and that serving in Viet Nam was "good." He shows that, for example, the hippies are shown as rude, untidy, and hypocritically militaristic, while the soldiers are, in Forrest's words, "some of America's finest young men." He points out that Wesley, Jenny's counter-culture boyfriend, abuses her in much the same way that her father did, while Forrest by contrast protects her, suggesting that "those who went to Viet Nam were the mamas' boys (as are both Forrest and Bubba) who rejected the violence of their fathers, while those who rebelled against the establishment and the war were the spiritual heirs of these fathers" (Byers 1996:435).

But this ignores several key features of Forrest's experience. With his I.Q. of 75, Forrest is considered "a goddamn genius" in the army, partly because he does not know and does not care what the war is about or even that it is violent; he believes that he and his friends are searching for an elusive fellow named Charlie. Thus his "rejection" of violence is really only stupidity. Forrest's opinion of his fellow-soldiers is equally suspect; he does not know that they are killing anyone until much later.

Byers also fails to mention (at least, at this point in his argument) that there is another pivotal soldier in the film who obsessively follows in the bootprints of his violent forefathers, and who shares characteristics with both Jenny and her father. This is Lieutenant Dan, who is in the war precisely because he is following his fathers' tradition; we are even shown a gruesomely funny series of quick scenes in which his ancestors are gunned down, one by one, in America's many wars. Unable to function after the war, he becomes an alcoholic and a promiscuous womanizer, at one point coming close to physical violence against a woman. In all of these particulars he is reminiscent of Jenny's drunk and abusive father, of the abusive boyfriend Wesley, and of the addicted, self-abusing Jenny. If the film imagines the counterculture as a haven for sullen and violent misogynists, it portrays

the army and the war as experiences that can produce just such characters.

Thus, the film's political views of the war and the anti-war movement are not as clear-cut as Byers (or Pat Buchanan, for that matter) would have them. Indeed, there were some viewers of the film who saw it as a liberal whitewash, stealthily disguised as a conservative film.

The fact that a film or a single scene can be subject to many simultaneous interpretations, or even that it can "mean" simultaneously in opposite directions, should not come as a surprise. The idea that meaning does not reside entirely in the text, but rather is negotiated in the interface between text, performer and audience, is by now commonplace in Folklore, Film Studies, and Cultural Studies. Nonetheless, interpretations like Byers's still read cinematic texts as monologic narratives.

The relevance of *Forrest Gump*'s proverbs to its treatment of history, then, is manifold. To begin with, there is an isomorphism between the film's use of proverbs—entextualized nuggets of discourse that have a "history"—and its use of people, places, events and cinematic images which are similarly historical. Moreover, the success of Gump's proverbs at "emerging" from out of the context of the film and into mainstream discourse suggests that the concern of historians over the distortion of history in *Forrest Gump* and other movies is not misplaced; there is a real danger that cinematic and other popular culture renderings of history can similarly affect the consciousness of many filmgoers.

At the same time, the humorously nonsensical ways in which history is rewritten—exemplified by the moment when the proverb "shit happens" is coined—can be read as affirming that there is a real history, and that the film is not it, in much the same way that readers recognized "peas and carrots" as a statement similar to, derived from, but not identical to "two peas in a pod." Furthermore, the laughter provoked by scenes of proverb formation is laughter at some of our core economic values, and some of the values that the film and the Hollywood establishment itself stand for.

In short, it is difficult to say with certainty whose aims are being served by the film's distortion (or creative re-imagining) of the past. Like Zinsser, who finds Gump's proverbs, and thus

the film, inherently multivocal and even self-contradictory, many viewers may leave *Forrest Gump* feeling that the movie sends mixed messages about history, politics and power. What is certain, however, is that *Forrest Gump*'s use of proverbs is closely tied to its use of history, and therefore enlightening for the study of the film as a whole.

### ***Conclusion***

If anything has become clear from our analyses of the catchphrases in *Forrest Gump*, it is that individual catchphrases are drawn directly out of traditions of proverbial speech, borrowing elements of different proverbs and encasing them in traditional proverbial structures. This results in what can only be called new proverbs—and it's heartening to note that the editors of the recent *Dictionary of Modern Proverbs* (2012) have listed some of Forrest Gump's sayings. Similarly, the great lesson learned from proverbial interpretations of the film is that, for the public, for professional critics, and for other figures attempting to interpret the film, catchphrases act like proverbs; Gump's proverbial catchphrases became the cornerstones of many interpretations, including to some extent my own. In this important regard, then, the movie catchphrase and the canonical proverb share functional traits as well as proverbial roots.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, interpreting proverbs can be seen in certain important ways as a guide to interpreting larger texts such as *Forrest Gump*. The proverb was subjected for too long to the monologic interpretations of lexicographical glosses, scholars seeking "national character," and others. So, too, have films been subjected to this type of interpretation. Instead, we can take our cue from the last several decades of nuanced proverb scholarship, and attempt to see the many contradictory potentialities of meaning embedded in films, waiting to be variously activated by audiences. This more revealing, but also less cut-and-dried, less concrete process is the kind of interpretation that can best predict, explain and explore how different social actors come to use texts, whether proverbs, catchphrases, movies, or great works of literature, as equipment for living their lives.

**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> To date, very few articles have treated the use of proverbs in movies in any detail. In most cases where the movies are mentioned (e.g. Bryant 1951), it is only a passing reference, and only relates to proverbial movie titles such as *Finders Keepers*, *Fit For a King* and *Fool and His Money*. An important exception to this is Donald P. Haase's 1990 article on *The Company of Wolves*, which examines how this surrealistic film uses traditional proverbs in both old and new ways. Haase follows the lead of the wealth of scholarship that has dealt with proverbs in various literary works. He catalogues the proverbs and shows how some applications of proverbs are examples of traditional wisdom, and how others present challenges to that wisdom. The approach taken in this paper is based on an intertextual theory of proverbs, as described in several previous publications of mine (Winick 1998, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> The phrase "to go ahead" has not been considered proverbial or even metaphorical by most previous scholars, so no records exist as to its origins or its earliest uses. However, it is clearly metaphorical, and in fact entails some of the core metaphors of our culture that are so basic as to appear almost literal, detailed by Lakoff and Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By*. In specific, the phrase involves the metaphors that life is a journey, and the future is ahead of us. Thus, to proceed in life, to "take the next step," as it were, becomes to "go ahead." See my discussion of "You've got to put the past behind you before you can move on," below.

<sup>3</sup> Throughout this article, I cite the Lexis/Nexis database as a source on the age and frequency of proverbs in newspapers. The database I used was All-News, which has since been discontinued by Lexis/Nexis in favor of other news databases. Therefore, it will be difficult for future scholars to replicate my results exactly. However, I am confident that the ages I claim for various proverbs will continue to be supported, if not exceeded, by searches on the successor databases. The phrase "to make my day," for example, first appears in my searches of the Lexis/Nexis database in 1975. It is undoubtedly older, and future searches will probably turn up even earlier examples of it.

<sup>4</sup> Almost certainly, Partridge would have included quotations from other media as well, had he thought of it.

<sup>5</sup> Nigel Rees, who compiled the more recent *Dictionary of Catchphrases* (1995), follows Partridge in most theoretical matters. He is even more explicit on the overlap in genres, stating that "it is possible for a phrase to be several things at once: catchphrase, slogan, idiom or whatever." As with Partridge's earlier dictionary, Rees's contains true proverbs, Wellerisms, proverbial phrases and comparisons; it is more apt than Partridge's to include movie lines. The observation that there is no dividing line between proverb and cliché is similarly supported by most dictionaries of clichés since Partridge's pioneering effort. James Rogers (1985:vii) makes a unique distinction, claiming that "if a proverb still gets heavy duty in the language, it [also] ranks as a cliché," while Betty Kirkpatrick, in her excellent introduction to *Cliches*, writes that "many clichés start life as proverbs" (Kirkpatrick 1997:xi), but does not explain exactly how they pass over the threshold into being clichés. She does, however, create a whole category which she calls "proverb clichés." G.L. Permiakov (1979)

famously included the proverb as a kind of cliché, but he expanded the meaning of cliché quite a bit from what many of these other authors mean.

<sup>6</sup> There have been other works of scholarship that mention catchphrases. Alexander (1984) attempts to distinguish between catchphrases and proverbial phrases, but does so poorly; his catchphrases all appear to be greetings (e.g. “what’s up, doc?”), even though he lists greetings as a separate category. Simon (1980) thinks that proverbs and catchphrases should be better distinguished, and criticizes Partridge on this account, but offers no suggestions for how to make this thorny distinction.

<sup>7</sup> The difficulty any outsider would have in guessing which dictionary each of these phrases came from only underscores how subjective a process the selection must have been.

<sup>8</sup> Negative reactions to catchphrases can affect critical responses to the film, but they probably don’t damage a film’s box-office sales. This calls to mind an occupational proverb I have heard from the publicity community: “the only bad publicity is an obituary.”

<sup>9</sup> This proverb is not, to my knowledge, included in any proverb dictionaries. I have heard versions of it several times, including Springsteen’s version and one from the movie *White Men Can’t Jump*, where it becomes “some days, the sun even shines on a sleeping dog’s ass. II

<sup>10</sup> It is important to note here that the database is most complete for recent years, and gets less and less complete the further back in time one looks. Most phrases, even our most common ones, cannot be tracked much earlier than the late 1970s in the database.

<sup>11</sup> This may be because the statements “dying is part of living” and “death is a part of life” are not as concretely metaphorical as many proverb scholars prefer. However, many English-language proverb dictionaries do include the phrase “dying is as natural as living,” which is also quite literal. Clearly, the two proverbs are different, but related.

<sup>12</sup> Once again, the non-metaphorical nature of these phrases may have kept them out of most proverb dictionaries; nevertheless, I believe them to be short sentences of wisdom with as much claim to proverbiality as “honesty is the best policy,” “first impressions are the most lasting,” and other items accepted into our proverb dictionaries.

<sup>13</sup> This is also similar to the uncollected proverb noted by Doyle (1996:80): “Some things never change.” 101

<sup>14</sup> Elsewhere, I have shown that “x is x” has a specific meaning that prevents it from being tautological: “one example of x should be (or can be) treated as any other example of x.” Hence, “a promise is a promise, so don’t try to get out of this one,” “a man’s a man, so don’t discriminate against poor people,” “business is business, so don’t expect a special deal based on a personal relationship.” It also means that any item, plugged into the pattern, can access the proverbial meaning. If a scientist is asked which paramecium he wants prepared on a microscope slide,” and he answers “a paramecium is a paramecium,” the message is conveyed that they are all the same and it doesn’t matter



which one, even though that specific phrase may never have been uttered before.

<sup>15</sup> Indeed, it is likely that, in the early examples of this proverb that use “handsome,” the word is referring not to looks but to abilities; “handsome does,” in other words, refers to “doing handsomely,” in other words, doing things skillfully.

<sup>16</sup> The phrase “To put the past behind” someone occurs more than 3,000 times in the Lexis/Nexis database. As for “move on,” because there is no way for the database to distinguish literal moving on from the folk metaphor, an accurate count is impossible.

<sup>17</sup> I have also seen the pattern elsewhere, as for example, “I should walk before I dance.” (Levin 1992:114) referring to writing short stories before progressing to novels.

<sup>18</sup> In order to tease out both the origins of this proverb and the consequences of those origins for the proverb’s meanings, I turned to various recontextualizations in the Lexis/Nexis database, originally taken from a wide variety of news sources.

<sup>19</sup> Medved is making a subtler point than the one that “life is always good.” Indeed, he bristles at the suggestion that *Forrest Gump* is a “sappy, feel good movie.” In a speech given in 1995, subsequently published in the Hillsdale College publication *Imprimis*, Medved explained his views to students in a leadership course:

[Forrest] goes through a series of almost unimaginable tragedies. He is born with limited intelligence..., is forced to wear braces on his legs, [and] is incessantly tormented by his peers. He goes to war and watches his best friend die, while his courageous commanding officer loses both legs.... His adored mother also dies before his eyes, and the woman he has loved since childhood... dies within a few months of their marriage.

But instead of whining, Forrest Gump held fast to his unshakable optimism and felt grateful for what favors he received. [sic] That’s the deeper meaning of the movie’s signature line, when Mama Gump tells Forrest: ‘Life is like a box of chocolates; you never know what you’re gonna get.’ That is the most important lesson we can teach our children: to accept life, even at its most tragic, as a gift from God. (Medved 1995)

Medved’s interpretation of the catchphrase is thus based on a paradox: even tragedy is sweet. The more common interpretation, that “life is always good,” shares aspects of Medved’s but avoids its open paradox.

<sup>20</sup> In *Forrest Gump*, Mamma Gump’s original statement is that life *is* a box of chocolates. Forrest misquotes her slightly when he states that life *is like* a box of chocolates.

<sup>21</sup> This adaptation is particularly interesting to me in that it is clearly based intertextually on three different proverbs: “life is like a box of chocolates: you never know what you’re gonna get,” “life is sweet,” and “life is hard. II By

“stacking” the three in this particular way, psychotherapist Marion Wikholm suggests that the three are comparable or related statements.

<sup>22</sup> The previous two variants were found on greeting cards.

<sup>23</sup> Although my search revealed only its use in news sources (*i.e.* magazines, newspapers, professional newsletters and radio and television transcripts), they make clear that it is not only professional journalists who have picked up on the phrase. It also appears in letters to the editor and other write-in features, as well as in direct quotations from both public figures and private citizens.

<sup>24</sup> Once again, we must take care to examine the stories and make sure we account for reprintings of the same article or quotation. When British Prime Minister John Major said that taxes and the Labour party went together like strawberries and cream, for example, he was widely quoted. The fact that this sentence, out of all the things he had said during that week, was picked out for such frequent quotation is certainly due to the phrase’s being part of the “proverb process,” but we could not conclude from all of these quotations alone that the phrase was widely used by others.

<sup>25</sup> The exceptions to this rule are “love and marriage” and “a horse and carriage,” whose popularity was ensured by the Sammy Cahn song.

<sup>26</sup> The other film that has been analyzed in depth for its use of proverbs, *The Company of Wolves* (cf. Haase 1990), also features an older woman, Rosa-leen’s grandmother, as the main source of proverbs.

<sup>27</sup> I uncovered 19 different reviews and stories that use the term “fable”; these were found in my own files of articles that quoted “life is like a box of chocolates,” “stupid is as stupid does” or “like peas and carrots” in the four years after the movie was released. There are undoubtedly more articles that called *Forrest Gump* a fable without directly quoting these catchphrases.

<sup>28</sup> *Forrest Gump* is, in fact, a complex patchwork of intertextual reference to other films; *The Birth of A Nation* is the most obvious, but others spring to mind as well. *Sergeant York*, for example, features a war hero who during the war has plans with his best friend to ride on the New York Subway. Since his friend is killed, York takes the subway ride alone. Gump, similarly, has plans with Bubba to start a shrimping business. After Bubba is killed in the war, he starts the shrimping business alone. When York returns from the war, he is offered many lucrative endorsements, which he refuses because “Uncle Sam’s uniform ain’t for sale.” When *Forrest Gump* returns, he is also offered lucrative endorsement opportunities, which he at first wants to reject for similarly ideological reasons. His Mama convinces him to accept, however, with the obviously uneasy justification that “it’s only a little white lie.” These plot similarities and differences are hardly likely to be mere coincidences. In similar ways, *Forrest Gump* refers to or resonates with many important films in Hollywood’s history.

<sup>29</sup> I do not, of course, believe that *Forrest Gump* is the real coiner of this phrase; indeed, if the phrase really had originated in the movie, this scene would not have been funny. The humor depends, in this case, upon the phrase already being familiar to the audience. However, the film depicts Forrest, with-

in its fictive history, as the phrase's coiner; this is what I mean when I write that he "inadvertently coins the phrase."

<sup>30</sup> All of these phrases depend on the proverb tradition for both their production and their reception, and all can therefore be considered proverbial using a communicative or intertextual theory of proverbiality.

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*O libro da vaca. Monografía etnolingüística do gando vacún.* By Pedro Benavente Jareño and Xesús Ferro Ruibal. Santiago de Compostela: Centro Ramón Piñeiro para a Investigación en Humanidades, Xunta de Galicia, 2010. Pp. 1637. A free electronic edition is available under:  
[http://www.cirp.es/pls/bdox/inv.pub\\_detalle2?p\\_id=312](http://www.cirp.es/pls/bdox/inv.pub_detalle2?p_id=312)

*O libro da vaca. Monografía etnolingüística do gando vacún* [“The book of the cow. An ethnolinguistic monograph of cattle”] is a monumental, exhaustive study of cattle in Galicia, which combines the linguistic and ethnographic perspectives (taken in their broadest sense), paying special attention to the paremiological and phraseological fields.

Cattle is a key point in the definition of Galicia as a nation, as it meant a critical support for family sustenance throughout history and, in spite of the deep socioeconomic restructuring of the last decades, it still is, even today, a fundamental basis for the Galician economy. It’s no wonder, therefore, that the cow historically has become a collective reference that achieved, without a doubt, the category of totemic animal of Galicia. In this way, the work we are reviewing puts forward with pleasantness and erudition the complex web that has been woven around the cow, in which innumerable fields interact: economics, ethnography, phraseology, history, linguistics, literature, paremiology, sociology, veterinary science, etc.

*O libro da vaca* is the result of two decades of joint work by Pedro Benavente Jareño, veterinary surgeon, and Xesús Ferro Ruibal, philologist. One of the major assets of this work is, precisely, the collaboration between two specialists from two very different scientific fields: the cooperation between the specialist in animal medicine and the linguist creates a synergy that brings into dialogue the popular culture and the veterinary science, both to analyse critically some customs and traditions, and to corrob-

rate the wisdom and wit of those popular beliefs that are supported by a scientific basis.

The authors' stated aim is to provide a multidisciplinary approach to the cow, which examines the world related to this animal from different views and it is not addressed only to specialists, but to be accessible to the general public, especially to Galician cattle breeders. This intention is thoroughly fulfilled, since the authors know how to adequately combine technical rigour and exhaustiveness in the presentation of linguistic, literary, and veterinarian data with an educational, extraordinarily enjoyable style. Besides, all this material is complemented with a large number of historical and cultural references that encourages reading and highlights the importance gained by the cow in different periods of time, inside and outside Galicia.

The book is organised in 16 chapters followed by a complete bibliography. A good example of the degree of exhaustiveness is that the index alone takes up twenty pages. Its organisational layout stands as follows (page 35):

1. Introduction. | 2. Outside (determination of age, ethnology, morphology, proper names) | 3. Characteristics (positive, negative and neutral) | 4. Physiology (eating, drinking, excrements, growth, moo, movements) | 5. Anatomy (the skin; digestive, respiratory, genito-urinary, and circulatory systems; nervous system and locomotive systems) | 6. Beef in the food (the slaughterhouse, the butcher's, beef pieces, giblets and sub products, milk and dairy products, the kitchen and cattle products business) | 7. Reproduction (cattle selection and improvement, oestrus, fertilisation or mounting, pregnancy, birth, puerperium, lactation) | 8. Pathology (general terms, unidentified pathology, infectious pathology, parasitic pathology, medical pathology, surgical pathology, reproduction pathology, syndromes and other unidentified pathologies; veterinary or healer actions and gear) | 9. The cattle and the cattle breeder (a brief historical approach to Galician cattle industry, cattle, cattle breeder, actions and gear of the cattle breeder, the yoke, the cart, ploughing and other actions, and gear of the cattle



breeder; the stable, cattle feeding; the pasture; the wolf) | 10. Cattle business (the deal, the fair, the dealer, cattle in the fair) | 11. Shows and rites with oxen. Bullfighting | 12. Beliefs and cattle calendar (beliefs and superstitions, predictions and calendar) | 13. Everything is like a cow (the cow as a reference) | 14. Cattle humour | 15. The cow in the Galician toponymy (needed cautions when dealing with toponymy, place names that make reference to cattle; other place names discussed) | 16. The cow in literature (an anthology of literary texts with references to cattle) | 17. Sources of this monograph (initials system, sources, municipalities and informants indices).

All those chapters are divided in a large number of thematic sections, which many times have up to four levels of depth. Most of them have the same distribution. First of all, there is an introduction to each subject of study in order to be contextualised from the point of view of economy, ethnography, philology, history, sociology, or veterinary science, accordingly. Then are put forward the vocabulary (with definition and, often, with use examples in literature), the phraseology, and oral tradition related to the issue in question. In total, *O libro da vaca* gathers 12020 lexical units, presents 5343 phraseological units, and brings back 1383 elements belonging to other fields of the oral tradition (songs, tales, legends, riddles, and prayers). Unfortunately, due to its great length, the volume does not include indices to directly access all those elements, so every section must be scanned in order to find anything. However, the authors are working on the creation of indices of words, proverbs and songs, which will be available in the website of *Centro Ramón Piñeiro para a Investigación en Humanidades* ([www.cirp.es](http://www.cirp.es)) as of March 2013. Although the printed work includes a CD-ROM with a database, it has a quite poor design and it is not very useful; so as long as the above mentioned index is not released, it is recommended to resort to the electronic edition to find the elements.

According to the subject matter of the specialised magazine to which this review is addressed, I will focus on the treatment of the phraseological and paremiological aspects referring to cattle, which occupy a privileged position in this monograph, including 2757 proverbs, 1982 collocations and locutions, and 604 formu-

lae. To that regard, we should keep in mind that one of the authors of *O libro da vaca*, Xesús Ferro Ruibal, is a prominent researcher in Galician phraseological and paremiological studies, one of the scientific fields in which he carries out a rigorous, tireless work, especially on the cataloguing and edition of proverbs, and on the creation of specialised forums such as *Cadernos de Fraseoloxía Galega* (<http://www.cirp.es/prx2/frase.html>). Therefore, we can deduce that the authors depart from an exhaustive knowledge of the Galician phraseology, and demonstrate a proven competence in the practical and theoretical work in regards to those linguistic structures.

We have to say also that this is not the first Benavente and Ferro's approach to the paremiology related to cattle. In 1995, they published their notable *Refraneiro galego da vaca*, which compiled 1471 proverbs, a number that virtually doubles in *O libro da vaca*. This spectacular increase in the inventory reveals both the great presence of the cow in the Galician collective unconscious, and the persistence of the authors, always attentive to add new material.

A high percentage of the proverbs are spread across the book, depending on the cow's aspect they refer to (anatomy, food, business, etc.). However, pp. 1369 to 1393 include some hundreds proverbs that do not refer directly to the cow, but rather to some aspect of the cattle as a metaphor for external realities. Thus, Benavente and Ferro classify, in more than one hundred themes, a large amount of proverbs that show the all-embracing presence of the cow in the Galician paremiology to describe a wide variety of situations. Let's see some examples:

Justice/law: *Quero máis que me morra a vaca que ver a xusticia na casa* ["I'd rather my cow die than see the law at home"]

Value of life: *Máis val de vivo cheirar a touro que de morto a ouro* ["I'd rather be alive smelling like a bull than dead smelling like gold"]

Theft: *Quen vende xatiños e vacas non ten, de algures lle ven* ["He who sells little calves and does not have cows, he got them somewhere"]; *Quen come a vaca do*

*Rei, a cen anos paga os ósos* ["He who eats the king's beef, he takes one hundred years to pay the bones"].

Dangers: *O millor carro pódese emborcar* ["Even the best cart may overturn"].

Relationship between men and women: *A vaca que non come cos bois, ou come antes, ou come despois* ["The cow not eating with the oxen, eats later or eats before"].

It must be noted that *O libro da vaca* is not a "simple" proverb compilation grouped in themes, but there is an important work of critical reflection around the paremias included. A prominent example can be found from page 1277 to 1285, devoted to proverbs that present the cattle as a barometer able to forecast weather into the future, as in *Cando espirran os bois, troca o tempo a pior* ["When oxen sneeze, the weather changes to worse"] (page 1280), as well as in those proverbs in the weather field that make reference to cattle, such as in *Cando a garcia vai pró mar, colle os bois e ponte a arar* ["When the heron goes to the sea, take the oxen and set about ploughing"] (p. 1281). The authors classify the proverbs according to the different atmospheric phenomena involved, they suggest scientific basis to support the different information transmitted, and they even try to reconcile some divergences among the sources. All along the work, there appear similar paremiological comments: when showing the blurred line that sometimes occurs between stanzas and proverbs (pp. 426), when examining, in light of the existing proverbs, whether popular culture appreciates more lamb or beef (pp. 475-476), when analysing the recommendations of proverbs on the suitable moment to plough and to sow wheat and rye (pp. 950-952), or on the right amount of fertilizer (pp. 980-981), just to mention some examples.

The authors do not disregard either the theoretical aspects of paremiology, as we can see in pp. 213-214, in which Valerii Mokienko's teachings on the stability of proverbs regarding dairy production are applied. If there is something the authors are not missing, it is the reflections about the quality of the sources included in *O libro da vaca*, such as on pp. 48 and 454, in which the proverbs seem to be an invention of the collector, probably a veterinary surgeon or an agronomist who wanted to give advice to farmers using this popular format.

As deduced from the above, the contribution of the authors to the field of paremiology is essential, not only because of their collection and classification of Galician material, but also because of their detailed analysis and comments, which compose an exemplary piece of work that should be taken as a starting point for undertaking similar tasks in other languages and/or semantic fields.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from proverbs, there are other phraseological aspects that deserve a prominent position in the work we are dealing with, always combining the elements' cataloguing and classification work with the critical analysis of the materials. As we have mentioned before, *O libro da vaca* collects around 2000 locutions and 600 formulae. Although most of this information is spread across the book, according to the thematic fields to which it belongs in the livestock world (cow illnesses, farming tasks, etc.), there are also other sections devoted to explore in detail different phraseological aspects; in this sense, a particularly important chapter is 13.1.5, appropriately entitled *A vaca, espello no que os galegos miran a súa vida* ["The cow, mirror in which Galician people look at their life"], as these pages by Benavente and Ferro clearly confirm that cattle is a major cognitive referent when creating metaphorical constructions, formulae, and any kind of phraseologism.

From page 1317 to page 1357, in section 13.1, we can find hundreds of designations in which the cow world serves to name animals and things, and even abstract concepts such as education, emigration, freedom, opportunity, homeland, effort, resignation, old age, etc. Thus, just to give a couple of examples of the first case, the *Lucanus cervus* is popularly known as *escornabois* [ox \*gorer] or *vacaloura* [chestnut-brown cow] and different modifiers following the name of the ox refer to a large variety of crustaceans: *boi bravo* [wild ox], *boi de area* [sand ox], *boi de Francia* [ox from France]... We can also find uncountable formulae and phraseological units that borrow the reference to the cow in order to name qualities, defects, feelings, etc. I cannot find a better way to describe it than paraphrasing part of the authors' inspiring words in section 13.3.6 ("The cow symbology in Galician phraseology and oral tradition"). In the phraseology linked to the cow, it appears as a beneficial animal.

It is a symbol for large dimensions (*comer coma un boi* [“eating like an ox”]) or for intensity (*bruar coma un boi sen capar* [“mooing like an uncastrated ox”]). It is also a referent for fatness (*gorda coma unha vaca* [“fat as a cow”]). If somebody speaks a lot, it is said that *ten lingua coma a vaca rabo* [“to have a tongue like a cow’s tail”]. It can be symbol of nudity (*ir en coi-ro coma unha vaca* [“To be naked like a cow”]) and of freedom (*andar solto como vaca sen choca* [“To be loose like a cow without a cowbell”]), of helpfulness (*dar a todo coma a vaca do pobre* [“To do everything, like the poor’s cow”]), but also of slave labour (*andar ás dúas mans coma a vaca do pobre* [“Walking on one’s two hands, like the poor’s cow”]). The cow and the ox are referents for calm, slowness, and sloth as well (*os bois de Búa, que, cando ollan para o carro cargado, xa súan* [“as soon as Búa’s oxen see the loaded cart, they sweat”]), but also for opposite values, such as restlessness (*andar coma o rabo da vaca no mes de agosto* [“to be like the cow’s tail in August”]). The cow’s sight inspires a feeling of confusion and surprise (*quedar como unha vaca mirando para o tren* [“to look like a cow watching the train”]). The examples are innumerable and, in any case, going over the pages of this book will provide informative material as well as an extraordinary pleasant time. We challenge other scholars to undertake similar works in other countries in order to observe similarities and differences on the phraseology related to the cow.

The comprehensive bibliography presented in *O libro da vaca* deserves a specific analysis. As it is expected from such a precise and exhaustive work, its level of detail is extraordinary, since it consists of almost sixty pages of references, with a total of 2411 sources of primary and secondary material. An outstanding amount of the entries are made up of phraseological collections and works of critical analysis, so this bibliography becomes an indispensable reference to those who want to be informed about the existing material on this field in Galicia.

The main problem this bibliography has – and of which the authors are aware (notes 1 and 3, page 1572) – derives from the fact that *O libro da vaca* is a work that started to be developed two decades ago. The underestimation of the amount of data that was to be compiled after all these years and the computer limitations of that time, lead to adopt some solutions that, years later

with much better technical means at our disposal, did not show themselves to be the most productive. This is the case of the order of the bibliography using initials created from the authors' names, a quite heterogeneous, unpredictable process that complicates the lineal search of the works included. In that sense, it is more advisable to use the bibliographical list available in the CD-ROM or to consult the PDF edition using the search-engine. The bibliography does not show either the existence of an electronic edition of the consulted works. The reason is clear enough. Who could imagine, at the beginning of the 1990s when the number of computers with Internet connection in Spain was less than one thousand, that most of our linguistic research and paremiological collections were going to be openly accessible in the Net? I think it is worth mentioning, especially for non-Galician readers, that in order to look up any of the primary or secondary sources included in the bibliography, we have the essential *Bibliografía Informatizada da Lingua Galega* (BILEGA, <http://www.cirp.es/bdo/bil/bilega.html>) to know whether there exists an electronic edition and to consult a content synopsis of most of them.

As a conclusion, I would like to reiterate that we have a fundamental work for the ethnolinguistic study of cattle that has no parallel in other countries. It also provides an exemplary reference point for other interdisciplinary teams to undertake similar tasks, referring to this or other semantic fields, in other linguistic domains, especially in those who show how the lexical and phraseological richness declines due to interferences with other languages or to socioeconomic changes. In addition, each of its 1637 pages demonstrates that technical rigour and erudition are not incompatible with pleasantness and being accessible to all audiences. Academic literature has, in the work of Benavente and Ferro, a perfect illustration of Horatio's maxim *to delight and enlighten*.

***Bibliographic reference***

Benavente Jareño, Pedro / Xesús Ferro Ruibal (1995): *Refraneiro galego da vaca*. Santiago de Compostela: Xunta de Galicia, Centro de Investigacións Lingüísticas e Literarias Ramón Piñeiro. Electronic edition at: [http://www.cirp.es/pub/docs/ref\\_vaca.pdf](http://www.cirp.es/pub/docs/ref_vaca.pdf)

*Note*

<sup>1</sup>It would even be possible to undertake work that would complete the information of Benavente and Ferro referred to Galicia, as the cow's semantic field is so rich that, in spite of the authors' efforts, it is impossible to collect all the proverbs. As an example, in a recent edition of unpublished material of the Diccionario Geográfico Popular de España ["Popular Geographic Dictionary of Spain"] started by Nobel Laureate Camilo José Cela (<http://ilg.usc.es/ditados>), we find some proverbs that complement those shown from page1480 to page1482 in *O libro da vaca*, which have toponymic references that illustrate jokes and rivalries amongst neighbouring towns: Home de Melide, muller de Sobrado e vaca de Furelos, que os leven os demos ["Man from Melide, woman from Sobrado and cow from Furelos, let the devils take them"] // Vacas de Mandaio e nenas de Cesuras, aparta delas coma de Xudas ["Get away from the cows from Mandaio and the girls from Cesuras, just like from Judas"] // Os de Escomabois xunguen as vacas e ordeñan os bois ["People from Escomabois yoke the cows and milk the oxen"] // A quen mal lle queirás deseaye ser baca ou boi da Ameá ["If you wish him any harm, wish him to be cow or ox from Ameá"]; the latter proverb can be explained due to the large slopes existent in the place, a noticeable problem for loaded carts].

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*Arabische Sprichwörter oder die Sitten und Gebräuche der neueren Aegyptier erklärt aus den zu Kairo umlaufenden Sprichwörtern.* By Johann Ludwig Burckhardt. Weimar: Verlag des Landes-Industrie-Comptoirs, 1834. Reprint ed. by Wolfgang Mieder. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2012. Pp. 461.

Zum ersten Mal liegt nun ein Nachdruck des Buches „Arabische Sprichwörter oder die Sitten und Gebräuche der neueren Aegyptier erklärt aus den zu Kairo umlaufenden Sprichwörtern“ von Johann Ludwig Burckhardt vor, das 1834 in der deutschen Version erschienen ist. Das Buch enthält eine Sammlung von 782 ägyptischen Sprichwörtern in arabischer Schrift gefolgt von deren deutschen Übersetzung. Fast alle Sprichwörter sind mit Erläuterungen von Burckhardt versehen. Die eigentliche Sprichwörtersammlung wird durch ein Vorwort und ein Literaturverzeichnis von Wolfgang Mieder (S. 7\*-66\*) eingeleitet.

Das Werk Burckhardts ist viel mehr als eine einfache Sprichwörtersammlung. Es ist als „Kulturdokument“ (Mieder 7\*) zu bewerten, in dem die Lebensart, die Sitten und Gebräuche, die Geschichte, die Denkweise, der Glaube und der Aberglaube der Ägypter zu Anfang des 19. Jahrhunderts in diesem Werke auf- und festgenommen werden. Eine nähere Betrachtung des Untertitels (s.o.) zeigt, dass dies – neben der Sammlung und Erläuterung von Sprichwörtern – Hauptziel seines Werkes ist, das in keiner Weise übersehen werden darf, so dass diese Sprichwörtersammlung nicht nur Parömiologen und Volkskundler interessiert, sondern auch und vor allem Kulturhistoriker.

Wichtig ist, dass diese Sprichwörtersammlung nicht als ein Dokument einer abgeschlossenen Epoche der Geschichte Ägyptens, als ein Stück Vergangenheit gelesen werden darf, sondern dass sie weiterhin durch die Sprichwörter Einblick in die Natur des ägyptischen Volkes verschafft, denn viele der Züge, viele der Sitten und Gebräuche gelten bis heute noch wie auch die meisten der von



Burckhardt gesammelten Sprichwörter heute noch in Kairo geläufig sind und tradiert werden.

Die Werke Burckhardts im allgemeinen und die vorliegende Sprichwörtersammlung im besonderen zeugen von der ausserordentlichen Leistung von Burckhardt, indem er alle seine Beobachtungen eines ihm fremden Volkes kunstvoll und mit allen Details aufzuschreiben und zu registrieren vermochte, und gleichzeitig die Gründe und Wurzeln seiner Beobachtungen zu suchen und in bewundernswerter Objektivität zu urteilen, zu erklären und zu erläutern. Seine Erläuterungen zählen daher als höchst wertvolle historische, soziale, sprachliche und ökonomische Dokumente.

Die aussergewöhnlich positive Einschätzung dieser Sammlung – in der englischen Version –, zeigt sich im Literaturverzeichnis (S. 46\* - 66\*), das von Wolfgang Mieder in seiner Vorrede zusammengestellt wurde. Davon zeugen die zahlreichen Nachdrucke in den Jahren 1875, 1972, 1980, 1990, 1994 und 2004, die zahlreichen Rezensionen und die Aufnahme „in grossen parömiographischen Bibliographien ... als wertvolle Publikation“ (Mieder S. 32\*) Nach Mieder (24\*) bauen „im Prinzip alle neueren Sammlungen arabischer Sprichwörter“ auf Burckhardts Sammlung auf.

Selbst in Ägypten ist das Werk sehr wohl bekannt und geschätzt und zählt zu den Standardwerken der ägyptischen Parömiologie. Beweis dafür ist u.a. die Übersetzung Burckhardts ins Arabische im Jahre 1989 durch Ibrahim Schalan, den renomierten Parömiologen und Verfasser der 6-bändigen „Enzyklopädie der ägyptischen Volkssprichwörter“ (2002).

Die Sprichwörtersammlung besteht – wie bereits erwähnt – aus 782 Sprichwörtern in arabischer Schrift. Sie sind durchgehend numeriert und nach dem arabischen Alphabet geordnet. Unter dem arabischen Sprichwort steht die deutsche Übersetzung. Fast alle Sprichwörter sind mit Erläuterungen von Burckhardt versehen, die unterschiedlich lang sind. Einige Erläuterungen reichen bis zu 10 Seiten, was wiederum bezeugt, wie sehr die Dokumentierung der Sitten und Gebräuche der Ägypter einen Vorrang bei Burckhardt besaßen. Bei anderen Sprichwörtern fehlt jede Erläuterung, worauf eigentlich die deutschen Leser nicht verzichten können.

Die Sprichwörter sind alphabetisch nach dem ersten Wort und nicht nach Themen oder Schlüsselwörtern geordnet. Dies erschwert die Suche nach einem bestimmten Sprichwort für den Arabischkundigen und nach einem bestimmten Thema für Deutschsprachige.

Diese Schwierigkeit ist teilweise durch das 2. Register in deutscher Sprache beseitigt worden, das von H. G. Kirmß, dem deutschen Übersetzer, der Sammlung Burckhardts hinzugefügt wurde und was als Vorteil der englischen Version gegenüber gilt.

Trotz der lobenswerten Fähigkeit Burckhardts, die Sprichwörter zu erläutern, scheinen einige seiner Erläuterungen ungenau zu sein und stimmen nicht mit den Erläuterungen, die allgemein anerkannt sind und tradiert werden. Verglichen haben wir die uns fragwürdig erscheinenden Erläuterungen mit alten und neuen, wissenschaftlich fundierten arabischen und ägyptisch-arabischen Sprichwörter-sammlungen wie die von Ahmad Taymur (2. Aufl. 1956), Al-Maidani (11/12. Jahrhundert), Al-Ibschihi (15. Jahrhundert) und Ibrahim Schalans Sprichwörterencyklopädie (2002).

Wir gehen hier auf einige Sprichwörter ein, bei denen die Erklärungen von Burckhardt sich von denen der o.g. Parömiologen unterscheiden. Die Nummern beziehen sich auf die Zahl der Sprichwörter in den jeweiligen Werken. Die Buchstaben verweisen auf folgende Schriftsteller: B = Burckhardt, T = Taymur, Sch = Schalan (1. Band).

B 21 *Nennt man dich einen Schnitter, so wetze deine Sichel.* Von Burckhardt erklärt als: „Versuche, selbst durch den bloßen Schein, die Leute zu ueberreden, daß du den Ruf verdienst, in welchem du stehst.“ Dagegen schreibt Taymur in T 589 *Nennt man dich einen Dieb, so wetze deine Sichel.* Taymur erklärt es wie folgt: „Wenn sie dich ungerechterweise einen Dieb nennen, so wetze deine Sichel und beraube sie, denn die Verleumdung deren Beschuldigungen werden sie nicht glauben.“

B 16 *Wenn dich eine Schlange liebt, so trage sie als Halsband.* Burckhardt erklärt es wie folgt: „Wenn gefaehrliche Menschen dir ihre Zuneigung zu erkennen geben, so bewirb dich um ihre Freundschaft mit dem groeßten Eifer.“ Taymur in T 568 erklärt es wie folgt: „Liebt dich eine Schlange, so umarme sie und habe keine Angst. Liebt dich ein gemeiner Mensch und ist er dir treu, so wird er dich, weil er dich liebt, nicht verletzen.“

B 1 *Tausend Schlaege (an die Thuer), aber kein Willkommen (von innen).* Die in Klammern gesetzten Worte sind Hinzufügungen seitens Burckhardt, was ihn dazu veranlasst, das Sprichwort wie folgt zu interpretieren: „Dieses sagt man von den fruchtlosen Versuchen gewisser Leute, welche sich gern in den vertraulichen Umgang

anderer eindringen wollen.“ Taymur in T 235 bringt folgende Erklärung: „Es ist besser, mehrmals an die Tür zu klopfen, auch wenn dies die Leute stört, als die Leute mit deinem Gruss mitten in deren Wohnung zu überraschen. Bis heute ist es Sitte, besonders auf dem Land, die Bewohner durch Grussformeln oder durch Klatschen der Hand zu warnen, dass man die Wohnung betritt.“

B 10 *Wenn dein Nachbar (jemand) scheert, so seife du ein (naemlich das Haupt dessen, den er scheert)*. Burckhardt erklärt es wie folgt: „Suche immer den Wuenschen deines Naechsten auf alle Weise zuvorzukommen.“ Taymur in T570 erklärt es wie folgt: „Wenn dein Nachbar seine Haare oder seinen Bart scheert, dann nässe du dein Haar mit Wasser, damit du bereit bist. Es ist notwendig von dem Schicksal zu lernen, das anderen widerfährt und dies als Zeichen zu verstehen, um sich auf Ähnliches vorzubereiten.“ Burckhardt hat das Sprichwort – grammatisch und syntaktisch – nicht richtig verstanden; und die Zusätze in Klammern sind Ergebnisse einer falschen Interpretation.

Wie Mieder darauf hingewiesen hat, sind nicht alle Beispiele, die Burckhardt aufführt, Sprichwörter in dem engen Sinne des Wortes. Wir führen hier einige Kommentarformeln an, die gleichzeitig von Burckhardt falsch interpretiert sind bzw. nicht weiter erläutert worden sind. Dies lässt wichtige Informationen aus, die besonders dem fremden Leser als Erläuterung und demzufolge als Bereicherung dienen.

B 161 *Ist's (heute) auch Feuer; morgen ist es doch Asche*. Dies erklärt Burckhardt wie folgt: „Heftige Leidenschaften legen sich leicht.“ T 869 *Sie übernachtet als Feuer und steht am Morgen als Asche. Diese Sache hat ihr Gott, der sie lösen wird*. Das ist eher eine Kommentarformel, die zum Troste gesagt wird. Wie gross auch das Problem in der Nacht scheint, so wird es oft am nächsten Morgen gelöst. Taymur und El-Ibschihi (Teil 1 S. 43) bestätigen die Allgemeingültigkeit des Sprichwortes, die Burckhardt fälschlicherweise auf Leidenschaften beschränkt.

B 23 *Wenn die Engel kommen, verstecken sich die Teufel*. Das Beispiel wird von Burckhardt nicht erklärt. Taymur in T 97 erklärt dieses Beispiel wie folgt: „Gute und Böse können nicht beisammen sein.“ Diese Kommentarformel wird von dem gesagt, der genau in dem Moment weggeht, wenn jemand eintritt.

B 92 *Die Waende haben Ohren*. Das Beispiel wird von Burckhardt nicht erklärt. Taymur in T 1109 erklärt dieses Beispiel

wie folgt: „Aufforderung Geheimnisse zu behalten, da hinter der Mauer jemand da ist, der zuhört.“ Taymur zitiert hier Al-Maidani. Diese Kommentarformel wird benutzt, um jemand davor zu warnen, etwas zu sagen, was man sonst nicht laut sagen kann oder darf.

Manchmal fügt Burckhardt Geschichten zu seinen Erläuterungen hinzu, für die ich keine Belege gefunden habe.

B 27 *Wenn das Wasser der Suendfluth kommt, so lege deinen Sohn unter deine Fuesse*. Burckhardt erklärt es wie folgt: „Rette dich selbst mit Aufopferung deiner naechsten Freunde und Verwandten, ein Grundsatz der niedrigsten Selbssucht, der aber im Orient ganz gewoehnlich ist.“ Burckhardt erzählt dazu die folgende Geschichte, die er „der moslemischen Ueberlieferung“ entnommen habe. Bei Noahs Sintflut hätten Noahs Söhne immer wieder versucht ihre eigenen Söhne zu retten, als aber das Wasser zu ihrem eigenen Munde reichte, legten Sie die Kinder unter ihre Füße. Schalan (Sch 445) zeigt, dass das Sprichwort über Egoismus spricht. Er fügt jedoch hinzu, dass dieses Sprichwort über die Zeiten der Unterdrückung, der Verfolgungen und Katastrophen spricht, unter denen das ägyptische Volk gelitten hat und die seine Energie übertraf, so dass er ihnen zu entkommen versuchte.

B 561 *Der Tag vernichtet das Wort (oder Versprechen) der Nacht*. Burckhardt erklärt es wie folgt: „Eine schoene Frau hatte dem harun er Rashid des Nachts fuer den naechsten Morgen eine Gunst versprochen; als aber der Tag kam, lehnte sie die Erfuellung ihres Versprechens mit obigen Worten ab. ... Ein aenliches Spruechwort ist den Bewohnern von Kairo noch gelaeufiger, naemlich: *Das Versprechen der Nacht ist mit Butter bestrichen, welche zergeht, wenn der Tag darauf scheint*. „Das heißt, wenn die Leidenschaft vorueber ist, so vergessen wir das Versprechen, welches wir gaben, als wir noch von ihr beherrscht wurden.“ Diese zweite Version des Sprichwortes bringt Taymur (T 2429) und Schalan (Sch 430) mit der allgemeinen Bedeutung, dass Versprechen nicht gehalten werden.

Wie schon angegeben ist das Buch von Burckhardt ein Kulturdokument und keine einfache Sprichwörtersammlung. Historische, kulturelle und sprachliche Informationen und Erläuterungen werden durch die Lektüre vermittelt. Selbst wenn – wie bereits angegeben – einige dieser Erklärungen nicht sehr genau sind oder sogar nicht zum Sprichwort passen, so sind das doch Informationen, die als Ganzes eine Beschreibung der Lebensart der Ägypter zu dieser Zeit sind.

Kurz gehen wir im Folgenden auf Gegenstände, Masse und Gewichte, Tiere, Nahrungsmittel, Berufe, Festlichkeiten usw. ein, die dem ägyptischen Volke typisch sind und auf die Burckhardt in seinen Erläuterungen näher eingeht und beschreibt.

*Die Taubenhäuser in B 325 Sie vertrauten die Schluessel zum Taubenhause der Katze an.* „welche auf dem platten Lande in Gestalt von kleinen Thuermen gebaut werden nach einem Riß, der grosse Aehnlichkeit mit dem der Propylaen der alten Tempel hat.“

*Karki in B3 Tausend Kraniche in der Luft sind nicht so viel werth, als ein Sperling in der Hand.* „Der Kranich (karki) ist ein im Delta sehr gewöhnlicher Vogel, besonders um den See von Menzaleh.“

*Erdeb in B 89 Wenn der Erdeb (des Getreides) nicht dir gehoert, so sei nicht gegenwaertig, wenn er gemessen wird; (sonst) bekommst du Staub in den Bart, und mußt dich abmuehen, ihn wieder heraus zu bringen.* Erdeb ist „das aegyptische Kornmaaß, ungefaehr 15 Scheffel haltend.“

*Feddan in B 471 Um einen Feddan wendet man gern eine Kassaba an.* Feddan ist ein ägyptisches Landmaß. Die Erläuterung dieses Sprichwortes umfasst ca. 10 Seiten.

*Kabkabs in B 143 Anstatt auf Kabkabs zu gehen, thue die Lappen von deinen Fersen.* Kabkabs „sind Stelzen oder hoelzerne Pantoffeln, vier oder fuenf Zoll hoch, deren sich die Frauen, wenn sie ins Bad gehen, und vornehme Damen zu Hause bedienen. Diese letzteren haben Kabkabs, welche mit verschiedenen Arten Silberschnuere gestickt und mit Perlmutter ausgelegt sind.“

*Tormus in B 500 Ein Affe bewachte ein Tormusfeld.* „Schau den Waechter und die Saat“, sagte jemand. „Tormus ist die Wolfsbohne (lupinus) von bitterem Geschmack und nicht sehr geachtet.“

*El-Khalal in B 233 Ein Essigverkaeufer mag nicht einen (andern) Essigverkaeufer leiden.* „Zu Cairo nennt man el-Khalal diejenigen, welche Eingemachtes verkaufen; Gurken, Rueben, Zwiebeln, Badendschans (Eierpflanze) in Dattel=Essig eingemacht sind bleibt bei den Aegyptiern.“

*Bohnenhaendler in B 372 Den Morgengruß dem Bohnenhaendler, und nicht dem Apotheker.* „Es ist besser arm, aber gesund zu sein, ... als reich, und die Huelfe des Apothekers zu suchen. ... Nach dem Volksglauben der Morgenlaender ist das Glueck oder Unglueck des Tages durch den Gegenstand bedingt, welchen man zuerst zu Gesicht bekommt, sobald man des Morgens aus der Thuere

tritt. ... ‚Al-fawal‘ von ‚ful‘ heißt der Mann, welcher des Morgens frueh auf dem Bazar grobe Pferdebohnen verkauft, welche gekocht ‚modames‘ heißen; sie machen die Hauptmahlzeit der Bauern aus, aber es gehoert auch der Magen eines Bauern dazu, um sie zu verdauen; zur Schmelzung derselben bedient man sich der Butter und des Lampenoels. Die Apotheker sind gewoehnlich zugleich die Aerzte in der Stadt.“

Zu dem Volksglauben gehoert auch die Abneigung gegen *Seereisen*, so in B 381 *Das Bauchknurren der Kamele ist besser, als das Gebet der Fische*. „Die beschwerlichste Landreise ist der angenehmsten Seereise vorzuziehen. ... Die Aegyptier haben eine solche Abneigung gegen Seereisen, dass sie groeßtentheils lieber den langweiligen und beschwerlichen Landweg nach Mekka waehlen, als den kuerzern Weg zur See.“ Schalans (Sch 420 *Ein Jahr zu Fuss gehen ist besser als ein Kanal zu überqueren*.) interpretiert es in einem allgemeineren Sinne, indem er schreibt, dass die Ägypter Ausdauer und Geduld haben und dagegen sind, Risiken einzugehen.

*El-tayamom* in B 22 *Wenn Wasser zum Waschen da ist, so ist das Waschen mit Sand nicht an seinem Orte*. „‚El-tayamom‘ ist das Waschen mit Sand, welches der Islam vorschreibt, wenn das Waschen mit Wasser wegen Wassermangels nicht moeglich ist.“ Mieder (17\*) schreibt, dass Burckhardt „sich die innersten Geheimnisse der mohammedanischen Weltanschauung zu eigen gemacht ...“ hat.

*safa* in B 422 *Zu dem Gluecke meines Hochzeitsfestes kam die Kuerze der Nacht und die Reue der Taenzerinnen*. „Dies ist ein ironischer Ausdruck fuer: die Hochzeit ging nicht gluecklich vor sich, ...“ *safa* ist „der fereierliche Auszug, in welchem die Braut in das Haus des Braeutigams gebracht wird“. Die Erläuterung dieses Sprichwortes umfasst 11 Seiten.

Auch beschreibt Burckhardt die *Leichenbegrabnisse* und die *Klageweiber* in B 611 *„Warum ist das Leichenbegrabniß so heiß?“* „Jedermann“, antwortete jemand, „weint wegen seiner eigenen (ungluecklichen) Lage“.

Auf *Historisches* geht Burckhardt in B 671 ein: *Wer mit Moses‘ Regierung nicht zufrieden ist, muß sich Pharaos Regierung gefallen lassen*. „Dieses Sprichwort hat juengst eine haeufige Anwendung gefunden, als diejenigen, welche sich ueber die *Mameluken* beschwerten, sich der viel grausameren Regierung *Muhammed Ali’s*

unterwerfen mußten.“ Bei den Ägyptern gilt immer der Pharaon als der tyrannische Regent, während Moses der milde Regent ist.

Neben den kulturspezifischen Erläuterungen geht Burckhardt auf sprachliche und phonetische Besonderheiten ein, indem er die Besonderheiten des ägyptischen Dialekts mit denen des Hocharabischen vergleicht.

Auf die ästhetischen Besonderheiten der Sprichwörter geht Burckhardt kaum ein, obwohl bei den Sprichwörtern oft Besonderheiten wie Endreim, Binnenreim, Alliteration, Wortwiederholung, Wortkontrastierung und Parallelismus vorliegen. Besonders der Endreim ist unter den ägyptischen Sprichwörtern sehr verbreitet. Der Endreim kommt in 25% der von Burckhardt aufgeführten Sprichwörter vor, auf die fragwürdigerweise Burckhardt nicht verweist. Nur in einem Sprichwort, nämlich B 387 *Ein Schlag vom Liebhaber schmeckt (so süß), wie eine Rosine*. kommentiert Burckhardt mit den Worten: „Hier liegt der Witz lediglich in dem Reime der arabischen Wörter *sebib*, Rosine, und *habib*, Liebhaber.“

Wie bereits erwähnt wurden der deutschen Übersetzung zwei Register durch den Übersetzer hinzugefügt. Im ersten Register stehen die Wörter alphabetisch geordnet in arabischer Schrift. Neben den arabischen Wörtern steht die deutsche Übersetzung, was gleichzeitig als Glossar dienen könnte. Das Register enthält nicht nur Themenbereiche, sondern auch phonetische, grammatische und sprachliche Besonderheiten des ägyptischen Dialekts gegenüber dem Hocharabischen sowie kulturspezifische Gegenstände, Namen, Berufe u. ä.

Das 2. Register enthält Wörter in deutscher Sprache und hilft somit dem Arabischen nicht Kundigen Sprichwörter über bestimmte Themenbereiche bzw. bestimmte kulturspezifische Gegenstände zu finden.

Zuletzt gehen wir auf das Vorwort von Mieder (ca. 60 Seiten) ein, was an sich eine wertvolle Studie ist, die die Sammlung von Burckhardt in ihrem Kontext setzt. Biographische Informationen über Burckhardt zeigen seine Herkunft, seine Familiengeschichte, seine Erziehung, seine Entwicklung, seine Ausbildung, sein Gesamtwerk und seine Reisen, die ihn letztendlich als Forschungsreisenden im Auftrage der African Association „durch die arabischen, und afrikanischen Ländern“ (Mieder 14\*) u. a. ziehen lässt. Mieder geht auch auf den Inhalt der Sprichwörtersammlung ein, auf die fehlenden – obwohl notwendigen – Erläuterungen einiger Sprichwörter, auf parömiologische Gattungen, die im strengen Sinne, keine Sprichwörter

ter sind, auf die anstössigen Sprichwörter und Sprichwörter, die sowohl Frauen als auch Männer benachteiligen und auf Sprichwörter aus der Tierwelt.

Das Literaturverzeichnis, das Teil der Vorrede Mieders ist, bringt die Werke zu Burckhardt, die Rezensionen und Nachdrucke der Sprichwörtersammlung Burckhardts, die Schriften Burckhardts, die arabischen Sprichwörtersammlungen in europäischen Sprachen und die internationalen Studien zu arabischen Sprichwörtern.

Zum Schluss ist zu bemerken, dass der vorliegende Nachdruck mitsamt der Sprichwörtersammlung Burckhardts und der Vorrede Mieders als eine willkommene Bereicherung nicht nur für die Parömiologie, die Volkskunde und die Kulturgeschichte ist, sondern dieser Nachdruck gilt ausserdem und in grossem Maße als eine Arbeit, die „zu einem besseren Verständnis der arabischen Völker“ (Mieder 45\*) beitragen wird.

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*Stylistic Use of Phraseological Units in Discourse*. By Anita Naciscione. Amsterdam/ Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2010. Pp. xiii, 292. With 10 figures and 20 illustrations.

Anita Naciscione's book *Stylistic Use of Phraseological Units in Discourse* is an excellent study of the vast range of stylistic use of phraseological units (PUs). The book falls into two main parts. Part One is devoted to theoretical research: elaboration of technical terms, offering a new approach to key terminology and basic concepts. Anita Naciscione follows Kunin in her understanding of PUs (Kunin 1970): a PU is a stable combination of words with a fully or partially figurative meaning. However, she justly argues that PUs have a third category – that of cohesion as a semantic and stylistic relation (p. 32; p. 64) whether it refers to the base form, core use or stylistic use in discourse (pp. 60-64).

Anita Naciscione believes that proverbs are part of phraseology from the linguistic point of view, that is, part of the phraseological stock of language on the following grounds. Semantically, they comply with the main categorial requirements: stability, figuration, and cohesion. Syntactically, they feature sentence structure (simple, compound or complex), and they never exceed sentence boundaries in their base form. Stylistically, functioning of proverbs presents a great variety of patterns of stylistic use (see, for instance, Mieder 1989), the same as in other types of PUs (p. 19).

The book is a major theoretical contribution to the development of this research area for the following reasons.

1. The theoretical conception is based on cognitive stylistics: the whole book is written with a cognitive approach in mind, and it offers a comprehensive view of all aspects of the subject. Anita Naciscione concludes that stylistic changes reflect the development of figurative thought in discourse, which is closely linked

with creativity in language use. A cognitive linguistic approach is a tool that helps to perceive, to understand, and appreciate stylistic use. Unfortunately, the cognitive perspective is not reflected in the title of the book.

2. The stylistic functioning of PUs, including proverbs, is analyzed in discourse (pp. 73-74; 209-210). Anita Naciscione argues against the widespread approach to analyze PUs in separate sentences, taken out of context. A discourse-based approach enables her to disclose the flow of the thinking process and sustainability of figurative thought across sentence boundaries, paragraphs, chapters and even a whole book. Sustained stylistic use reflects extended figurative thought and contributes to the perception of the text as a cohesive entity. In this way, the PU acquires a discourse dimension (pp. 191-192).

3. The book gives an excellent diachronic insight into stylistic use of PUs, going back to the OE, MiE and EMoE periods up to Modern English. The diachronic angle has proved fruitful; it serves 1) to disclose and substantiate the regularities of stylistic functioning of PUs; 2) to reveal cross-centuries stability of the language units themselves (which does not exclude their changes and development in the course of time, p. 58) and 3) to bring out stability of the stylistic pattern (or stylistic device, to use an older term) that lies at the basis of the stylistic instantiation, which means concrete, unique cases of actual use (p. 72), such as extended metaphor, pun, split-up, allusion, replacement, and others. Stylistic patterns are also characterized by stability across centuries. For example, when analyzing extended metaphor as one of the most widespread stylistic patterns in the use of PUs, Anita Naciscione gives examples starting from OE (year 750), MiE, Shakespeare's plays up to MoE where extended metaphor covers longer stretches of text (pp. 84-90). Her analysis of allusion as a stylistic pattern presents great interest as it has not been researched in phraseological stylistics as yet. It is a creative technique that develops a novel meaning of the basis of phraseological metaphor, e.g. Chaucer uses the proverb *curses, like chickens, come home to roost*, which is alluded to in "The Canterbury Tales": "And ofte tyme swich **cursinge wrongfully retorneth agayn to him that curseth, as a bryd that retorneth agayn to his owene nest**" (p. 113). The proverb is alluded to and

extended, even though only one of the base constituents has been preserved. As a result of diachronic analysis, she comes to the conclusion that both the PU and the stylistic pattern are stored in the long-term memory of language users.

4. The chapter on visual representation of figurative thought is both interesting and useful. It offers a rich variety of well-researched illustrations (bigger and clearer pictures would have been desirable, though). Anita Naciscione's analysis reveals the subtle interrelation between the verbal and the non-verbal in representation of stylistic use. She stresses the importance of knowledge of the political, socio-cultural, and semiotic implications (pp.187-189). Visual representation creates new meaning, "stretches our imagination and sustains figurative thought" (p. 175).

5. Part Two is of great practical value. It explores challenges, which stylistic use of PUs cause in practical applications in various spheres of life. Here Anita Naciscione argues for applied stylistics, that is, practical applications of the theory. The reader feels that it could have been extended, especially the section on advertising, but then realizes that applied stylistics deserves a separate monographic investigation. This part provides useful insights for a diverse range of practitioners. The blend between theory and practice has been skillfully woven and the edition is useful for a wide spectrum of readers, including not only academics, but also teachers, students, translators, lexicographers and specialists in the advertising world. For all these different reasons, I feel that this high-quality edition by John Benjamins deserves a paperback publication to provide access to more people interested in the given area.

The text is well written, direct and to the point, and in a style which makes a complex subject easy to follow. The contents are well documented with extensive references. Ample textual illustrations have been taken from a wide range of English stylistic use in different genres: prose, poetry, drama, and media texts. Much attention has been paid to elaboration of key terminology, and the book is supplied with a glossary of clear-cut definitions of key terms. I may conclude that Anita Naciscione's book *Stylistic Use of Phraseological Units in Discourse* opens up new perspectives for further research in phraseological stylistics.

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HRISZTALINA HRISZTOVA-GOTTHARDT

*Playful Blasphemies. Postproverbials as Archetypes of Modernity in Yorùbá Culture.* By Aderemi Raji-Oyelade. Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2012. Pp. 168. ISBN 978-3-86821-380-5.

Aderemi Raji-Oyelade is a Nigerian poet, scholar, literary organizer, and cultural activist who currently teaches Literature and Creative Writing in the Department of English, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. In the beginning of his career, it was his poetry that brought him national and international recognition. Throughout the years he gained a reputation for his scientific work in the field of literature and paremiology and has quickly become one of the most eminent African proverb scholars. He has authored numerous paremiological publications, most of them connected to his mother tongue, Yorùbá.

In 2007, his achievement in the field of paremiology was acknowledged by being appointed a member of the Advisory Board of the International Association of Paremiology. Raji-Oyelade's newest work entitled *Playful Blasphemies. Postproverbials as Archetypes of Modernity in Yorùbá Culture* was published as a part of the series *Literatures and Arts of Africa*, edited by Susanne Gehrmann, Flora Veit-Wild, and Tobias Wendl. During the period of establishing and developing his radical theory called postproverbials, the author received institutional support from the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung, Germany, as well as assistance from the staff of the Institute of Asian and African Studies at Humboldt University, Berlin. He had the opportunity of consulting the African studies libraries at Humboldt University, Bayreuth University and the city-owned library, the *Stadtbibliothek*. In this way, Raji-Oyelade gained an excellent overview of the relevant African – and especially Yorùbá – paremiological and paremiographical publications. Throughout all the chapters of his book the author refers to these works, introducing the important aspects of the past and present ones dealing

PROVERBIUM 30 (2013)

with the collecting and studying of Yorùbá proverbs. In addition, he lists all the referenced works at the end of his volume in a very detailed bibliography that can be of a great help for other researchers interested in this topic.

The title of the book already suggests its subject – Raji-Oyelade writes about blasphemies; something that “shows lack of respect for God and religion” (see Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary.) The subtitle explains what it is all about: about postproverbials as archetypes (typical examples) of modernity in Yorùbá culture and language. The cover image shows an “ere” (an image or effigy) with two reflective shadows behind it and stands, according to the author, for the concept of postproverbiality. Raji-Oyelade namely believes that “the radical proverb is a shadow of the original” (see p. 4).

The fact that the Foreword to the book was written by Wolfgang Mieder, the most distinguished proverb scholar of our times, shows the great importance of Raji-Oyelade’s work in terms of modern paremiology. It is important to mention here that Mieder himself coined the term anti-proverb for intentional modifications of proverbs (see Mieder 1983). Nevertheless, he does not disapprove of Raji-Oyelade’s term “postproverbial”, but believes that it appears to fit the specific African changes of existing proverbs more precisely. In the author’s native language, Yorùbá, the phenomenon of deliberately changing proverbs is not only an act of wordplay. It happens also with the intent of negating traditional wisdom and creating new proverbial wisdom that fits new times..

Mieder sees Raji-Oyelade’s credit in showing that proverb modifications are not only a common language phenomenon in Europe and America, but have arrived also to societies which have not been extensively influenced by the Western culture, in other words to Africa. He also emphasizes the author’s eager interest in the dynamic and innovative aspects of proverbs, rather than in their static and traditional features. Moreover, by observing and studying the process of emerging and the spreading of postproverbials, Raji-Oyelade completes one of the most important tasks of modern paremiology.

In the Preface to his volume, Raji-Oyelade explains what made him become interested in postproverbials. He expresses his

great relief and gratitude to the copious work of former scholars because African traditional proverbs have already been archived, documented and 'can no longer be lost of physical death or cultural amnesia'. However, he is extremely aware of the ascendancy of an ultramodern alternative of the traditional proverb in Yorùbá culture and has witnessed how in informal situations more and more speakers of Yorùbá have become inventive with the original wise-sayings, thereby producing interesting deviant re-productions of the conventional proverbs, namely postproverbials. He believes that these innovative proverb alienations deserve a detailed analysis and that is the main reason this volume was born. With his book, Raji-Oyelade aims to reach not only specialists of proverb studies; he hopes that it will be useful also for the general reader who wants to know what the idea of post-proverbiality is all about.

Further in the Preface, Raji-Oyelade explains that his book is actually a result of close to two decades of research and revision work. There were two procedures involved in gathering the language data (postproverbials) for this study. The first one included the administration of a questionnaire to groups of Yorùbá speakers categorized by age, location, and level of literacy. In this questionnaire the informants were asked to complete traditional Yorùbá proverbs as best as they could, and also to provide any other alternative form of the 'original' proverb, as known by them (see Appendix I, pp. 125-130). In addition to that, the author collected postproverbials in contemporary Yorùbá music, video films, and literary texts. The second procedure of data collection involved gathering of alternative proverb statements made in real-life, everyday speech, and dialogue situations. Raji-Oyelade collected the corpus for his study at different locations and occasions of southwestern Nigeria, ranging from social gatherings and marketplaces to public transports and radio/television programs.

In Chapter 1 the author introduces to the reader the subject of paremiology and paremiography and summarizes the most significant trends in these two research areas worldwide. Raji-Oyelade also gives a very detailed overview of Yorùbá paremiography – something to be considered one of the main merits of this work. He emphasizes that unlike American and European scholarship, the major studies on African proverbs have sus-

tained the idea of the sacrosanct structure of the proverb text. Indeed, much of Yorùbá proverb scholarship has concentrated on aspects of the function, the form, and the thematic categories of proverbs, but aspects on the innovativeness of the verbal art are still under-theorized. Even the two pioneering works of Alaba (1986) and Owomolyela (1988) only acknowledge the existence of alternative transformations and variations of traditional Yorùbá proverbs but do not define or analyze the phenomenon rigorously. Raji-Oyelade argues that it is important to recognize that societies and cultures are developing dynamically and that there is also a certain radical shift or transgressive force in the making and use of proverbs in recent times. Therefore, the author aims to theorize the phenomenon of transformations in the body of Yorùbá proverbs as a sociolinguistic event by defining the character and the grammar of postproverbials and examining their manifestation and function in popular media.

In the very beginning of Chapter 2 Raji-Oyelade indicates that until now only little focus has been set on the area of transformative paremiology, that is, the study of shifts in structure and meaning(s) of proverbs. Within the next 30 pages, he attempts to address this neglected issue by giving a poststructuralist description of the radical proverb and by defining the “post-modern” template in the production of the typical postproverbial statement. He presents his own taxonomic categorization of the main structural categories of Yorùbá postproverbials and provides representative illustrations of the utterances. The author appropriates the fundamental aspect of G.B. Milner’s theory of the head-tail dyad of the given proverb (see Milner 1969).

According to Raji-Oyelade, based on their structural formation, there are four major types of Yorùbá postproverbials:

- Category I represents the most popular category of postproverbials in current usage. In this case, the transformation takes place in the completing clause of the conventional utterance;
- Category II covers an exceptional type of postproverbials in which the significant rupture occurs in the signal clause;



- In category III, the transformation takes place either in the signal clause or in the completing clause of the proverb. In this group, the making of the postproverbial text is highly dependent on the use of the pun as the operable constant in the “new” proverb.
- Unlike the other three groups, category IV of postproverbials usually retains the entire sentence structure of the conventional proverb. The transgressive act is achieved in the form of an additional proverbeme (extension, prolongation) to the original text.

Raji-Oyelade illustrates his theoretical framework with numerous examples of Yorùbá postproverbials. He does not simply provide an English translation for all of his examples but also explains the exact type of structural transformation and the shift in the meaning(s) of the texts and gives some additional historical and cultural background information. In this way, he makes it possible for the reader to gain a deeper insight into the nature and “behavior” of postproverbials.

However, despite its innovativeness and really good elaboration, the taxonomic categorization of Raji-Oyelade has its little drawback that has to be mentioned here. In fact, the so-called category III does not group the postproverbials according to the position of transformation (e.g. signal clause, completing clause or extension of the original text), as the other three categories do. It rather introduces the pun (the word play) as a very powerful way for modifying the meaning of traditional Yorùbá proverbs. As the author notices, the pun can occur both in the head and in the tail of a proverb; it is merely enabled by the tonality of the Yorùbá language. In this regard, I would recommend Raji-Oyelade to reorganize his typology of postproverbials by defining more different criteria for categorizing the texts, e.g. place, i.e. position of transformation, type of transformation etc. This might also help him to solve the cases of so-called overlapping postproverbials, where “the recreated sayings incorporate the characteristic elements of two or more categories for their own composition” (see p. 61).

Chapter 3 draws attention to another variant of radicalized Yorùbá proverbs, marked by the author as “eponymous postpro-

verbials". These creations are qualified not so much by their structural formation but by the possibility of identifying their origins or source reference. This category of re-invented sayings includes the range of "axiomatic" statements ascribed to particular personae, including fictional characters, usually contemporary poets, orators, politicians etc. In other words, the most crucial difference of eponymous postproverbials is that its creation is always connected to an individual in society.

In Yorùbá-language literature, the peculiarity of the eponymous postproverbial is contained in the exemplary creations of the radical fictional character called "Lawuwo" in Oladejo Okediji's play *Rere Run*. According to Raji-Oyelade, the play contains an approximate number of one hundred and twenty conventional proverbs in dialogue, besides the sequence of postproverbial utterances. In the frame of Chapter 3, the author analyzes ten eponymous postproverbials. In his critique, he not only comments on the structural changes undergone by the traditional sayings but also makes an attempt to explain the primary metaphors and the semantic intention behind those rather unusual utterances.

In Chapter 4 Raji-Oyelade examines and describes the deployment of postproverbials in a contemporary Yorùbá musical form known as *fuji*. The author believes that it is in *fuji*, other than in any other popular art form, that the traditional Yorùbá proverb records the greatest and the most amazing transmutations. For this reason, he examines the phenomenon of "nonsense lyrics", also called *asakasa* lyrics. In traditional use, *asakasa* is a term which connotes a negative moral attitude and therefore implies some kind of degeneration, retrogression, or disruption within the cultural system. In recent usage, *asakasa* becomes the pronominal reference to a particularly racy, hip-hop style of *fuji* music, named by Abass Obesere Akande, one of the new generation of Yorùbá popular musicians. Raji-Oyelade takes a closer look at some of Obesere's records and compact discs and comes to the conclusion that the musician is competent and versed in traditional Yorùbá proverbs; therefore his use and invention of postproverbials is not inadvertent but deliberate.

Chapter 5 discusses the inflections of conventional proverbs as postproverbials in Yorùbá video films. The author's first gen-

eral observation is that postproverbials are significant dialogic “in-texts” present in Yorùbá-language movies, especially in productions of the 1990s onward. In this chapter, he attempts to describe the nature of the transformative rupture that has come upon the identity of conventional proverbs and their radical deployment in Yorùbá video films. For this purpose, Raji Oyelade examines examples from different productions dated between 1999 and 2006. He comes to the conclusion that the typical proverbial utterance is almost always predictably deployed as comic relief material. Apart from that, the proverbial line operates as a sign of the challenge of a long-held belief systems, as well as a reflection of contemporary social concepts and realities of a new generation of Yorùbá language users and speakers.

In the concluding chapter of his book, Raji-Oyelade asserts that the postproverbial text is the evidence of the culture’s dynamism. Among other factors, the making of postproverbials has been due to:

- the vanishing of the real village or community square tradition;
- the decline in the deployment of the standard resources of Yorùbá language among educated elites;
- the indifferent or triumphalist sense of overcoming Yorùbá with the use of the English language by the youth;
- the intervention and corruption of Yorùbá conversations with words and phrases borrowed from other languages;
- the suspension or de-emphasis of the teaching of the forms of Yorùbá proverbs in schools.

In this regard, postproverbials can be seen as peculiar verbal signs of modernity, in particular of African cultural modernity. Their permanent appearance in popular mass media is the evidence of a unique and inevitable development. For this reason, Raji-Oyelade believes that the study of postproverbiality is to become an essential part of modern linguistics, literature, and cultural research. His book is intended not only to arouse the interest of paremiologists in the radical African proverb text and its typology, but also to bring the idea of postproverbiality closer to the general reader. In my opinion, the author has fully suc-

ceeded in his intention. His inventive theoretical analysis of innovative proverb modifications is definitely worth reading and further examining.

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PETER UNSETH

*Máakuti t'awá shuultáa: Proverbs Finish the Problems: Sayings of the Alaaba (Ethiopia)*. Ed. Gertrud Schneider-Blum. (Verbal Art and Documentary Literature in African Languages, 28.) Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag. 2009. Pp. 102.

Though Ethiopia is rich in proverbs, even proverbs about proverbs (e.g. “A conversation without proverbs is like stew without salt” in Oromo), it is amazing how few Ethiopian languages have had their proverbs collected and published. Book-sized collections of proverbs are only available for less than 10 of Ethiopia’s +80 languages. This one is a welcome addition, especially since it is from a lesser-known community.

The Alaaba community of Ethiopia was little-known until Gertrud Schneider-Blum wrote her grammar of the language (2007). The Alaaba are approximately 200,000 people living in south central Ethiopia, speaking a Highland East Cushitic language that is most closely related to Kambaata. Schneider-Blum (S-B) edited this collection of 418 Alaaba proverbs, most collected by Shukuralla Mohammed, a local leader who had been collecting Alaaba proverbs before she arrived.

The proverbs are listed in alphabetical order. Each proverb is given in Alaaba (in a phonemic transcription), then a word-by-word translation, with the suffixes identified. This is followed by a literal translation of the proverb in sentence form, often explaining idioms, e.g. “enthusiastically (*lit.* with the stomach)”. This is followed by an explanation, such as “Be careful when choosing friends.” This sometimes also has a note about usage, e.g. “Said to somebody who should show more respect.” In addition, there are sometimes cross-references to other proverbs with similar meanings or forms. In these ways, S-B’s book is far superior to most published collections of proverbs, which are far too often simply translated lists, sometimes without even translating the literal form of the proverb.

PROVERBIUM 30 (2013)

Listing proverbs in simple alphabetical order works well in a language like Alaaba that seems to have no prefixes. In this way, all the proverbs that begin with a particular word, e.g. “donkey”, all appear together (nos. 203-213). S-B cites the proverbs in a phonemic form, but then carefully gives a breakdown of affixes, showing the underlying forms of roots and suffixes. For example the root of ‘be better’ is *k’oh-*, and when it is followed by the suffix *-táa*, the pronounced surface form is *k’okkáa*. This sort of morphophonemic complexity is familiar to those studying East Cushitic languages, but is fascinating for other readers with a linguistic bent. Also, she points out a linguistic complexity that readers would otherwise miss: some verbs given in the perfect form must be interpreted as imperfect in English, e.g. “the one who stands (*lit.* stood) beside the donkey”. Those who want to mine this book for linguistic data will find much fascination.

The topics of the proverbs are generally familiar. They support loyalty to family, fulfilling one’s responsibilities, coping with difficulties, avoiding of extremes, etc. As is so often the case, we find some proverbs offering contradictory advice, each proverb to be used in the appropriate situation.

The proverbs were gathered by a community insider, but sometimes leave outsiders wondering “What exactly is a proverb?” Most of these are instantly classifiable as proverbs, but some are labeled as a “blessing”; are these truly proverbs? The insider’s judgment is authoritative.

Because Alaaba has extensive suffixing, rather than prefixing, rhyme at the ends of words is generally the result of grammar, not poetic artistry. Instead, the anonymous poets who created these proverbs artistically used word initial alliteration of both single consonants and entire syllables (or more). One common pattern is to do this with two adjoining words, usually the first and second words of a proverb: “toomá torréeni...” (p. 85). Another frequent pattern is to do this with the first words of the two halves of a couplet: “moggú... moogú...” (p. 75).

About 10% of the proverbs contain wellerisms. For example, “‘Cook me with the hump!’ said the intestines.” Such constructions have been well documented in European languages, and also in West Africa (Dundes 1964), but this book gives ample evidence of it in Alaaba. Noting examples of wellerisms also in

Amharic, Oromo, and Kambaata, Harari it is clear that they are common in Ethiopia, as well.

The translations are generally good, but one word needs correction: *samaag* 'wildcat' (found in several proverbs) should be 'leopard'.

It is not surprising to find here proverbs that are known in other Ethiopian languages, such as "Of mothers and water, there is none evil", also found in both Amharic and Oromo. However, it is fascinating to find one that is also found far away: "The she-dog [bitch], because she is in an extreme hurry gives birth to blind (ones)." (The same basic proverb is found in adjoining Guji Oromo, but recast as a wellerism.) What is jolting is that this proverb is attested in ancient Greek and Akkadian texts, where Moran gives it as "The bitch by her acting too hastily brought forth the blind" (1978:18). Alster (1979:5) classified this proverb as having "a longer history than any other recorded proverb in the world", going back to "around 1800 BC". It must have been valued in its form and commonly used to be preserved so unchanged.

This collection of proverbs is valuable as documentation of Alaaba culture and language, but also as a stimulus to other scholars to collect and publish proverbs in the proverb-rich languages of Ethiopia.

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*Sprichwörter multilingual. Theoretische, empirische und angewandte Aspekte der modernen Parömiologie.* Ed. by Kathrin Steyer. Tübingen: Narr Verlag, 2012. Pp. 470.

„Sprichwörter multilingual. Theoretische, empirische und angewandte Aspekte der modernen Parömiologie“ lautet der Titel des Sammelbandes, der den Gegenstand dieser Buchbesprechung bildet. Es handelt sich dabei um Band 60 der renommierten Reihe „Studien zur Deutschen Sprache“, in der ausschließlich die Forschungen des Instituts für Deutsche Sprache (IDS) in Mannheim vorgestellt werden. Der aktuelle Band ist im Auftrag des IDS bei Gunter Narr Verlag erschienen.

Herausgeberin des Sammelbandes ist Kathrin Steyer, wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin in der Abteilung „Lexik“ am IDS. Zu den Autorinnen und Autoren zählen angesehene Forscher auf dem Gebiet der Parömiologie und Phraseologie. Die Beiträge wurden auf der internationalen Tagung „Sprichwörter multilingual. Sprachliche Muster – kommunikative Einheiten – kulturelle Symbole“ vorgestellt, die vom 27. bis 28. September am IDS in Mannheim stattfand. Der erste Teil des 470-seitigen Werkes beinhaltet neun Beiträge, die theoretische, empirische und sprachvergleichende Aspekte der modernen Sprichwortforschung behandeln. Im zweiten Teil werden die Ergebnisse des EU-Projekts „*SprichWort*. Eine Internet-Plattform für das Sprachenlernen“ dargestellt, an dem Sprachwissenschaftler und Computerlinguisten aus sechs europäischen Ländern beteiligt waren.

Im Vorwort zum Band bringt die Herausgeberin ihre Überzeugung zum Ausdruck, dass Sprichwörter auch im 21. Jahrhundert zeitgemäß sind und dass eine eingehende wissenschaftliche Beschäftigung mit diesem Sprachphänomen sich als absolut notwendig erweist. Steyer begründet ihre These, indem sie auf die elektronischen Textdatenbanken hinweist. Gerade diese Korpora zeugen von der Lebendigkeit und Vitalität der Sprichwörter auch in unserer modernen Zeit. Sie zeigen eindrucksvoll die Häufigkeit, Festigkeit und

PROVERBIUM 30 (2013)



Produktivität solcher fest geprägten Sätze und illustrieren die komplexen Funktionen, die Sprichwörter in der Kommunikation einnehmen können. Des Weiteren reflektiert Steyer darüber, dass man durch Sprichwörter viel über Sprache (u.a. über Festigkeit und Varianz, über Musterhaftigkeit und Produktivität, über pragmatischen Wert etc.) selbst lernen kann und dass die Parömiologie einiges zu den aktuellen linguistischen Diskussionen beitragen kann. Darin sieht sie auch eines der Hauptziele und -verdienste des Sammelbandes.

Den ersten Teil des Bandes eröffnet Wolfgang Mieder mit seinem Beitrag zur „(inter-)nationalen Sprichwortpraxis“ Barack Obamas. Der (neulich wiedergewählte) amerikanische Präsident ist bekannt für sein beachtliches Repertoire an Sprichwörtern, die sowohl seinen Reden und Interviews als auch seinen Büchern eine metaphorische Ausdrucksfähigkeit verleihen. Allerdings haben Übersetzer bereits die Erfahrung gemacht, dass es für Obamas angloamerikanische Sprichwörter manchmal nur partielle oder gar keine Äquivalente gibt, was ihnen erhebliche Schwierigkeiten bereitet. In seiner Arbeit setzt sich Mieder mit diesem Problem auseinander, indem er die deutschen Übersetzungen zweier vom Präsidenten verfasster Bücher genauer unter der Lupe nimmt. Dabei versucht er die zentrale Frage seiner Untersuchung zu beantworten, nämlich: Wie gelungen ist die Übersetzung der von Obama gebrauchten Sprichwörter und sprichwörtlichen Redensarten? Er findet zwar Beispiele für perfekte Übersetzungen, aber viel zu oft trifft er auch auf Fälle, wo die Sprichwörter beziehungsweise die offensichtlichen Sprichwortanspielungen einfach außer Acht gelassen wurden. Mieder macht Vorschläge für alternative sprichwortartige Übersetzungen und rät den Übersetzern, sich intensiver mit mono- und multilingualen Sprichwörtersammlungen zu befassen und bei Gelegenheit auch Google und andere Datenbanken zu konsultieren.

In dem nachfolgenden Artikel geht Harald Burger auf Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede zwischen Sprichwort und Redensart ein. Einleitend stellt er einige terminologische und klassifikatorische Überlegungen an und kommt zu der Schlussfolgerung, dass überhaupt kein Bedürfnis nach einer (in der Parömiologie üblichen) Kategorie „sprichwörtliche Redensart“ besteht. Es gibt seines Erachtens nur eine große und recht heterogene Klasse von „Idiomen“, die sich auf einer Skala von gänzlich motiviert bis völlig unmotiviert einordnen lassen. Bei einer wissenschaftlich fundierten Gegenüberstellung von Sprichwörtern und Idiomen sollte man laut Burger

folgende Aspekte berücksichtigen: ihre quantitative Verteilung in Texten, ihre metasprachliche Indizierung (z.B. mit Hilfe lexikalischer Konnektoren), ihre Position im Text, ihre Häufung in einzelnen Textpassagen, ihre Rolle als Indizes für Idiolekte und Soziolekte sowie die Art und Funktion ihrer Modifizierungen. Im Rahmen seines Beitrages vergleicht Burger das konkrete Auftreten von Sprichwörtern und Idiomen in geschriebenen Texten. Sein Fazit lautet, dass beide Kategorien heutzutage im Gebrauch sehr nah beieinander stehen.

Ganz zu Beginn seines Artikels fragt sich Valerij M. Mokienko, warum Grigorij L. Permjakovs bahnbrechende Idee von einem parömischem Minimum nie richtig in die Praxis umgesetzt wurde? Permjakov wagte sich als Erster an ein sogenanntes „parömiologisches Experiment“ und begeisterte damit zahlreiche Forscher in anderen europäischen Staaten und in den USA. Nichtsdestotrotz hält man heutzutage die Vorstellung über ein allgemein gültiges Sprichwortminimum für alle Sprachträger einer bestimmten Sprache für unrealistisch. Dafür sieht Mokienko folgende Gründe: Zum einen kann man nicht von einer absoluten Auswahl an Sprichwörtern, sondern lediglich von einer „Kenntniszone“ respektive von einem „Kern“ sprechen, der allerdings im Sprachbewusstsein des jeweiligen Sprachträgers in Abhängigkeit von seiner persönlichen Spracherafahrung schwankt. Zum anderen ist diese Kenntniszone äußerst dynamisch – es können ständig neue Sprichwörter oder Varianten dazukommen, andere wiederum werden an die Peripherie gedrängt. Das bezeugt auch die von Mokienko durchgeführte soziolinguistische Fallstudie zu zwölf Sprichwörtern, die 2009 an den Rolltreppen der Sankt Petersburger Metrostationen zu sehen waren. Nur eines davon war in Permjakovs Minimum vertreten, aber infolge der Kampagne wurden alle diese vor kurzem noch peripheren Sprichwörter über Nacht populär.

Peter Grzybek macht seinerseits auf das terminologische Chaos aufmerksam, das beim Gebrauch der Begriffe „Kenntnis“, „Bekanntheit“, „Verwendung“ und „Frequenz“ von Sprichwörtern herrscht. In diesem Zusammenhang unterbreitet er im einleitenden Teil seines Artikels einige Vorschläge zur terminologischen, konzeptuellen und methodologischen Präzisierung der Konzepte von „Kenntnis“ (knowledge) und „Bekanntheit“ (familiarity). Im Folgenden konzentriert er sich primär auf die Methodologie der Untersuchung der Bekanntheit

von Sprichwörtern. Er bietet eine kurze Zusammenfassung zentraler Verfahren, wertet ihre bisherigen Ergebnisse aus und fasst zusammen, welche Stärken und Schwächen diese Methoden aufweisen. Grzybek kommt zu dem Schluss, dass das Verfahren der Teiltex-Präsentation im Vergleich zu anderen Methoden die meisten Vorteile mit sich bringt.

Britta Juska-Bacher stellt in ihrem Beitrag die relativ neue Erhebungsmethode Korpusanalyse und die eher traditionelle, zurzeit in der Parömiologie ins Hintertreffen geratene Methode Befragung gegenüber. Die Autorin plädiert dafür, dass die Befragung durchaus Potenzial für neue Forschungsansätze bietet. Sie führt am Beispiel einer Online-Befragung von 2 000 Informanten aus drei Sprachräumen (dem deutschen, schwedischen und niederländischen) exemplarisch vor, welche neuen Möglichkeiten sich aus einer groß angelegten Online-Fragebogenaktion ergeben – sowohl was die statistische Auswertung großer Datenmengen als auch was die Realisierung der Vergleichbarkeit zwischen Material aus mehreren Sprachen angeht. Außerdem hält Juska-Bacher fest, dass sich beide Methoden ausgezeichnet komplementieren lassen. So zum Beispiel können auf Grund einer Korpusanalyse gewonnene Ergebnisse mit Hilfe einer Befragung bezüglich ihrer aktuellen Gültigkeit bestätigt, differenziert, gewichtet oder auch korrigiert werden.

Im Mittelpunkt von Carmen Mellado Blancos Artikel steht die wissenschaftliche Auseinandersetzung mit pragmatischen Funktionen von deutschen und spanischen Sprichwörtern aus dem kognitiven Feld SCHWEIGEN. Durch die Analyse zweier Sprichwörter (*Reden ist Silber, Schweigen ist Gold* und *En boca cerrada no entran*) deckt die Autorin Unterschiede und Gemeinsamkeiten im textuellen Verhalten, in den illokutiven Funktionen, in der sozialen Funktion, in den kognitiven Konzepten und in der Typologie der Modifikationen beider Sprüche auf. Aus der durchgeführten kontrastiven Untersuchung zieht Mellado Blanco Schlussfolgerungen, die auch für die parömiologische Grundforschung von Bedeutung sind. Unter anderem konstatiert sie, dass Sprichwörter einen wichtigen pragmatischen Wandel durchgemacht haben, ihre didaktische Funktion fast ganz eingebüßt haben und heutzutage in der konzeptuellen Schriftlichkeit im starken Maße als rhetorisches Stilmittel eingesetzt werden. Darüber hinaus bezeugt sie mit ihrer Untersuchung, dass der kreative Umgang mit Sprichwörtern ein Garant für ihre Überlebensfähigkeit und Regenerationskraft ist.

Aus der Erkenntnis, dass die heutigen zwei- und mehrsprachigen Sammlungen des Öfteren reine 1:1-Entsprechungen anbieten, die den Bedeutungsumfang eines Sprichwortes meist nicht voll ausschöpfen können, haben sich der Autor des nachstehenden Artikels, Harry Walter und seine Kollegen entschlossen, ein experimentelles Wörterbuch vorzulegen. Darin sind drei Sprachen vertreten, die unterschiedlichen Sprachgruppen zugehören, und zwar Russisch (als Ausgangssprache), Deutsch und Spanisch. In seinem Beitrag verweist Walter auf besonders schwierige Fälle, auf die sein Team im Laufe der lexikographischen Arbeit gestoßen ist und stellt mögliche Lösungen vor, indem er konkrete Beispiele aus dem Sprichwörterbuch anführt.

Im vorletzten Beitrag aus dem ersten Teil des hier rezensierten Sammelbandes präsentiert Željka Matulina die Ergebnisse einer empirischen Untersuchung zur Verwendung von Sprichwörtern in ausgewählten kroatischen, bosnischen, serbischen und deutschsprachigen Zeitungstexten. Das Ziel der Arbeit war es, den typischen Gebrauch von Parömien in verschiedensprachigen Presstexten zu beschreiben und miteinander zu vergleichen. Matulina konnte etliche Ähnlichkeiten im Gebrauch der Parömien feststellen. Zum Vorschein kommen diese gemeinsamen Tendenzen vor allem im Bereich der okkasionellen formalen Veränderung der Sprichwörter und im kreativen Umgang mit den Sprüchen bei der Gestaltung der Presstexte. Die Unterschiede liegen dagegen unter anderem in der Quantität des verwendeten parömischen Materials.

Der letzte Artikel in diesem Teil wurde von Mona Noueshi verfasst, die sich der Beschäftigung mit interkulturellen und sprachlichstilistischen Aspekten von deutschen und arabischen Sprichwörtern widmet. In der Untersuchung geht es in erster Linie um das Problem der Übersetzbarkeit von arabischen Sprichwörtern aus ägyptisch-arabischen Texten der Gegenwartsliteratur. Die Autorin geht der Frage nach, bis zu welchem Grad die arabischen Texte in der Zielsprache Deutsch äquivalent wiedergegeben werden können, ohne dabei ihren kommunikativen Wert zu verlieren. Anhand zahlreicher anschaulicher Beispiele zeigt Noueshi, dass es in der Gegenüberstellung Arabisch-Deutsch noch eine Menge Fragen und Probleme zu lösen gibt, insbesondere was das Fehlen eines Pendantes nicht nur für ganze Sprichwörter, sondern auch für darin vorkommende Realien betrifft.

Der zweite Teil des Sammelbandes dokumentiert die Ergebnisse des internationalen Projektes „*SprichWort*“ in Form von zehn Beiträgen zu verschiedenen Aspekten der Internet-Lernplattform. Eröffnet wird dieser Teil von Vida Jesenšeks Beitrag, der eine Kurzbeschreibung der grundlegenden Idee und der Inhalte des Projekts darstellt. Die Autorin bietet einen kurzen Überblick über die Hauptergebnisse der gemeinsamen Tätigkeit von Sprachwissenschaftlern und Computerlinguisten aus verschiedenen Ländern Europas, die sich folgenderweise zusammenfassen lassen:

- eine mehrsprachige Datenbank mit 300 ausgewählten, im aktuellen Sprachgebrauch geläufigen, empirisch geprüften Sprichwörtern in fünf Sprachen (Deutsch, Slowenisch, Slowakisch, Tschechisch und Ungarisch), die einheitlich und mehrdimensional beschrieben sind;
- didaktische Inhalte mit speziellen parömiologischen Lern- und Lehrmaterialien, die das nachweisbar bescheidene Angebot an vergleichbaren parömiologischen Lern- und Lehrressourcen erweitern sollen;
- eine Sprichwortcommunity, durch die allen Interessenten die Möglichkeit gegeben wurde, sich an einigen Projektaktivitäten zu beteiligen.

Die im Internet unter <http://www.sprichwort-plattform.org> abrufbaren Sprachdaten und Materialien können sowohl in der Parömiologieforschung und in der lexikographischen Praxis als auch im Fremdsprachenunterricht eingesetzt werden.

Die Herausgeberin des hier vorgestellten Bandes, Kathrin Steyer, konzentriert sich in ihrem Beitrag auf drei Aspekte, die in der empirischen Arbeit für die „*SprichWort*“-Datenbank einen zentralen Platz eingenommen haben: die korpusbasierte Validierung des Sprichwortstatus (den Abgleich von Sprichwörtern im Korpus), die Sprichwortfrequenz und die korpusbasierte Rekonstruktion von Sprichwortmustern und Strukturformeln. Steyer erläutert die von der Projektgruppe entwickelte Heuristik und illustriert an einigen ausgewählten Punkten, mit welcher Komplexität die Projektmitarbeiter im Laufe der empirischen Arbeit konfrontiert wurden.

Das zentrale Anliegen des Artikels von Katrin Hein ist es zu zeigen, inwiefern man auf der Basis von Korpora zu einer im Hinblick auf den aktuellen Sprachgebrauch adäquaten lexikalischen Beschreibung von Sprichwörtern gelangen kann. Hierbei liegt der

Fokus auf der Erfassung der Bedeutung und des Gebrauchs deutscher Sprichwörter. Anhand von Belegen aus dem Deutschen Referenzkorpus zeigt die Autorin, wie eine Kernbedeutung und gebrauchsspezifische Aspekte der Sprichwortverwendung (sogenannte Gebrauchsbesonderheiten) differenziert werden können. Hein führt deutlich vor Augen, dass die systematische Analyse von Korpusbelegen in der lexikographischen Praxis mehr Berücksichtigung finden sollte.

Der Beitrag von Melania Fabčič fasst die Ergebnisse einer Untersuchung des deutschslowenischen Teils der *SprichWort*-Datenbank (s. oben) zusammen. Das Ziel der Untersuchung war es, eine Typologie der Äquivalenzbeziehungen zwischen den Sprichwörtern zu konzipieren, die auf unterschiedlicher Konzeptualisierung im Deutschen und Slowenischen und auf den sich daraus ergebenden Differenzen zwischen den Sprichwörtern beider Sprachen basiert. Die Sprichwortpaare wurden im Sinne der konzeptuellen Metapher-Theorie analysiert und zusätzlich in Bezug auf ihre argumentativen Funktionen untersucht. Diese kombinierte kognitivpragmatisch ausgerichtete Methode gewährte einen recht interessanten Einblick in die Äquivalenzbeziehungen zwischen dem deutschen und dem slowenischen Sprichwortbestand und kann laut Autorin als Ansatz für die Entstehung vergleichbarer Typologien für andere Sprachenpaare dienen.

Bei einer kontrastiven Untersuchung von Sprichwörtern aus verschiedenen Sprachen können die gegenübergestellten Items auf der Systemebene zwar als Äquivalente erscheinen, jedoch völlig unterschiedliche Charakteristika hinsichtlich ihrer diasystematischen Markierungen aufweisen. Das bedeutet, es kann Differenzen geben im Hinblick auf ihre Präsenz in der Gegenwartssprache, ihre territoriale Verbreitung, ihre Herkunft, ihr bevorzugtes Vorkommen im gesprochenen respektive geschriebenen Usus, ihre Präsenz in verschiedenen Textsorten, ihre Häufigkeit im Sprachgebrauch, ihre stilistische, funktionale, sozial- und schichtabhängige Färbung etc. In seinem Artikel nimmt Peter Ďurčo einen kontrastiven Vergleich deutscher und slowakischer Sprichwörter vor und zählt zahlreiche Beispiele für diasystematische Differenzen im Fall von semantischen Äquivalenten auf. Diesbezüglich lautet seine dringende Empfehlung an Parömiologen und Parömiographen, diese Unterschiede zu be-

rücksichtigen und in Sammlungen und Wörterbüchern entsprechend zu markieren.

In seinem Beitrag knüpft Tamás Forgács an das Thema „Sprichwortäquivalenz“ an, indem er deutsche und ungarische Sprichwörter aus der *SprichWort*-Datenbank zitiert, die als Beispiele für Volläquivalenz, Teiläquivalenz beziehungsweise funktionale Äquivalenz fungieren. Damit bezweckt der Autor einerseits zu demonstrieren, wie schwer es manchmal ist, die wirklich treffende Entsprechung für ein Sprichwort in einer anderen Sprache zu finden. Andererseits möchte er darauf hinweisen, wie abwechslungsreich die einzelnen Sprachen die gleichen kognitiven Modelle in sprachliche Bilder und somit in phraseologische Konstruktionen umsetzen können.

Nach – für den Geschmack der Rezensentin – allzu umfangreichen Ausführungen zum Wesen der Sprichwörter, zu ihrer Rolle als Hort des kulturellen Gedächtnisses einer Diskursgemeinschaft und zu Grundfragen der Sprichwortäquivalenz präsentiert Elizabeta Bernjak in eher knapper Form die Ergebnisse einer kontrastiven Analyse slowenischer und ungarischer Parömien aus dem Bedeutungsfeld GESUNDHEIT. Die Autorin vergleicht die Bedeutung und die Struktur der Sprichwörter und versucht festzustellen, ob es sich bei dem jeweiligen Paar um Voll- oder lediglich um Teiläquivalente handelt. Die Untersuchung stützt sich auf Daten, die in der Datenbank des *SprichWort*-Projekts erfasst sind.

Tamás Kispál berichtet in seinem Aufsatz über die Tätigkeit der Projektgruppe „Didaktik“, die die parömiologischen Aufgaben auf der *SprichWort*-Plattform entwickelt und erstellt hat. Diese Aufgaben sind für eine besondere Gruppe von Nutzern bestimmt, und zwar für Studierende von Fremd- und Muttersprachen, Linguisten, Lehrer sowie eventuell an der Sprache und Wissenschaft interessierte Laien, deren Sprachkenntnisse idealerweise mindestens der Niveaustufe B2 des Gemeinsamen europäischen Referenzrahmens für Sprachen entsprechen. Das Ziel der parömiologischen Aufgaben ist es, die Nutzer auf linguistische Sprichwortmerkmale und einige sprichwortbezogene sprachwissenschaftliche Phänomene aufmerksam zu machen und die diesbezüglichen Kenntnisse zu üben. Die verschiedenen Aufgabentypen werden im Beitrag exemplarisch vorgeführt.

Außer den parömiologischen Aufgaben ist auf der *SprichWort*-Plattform ein reiches Angebot an interaktiven Übungen, Tests und Selbstevaluationsbögen für Lernende, Lehrende und Interessenten zu

finden. Die Übungen und Tests sind ein-, zwei oder mehrsprachig angelegt und für die Niveaustufen B1-B2 und C1-C2 des Gemeinsamen europäischen Referenzrahmens für Sprachen bestimmt. In ihrem Beitrag schenkt Darina Vitéková diesen didaktischen Materialien besondere Aufmerksamkeit. Sie macht den Leser mit jenen Übungstypen für deutsche Sprichwörter bekannt, die auf der Plattform am häufigsten vorkommen und für die einzelnen Lernphasen (Erkennen, Verstehen, Festigen und Verwenden) als repräsentativ angesehen werden können.

Der Beitrag von Brigita Kacjan bildet den würdigen Abschluss des Sammelbandes. Zunächst spricht die Autorin wichtige Aspekte an, die für das Sprichwortlernen von Bedeutung sind, wie z.B. die Rolle des autonomen Lernens und die Präsenz von Sprichwörtern im Alltag und im Fremdsprachenunterricht. Sie hebt eines der Hauptziele der *SprichWort*-Plattform hervor, das darin besteht, das autonome Lernen mit Hilfe von modernen, interaktiven Materialien und praktischen didaktischen Vorschlägen zu unterstützen. In diesem Zusammenhang formuliert Kacjan 25 konkrete Tipps zum Sprichwortlernen, die sich auf die im Rahmen des Projekts festgelegten vier Lernphasen (s. weiter oben) beziehen.

Zusammenfassend lässt sich festhalten, dass es mehrere Gründe gibt, die für das Rezipieren dieses Bandes sprechen. Zum Ersten informiert er im Detail über den aktuellen Stand der parämiologischen Forschung. Zum Zweiten wirft er mehrere noch offenstehende theoretische und empirische Fragen auf und gibt somit Anregungen für weiterführende Untersuchungen. Und nicht zuletzt bietet er durch die Präsentation des didaktischen Teils der *SprichWort*-Plattform wertvolle praktische Tipps für Fremdsprachler und -lehrer.

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WOLFGANG MIEDER

INTERNATIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF NEW AND  
REPRINTED PROVERB COLLECTIONS

For Xesús Ferro Ruibal

It is with much excitement that I can report that 83 paremiographical publications could be added to my International Proverb Archives at the University of Vermont during this past year. As usual, these collections vary widely in length and scope. Some of them are small regional collections, and yet, they are often of great value, to wit several African collections of 100 proverbs collected by way of field research from languages that are spoken by only small numbers of people. It remains my hope that all of the African proverb collections will one day be brought under one paremiographical roof by way of an electronic database, enabling scholars to look at the rich tradition of African proverbs from a comparative point of view. We know much about the proverbs that are commonly known throughout Europe or Asia, but what are the common proverbs that have been disseminated over large areas of Africa? It would indeed be a worthwhile and welcome project to work on a comprehensive database of major African proverbs.

One of the major accomplishments this year is without doubt the 18<sup>th</sup> edition of John Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations. A Collection of Passages, Phrases, and Proverbs Traced to Their Sources in Ancient and Modern Literature*, ed. by Geoffrey O'Brien (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2012). The 1<sup>st</sup> edition of this massive reference work appeared in 1855, and this new edition can serve as a model for other such books in various languages. Many such volumes are outdated, and it is high time to update them with modern quotations, proverbs, slogans, mottoes, etc. This leads me to the announcement that *The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs*, ed. by Charles Clay Doyle, Wolfgang Mieder, and Fred R. Shapiro (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University

Press, 2012) has now been published, and this volume could also serve as a model for collections of truly new proverbs from other languages. Let me also mention that the first volume of the *Handbuch der Sentenzen und Sprichwörter im höfischen Roman des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by Manfred Eikelmann and Tomas Tomasek (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012) has now been published. The second volume had, somewhat peculiarly, already appeared in 2009, but the two massive volumes together are a major accomplishment regarding the proverbial language of medieval epics.

Obviously I could single out other collections, but space does not allow further comments. Suffice it to mention one more voluminous collection, namely Pedro Benavente Jareño and Xesús Ferro Ruibal's *O libro da vaca. Monografía etnolingüística do gando vacún* (Santiago de Compostela: Xunta de Galicia, 2010) with its 1637 large pages! I do wish to thank Xesús Ferro Ruibal for having sent me proverb collections from Galicia over the years, and I am also most happy for the exchange that we have set up between his *Cadernos de Fraseoloxía Galega* and my *Proverbium*. It is then with sincere appreciation, respect and admiration that I dedicate this year's "International Bibliography of New and Reprinted Proverb Collections" to my Galician friend Xesús Ferro Ruibal.

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WOLFGANG MIEDER

INTERNATIONAL PROVERB SCHOLARSHIP:  
AN UPDATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

For Fionnuala Carson Williams

During this past year I could add another 413 scholarly publications on proverbs, proverbial expressions and various other types of phraseologisms to my International Proverb Archives at the University of Vermont. What this means is that I occupy myself with more than one new article or book on proverbial matters each day, and I can once again report that international paremiology is alive and well. It is truly amazing to register all these exciting studies, but I do have to admit that at times I do get the feeling that the wide field of phraseology is pushing paremiology as a smaller field of study into a corner. I find it especially bothersome when scholars who are clearly dealing with paremiological issues refuse to use such traditional terminology as proverbs, proverbial expressions, proverbial comparisons, etc. I do understand that linguists and phraseologists want to create their own terminology, but I would nevertheless plead with them not to throw the baby completely out with the bath water, to use an old proverbial expression that goes back to the early sixteenth century and that has been loan-translated into other languages. It certainly is no crime to use vocabulary that has long been established in the scholarly investigation of folk wisdom and folk speech. Paremiology was long dominated by such fields as folklore, literature, and philology, and scholars of those fields had established a solid vocabulary for such “folksy” bits of wisdom or metaphorical phrases. While some of the new terminology is in fact very useful for a purely linguistic and phraseological approach, it is perfectly fine to employ long-established terms as well that are current among readers who are not experts in phraseology as such.

This year there once again appeared a considerable number of extremely important essay volumes, among them Hanna Biadún-Grabarek (ed.), *Fragen der Phraseologie, Lexikologie und Syn-*

*tax* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012); Natalia Filatkina, Ane Kleine-Engel, Marcel Dräger, and Harald Burger (eds.), *Aspekte der historischen Phraseologie und Phraseographie* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 2012); Natalia Filatkina, Birgit Ulrike Münch, and Ane Kleine-Engel (eds.), *Formelhaftigkeit in Text und Bild* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2012); Anna Idström and Elisabeth Piirainen (eds.), *Endangered Metaphors* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2012); Antonio Pamies, José Manuel Pazos Breña, and Lucía Luque Nadal (eds.), *Phraseology and Discourse: Cross Linguistic and Corpus-based Approaches* (Baltmannsweiler: Schneider Verlag Hohengehren, 2012); Michael Prinz and Ulrike Richter-Vapaatalo (eds.), *Idiome, Konstruktionen, "verblümete rede". Beiträge zur Geschichte der germanistischen Phraseologieforschung. Festschrift für Jarmo Korhonen* (Stuttgart: S. Hirzel, 2012); Rui J.B. Soares and Outi Lauhakangas (eds.), *Proceedings of the Fifth Interdisciplinary Colloquium on Proverbs, 6<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> November 2011, at Tavira, Portugal* (Tavira: Tipografia Tavirense, 2012); and Kathrin Steyer (ed.), *Sprichwörter multilingual. Theoretische, empirische und angewandte Aspekte der modernen Parömiologie* (Tübingen: Narr Verlag, 2012). From among the many excellent books I might mention Sarah Hoffmann, *Argumentative Strukturen in Sprichwörtern* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2012); Elvira Manero Richard, *Perspectivas lingüísticas sobre el refrán. El refranero metalingüístico del español* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011); Elisabeth Piirainen, *Widespread Idioms in Europe and Beyond. Toward a Lexicon of Common Figurative Units* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012); Aderemi Raji-Oyelade, *Playful Blasphemies. Postproverbials as Archetypes of Modernity in Yoruba Culture* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2012); and Elisabeth Schulze-Busacker, *La Didactique profane au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2012). But I know, of course, that I am merely scratching the service here and that these books are but the tip of the iceberg.

Since these few references must suffice to whet the appetite as it were to now read the entire bibliography, I want to close with a special item in the following list. It is Fionnuala Carson Williams' *Application for the Degree of Doctor of Literature of the National University of Ireland, April 2011* (Belfast: National University of Ireland, 2011) that includes 581 pages of previous

publications and earned her the doctorate degree for her invaluable paremiological work. Many of us have met Fionnuala Williams at various conferences, and I am certain that paremiologists worldwide would want to join me in congratulating this special friend on her most impressive academic achievement. As a scholarly family we delight in her accomplishment, and it gives me great pleasure to dedicate this bibliography to her as a sign of my personal respect and admiration for my good paremiological friend from Ireland.

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