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# "THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX": ORIGIN, NATURE, AND MEANING OF MODERN ANGLO-AMERICAN PROVERBS

***Abstract:*** This article is a much longer version of a keynote address that I delivered at the "Colloque International de Parémiologie" on July 2, 2011, at the University of Paris-Diderot, at Paris, France. While the shorter lecture will appear in due time in the proceedings of this exciting conference under the editorship of Jean-Philippe Zouogbo, the present article will make it available to *Proverbium* readers throughout the world who will doubtlessly be interested in the inclusion of many more textual examples. The paper is based on the Anglo-American proverbs contained in the new *Dictionary of Modern Proverbs* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2012) compiled by Charles Clay Doyle, Wolfgang Mieder, and Fred R. Shapiro. It begins with a short history and description of this joint project that took about four years to complete. This is followed by lexicographical matters dealing with the organization of the proverbs and their many variants. Syntactical and structural aspects are discussed, delineating the appearance of certain structural patterns. Proverbs in the form of indicative sentences, imperatives, interrogatives are presented, and the different lengths of these modern proverbs is commented upon as well. There are also considerations relating to counter-proverbs, anti-proverbs, followed by an analysis of proverbs originating from known individuals, motion pictures, songs, advertisements, etc. A discussion of the realia contained in these proverbs is also included, especially regarding animals, somatisms, sports, technology. business, gender, sexuality, scatology, etc. It is concluded that modern Anglo-American proverbs are perhaps less metaphorical than traditional proverbs, that they tend to be shorter, and that they do at least in part reflect modern mores and the worldview of the modern age.

***Keywords:*** Advertisement, American, Anglo-American, anti-proverb, business, collection, counter-proverb, dictionary, gender, imperative, interrogative, length, lexicography, metaphor, modernity, motion picture, origin, paremiography, pattern, realia, sexuality, scatology, somatism, song, sports, structure, syntax, technology, variant, worldview.

Among modern proverb scholars it has become almost proverbial to call for the collection and study of proverbs that have been coined in more recent times. Far too long have paremiologists and paremiographers looked backwards at traditional proverbs without paying much attention to what modernity has contributed to the treasure trove of proverbial wisdom. Archer Taylor, the doyen of 20th-century paremiology, lamented this unfortunate situation in an invaluable article on "The Study of Proverbs" (1939), calling for new collections that would be "made as complete as humanly possible, showing not only old proverbs and variations of old ones that are still current, but also new ones that have come into use, thus giving a complete cross-section of the proverbs of our time" (1939 [1975]: 62-63 [46], see also Taylor 1969). Following my revered mentor in this plea, I observed some fifty years later in my "Prolegomena to Prospective Paremiography' (1990b) that "paremiography cannot remain a science that looks primarily backwards and works only with texts of times gone by. Modern paremiographers can and should also assemble proverb collections that include the texts of the twentieth century [and beyond]" (1990B: 142, see also 2000: 16). Such calls have not remained unheeded for English language proverbs, as my survey "'New Proverbs Run Deep': Prolegomena to a Dictionary of Modern Anglo-American Proverbs" (2009a, see also Sevilla Muñoz 2009) has shown.

This overview was a direct result of a contract for a new *Dictionary of Modern Proverbs* that my friends Charles Clay Doyle, Fred R. Shapiro, and I signed on September 21, 2007, with the prestigious Yale University Press of New Haven, Connecticut. Even before signing the contract, we had already more or less independently begun to assemble modern Anglo-American proverbs, i.e., proverbs for which no references before the year 1900 can be found. Doyle had published about 200 such texts in his invaluable compilation "On 'New' Proverbs and the Conservativeness of Proverb Dictionaries" (1996 [2003], see also Doyle 2001 and 2007b), Shapiro had included a list of 104 "Modern Proverbs" in his invaluable *The Yale Book of Quotations* (2006: 526-530), and I had amassed about 300 texts that qualified as modern proverbs during the four decades of establishing my International Proverb Archives. After combining these three sets of modern

proverbs, of which many quite expectedly proved to be duplicates, we examined six major and eighteen minor proverb collections published during the past few decades for possible modern proverbs, among them Nigel Rees, *Sayings of the Century. The Stories Behind the Twentieth Century's Quotable Sayings* (1984), Bartlett Jere Whiting, *Modern Proverbs and Proverbial Sayings* (1989), Nigel Rees, *Bloomsbury Dictionary of Phrase & Allusion* (1991), Wolfgang Mieder, Stewart A. Kingsbury, and Kelsie B. Harder, *A Dictionary of American Proverbs* (1992), David Pickering, Alan Isaacs, and Elizabeth Martin, *Brewer's Dictionary of 20th-Century Phrase and Fable* (1992), Anne Bertram and Richard Spears, *NTC's Dictionary of Proverbs and Clichés* (1993), Linda and Roger Flavell, *Dictionary of Proverbs and Their Origins* (1993), Nigel Rees, *Phrases & Sayings* (1995), Anna T. Litovkina, *A Proverb a Day Keeps Boredom Away* (2000), Adrian Room, *Brewer's Dictionary of Modern Phrase & Fable* (2000), David Pickering, *Cassell's Dictionary of Proverbs* (2001), Gregory Titelman, *Random House Dictionary of Popular Proverbs and Sayings* (2000), Martin H. Manser, *Facts on File Dictionary of Proverbs* (2002), Wolfgang Mieder, *English Proverbs* (2003), George B. Bryan and Wolfgang Mieder, *A Dictionary of Anglo-American Proverbs & Proverbial Phrases Found in Literary Sources of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (2005), Stan Nussbaum, *American Cultural Baggage[i.e., Proverbs]. How to Recognize and Deal with It* (2005), Susan Ratcliffe, *Oxford Dictionary of Phrase, Saying, and Quotation* (2006), Nigel Rees, *A Word in Your Shell-Like: 6,000 Curious and Everyday Phrases Explained* (2006), and Jennifer Speake, *The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* (2008). In addition, we looked through about seventy publications that in one way or another also cite some modern proverbs, as for example Richard Jente, "The American Proverb" (1931-1932), Frances M. Barbour, "Some Uncommon Sources of Proverbs" (1963), Kenneth L. Higbee and Richard J. Millard, "Visual Imagery and Familiarity Ratings for 203 Sayings" (1983), Jess Nierenberg, "Proverbs in Graffiti: Taunting Traditional Wisdom" (1983 [1994]), Robert R. Hoffman and Richard P. Honeck, "Proverbs, Pragmatics, and the Ecology of Abstract Categories" (1987), Wolfgang Mieder, *American Proverbs: A Study of Texts and Contexts* (1989a), Wolfgang Mieder, *Proverbs Are Never Out of Season: Popular Wisdom in the Modern Ages* (1993a), Chris-

toph Chlosta and Peter Grzybek, "Empirical and Folkloristic Paremiology: Two to Quarrel or to Tango?" (1995), Kimberly Lau, "'It's about Time': The Ten Proverbs Most Frequently Used in Newspapers and Their Relation to American Values" (1996 [2003]), Roumyana Petrova, "Language and Culture: One Step Further in the Search for Common Ground (A Study of Modern English Proverbs)" (1996), Sw. Anand Prahlad, *African-American Proverbs in Context* (1996), Stephen D. Winick, *The Proverb Process: Intertextuality and Proverbial Innovation in Popular Culture* (1998), Anna Tóthné Litovkina, "An Analysis of Popular American Proverbs [found in the Folklore Archive at UC Berkeley] and Their Use in Language Teaching" (1998), Paul Hernadi and Francis Steen, "The Tropical Landscape of Proverbia: A Crossdisciplinary Travelogue" (1999 [2003]), George B. Bryan, "An Unfinished List of Anglo-American Proverb Songs" (2001), Charles Clay Doyle, "Collections of Proverbs and Proverb Dictionaries: Some Historical Observations on What's in Them and What's not" (2007b). After pooling all of these references we eventually had the impressive database of not quite 700 modern Anglo-American proverbs (for more details see Mieder 2009a).

For all these texts we undertook the laborious task to prove that they in fact were not older than the 1900 cut-off year. Many of our sources did not provide any dates of occurrences, and we consequently had to use various databases (Google, Google Books, Google News, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, Newspaperarchive, America's Historical Newspapers, 19th Century U.S. Newspapers, LexisNexis Academic, JSTOR, etc.) to find the earliest citation possible (Chlosta and Ostermann 2002, Colson 2007, Kleinberger Günther 2006, Lauhakangas 2001, Rittersbacher and Mösch 2005, Umorova 2005, and Winick 2001). But not just that, for as I have said in my earlier description of this vexing and time-consuming task: "Texts alone no proverbs make, and as with all folklore genres, it takes currency and traditionality, usually also variants, [...] to decide whether a text is in fact in more or less general use beyond being a mere one-day wonder!" (2009a: 257). In other words, we felt compelled to establish the proverbiality of each and every text, thus going far beyond all previous background material accumulated on these proverbs. But our work did not stop there, for we clearly were not satisfied with just about 700

modern proverbs! Many contenders to be included eventually had to be dropped because we were able to establish that they were already in use before 1900 (Stevenson 1948, Wilson 1970), among them such surprises as the following (our dictionary includes a much longer appendix with additional texts):

**Business** before pleasure.
**Buy** low, sell high.
The **camera** cannot lie.
You are what you **eat**.
An **elephant** never forgets.
The **future** is already here.
Behind every great **man** there's a great woman.
The second **million** (dollars) is always easier (than the first).
**Money** isn't everything.
There is nothing to fear but **fear** itself .
It pays to **advertise**.
**Records** are set to be broken.
**Safety** first.
You can prove anything with **statistics**.
First **things** first.
The best **things** (in life) are free.
No **tickee**, no washee (shirtee). (Arora 1988, Mieder 1996 [1997])
**Use** it or lose it. (Doyle 2009)

But the sixty-four thousand dollar question was and remains: How do we find ever more modern proverbs? Our own reading, relatives, friends, colleagues, and above all our students were of great help. We also continued gathering possible proverbs from literature, the mass media, films, songs, advertisements, speeches, and oral communications of all types (Mieder and Sobieski 2006), and as our *Dictionary of Modern Proverbs* is scheduled to be published by May 2012, we have submitted a final manuscript of 1422 modern proverbs, of which 731 had not been registered before! The voluminous e-mail correspondence among the three of us living relatively far apart in Athens, Georgia (Charles Doyle), New Haven, Connecticut (Fred Shapiro), and my Burlington, Vermont, is a telling testimony for the wondrous excitement in discovering one proverb after another during about four years of

enthusiastic and rewarding work on this fascinating project. We have done our very best throughout to establish the earliest possible reference for each proverb, citing this reference in its context with precise bibliographical information. We also include variants and, where necessary, some explanatory comments regarding linguistic, cultural, and semantic matters. We checked every proverb for its currency and frequency, with most proverbs garnering some tens of thousands of raw Google hits (we are obviously aware of duplications and errors in these electronic searches). The hits in Google Books and Google News are significantly less "raw", but even there the results are not always reliable. Of course, Google also shows deceptively low numbers for proverbs that became obsolete by mid-century, or that are extremely recent in their coinage.

Have we found and included all possible modern Anglo-American proverbs in our *Yale Book of Modern Proverbs*? Of course not! We will have missed plenty new proverbs and also those that are presently being created (Honeck and Welge 1997 [2003]), and it is for this reason that we have included the address of a website so that readers can hopefully draw our attention to numerous additional texts. Obviously this project will be ongoing, and we hope in due time to bring out an updated and expanded version of our proverb dictionary. But we do want to stress once again that the identification of modern proverbs is extremely difficult and is in need of as much help as possible from people interested in the proverbial wisdom of the modern age. But having completed our task for the time being, we can now finally draw some conclusions about the nature, origin, and meaning of these modern Anglo-American proverbs. What follows is my attempt to draw some general conclusions from our 1422 truly modern proverbs regarding such matters as variants, form, syntax, structure, length, poetics, metaphor, origin (authorship, attribution, anonymity), semantics, etc. I will also comment on how these proverbs reflect on modern social, political, economic, psychological, and sexual matters, showing that some of the major sources of the proverbs are advertising slogans, so-called "laws" of modernity, songs, motion pictures, the world of business, sports, technology, and sexuality (also obscenity and scatology). It will also be shown that animal and somatic metaphors are quite prevalent, but clearly

there are also numerous proverbs concerned with religion (God), beauty, love, success, and other matters. As has always been the case with traditional wisdom, modern proverbs also show themselves to be observations and generalizations about basic human behavior and the trials and trepidations of human life (Mieder 1987 [1993] and 2004).

Following the lead of some of the major proverb collections already mentioned, we have alphabetized the proverb entries according to the first noun in each proverb. If the text has no noun, then the first finite verb serves as the keyword, using bold face print in both cases to mark the keywords. For cases in which variants of a given proverb have differing keywords, cross-references are included with a "See" indicator followed by the standard variant of the proverb showing the user where to find more information about it. Each entry begins with the proverb itself with some principal variants shown in parentheses. Then, introduced by its date, follows the earliest contextualized reference with precise bibliographical information. Usually further dated examples of the text in context follow, especially if the earliest reference cited leaves some doubt as to its proverbiality, if the proverb is not well known or has not been recorded in any proverb collection before, if important variants need to be illustrated in actual use, or if additional textual references shed further light on the origin, attribution, evolution, or meaning of the proverb. Where it seemed necessary to us, we have also added further brief comments. Finally, all of this is augmented by precise references to those proverb collections and other sources in which 691 of the 1422 proverbs have been registered before.

As all paremiographers know, it is at times quite difficult to decide on the precise wording of the lemma for a particular proverb, especially since many proverbs are current in various degrees of variation. It is for this reason that quite a large number of lemmas contain principal variants in parentheses, as for example:

Free **advice** is worth (exactly) what you pay for it.
No matter how (thin) you slice (cut) it, it's still **baloney**.
Don't take (tear) down a **fence** (wall) unless you are sure why it was put up.
**Flattery** will get you everywhere (anywhere).
If **life** hands (gives, throws) you scraps, make a quilt.

You are only as good as your last (latest) **mistake**.
It is (is always, must be) five (six) **o'clock** somewhere (in the world).
There are no **problems**, only opportunities (challenges).
Tough (Hard, Difficult) **times** call for tough (hard, difficult) decisions (choices).
**Tragedy** (Every tragedy) is an opportunity.
**Trust** is (must be) earned.

In those cases where the variants are more substantial (i.e., having a different keyword), we do list the variant as a separate entry followed with a "See" and the standard proverb lemma where the variant is to be found. Scholarly proverb dictionaries need to include such cross references so that their users do not miss those proverbs that, as all verbal folklore, exist in considerable variants.

**Almost** doesn't count. See "CLOSE doesn't count."
Never trust a skinny **cook**. See "Never trust a skinny CHEF."
**Grow** where you are planted. See "BLOOM where you are planted."
Never ask (You don't want to know) what's in a **hotdog**. See "Never ask what's in a SAUSAGE."
When all else fails, read the **instructions**. See "When all else fails, read the DIRECTIONS."
If **life** isn't one thing, it's another. See "If it isn't one THING, it's another."
**Nearly** is not good enough. See "ALMOST is not good enough."
There will always be another **streetcar**. See "There will always be another BUS."
Think big **thoughts**. See "THINK big."
The older the **violin**, the sweeter the tune. See "The older the fiddle, the sweeter the tune."

Turning to syntactical matters it can be stated that most modern proverbs are straight-forward indicative sentences, with 61 of 1422 or 4.4% following the pattern "A(n) / noun / verb / ...", as for example:

A **boy** cannot do a man's work.

A **candle** loses nothing by lighting another candle.
A **chip** on the shoulder is a good indication of wood higher up.
A **crisis** is an opportunity.
A **diamond** is (Diamonds are) forever.
An **expert** is only a fool a long way from home.
A **handicap** is what you make it.
A **man** is no better than his horse.
A **woman's** place is any place she wants to be.

Another 33 proverbs or 2.3% expand the pattern by a descriptive adjective, i.e., "A(n) / adjective / noun / verb ... ", as can be seen from the following examples:

A clear **conscience** is (usually) a sign of (usually comes from) a bad memory.
An old **dog** barks sitting down.
A boiled (fried, cooked) **egg** won't hatch.
A wise **head** is better than a pretty face.
An empty **pot** does not boil over.
A live **soldier** is better than a dead hero.
A good **start** often means a bad finish.
A kind **thought** is never lost.
A rising **tide** lifts all boats (ships).

As one would expect, quite a few proverbs (namely 67 or 4.7%) follow the indicative pattern "The / noun / verb ...":

The **future** is not (is no longer) what it used to be.
The **hand** will not reach for what the heart does not long for.
The **joy** is in the journey.
The **life** you save may (could) be your own.
The **mountains** are calm even in a tempest.
The **nail** that sticks out gets pounded (hammered down).
The **rush** (Sometimes the rush) is worth the risk.
The **sun** will come out tomorrow.
The **world** (Everyone) hates a quitter.

The same pattern expanded by a modifying adjective is not quite as prevalent, but the collection does contain 39 (2.7%) texts based on "The / adjective / noun / verb ... ":

The unaimed **arrow** never misses.
The first **casualty** of war is truth (Truth is the first casualty of war).
The same **knife** cuts the sheep and the goat.
The longest **mile** is the last mile home.
The second **mouse** gets the cheese.
The best (easiest, safest) **place** to hide is in plain sight.
The worst (kind of) **ride** is better than the best (kind of) walk.
The best **way** to kill time is to work it to death.
The squeaking (squeaky) **wheel** gets the grease.

In addition to these quite similar syntactical patterns totaling 200 (14.1%) texts, a considerable number of proverbs, 57 or 4.0% to be precise, follow the pattern "You can't (cannot) verb ...", thereby continuing an established proverbial way of expressing the impossibility of a situation or action:

You can't put the **bullet** back in the gun.
You cannot herd **cats**.
You cannot tell the **depth** of the well by the length of the handle on the pump.
You can't unscramble **eggs**.
You can't go **home** again.
You can't **know** where you're going unless you know where you've been.
You can't be (There is no such thing as) a little (bit) **pregnant**.
You can't fix **stupid**.
You can't put **toothpaste** back in the tube.

Somewhat related to the sentiment expressed by way of the "You can't" impossibility marker are the messages contained in those proverbs (68 or 4.8%) that state their messages by way of the "Don't (Do not) / verb ..." imperative, which certainly is a well-established proverbial formula:

Do not (You cannot) compare **apples** and oranges.
Don't **believe** everything you think.
Don't **fall** before you're pushed.
Don't draw a **gun** unless you're going to use it.

Don't **judge** yourself by others.
Don't **knock** it till you've tried it.
Don't get caught with your **pants** (trousers, britches) down.
Don't **try** to be someone you are not.
Don't **worry**, be happy.

Another 30 (2.1%) proverbs follow the formula "Never / verb ...", once again expressing their advice in the form of an imperative:

Never miss a **chance** to sit down and rest your feet.
Never work with **children** or animals.
Never **give** anything away that you can sell (Why give something away when you can sell it?).
Never argue with a **fool**; people might not know the difference.
Never (You don't) bring (take) a **knife** to a gunfight.
Never play **leapfrog** with a unicorn.
Never (Don't) **let** them see you sweat.
Never try to teach a **pig** to sing; it wastes your time, and it annoys the pig.

Altogether then there are 98 (6.9%) proverbs that state their message in the form of an imperative, not a particularly high number to be sure. Perhaps this is due the fact that people today are less willing to be told directly what to do or not to do. In other words, the obvious didactic nature of many traditional proverbs appears to be on the decline.

Proverbs in the form of humorous, ironic, or sarcastic interrogatives have never been especially numerous, and this is also true for modern proverbs. In fact, in some of the 14 (1%) texts the interrogative is merely a variant of the standard proverb. Nevertheless, these proverbs in the form of a question add some rhetorical spice to the intended message:

A **bird** may love a fish, but where would they live (build a home, build a nest)?
**Birds** sing after a storm (so why shouldn't we?).
Who cares if a **cat** is black or white as long as it catches mice?
Never **give** anything away that you can sell (Why give something away when you can sell it?).

Where does a 500-pound (800-pound, etc.) **gorilla** sit?
Why go out for **hamburger** (for a hamburger, for fast food) when you can get steak at home?
Nobody ever said **life** is fair (Who ever said life is fair?).
Other than that, Mrs. **Lincoln**, how did you like the play?

Concerning prevalent structures, it certainly comes as a surprise that the well-established pattern of "Where there is X, there is Y" does not at all appear among these modern proverbs. This can perhaps be taken as a sign that some of the traditional structures are not necessarily of great importance in the formulation of new proverbs any longer. The most dominant structure in our corpus is "If you X, (you) Y" with 62 (4.4%) proverbs, as for example:

If you don't believe in **cooperation**, watch what happens to a wagon (car) when one wheel comes off.
If you can **dream** it, you can do it (be it, have it).
If you can't be **good**, be careful.
If you can't stand (don't like) the **heat**, get out of the kitchen. (Mieder and Bryan 1997: 59-61)
If you can't ride two **horses** at once, you shouldn't be in the circus.
If you (can) **make** it here, you can make it anywhere.
If you keep your **mouth** shut, you won't put your foot in it.
If you want something done, ask a busy **person**.
If you are not at the **table**, you may be on the menu.

But this is really the only structure that has at least somewhat of a claim for being of considerable frequency. The number of texts based on other structures falls off rather drastically, showing once again that by far the majority of modern proverbs are rather straight-forward indicative sentences with little formulaic or poetic characteristics. Here then are the examples for eleven structures, with nine groups of texts not even reaching 1% of the corpus:

"X is Y" (24, 1.7%; definitional proverbs)
**Age** is just a number.
Old **age** is hell.
**Beauty** is only skin.
**Black** is beautiful.

**History** is bunk.
**Life** is a funny (strange) old dog.
**Politics** (All politics) is local.
The **sky** is the limit.
The **world** is a place. (Mieder 2009b: 56-57, 2010c, 2011: 24-26)

"X is better than Y" (16, 1.1%)
The **chase** (hunt) is better than the kill.
**Fame** is better than fortune (Better fame than fortune)
A **friend's** frown is better than a foe's smile.
A wise **head** is better than a pretty face.
A bad **professional** is better than a good amateur.
The worst (kind of) **ride** is better than the best (kind of) walk.
**Second best** is better than nothing (at all).
A live **soldier** is better than a dead hero.
Once seen is better than a hundred **times** heard.

"It's not X, it's (but) Y" (9, .63%)
It's not the **crime** but the cover-up.
It's not what you've **got**, it's what you do with it.
It's not how many **times** you get knocked down that matters but how many times you get back up.
It's not the **years**, it's the mileage (miles).

"When you X, (you) X(Y)" (9, .63%)
When you pray, move your **feet**.
When you're **good**, you're good.
When you are in a **hole**, stop digging.
When you're **hot**, you're hot (and when you're not, you're not).
When you have **nothing**, you have nothing to lose.

"Better X than Y" (8, .56%)
Better to **cheat** than repeat.
Better a good **cow** than a cow of a good kind.
Better a big **fish** in a little pond (puddle, pool) than a little fish in a big pond (mighty ocean).
Better **Red** than dead. (Barrick 1979)
Better to burp (belch) and bear the **shame** than swallow the burp (belch) and bear the pain.

"No X, no Y" (8, .56%)
No **brain**, no pain.
No **guts**, no glory. (Prahlad 1994 [2003])
No **harm**, no foul.
No **pass**, no play.
No **victim**, no crime.

"X is (are) X" (7, .49%, tautologies)
**Bosses** are (will be) bosses.
A **deadline** is a deadline.
**Good enough** is good enough.
A **kiss** is just a kiss.

"There is no such thing as X" (7, .49%)
There is no such **thing** as a definitive study (text, edition, etc.).
There is no such **thing** as a free lunch (There is no free lunch).
There is no such **thing** as bad publicity (press, P.R., ink).
There is no such **thing** as bad weather, only the wrong clothes.
"He who Xs, Ys" (6, .42%)
He who has the **gold** makes the rules (Whoever has the gold rules).
He who marries for **money** earns it.
He who dies with the most **toys** still dies.

"There are no X, only (just) Y" (6, .42%)
There are no bad **children**, only bad parents.
There are no bad **dogs**, only bad owners.
There are no **problems**, only opportunities (challenges).
There are no bad **students**, just bad teachers.

"One man's X, is another man's Y" (4, .28%)
One **man's** floor is another man's ceiling.
One **man's** terrorist is another man's freedom fighter (One man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist).
One **man's** trash is another man's treasure.

From this dearth of proverbs based on repeated structures we can move on to an analysis of the length of proverbs. Taking all 1422 proverbs without variants, the total word count is 10,225 words, resulting in an average length of 7.2 words per proverb. This corresponds very much to the length of traditional Anglo-American proverbs in general (Grzybek 2000). As one would expect, our corpus includes texts that consist of the minimum of two words required for a *bona fide* proverb (Dundes 1975 [1981]). Old proverbs like "Time flies" and "Money talks" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1973 [1981]) easily come to mind, but considering the predisposition of modern speakers for short sound bites, it is surprising that our collection contains but 11 (.77%) two-word proverbs. The range of messages clearly goes from the didactic boy-scout motto "Be prepared" via the slang proverb "Life sucks" all the way to proverbs based on scatological and sexual images:

Question **authority**.
**Life** sucks.
**Manners** matter (much).
Be **prepared**.
**Sex** sells.
**Shit** (Stuff) happens.
**Speed** kills.

The group of proverbs consisting of three words comprises 39 (2.7%) texts, of which about a fifth are definitional proverbs of the structure "X is Y" already listed above. Some texts are simple imperatives like "Just do it" or "Just say no", while others are very short statements expressing some basic generalizations about modern life and behavior:

Everyone **finds** someone.
**Gentlemen** prefer blondes.
Just **do** it.
Just say ***no***.
**Money** never sleeps.
**Nothing** grows forever.
**Publish** or perish.
**Signs** don't vote.

The group of proverbs consisting of four words is expectedly much larger with its 150 (10.5%) texts. There is a predominance

of monosyllabic words in these texts, making them very short pieces of rather directly expressed insights that often lack any metaphorical element. However, many of them follow a parallel structure with or without rhyme. Regarding rhyme, it should however be noted that this proverbial marker does not play a major role in modern proverbs (about 51 texts or 3.6%), among them "Your ego is not your amigo", "Move your **feet**, lose your seat", "Drive for **show**, put for dough", "If you don't **speculate**, you can't accumulate", and "Different **ways** for (on) different days": A few more rhymed proverbs are included in this list of four-word proverbs:

Get your **act** together.
No **beauty** (There is no beauty) without pain.
No **brain**, no pain.
Think outside the **box**.
The **buck** stops here. (Mieder and Bryan 1997: 62-65)
Close but no **cigar**. (Cohen 1989)
Been there, **done** that.
Everyone can't be **first**.
Go with the **flow**.
**Garbage** in, garbage out. (Winick 2001)
Last **hired**, first fired.
Make **love**, not war.
You can't fix **stupid**.

Of course, there are also proverbs of a much greater length, reaching as many as 23 words. Some of them have parallel structures, others begin with a statements that is elaborated in the second part (often beginning with the conjunction "but"), and there are also those texts that simply state a truism in a somewhat wordy way. Owing to their length and perhaps to the problem of memorability, these texts do not belong to those of frequent use. If they are used, they are most likely only cited partially, assuming that people will be able to complete them in their own minds:

15 words:
If you always **do** what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always gotten

**Men** are only good for one thing – and sometimes they aren't even good for that.

16 words:

Be nice to **people** on your way up because you'll meet them on your way down.

17 words:

The **toes** you step on today may be attached (connected) to the ass you have to kiss tomorrow.

**Worry** is like a rocking chair: it gives you something to do but doesn't get you anywhere.

18 words:

When you're up to your **ass** in alligators, it's hard to remember you're there to drain the swamp (it's too late to start figuring out how to drain the swamp). (Dundes and Pagter 1987)

A **government** big enough to give you everything you want is big enough to take everything you have.

19 words:

You can take a **boy** (man, girl, etc.) out of the country, but you can't take the country out of a boy (man, girl) .

It is better to be thought a **fool** than to open your mouth and let the world know it.

20 words:

It is better to be a big **duck** in a little puddle (pond) than a little duck in a big puddle (pond).

21 words:

You can't keep **birds** (crows) from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair (on your head).

It's not the **size** of the dog in the fight that matters; it's the size of the fight in the dog.

23 words:

When a **lady** says *no*, she means 'perhaps'; when she says *perhaps*, she means 'yes'; when she says *yes*, she is no lady.

> The **caribou** and the wolf are one; for the caribou feeds the wolf, but it is the wolf who keeps the caribou strong.

As has been shown, a considerable number of modern proverbs are based on traditional structures, giving them a familiar appearance albeit with new contents. This is also the case with two special types of new proverbs, namely so-called counter-proverbs and anti-proverbs. According to Charles Doyle, who coined the term *counter-proverb* in 1972, "a *counter-proverb* is simply an overt negation or sententious-sounding rebuttal of a proverb, an explicit denial of the proverb's asserted truth. A counter-proverb does not typically aim for any ironic effect, other than calling into doubt whatever wisdom it is that proverbs are supposed to encapsulate. For example, in the twentieth century we find, with some frequency, 'One rotten apple does not spoil the whole barrel,' rebutting the very old proverb 'One rotten apple will spoil the whole barrel.' Sometimes [especially when both texts are modern] it is impossible to determine which is the original proverb and which the counter-proverb: 'Good enough is not good enough' seems to be about the same age as 'Good enough is good enough'; the sayings 'Life is just a bowl of cherries' and 'Life is not a bowl of cherries' are contemporaneous" (quoted from the introduction of our collection manuscript). Just as such traditional contrasting proverb pairs as "Absence makes the heart grow fonder" and "Out of sight, out of mind", these counter-proverb pairs mirror the contradictions of life itself. Since proverbs are not a logical system, such opposing bits of wisdom are perfectly legitimate. But be that as it may, our collection only includes 11 (.77%) counter-proverbs. In the following list the counter-proverb is cited with the date of its earliest recording but without contextualized references. After that I cite the original proverb on which the new counter-proverb is based:

> **Bigger** is not always (necessarily) better. 1928. [...] The proverb perhaps originated as counter-proverb responding to "The bigger the better."

> You cannot fight **fire** with fire. 1917. [...] The proverb perhaps originated as a counter-proverb rebutting the very

> old "Fight fire with fire" or "You've got to fight fire with fire."
>
> **Flattery** will get you everywhere (anywhere). 1926. [...] The proverb probably originated as a counter-proverb rebutting "FLATTERY will get you nowhere" – or else "FLATTERY will get you nowhere" rebuts "FLATTERY will get you everywhere."
>
> **Life** is not a bowl of cherries. 1931. [...] Presumably the proverb originated as a counter-proverb rebutting "LIFE is a bowl of cherries." – or vice versa.
>
> The **plural** of *anecdote* is not *data* (*evidence*). 1982. [...] Presumably the proverb originated as a counter-proverb responding to the waggish "The plural of *anecdote* is *data*" – or vice versa.
>
> Not all **publicity** (press) is good (publicity). 1915. [...] The proverb perhaps originated as a counter-proverb rebutting "Any PUBLICITY is good publicity" – or vice versa.
>
> **Size** does matter. 1964. [...] The proverb, with the emphatic auxiliary verb *does*, probably originated as a counter-proverb rebutting the proverb "SIZE doesn't matter."

Our collection also includes a considerably larger number of anti-proverbs (Litovkina and Lindahl 2007, Litovkina and Mieder 2006), namely 118 (8.3%). I had coined the term *anti-proverb* in 1982, with an anti-proverb being "an allusive distortion, parody, misapplication, or unexpected contextualization of a recognized proverb, usually for comic or satiric effect. Anti-proverbs occur frequently in commercial advertising, on greeting cards, in the captions of cartoons, and as the punch lines of 'shaggy dog' jokes. Sometimes they pass into oral tradition as proverbs in their own right (Valdaeva 2003): for example, 'Absence makes the heart go wander'; 'Beauty is only skin'; 'No body is perfect'; 'Do unto other before they can do unto you'; 'Dynamite comes in small packages'" (cited from the introduction of our collection manuscript). In the following selection of examples, I cite first the anti-proverb with the date of its earliest recording, once again leaving our all contextualized references. This is followed by the traditional proverb upon which the anti-proverb was formulated:

> Don't **believe** everything you think. 1948. [...] The proverb originated as an anti-proverb based on "Don't believe everything you hear (read, see)."
>
> You **booze**, you lose. 1986. [...] The rhyming proverb may have originated as an anti-proverb based on "You SNOOZE, you lose."
>
> **Do** unto others before they (can) do unto you (before they do you). [...] The proverb originated as an anti-proverb based on the golden rule (Matt. 7:12) "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." (Mieder 2010b).
>
> **Expedience** is the best teacher. 1966. [...] The proverb originated as an anti-proverb based on "Experience is the best teacher."
>
> A **ms.** (miss) is as good as a male. 1942. [...] The proverb originated as an anti-proverb based on "A miss is as good as a mile."
>
> Love thy **neighbor**, but don't get caught. 1967. [...] The proverb is an anti-proverb based on the Jesus's advice to "love thy neighbor as thyself."
>
> **People** who live in glass houses should (always) wear clothes. 1904. [...] The proverb originated as an anti-proverb based on "People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones."

Somewhat related to counter-proverbs and anti-proverbs are what we have called reincarnations of older proverbs, i.e., modern proverbs based on the general wording, metaphor (if there is one), and meaning of an older proverb. Such pairs of texts may coexist, of course, but usually the more modern one will win out in the struggle for dominance. A few truncated examples will illustrate this phenomenon:

> You **break** it, you buy (bought, own) it (If you break it, it's yours). 1957. [...] Sometimes, in recent years, the proverb is called "the Pottery Barn rule." Cf. the older proverb (and legal maxim) "He who breaks pays."

> You never get a second **chance** to make a first impression. 1952. [...] Cf. the older proverb "First impressions are lasting."
>
> Don't shit on your own **doorstep**. 1967. [...] Cf. "Don't SHIT where you eat [sit]" and the older "A bird does not foul its own nest."
>
> The older the **fiddle** (violin), the sweeter (finer) the tune (melody, sound). 1909. [...] Cf. the older proverb "There's many a good tune played on an old fiddle."
>
> Only dead **fish** go with the flow. 1989. [...] Cf. the older proverb "A dead fish can float downstream, but it takes a live one to swim upstream." The modern variant (among other implications) satirizes – and sometimes retorts to – the proverbial advice "Go with the FLOW."
>
> Nobody ever said **life** is easy (Who ever said life is easy?). 1965. [...] Cf. the older proverb – from which this one perhaps evolved – "Life is not meant to be easy."
>
> A good **man** is hard to find. 1918. [...] The proverb is the twentieth-century incarnation (or equivalent) of the older proverb "Good men are scarce." (Doyle 2007a)

Modern proverbs also are consciously created by individuals as so-called "laws" summarizing life's trials and tribulations that appear to repeat themselves. Usually these insights have the name of their originator attached to them, and there are entire books on such (in)famous laws. Some of them have clearly become proverbial, and our collection includes 15 (1.1%) of them (Bloch 1979, 1982a, 1982b). A few are listed here with their date and the name of the person who (supposedly) coined them. Our actual entries provide much more material, as can be seen from this one complete text for perhaps the most famous of these laws:

> If anything can **go wrong**, it will (Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong., Anything that can possibly go wrong usually does). 1908 Nevil Maskelyne, "The Art in Magic," *The Magic Circular* (June) 25: "It is an experience common to all men to find that, on any special occasion, such as the production of a magical effect for the

first time in public, everything that *can* go wrong *will* go wrong. Whether we must attribute this to the malignity of matter or to the total depravity of inanimate things, whether the exciting cause is hurry, worry, or what not, the fact remains" (italics as shown). 1951 Anne Roe, "Child Behavior, Animal Behavior, and Comparative Psychology," *Genetic Psychology Monographs* 43 (May) 204: "As for himself he realized that this was the inexorable working of the second law of the thermodynamics which stated Murphy's law 'If anything can go wrong it will.' I always liked Murphy's law." 1955 Lee Corey, "Design Flaw," *Astounding Science Fiction* 54 (Feb.) 54: "'Reilly's Law,' Guy Barclay said cryptically. 'Huh?' 'Reilly's Law,' Guy repeated. 'It states that in any scientific or engineering endeavor, anything that can go wrong *will* go wrong" (italics as shown). [references to collections are deleted here and elsewhere]. In popular legend, Murphy's Law originated in 1949 at Edwards Air Force Base in California, coined by project manager George E. Nichols after hearing Edward A. Murphy, Jr., complain about a wrongly-wired rocket-sled experiment. However, there is no documentation of that connection until 1955. The idea embodied in Murphy's Law (less often, "Reilly's Law" or "O'Reilly's Law") has appeared in numerous forms, in reference to a variety of activities, from antiquity forward (see the cross-references at the *YBQ* entry). For example: 1878 Alfred Holt, "Review of the Progress of Steam Shipping during the Last Quarter of a Century," *Minutes of Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers*, 51: 8: "It is found that anything that can go wrong at sea generally does go wrong sooner or later." 1941 George Orwell, "War-Time Diaries," in *Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters*, edited by Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968) 2: 400-01: "Iraq, Syria, Morocco, Spain, Darlan, Stalin, Raschid Ali, Franco—sensation of utter helplessness. If there is a wrong thing to do, it will be done, infallibly. One has come to believe in that as if it were a law of nature." The term "Murphy's law" has come to designate a range of seemin-

gly reasonable but often paradoxical or absurd-sounding propositions.

But here then are a few more laws in much truncated form to save space. They make clear that at times they are simply attributed to a person, with Edward A. Murphy winning the prize as the supposed coiner of such laws of which but a few have become proverbial:

When you are in a **hole**, stop digging. 1911 *Washington Post* 25 Oct.: "Nor would a wise man, seeing that he was in a hole, go to work and blindly dig it deeper, as [William Jennings] Bryan did when he shifted ground and assailed the integrity of the President and the Judges." [...] 1984 *New York Times* 11 Sep.: "There is a Law of Holes that says, when you are in one, stop digging. That is a law Congress finds it almost impossible to observe." [...] In British publications, the "Law of Holes" is often referred to as "Healey's Law," after the statesman Denis Healey, a popularizer of the expression in the later 1980s.

Everything (always) **takes** longer than it should (it does, it takes, you expect). 1900 Florence Converse, *The Burden of Christopher* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin) 139: "To be sure, we're still profit sharing, we have n't gone into real coöperation yet; but then, things always take longer than you think they will ..." [...] Especially in absurdly-worded forms like "Everything takes longer than it takes," the proverb is often given as one of "Murphy's Laws."

You can never do merely (just, only) one **thing**. 1963 Garrett Hardin, "The Cybernetics of Competition," *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 7, no. 4 (Autumn) 80: "The moral of the myth [a narrative of the magically-granted three wishes] can be put in various ways. One: wishing won't make it so. Two: every change has its price. Three (and this one I like the best): we can never do merely one thing. Wishing to kill insects, we may put an end to the singing of birds. Wishing to 'get there faster,' we insult our lungs with smog." [...] In *Living within Limits* (New York: Oxford UP, 1993) 199-201, Hardin traces the tradition and background of the principle that the proverb en-

> capsulates, which came to be called "Hardin's Law" – but Hardin himself prefers to think of it as the "First Law of Ecology."
>
> **Work** expands to fill the available (allotted) time. 1955. "Parkinson's Law," *The Economist* 177: 633 (the reference is to C. Northcote Parkinson): "It is a commonplace observation that work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion ... Before the discovery of a new scientific law – herewith presented to the public for the first time, and to be called Parkinson's Law – there has, however, been insufficient recognition of the implications of this fact in the field of public administration."

These examples show that the actual authorship of some of these proverbial laws is not at all certain. This is quite naturally also the case with the other proverbs in our corpus. To be sure, some modern proverbs have simply been attributed to certain well-known persons, just as this has been done in previous times (Taylor 1931: 34-43). Detailed research on our part has shown that such attributions can usually not be proven, even though people will cling to these claims when citing such proverbs. What it takes to come to terms with such attributions can best be seen from our discussion of the internationally disseminated modern proverb "A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle" (Mieder 1982):

> A **woman** without a man is like a fish without a bicycle (A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle). 1976 *Corpus Christi [TX] Times* 5 May (quoting Barbara Hower): "... [A] feminist said recently an independent woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle. That's horse feathers, at least for me. I like what I'm doing but I'd like someone to scratch and giggle with" (credited to *Chicago Daily News*). 1976 *Seattle Times* 5 Jun.: "Sign in a (feminist?) dress shop in Seattle, Wash.: 'A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle.'" 1976 *People* 6, no. 4 (26 Jul.) 20 (photo caption): "Gloria Steinem (left) planned to wear a shirt that said, 'A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle,' but, like Candy Bergen, arrived unlettered at a [Democratic Party]

> women's fund raiser." 1976 Mary Murphy, "Superstar Women and Their Marriages," *New York Magazine* 9, no. 32 (9 Aug.) 26: "[Gloria] Steinem sums it up: 'Today a woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle." 1979 Deborah Goleman Wolf, *The Lesbian Communit*y (Berkeley: U of California P) [vi] (epigraph): "'A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle.' (Graffito in the women's lavatory, Student Union, University of California Berkeley, 1975, attributed to Flo Kennedy)" (italics as shown). 1976 *Seattle Times* 5 Jun. "Sign seen in a (feminist?) dress shop in Seattle, Wash.: 'A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle.'" [...] The proverb perhaps originated as an anti-proverb patterned after "A woman without a man is like a handle without a pan" (or other old similes suggesting uselessness or absurdity). Steinem, in *Time* 156, no. 15 (9 Oct. 2000) 20, disclaimed credit for originating the feminist expression: "Irina Dunn, a distinguished Australian educator, journalist and politician, coined the phrase back in 1970 ..." The image of a fish without (or not needing) a bicycle has had a life of its own. Cf. "A MAN without faith is like a fish without a bicycle" and "A MAN without a woman is like a fish without a bicycle" and "A WOMAN without a man is like a fish without a net."

Here are but a few more examples of this phenomenon, once again stripped of many additional contextualized references:

> Old **age** is not for sissies. 1969 Eugene P. Bertin, "Ravelin's: Threads Detached from Texture," *Pennsylvania School Journal* 17: 546 (in a series of witty sayings commemorating Senior Citizen Month, May): "Old age is not for sissies." [...] The proverb's origin is often attributed to the actress Bette Davis.

> Float like a **butterfly**, sting like a bee. 1964 *New York Times* 19 Feb.: "'Put the poison on him,' yelled Drew (Budini) Brown, Clay's spiritual adviser and assistant trainer. 'Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee. Oh, beautiful, Cassius, you should see yourself.'" [...] The saying

has generally been attributed to Mohammed Ali (*né* Cassius Clay) himself.

It's (The game is) not **over** till it's over. 1921. Roy Sahm, "It Is Believed Rotarians Won," *The Delta of Sigma Nu Fraternity* 38: 667: "It is said the score was 23 to 21 in favor of Rotary, they having tied the score in the seventh. They passed Kiwanis in the eighth and held Kiwanis in the ninth. all of which goes to prove that a ball game's never over until it's over" (credited to the *Indianapolis News*). [...] Often, the saying is apocryphally attributed to Yogi Berra. Cf. the older expression "When it's over, it's over," which has a different meaning.

**Trust** but verify. 1966 Michel Tatu, "Soviet Reforms: The Debate Goes On," *Problems in Communism* 15, no. 1 (Jan.-Feb.) 31: "Supplemented by the Khrushchevian motto, 'Trust but verify' (*dovierat no provierat*), this attitude leaves agricultural producers [in the USSR] very little freedom of action." [...] Ironically, the proverb is often attributed to Ronald Reagan, even though Reagan himself stated that he had learned it (as a Russian proverb) from Mikhail Gorbachev.

A **week** is a long time in politics. 1961 Richard Cox, "Nyerere Sees a Middle Way for Africa," *New York Times Magazine* (3 Dec.) 121: "He [Prime Minister Julius Nyerere] will undoubtedly find it difficult to negotiate federation when it comes to the details, but as the weeks pass—and a week is a long time in African politics—it seems more and more likely that he will succeed." [...] The proverb is commonly attributed to Prime Minister Harold Wilson; however, no record of his using it can be found from earlier than 1968, and Wilson himself is on record saying he cannot remember when he first uttered it.

All of this is not to say that our collection does not contain modern proverbs for which we know precisely who originated it when and where. Such original citations by known persons begin basically as statements in books, articles, speeches, motion pictures, songs, etc. As they are repeated, they become quotations and with ever

more frequent use, eventually often without any awareness of the originator, these memorable texts can become proverbs. Sometimes quite similar statements precede such a quotation that for various reasons caught on and thus became proverbial. This is well illustrated by one of John F. Kennedy's most famous statements:

> Ask not what your **country** can do for you – ask what you can do for your country. 1960. The saying (often slightly misquoted) entered oral tradition as a proverb from President John F. Kennedy's inaugural address, 20 Jan. 1960. An 1884 speech by Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., is sometimes cited as a prototype of Kennedy's wording, since it anticipates the (commonplace) idea and the parallel phrasing, the chiasmus: "... [W]e pause ... to recall what our country has done for each of us, and to ask ourselves what we can do for our country in return." A closer prior analog: 1922 Isaac Doughton, *Preparing for the World's Work* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons) 4: "But as good citizens you are not so anxious to know what your country does for you as you are to know what you can do for your country." The eeriest anticipator of both Holmes's and Kennedy's wording occurred in 1858 – except that the writer, one Rev. M. Thomson, was engaging in satire, proffering ironic advice – and thus inverting the clauses – in "Our Youth: Their Principles and Prospects," *Ladies' Repository* 18: 285: "Fetter the noblest powers and impulses of the soul; turn all your genius into cunning; prefer your wages to your work; study not what you can do for your country, but what your country can do for you." [...] (Mieder 2005c: 172-173).

But here then are a few shortened examples from our collection that are in fact rather straight-forward regarding their first appearance in a written or oral communication by a known person of considerable consequence:

> He who **can** does; he who can't teaches (Those who can do; those who can't teach). 1903. The saying entered oral tradition as a proverb from George Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman* (the appended "Maxims for Revolutio-

nists"). [...] The proverb has acquired various codas: "... he who can't teach teaches others to teach"; "... he who can't teach, administrates"; etc.

If it (If the glove) doesn't **fit**, you must acquit. 1995. The saying entered oral tradition as a proverb from its use as a mantra by the defense lawyer Johnnie Cochran, Jr., in his closing argument at the murder trial of O. J. Simpson (27 Sep.). [...] The proverb means "You must reject, abandon, or discard a belief or plan that does not 'fit' with realities, goals, or purposes." The proverb is less commonly applied jurisprudentially. (Winick 2003: 587-588, Prahlad 2006: II,1026).

You can't go **home** again. 1940. The saying probably entered oral tradition as a proverb from the title of Thomas Wolfe's novel, published posthumously (Wolfe died in 1938). [...]

**Love** means never having to say you're sorry. 1970. The saying entered oral tradition as a proverb from Erich Segal's best-selling novel *Love Story* (New York: Harper & Row), which first appeared (somewhat condensed) in *Ladies Home Journal* 87, no. 2 (Feb.) 124: "She cut off my apology, then said very quietly, 'Love means not ever having to say you're sorry.'" In the popular motion picture, "never" replaces "not ever." The novel was written after Segal's screen play but published before the release of the movie in Dec. 1970. [...]

**Pain** is (Tough times are) temporary; failure (quitting) is forever. 2003. Lance Armstrong (with Sally Jenkins), *Every Second Counts* (New York: Random House) 3-4: "But the fact is I wouldn't have won a single Tour de France without the lesson of illness. What it teaches is this: pain is temporary. Quitting lasts forever." [...]

**Speak** (Talk, Walk) softly and carry a big stick. 1900. Theodore Roosevelt, letter to Henry Sprague (26 Jan.): "I have always been fond of the West African proverb: 'Speak softly and carry a big stick; you will go far.' If I

> had not carried the big stick the organization would not have gotten behind me ..."; *Letters*, edited by Elting E. Morison (Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1951-54) 2: 1141. On several occasions Roosevelt uttered the saying, without the last clause and without the West African connection. In oral tradition, the proverb often varies the first verb. [...] An interesting prior analog: 1882 C. H. Spurgeon, "Colportage a Want of the Age," in *Booksellers and Bookbuyers*, by Spurgeon et al. (London: Passmore and Alabaster) 12: "Amid abundant laughter, our friend [an evangelist] declared that he had not fought wild beasts at Ephesis, but ... he had found it well to trust in God *and carry a big stick*" (italics as shown).
>
> **War** will cease when men refuse to fight. 1933. Albert Einstein, *The Fight against War*, edited by Alfred Lief (New York: John Day) 37 (excerpted from Einstein's interview with George Sylvester Viereck, Jan. 1931): "I am not only a pacifist but a militant pacifist. I am willing to fight for peace. Nothing will end war unless the peoples themselves refuse to war [sic]." [...] Cf. "Some day they will give a WAR and nobody will come."

It has long been established that advertising slogans have given rise to new proverbs (Mieder and Mieder 1977 [1981], Prahlad 2004, Winick 2011), but the 17 (1.2%) texts in our collection are certainly not an overwhelming number. Many slogans are simply too specifically oriented towards a certain product to take on the nature of a general proverb. In addition, over time the association with the original advertising campaign is lost, making it difficult to establish clear-cut connections. In other words, proverbs starting as advertising slogans have a tendency of becoming anonymous traditional sayings, as is, of course, the very nature of real proverbs. The complexity of all of this, including variants building on such slogans, can readily be seen from this one reference from our collections cited in its entirety:

> What happens (goes on) in **Las Vegas** stays in Las Vegas. 2002 *Las Vegas Review-Journal* 25 Nov.: "The Las Vegas Visitors and Convention Authority, meanwhile, continued its saucy come-to-Vegas-baby advertising campaign

> with six new spots filmed over a three-day period last week. Depicting the theme 'what happens in Las Vegas stays in Las Vegas,' the national commercials, produced by Hungry Man Productions, feature Vegas visitors indulging fantasies in locations ranging from a limousine to a tattoo parlor." 2002 Kellye M. Garrett et al., "Everything the Top Football Stars Can't Live Without," *Vibe* Nov. 62 (quoting the football player Adam Archuleta): "Favorite city: Las Vegas ... You party and have a good time with your friends. What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas." Whether the advertising campaign originated the saying or merely employed an existing proverb, "What happens in Las Vegas stays in Las Vegas" has become, by far, the most common of the popular sayings that follow the formula; it is widely assumed to be the prototypical version, and currently it can be uttered (figuratively) in reference to any site of conduct that calls for non-disclosure. However, it was anticipated – at least as early as the 1970s – by parallel sayings about secrecy or discretion of various sorts: "What's said (What happens) at home stays at home," an expression sometimes used to lament the secrecy of child abuse or spousal abuse; the clinical or psychotherapeutic adage "What happens in the group (at the meeting, at the session) stays ..."; the professional baseball maxim "What happens in the clubhouse stays ..." Even in the dissipated-vacation usage, other versions are apparently older: 1996 *San Antonio Express-News* 13 Nov.: "But there was one condition. Drill sergeants told them repeatedly: 'Whatever happens in Mexico stays in Mexico.'" 1998 *Orlando Sentinel* 30 Mar.: "'What happens in Daytona, stays in Daytona,' he tells the others."

But here then are once again a few shortened examples of advertising slogans turned proverb, with only one text actually maintaining the name of a company (Delta Airlines). Nevertheless, a certain amount of cultural literacy and knowledge about the commercial world belong at least in part to the proper understanding of some of these texts (Mieder 1992 [1994], see also Haas 2008):

Where is the **beef**? 1984. The saying entered oral tradition as a proverb from an advertising slogan for Wendy's hamburgers. [...] In the proverb, the word *beef* is understood to mean 'substance' in various senses. (Barrick 1986).

It's what's up front that **counts**. c1957. The saying entered oral tradition as a proverb from an advertising slogan for Winston cigarettes – playing on the older proverb "It's what inside that counts." [...]

**Delta** is ready when you are. 1969. The saying passed into oral tradition as a proverb from an advertising slogan of Delta Airline. [...] The proverb means "If you are dissatisfied in the place where you are, you should leave."

Say it with **flowers**. 1917. The saying entered oral tradition as a proverb from an advertising slogan of the Society of American Florists. [...]

**Number two** tries harder (When you're number two, you try harder). 1962. The proverb probably entered oral tradition from an advertising campaign for Avis: "We're Number Two. We try harder" (Avis was second to Hertz in the car-rental business).

**Reach** out and touch someone. 1970. Eliot Tiegel, "Reach Out and Touch Someone," *Billboard* (15 Aug.) 26; the title of the review of a live performance by Diana Ross presumably alludes to Ross's song "Reach Out and Touch Somebody's Hand." [...] Beginning in 1978 the proverb was featured in an advertising campaign for AT&T's long-distance phone service. [...]

Have it your **way**. 1973. The saying entered oral tradition as a proverb from the advertising slogan of Burger King. It asserts that a consumer should demand to be accommodated by commercial establishments or agents. [...] The invention of the slogan – or its popularity as a proverb – might have been influenced by Frank Sinatra's famous song "My Way" (1969; lyrics by Paul Anka), with the refrain "I did it my way."

> You've come a long **way**, baby. 1968. The saying probably entered oral tradition as a proverb from an advertising campaign for Philip Morris cigarettes, which promoted the liberating effects of smoking for women. [...] a1978 Hallmark greeting card (purchased in Burlington VT): [front] "You've come a long way, baby ..." [inside] "... from Adam's rib to 'Women Lib'" (ellipsis dots as shown). [...]

As can be seen from two of these examples, proverb-like one-liners from the world of advertising and popular music can actually work hand in hand in creating and spreading new proverbs. With music playing such a large role on the modern entertainment scene, it should not be surprising that songs have given rise to ample modern proverbs, with our collection containing 65 (4.6%) texts. It should be noted, however, that this is nothing new as far as the creation of proverbs is concerned (Bryan 2001, Mieder 1988). Religious hymns, anonymous folksongs, operettas, and musicals have long given rise to proverbs, with the song texts of Gilbert and Sullivan being prime examples in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Bryan 1999). Nothing in this regard has changed on the modern scene, as can be seen by country songs, blues, reggae, or rap music (Folsom 1993, Prahlad 2001, Taft 1994). In fact, songs by famous lyricists and musicians like the Beatles, Bob Dylan, and Bruce Springsteen have led to new proverbs. But in order to illustrate once again the complexity of locating the earliest recording of a proverb in a song, its subsequent use, and its later incorrect attribution to a famous person, let me cite one entry from our collection almost in its entirety:

> Old **soldiers** never die (they just fade away). 1916 Bruce Bairnsfather, *Bullets & Billets* (London: Grant Richards) 52-53: "Occasionally, in the silent, still, foggy mornings, a voice from somewhere in the alluvial depths of a miserable trench, would suddenly burst into a scrap of song, such as – Old soldiers never die, / They simply fade away. – a voice full of 'fed-upness,' steeped in determination." In the same book (202) appears a drawing of a singing "Tommy" in a trench, holding a raised umbrella; over the umbrella appears a line of music with the words "old sol-

> diers never die, they simply fades [sic] a-way." Snippets of the song (said to be to the tune of "Kind Words Can Never Die") appear in other reminiscences of World War I, with slight variations ("they fade away"; "they always fade away"). In 1920 the song was copyrighted by one J. Foley, but there is no good evidence that he was the actual author. The proverb is now popularly associated with its use by General Douglas McArthur in his farewell address to Congress in 1951. The proverb has given rise to a cycle of parodic jokes, which are anti-proverbs ("Old doctors never die, they just lose their patients"; "Old golfers never die, they just lost their balls"). [...]

But here then are at least a few examples from the treasure trove of proverbs stemming from popular songs. Of course, let me also state for the record that lyric poets also employ traditional proverbs and formulate lines that later become proverbs, as can be seen from many such proverb poems (Sobieski and Mieder 2005):

> There's no **business** like show business. 1946. The saying entered oral tradition as a proverb from the title and first line of a song by Irving Berlin. [...]
>
> **Diamonds** are (A diamond is) a girl's best friend. 1949. The saying entered oral tradition as a proverb from the title and refrain of a song by Leo Robin. [...]
>
> It's not **easy** being green. 1970. The saying entered oral tradition as a proverb from a song by Joe Raposo, sung by the character Kermit the Frog of the Muppets. It applies to the difficulty of efforts to save the environment and perhaps to other kinds of figurative "greenness."
>
> Everybody wants to go to **heaven**, but nobody wants to die. 1950. The proverb originated with – or gained popularity from – the title of Tommy Dorsey's song "Everybody Wants to Go to Heaven (But No One Wants to Die)."
>
> A **kiss** is just a kiss. 1931. The song "As Time Goes By," lyrics by Herman Hupfeld (in the musical *Everybody's Welcome*), contained the lines "A kiss is still a kiss, / A sigh is just a sigh"; the saying entered oral tradition (and

> many performances of the song itself) with the lines conflated: "A kiss is just a kiss." [...] More recently, the song has been featured in the BBC television series *As Time Goes By* (1992-2005). [...]
>
> **Life** is (just) a cabaret. 1966. The saying entered oral tradition as a proverb from the featured song in the musical *Cabaret*, lyrics by Fred Ebb (music by John Knader). [...] The proverb updates the venerable Elizabethan commonplace of the world as a stage (and men and women merely players).
>
> All you need is **love**. 1967. The saying passed into oral tradition as a proverb from the title and refrain of the Beatles' song (lyrics by John Lennon).
>
> It takes **two** to tango. 1952. The saying entered oral tradition as a proverb from the song "It Takes Two to Tango," by Al Hoffman and Dick Manning. [...] The proverb may have originated as an anti-proverb based on "It takes two to quarrel." (Mieder and Bryan 1983, Mieder 1985: 151-154)

Motion pictures are not surprisingly also a fruitful ground for spreading laconic insights to large segments of the population who in turn help to distribute them by frequent repetition as new proverbs of the folk. Our collection assembles 19 (1.3%) such proverbs whose origin can be traced back to popular films:

> If you **build** it, they will come (Build it and they will come). 1979. The saying probably entered oral tradition as a proverb – or at least gained popularity – from W. P. Kinsella's story "Shoeless Joe Jackson Comes to Iowa" and the motion picture based on it, *Field of Dreams* (1989). [...]
>
> Keep your **friends** close and (but) your enemies closer. 1974. The proverb probably entered oral tradition from a speech in the motion picture *The Godfather, Part II*: "There are many things my father taught me here in this room. He taught me: Keep your friends close, but your

enemies closer." Occasionally it is referred to as an ancient Chinese proverb.

If (When) you've **got** it, flaunt it. 1968. The saying may have entered oral tradition as a proverb from the motion picture *The Producers*: "That's it, baby! When you got it, flaunt it!" (or the character in the movie may have been uttering a proverb). Most frequently the proverb refers to the display of an individual's sexuality.

**Life** is like (is just) a box of chocolates (chocolate). 1994. The saying entered oral tradition as adapted from the motion picture *Forrest Gump*: "Life is a box of chocolates, Forrest. You never know what you're going to get." The proverb sometimes intends to *satirize* the sententious utterance of Forest Gump's mother.

**Life** is too short (to wait) for *someday*. 1969. *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (motion picture). "[FATHER:] 'Bond – he's in love with you?' [DAUGHTER:] "That may come too, someday.' [FATHER:] 'Life's too short for someday, Tereza.'" [...] (Krummenacher 2007: 145).

There are no **rules** in a knife fight. 1969. The entered oral tradition as a proverb, garbled, from dialog in the motion picture *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*: "[Butch:] 'No, no, not yet. Not until me and Harvey get the rules straightened out.' [Harvey Logan:] 'Rules? In a knife fight? No rules!'" (at which instant Butch kicks Harvey in the groin). [...]

Turning now to the realia of modern proverbs, it is perhaps surprising that various animals continue to appear with considerable frequency. Obviously the modern age still relates well to animals, especially such domesticated animals as cats, cows, dogs, horses, and pigs. But wild animals as birds, elephants, fish, frogs, monkeys, and others are also employed to express human behavior and attitudes via animal metaphors. There is, of course, also the telling modern proverb "All animals are (created) equal, but some are more equal than others" that entered oral tradition from George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945), expressing in metaphorical wording an unfortunate aspect of human life. In any case, our proverb

collection contains 116 (8.2%) so-called animal proverbs, among them:

A **bird** may love a fish, but where would they live (build a home, build a nest)?
**Cats** look down on you, dogs look up at you, pigs look at you as equals.
If you can't run with the big **dogs**, stay on (under) the porch.
If it looks like a **duck**, walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck, it's a duck.
It is possible to swallow (You can eat) an **elephant** – one bite at a time.
You have to kiss a lot of **frogs** (toads) to find a prince.
When you hear **hoofbeats**, think horses, not zebras (When you hear hoofbeats, don't look for zebras). (Dundes, Streiff, and Dundes 1999)
Always ride the (your) **horse** in the direction it's going (it wants to go).
You can put **lipstick** on a pig but it's still a pig (A pig wearing lipstick is still a pig).
Only **monkeys** work for peanuts (If you pay peanuts, you get monkeys).
The second **mouse** gets the cheese.
Old **rats** like cheese too.

Just as animal metaphors have not disappeared from modern proverbs, the same is also true for somatisms, with such nouns as ass (behind), eye, hand, head, heart, mouth, and nose being the most frequent among the 49 (3.4%) texts.

Your **arms** are too short (not long enough) to box (fight, spar) with God.
If you're too open-minded, you **brains** will fall out.
Every shut **eye** is not asleep.
It is better to die on your **feet** than to live on your knees.
If you want **good**, your nose must run.
Busy **hands** are happy hands.
You can't measure **heart**.

Never take more on your **heels** than you can kick off with your toes.
A **moment** (minute) on the lips, a lifetime (forever) on the hips.
A closed (shut) **mouth** gathers (catches) no feet.
Keep your **nose** clean.
Everyone puts his (All men put their) **pants** on one leg at a time (the same way).
The **toes** you step on today may be attached (connected) to the ass you have to kiss tomorrow.

Today's preoccupation with business, finance, and more specifically money has left its mark on modern proverbs as well, with 47 (3.3%) texts showing up in our corpus. They all reflect the pecuniary aspects of modern life, stressing the importance of business, the power of money, the rights and expectations of customers, the hope for prosperity, etc.:

Buy the **best** and you only cry once (If you buy quality, you only cry once).
**Business** goes where it is invited and stays where it is well-treated.
The **customer** is always right. (Taylor 1958)
Another **day**, another dollar.
Never **give** anything away that you can sell (Why give something away when you can sell it?).
Put your **money** where your mouth is.
You **pay** now (You can pay) or pay later (with interest).
If you have to ask the **price** (the cost, how much it costs), you can't afford it.
No one ever went bankrupt (went broke, lost money) taking (making) a **profit**.
**Prosperity** is always just around the corner.
The best **way** to make money is to save it (is not to lose it).

Speaking of modern preoccupations, it certainly comes as no surprise that at least 39 (2.7%) proverbs relate to the ever-present and fascinating world of sports. There are several more general proverbs referring to games as such or balls, but it is indeed striking that the majority of sports proverbs are based on the American

national sport of baseball (Frank 1983). While these proverbs relate literally to that very sport, their figurative meanings are, of course, much broader and can be applied to situations far removed from the actual game of baseball. Yet popular as these proverbs might be especially in American folk language, they are also the ones that will give people not acquainted with the lingo of this sport certain comprehension difficulties. But here then are a few striking examples:

You can't hit the **ball** (get a hit) if you don't swing (the bat).
You can't score unless you have the **ball**.
Nobody **bats** 1000.
You can't steal **first base**.
It isn't whether you win or lose (that counts); it's how you play the **game** (It's not winning that counts, it's playing the game).
You can't hit a **home run** every time.
Don't hate the **player**, hate the game.
If you have two **quarterbacks**, you don't have one (any).
You can't **score** if you don't shoot.
You can't steal **second base** while your foot is on first base (if you keep one foot on first).
You miss 100 per cent of the **shots** you don't take.
Three **strikes** and you're out.

In comparison to the importance of sports for the origin of modern proverbs, it is surprising that our corpus includes but 24 (1.7%) texts that exhibit at least some relationship to technology by way of certain words. It is here where we might want to look for new proverbs in the future. Of course, there are some modern proverbs like "Garbage in, garbage out" that come from the world of computers, but they do not show by the choice of words any immediate relationship to technology. Our entry with its contextualized references makes this connection perfectly clear:

> **Garbage** in, garbage out. (Often abbreviated with the acronym *GIGO*.) 1957 Ernest E. Blanche, "Applying New Electronic Computers to Traffic and Highway Problems," *Traffic Quarterly* 11: 411: "When the basic data to be

> used by a computer are of questionable accuracy or validity, our personnel have an unusual expression – GIGO – to characterize such information and the answers the computer produces. It simply means 'garbage in – garbage out.'" 1959 B. A. Wilson, "Operations Research and Management," *Business Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (Winter) 215: "The attempt to use existing records and data in O.R. studies may eventually indicate the inadequacy or inconsistency of existing data, but any results derived from using such data can be no better than the basic data. As one consultant puts it, 'Garbage in, Garbage out.'" [...].

In any case, here are some additional proverbs that indicate that technology is playing at least a small role in the creation of modern proverbs, with more to be found or to come in the foreseeable future:

> You never forget how to ride a **bicycle**.
> There will always be another **bus** (streetcar).
> Nobody washes (We don't wash) a rental (rented) **car**.
> You can't judge a **car** by its paint (job).
> **Dot-com**, dot-bomb.
> **Drinking** and driving do not mix.
> **Dynamite** comes in small packages.
> **Gasoline** and whiskey (Alcohol and gasoline, etc.) do not mix.
> A **ring** on the finger is worth two on the phone.
> **Speed** kills.
> You cannot tell which way the **train** went (is going) by looking at the tracks.
> Sometimes (Some days) you're the **windshield**, and sometimes you're the bug (bird).

Even though our collection has no texts that indicate by certain word choices that they were coined in Australia, Great Britain, or elsewhere where English is spoken, there are 16 (1.1%) modern proverbs in our collection that refer explicitly to American matters, with a text like "What is good for General Motors is good for America" needing an explanatory comment:

> What is good for **General Motors** is good for America (the country). 1953. The proverb originated as a misquotation from US Senate testimony of Charles E. Wilson (former president of General Motors): "For years I thought what was good for our country was good for General Motors, and vice versa. The difference did not exist." [...] The proverb most often satirizes the concept that the well-being of giant corporations is inextricably and benevolently connected with the welfare of the nation and its populace.

Such comments are also added to some of the following proverbs that might not necessarily be clear to non-native speakers of American English:

> Never (Don't) sell **America** short.
> The **business** of America is business.
> As **California** goes, so goes the nation.
> Thank **God** for Mississippi.
> There is no **law** west of the Pecos.
> Other than that, Mrs. **Lincoln**, how did you like the play?
> Only **Nixon** could go to China.
> Don't mess with **Texas**.

The meager number of proverbs referring to American matters is a clear sign that our collection is in many ways a compilation of texts that is in general use in the United States, Great Britain, Canada, and elsewhere. This is, of course, also true for those proverbs that have very common keywords. The most popular word is "life", and it is hardly surprising that modern humankind has much wisdom about existence. Altogether 46 (3.2) proverbs contain "life" as a keyword, with most of them following the structural and definitional pattern "Life is X". While some of them in two or four words refer to life being problematic, i.e., "Life sucks" and "Life is a bitch", others look at life much more positively, as for example "Life begins at forty" and "If life hands you lemons, make lemonade". Some additional representative examples are:

> Life **comes** at you fast.
> **Life** deals us each a hand.
> **Life** is a journey, not a destination.

**Life** is a party.
**Life** is a picture; paint it well.
**Life** is not a spectator sport.
**Life** is what happens while you are making other plans.
To lengthen your **life**, lessen your meals.
You get out of **life** (the world, something, anything) what you put into it.

Next in high-frequency keywords is "man/men", with 34 (2.3%) dealing positively or negatively with the male species. Some texts also contrast men with women, of course, and there are some texts that use this keyword in its generic meaning, thus somewhat inflating this group of "male" proverbs:

A **man** who kicks his dog will beat his wife.
Every **man** to his own poison (To every man his own poison).
**Men** are from Mars, women are from Venus.
No **man** is above the law, and no man is below it.
Old **men** make wars, and young men fight them (pay the price).
Stand by your **man**.
The best **man** for the job may be a woman.
The bigger a **man's** head gets, the easier it is to fill his shoes.
The **man** most down on a thing is he who is least up on it.
The **man** who reads is the man who leads (He who reads leads).

Proverbs with "woman/women" as the keyword are smaller in number with but 8 (not even .56%), but do notice that none of them refer to men as well. As wisdom about women, they are pretty much split between positive and negative characterizations, quite in keeping with traditional proverbs that often express misogynous generalizations (Kerschen 1998, Schipper 2003):

A **woman** should be (kept) barefoot and pregnant (barefoot, pregnant, and in the kitchen).
A **woman** without a man is like a fish without a net (A woman needs a man like a fish needs a net).
A **woman's** place is any place she wants to be.

Never run after a **woman** or a streetcar (Girls are like buses); if you miss one, another will come along soon.
Well-behaved **women** rarely (seldom) make history.
**Women** and elephants never forget.

But here are a few more lists for a number of relatively high-frequency keywords, with "God"-proverbs perhaps reflecting the religious preoccupation of parts of the American society. Proverbs about friends, time, age, love, beauty, knowing, pain, success, children, luck, and winning are nothing new as far as Anglo-American proverbs and those of other languages and cultures are concerned, but there are now texts that contain references that identify them as proverbs that could only have originated in more recent times, such as the drug-related "A friend with weed is a friend indeed" as an anti-proverb to the traditional "A friend in need is a friend indeed" or "Act your age, not your IQ" with its reference to the score of an intelligence test. Above all, it should be noticed that most of these modern proverbs are rather literal statements of basic truths of modern life without couching them into expressive metaphors. Folklorists obviously will delight in the proverb "Every beauty needs her beast" which is a proverbial allusion to the fairy tale of "The Beauty and the Beast":

God (19)
**God** can make a way out of no way. (Mieder 2010a: 171-186)
**God** doesn't love ugly.
**God** doesn't make junk (trash).
**God** doesn't play dice.
**God** is good, but don't dance in a small boat.
**God** is in the details.
**God** sends no cross that you cannot bear.
Kill them all, and let **God** sort them out. (Russell 1999)
Let go; let **God**.

friend (15)
A (true, good) **friend** walks in when (all) others walk out.
A **friend** with weed is a friend indeed.
A **friend's** frown is better than a foe's smile.

A true **friend** is one who knows all your faults and still loves (likes) you.
Fast pay (payment) makes (for) fast **friends**.
If you want a **friend**, get (buy) a dog.
Little **friends** may prove (become) great friends.
Make **friends** when you don't need them (before you need them).
You cannot use your **friends** and have them too.

time (11)

It's not how many **times** you get knocked down that matters but how many times you get back up.
Once seen is better than a hundred **times** heard.
**Time** flies when you're having fun.
**Time** spent wishing is time wasted.
**Time** you enjoy wasting is not (always) wasted time.
To win, you only have to get up one more **time** than you fall down.
Tough (Hard, Difficult) **times** call for tough (hard, difficult) decisions (choices).

age (8)

Act your **age**, not your IQ.
Act your **age**, not your shoe size.
**Age** (Old age) is a high price (too high a price) to pay for maturity (Maturity is a high price to pay for growing up).
**Age** is just a number.
Old **age** (Getting old) is better than the alternative (Old age sucks, but it's better than the alternative).
Old **age** is hell.

love (8)

If you **love** something, let it go (set it free); if it comes back to you, it is yours.
**Love** is where you find it.
**Love** it or leave it.
Make **love**, not war.
The **love** you take is equal to the love you make.

beauty (7)

**Beauty** does not buy happiness.

**Beauty** is pain.
**Beauty** may open doors but only virtue (strength, etc.) enters.
Every **beauty** needs her [a] beast.

know (7)
If you don't **know** what it is, (then) don't mess with (fool with, touch, eat) it.
You can't **know** where you're going unless you know where you've been.
You have to **know** when to hold them [cards] and know when to fold them.
You never **know** what you have till it's gone.

pain (7)
Don't tell me about the **pain** (labor pains); just show me the baby.
**Pain** (Fatigue) is nature's way of telling you to slow down (you need a rest).
**Pain** is the price of glory.

success (7)
**Success** (Victory) has many (a hundred) fathers, but failure (defeat) is an orphan.
**Success** is always preceded by preparation..
**Success** is never final (and failure is never fatal).

children (5)
**Children** (Our children, The children) are our future.
**Children** should be seen and not had.
Teach your (Parents must teach their) **children** to walk then to walk away.

luck (5)
**Luck** (Good luck, Bad luck) does not just happen.
**Luck** is when (what happens when) preparation meets opportunity.
You can't trust **luck**.

win (5)
You can't **win** if you don't play.

You can't **win** them all if you don't (unless you) win the first one.
You have to be (get) in it to **win** it (You can't win it unless you are in it).

Proverbs from these groups organized according to various dominant keywords perhaps show at least in a generalized way some of the preoccupations of modern society. People at times appear to be obsessed with matters of age, beauty, love, luck, success, winning, and of course also the element of time (Lau 1996 [2003]). While it is problematic to deduce the worldview of masses of people from different countries by way of a corpus of proverbs (Dundes 1972 [2007], White 1987), there is no way of denying that there are some themes that permit us to draw some tentative conclusions about the nature of modern proverbs. Continuing along these lines, it can then also be said that people are concerned about pain and anxieties of various types, that they look for friendships in an ever more segmented and chaotic modern life, and that they continue to find solace in knowing that God might assist them in coping with modernity.

With this said, we can turn to one last major group of 83 (5.8%) proverbs that belong to the realms of sexuality, obscenity, and scatology. Looking at earlier proverb collections, one might well get the impression that the folk has no so-called "dirty" proverbs. Even though paremiographers usually have included at least some such proverbs, they have in general been reluctant to collect them or their publishers did not consent to publish them. And yet, some specialized collections have been published along these lines separately from major collections. Thus Ignace Bernstein in Poland followed his massive collection *Jüdische Sprichwörter und Redensarten* (1908 [1969]) up with a published manuscript of *Proverbia Judaeorum Erotica et Turpia. Jüdische Sprichwörter erotischen und rustikalen Inhalts* (1918 [1971]). And Edwin Miller Fogel augmented his important collection *Proverbs of the Pennsylvania Germans* (1929 [1995]) by a privately distributed *Supplement to Proverbs of the Pennsylvania Germans* (1929) which I had the audacity of including in the reprint of the major collection in 1995. Numerous smaller collections of obscene proverbs have been published in books, journals, and above all in three serial publications dedicated explicitly to taboo folkloric matters,

i.e., *Anthropophyteia* (1904-1913), *Kryptadia* (1883-1911 [1970]), and *Maledicta* (1977-2004). Today, with a more open attitude, popular collections of erotic proverbs and proverbial expressions are more readily available, to wit Marinus A. van den Broek's *Erotisch Spreekwoordenboek. Spreekwoorden en zegswijzen* (2002).

In any case, we have not shied away from including suggestive or obscene proverbs of which some are rather explicit and literal, while others are metaphorical and figurative to the point that many native speakers might have difficulty understanding them. But the fact remains that these proverbs exist, and they are part and parcel of the proverbial speech among the initiated, as our Google searches have proven beyond any doubt. They are part of the world of slang, graffiti, latrinalia (Dundes 1966 [2007]) and the so-called "vulgar tongue", with Francis Grose's *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (1785 [1931, 1992]) in the eighteenth century having set the stage for a rich tradition of compendia dealing with obscenities of the underworld and "upperworld". Proverbs deal with all aspects of life, and they certainly have always commented on such basic issues as sexuality. It should then not be surprising that in an age that is dealing quite openly with sex in particular that proverbs will be involved as well. Of course, it is exactly the way that proverbs comment on sexuality in a metaphorical way that makes these texts especially interesting.

The word "shit", less taboo in fine society than in former times, is quite prevalent in this type of proverbs. But this scatological term does not really refer to feces as such in most of these proverbs but rather to something bad or unpleasant. This is also the case for the slang term "bullshit" (often cited in its abbreviated form as B.S.) with the meaning of "nonsense, lies, or exaggeration". A few examples, with the short proverb "Shit happens" (Rees 2005) and its clean variant "Stuff happens" being very popular indeed, will illustrate this:

If you can't dazzle them with **brilliance**, baffle (blind) them with bullshit (B.S.).

**Bullshit** can get you to the top, but it won't keep you there.

**Life** is a shit sandwich: the more bread you have, the less shit you eat.
Shit (Piss) or get off the **pot**.
Don't **shit** where you eat.
If you stir (up) **shit**, it will stink (you raise a stink).
**Shit** flows (runs, rolls) downhill.
**Shit** (Stuff) happens.
**Shit** rubs off.
You can't kill **shit** (Shit never dies). (Winick 2004)
You can't sprinkle **sugar** on shit (bullshit) and make (call) it candy (dessert, a treat, etc.).

A few other proverbs dealing with urination, flatulence, and feces (i.e., turds) are clear indications that people at least at times rely on this more or less crassly expressed wisdom as a summary of some of the unpleasant aspects of human interaction:

When you've got to **go**, you've got to go [reference to defecation].
The **one** who smelt it dealt it.
It's better to be **pissed** off than pissed on.
**Opinions** are like assholes (armpits) – everybody's got one (and they all stink).
Nobody minds the **smell** of his own farts (Everyone likes to smell his own farts;
Don't eat yellow **snow** [reference to urine].
Don't kick a (fresh) **turd** on a hot day.
You can't polish (gild) a **turd**.

Male genitalia, i.e., testicles and the penis, appear in various slang transmutations, with "balls" in the two proverbs listed below usually not being thought of as testicles by speakers. In other words, the metaphorical proverb legitimizes a slang word so that the proverb "Take the bull by the balls" with the meaning of taking charge of a situation becomes quite innocuous.

Grab them (If you've got them) by the **balls**, their hearts and minds will follow.
Take (Grab) the **bull** (life, the world) by the balls.
Big **car**, small dick (prick).
**Chicks** [girls] before dicks.
Don't let your **meat** loaf (meatloaf).

Big **mouth**, small pecker (dick, prick).
All **prick** and no pence.

As can be seen from these texts, males showing off with big cars or a big mouth are quickly ridiculed by the claim that their apparent wealth and boisterousness is but a psychological cover-up for a small penis size that in this case serves as a weakening of their masculinity. The proverb "All prick and no pence" expresses the reverse, i.e., the macho man with his big penis has nothing else to show in the way of money or brains. But only the proverb "Don't let your meat loaf" actually has a sexual meaning in that it gives the advice that a man ought not to let his meat (penis) be inactive. Of course, it is a well known fact that males as well as females have had their questions about the matter of penis size, and this concern has found its way into modern proverbs as well. As sex surveys have shown, the feeling about the importance of penis size for sexual satisfaction differs considerably, and this is mirrored in the conflicting proverbs about this topic as well:

It's not the **meat**, it's the motion.
It's not the **size** of the boat (ship) but the motion of the ocean (that matters).
**Size** does matter.
**Size** doesn't matter (it's what you do with it, it's how you use it).

In any case, sexual intercourse appears to be the talk of the town everywhere, with some of the proverbs dealing with this matter being quite crude. But not just that, for they also show that their male originators unfortunately at times express an aggressive or even violent attitude toward women seen as mere sex objects:

Old enough to **bleed**, old enough to breed (butcher, stick, etc.).
Close (Shut) your **eyes** and think of England (the Empire, the queen, Old Glory, etc.).
You don't fuck the **face**.
**Fuck** them (Find them, fuck them) and forget them.
If there's **grass** on the field [woman's pubic area], (you can) play ball.
**Hit** it and quit it [short sexual act].

Wham (Slam), bam – thank you, **ma'am**.
If she **smokes**, she pokes [fornicates].
Won't **tell**, won't swell [get pregnant], grateful as hell.

Much more positive are the two related proverbs "The blacker the berry (meat), the sweeter the juice" and "The blacker the **meat**, the sweeter the bone (piece)" that are part of the rich African American proverb tradition (Daniel, Smitherman-Donaldson, and Jeremiah 1987, Prahlad 1996). While they are clearly sexual metaphors, they do look positively at black women, as we documented in the following entry:

> The blacker the **berry** (meat), the sweeter the juice. 1929 *Chicago Defender* 2 Mar.: "They tell me that 'The blacker the berry, the sweeter the Juice:' is that so?" 1929 Wallace Thurman, *The Blacker the Berry* (New York: Macaulay) [3]; an epigraph to the novel gives the full form, presented as verse: "The blacker the berry / The sweeter the juice" – identifying it as a "Negro folk saying." 1934 Zora Neale Hurston, *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott) 234: "Ah could uh married one uh dem French women but shucks, gimme uh brown skin eve'y time. Blacker de berry sweeter de juice." [...] Cf. "The blacker the MEAT, the sweeter the bone." The proverb praises blackness, usually in regard to sexual desirability. (Prahlad 1996: 209-210)

Little wonder that modern Anglo-American proverbs also include cautionary texts that warn against sex at an early age, advocate safe sex, and also declare that people have the right to refuse a sexual encounter:

Keep your **dress** down and your panties (drawers) up.
No glove, no **love**.
***No*** means 'no.'

And what is the proverbial wisdom on sex in general, with the short word "sex" finally also appearing in a proverb collection? Once again we have conflicting attitudes, and the proverb "Everybody lies about sex" most likely has a solid truth claim to it:

If it exists, there is **porn** of it.
Bad **sex** is better than no sex (Any sex is better than no sex, The only bad sex is no sex).
Everybody lies about **sex**.
No **sex** is better than bad sex.
**Sex** sells.
There is no such **thing** as bad sex (a bad fuck, a bad piece).

As the extremely short proverb "Sex sells" states, sexuality has become a commodity in the modern world obsessed with this topic. These sexual games have little to do with love about which many traditional proverbs comment much more positively without forgetting that love has its problems too (Mieder 1989b).

In conclusion, let me reiterate that Charles Doyle, Fred Shapiro, and I have done our level best to register as many modern Anglo-American proverbs as possible. We have assembled 1422 richly annotated proverbs, of which 731 (51.4%) have never been recorded in paremiographical or paremiological publications before. Regarding the other 691 (48.6%) proverbs, they were located text by text in numerous collections and scholarly books and articles. We have thus unearthed and registered an impressive proverbial corpus for the first time in one and the same place in our *Dictionary of Modern Proverbs* (to be published in May 2012), and we hope that other proverb scholars will follow suit by compiling collections of modern proverbs for their languages and cultures. Regarding our collection, I can offer two more statistics that might be of considerable interest. Regarding the distribution of our 1422 texts over the eleven decades from 1900 to 2010, it can be stated that the number of new proverbs appearing on the scene is quite constant, albeit with a noticeable drop-off during the two most recent decades:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1900-1909: | 155 proverbs |
| 1910-1919: | 169 |
| 1920-1929: | 152 |
| 1930-1939: | 149 |
| 1940-1949: | 124 |
| 1950-1959: | 139 |
| 1960-1969: | 154 |

| | |
|---|---|
| 1970-1979: | 152 |
| 1980-1989: | 116 |
| 1990-1999: | 86 |
| 2000-2009 | 26 |
| (2010/11) | 0 |
| total | 1422 |

With time and more research, I would imagine that more proverbs will be identified for the period from 1990-2010, and since proverbs will surely be created as time goes on, the immediate presence will also yield proverbs that will be discovered in due time. And here then is the last statistical information with the caveat that it is at times difficult to decide whether a certain proverb is metaphorical or not. But keeping such questionable cases in mind, 676 (47.5%) of our 1422 proverbs are clearly metaphorical, with slightly more than half of our corpus (746, 52.5%) being literal statements. In order to draw definitive conclusions from this data, statistical information concerning the metaphorical – non-metaphorical dichotomy of traditional proverbs would have to be obtained. For now, it is reasonable to state that modern Anglo-American proverbs might well be less metaphorical than the proverbs from earlier periods. But that is not to say that such eminently American proverbs as "Different strokes for different folks" (McKenzie 1996, Mieder 1989a: 317-332, 2006), "The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence" (Mieder 1993b [1994]), and "A picture is worth a thousand words" (Mieder 1990a [1993a], 2005a) with their international dissemination in English or loan translations are not as metaphorical as proverbs usually come (Mieder 2005b, 2005c)! One thing is for certain, proverbs are well and alive in the modern age (Mieder 1993a), and as folk wisdom they express the attitudes, beliefs, mores, and values of the people who use them. As such they are indeed "monumenta humana" (Kuusi 1957: 52) and warrant the attention of paremiographers and paremiologists throughout the world who, in order to identify and interpret them, must, to speak proverbially, "Think outside the box."

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