Dogs don't bark at parked cars
Zoological Messages in Modern Anglo-American Proverbs

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Abstract

There is no doubt that there has always been a predominance of animal proverbs. Numerous collections and studies have shown that various languages and cultures have many animal proverbs that can be seen as generalizations about animal behavior as such or as metaphorical or symbolic statements of human interactions as social beings. But there is one aspect that is missing in compilations and investigations of animal proverbs, namely the important fact that there are new or modern proverbs that differ considerably in language and metaphor/symbol from some of the traditional texts.

117 modern animal proverbs are presented and discussed in this study, emphasizing their language, meaning, metaphor, origin, and structure. While the proverbs often make sense literally, they also contain considerable wisdom that is understood in a metaphorical sense. They play an important communicative role in modern society, and they are proof positive that the time of making new proverbs is definitely not over. These modern animal proverbs will doubtlessly continue to be used as verbal tools of indirection to express in a figurative way generalizations and observations about animal and human existence alike.

Keywords: Paremiology. Proverb. Animal. Anglo-American.

Resumen

Título: «*Dogs don't bark at parked cars.* Mensajes zoológicos en refranes angloamericanos modernos».

No hay duda de que siempre ha habido un predominio de los refranes sobre animales. Numerosas colecciones y estudios han demostrado que diferentes idiomas y culturas tienen muchos refranes sobre animales que se pueden ver como generalizaciones sobre el comportamiento animal como tal o como declaraciones metafóricas o simbólicas de las interacciones humanas como seres sociales. Pero falta un aspecto en las compilaciones e investigaciones de los refranes sobre animales, a saber, el hecho importante de que hay refranes nuevos o modernos que difieren considerablemente en lenguaje y metáfora/símbolo de algunos de los textos tradicionales.

En este estudio, se presentan y se analizan 117 modernos refranes sobre animales, destacando su lenguaje, significado, metáfora, origen y estructura. Aunque los refranes a menudo poseen un sentido literal, también encierran una sabiduría notable que se entiende en un sentido metafórico. Desempeñan un importante papel comunicativo en la sociedad moderna y son una prueba positiva de que el tiempo de crear refranes no ha terminado. Estos modernos refranes sin duda continuarán siendo utilizados como herramientas verbales de indirección para expresar de manera figurativa por igual generalizaciones y observaciones sobre la existencia animal y humana.

Palabras clave: Paremiología. Refrán. Animal. Angloamericano.

Titre : « *Dogs don't bark at parked cars.* Messages zoologiques de nouveaux proverbes anglo-américains ».

Que les proverbes sur les animaux ont toujours été les plus fréquents, ne présente aucun doute. Nombreuses sont les collections et les études montrant que différentes langues

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et cultures ont beaucoup de proverbes sur les animaux qui peuvent être vus comme des généralisations du comportement des bêtes ou comme des propos métaphoriques ou symboliques des interactions des hommes en société. Or, un aspect fait défaut dans les recueils et les recherches sur les animaux, à savoir, le fait intéressant qu'il existe des proverbes nouveaux ou pas trop anciens qui sont très différents dans leur langue et leur métaphore/symbole à ceux des textes traditionnels.

117 nouveaux proverbes sur les animaux sont présentés et analysés dans ce travail pour montrer la spécificité de leur langue, leur signification, leurs métaphores, origine et structure. Tout en gardant souvent leur sens littéral, les proverbes enferment aussi un savoir profond que l'on comprend par leur sens métaphorique. Ils jouent un rôle communicatif très important dans la société moderne et sont la preuve que le temps de la créativité du parler proverbial n'est pas révolu. Ces nouveaux proverbes continueront sans doute à être utilisés comme des outils verbaux d'indirection pour exprimer, par leur sens figuré les généralisations et les observations sur la vie des animaux et des humains.

Mots-clés : Parémiologie. Proverbe. Animal, Anglo-américain.

More than a hundred years ago Carl Sylvio Köhler published his philological study about *Das Tierleben im Sprichwort der Griechen und Römer. Nach Quellen und Stellen in Parallele mit dem deutschen Sprichwort* (1881), whose reprint in 1967 might have contributed somewhat to the fact that paremiologists and phraseologists have occupied themselves more intensively with animal proverbs. Linguo-cultural and folkloric studies about individual proverbs, proverbial expressions, and proverbial comparisons based on animals have been undertaken for a long time (Mieder 2009a), but large collections of them with explanations started to appear only since the 1960s. The largest English language collection of animal proverbs from around the world is Rachid Lyazidi's *Animal Proverbs and Quotes Kingdom. Domestic Animals* (2012), but there are also smaller collections with important commentaries for British and American animal proverbs, to wit Robert Hendrickson, *Animal Crackers. A Bestial Lexicon* (1983), Darryl Lyman, *The Animal Things We Say* (1983) and *Dictionary of Animal Words and Phrases* (1994), G.F. Lamb, *Animal Quotations* (1985), Wolfgang Mieder, *Howl Like a Wolf: Animal Proverbs* (1993), Michael Macrone, *Animalogies. "A Fine Kettle of Fish" and 150 Other Animal Expressions* (1995), Robert Palmatier, *Speaking of Animals: A Dictionary of Animal Metaphors* (1995), Udo Steuck, *One Thousand and More Animal Proverbs* (1997), and Martha Barnette, *Dog Days and Dandelions*. *A Lively Guide to the Animal Meanings Behind Everyday Words* (2003). Large proverb collections of the English language quite naturally also include numerous animal proverbs dealing especially with such animals as the bear, cat, chicken, dog, donkey, fox, horse, mouse, ox, pig, rabbit, sheep, wolf, etc. (Mieder, Kingsbury, Harder 1992; Speake 2015; see also Ward 1987; Krikmann 2001: 11-12; Mussner 2012: 115-116).

With such a prevailing dominance of animal proverbs it should not come as a surprise that an impressive amount of secondary literature has appeared during the past few decades. There have been a number of comparative studies between animal proverbs of two or more languages and cultures: German-Dutch (Jarosińska 1991), German-Spanish (Thiele 1997; Piñel López 1999), Spanish-German (Alonso Ímaz 2003), German-Finnish (Aakko 2003), German-Japanese (Ueda 2004), German-Latin (Schnoor 2007), Portuguese-French-Spanish-Dutch (Augusto 2008), English-Bulgarian (Holandi 2011), German-Polish (Biadún-Grabarek 2012), German-French-Italian (Mussner 2012 and 2013), German-Slavic (Bock 2013), English-Chinese (Liu 2013), English-Kazakh (Mazhitaeva 2013), Japanese-Brazilian (Pinheiro Pereira 2013), Persian-English (Rashidi and Ghaedi 2013), German-Polish (Stypa 2014), Cuban-Spanish (Pacheco Carpio, Cabrera Albert, and Cabrera 2015), and German-Russian-Tatar (Yusupova and Kuzmina 2015). These compilations together with the analysis of similarities and differences in animal metaphors are clear indications how much people throughout the world have relied on proverbs describing animal be-

havior that often are generalized metaphors for human behavior as well. Little wonder that animal fables have frequently been reduced to proverbial wisdom about human nature couched in animal imagery (Carnes 1988; Bodi 2015).

As one would expect with such a predominance of animal proverbs, there have also been studies that have looked at these proverbs in only a specific language and culture, as for example English (Čermák 2012), Galician (Martinez Blanco and Veiga Alonso 2010), German (Preußer 2003; Abdulrahman 2016), Persian (Estaji and Nakhavali 2011), Portuguese (Cristea 2016), Russian (Velasco Menéndez 2008), and Spanish (Domínguez 1974; Nuessel 2010; Santiago Álvarez 2014; Suárez 2015). Of great importance is Arvo Krikmann's semantic, structural, and typological study "Proverbs on Animal Identity: Typological Memoirs" (2001), which by way of numerous examples from various languages established somewhat of a systematization for this rich proverbial material. And yet, it comes as somewhat of a surprise that he had to start his thorough overview with the observation that animal proverbs despite of their large numbers had not received the proper attention by scholars from various fields: "The number of publications on animal proverbs and zoo-metaphors in proverbs is undeservedly small, considering that the semantic field of animals must be the most productive one in proverbial metaphors" (Krikmann 2001: 11). This picture has changed during the past two decades, as the bibliography at the end of these deliberations shows rather convincingly.

With direct reference to Krikmann's work Antonio Pamies Bertrán has by now published his valuable comparative study of "Zoo-Symbolism and Metaphoric Competence" (2011) that shows that a considerable amount of linguo-cultural knowledge is necessary in order to understand various animal proverbs of different languages and cultures. Of course, there are internationally disseminated animal proverbs that go back to classical times, the Bible, and animal fables (Abdulrahman 2016: 123-130, Carnes 1988). But there are also culturally specific expressions for which there are no exact equivalents in other languages. But animal proverbs most certainly exist in all languages based on the one hand on the observation of the animal world and in a figurative way on "die augenfällige Übereinstimmung menschlichen und tierischen Verhaltens (the obvious correspondence of human and animal behavior)" (Meisser 1969: 871). This can be seen in myths, legends, fairy tales, and fables that show, "daß die Grenzen zwischen Mensch und Tier nicht so scharf zu ziehen sind, wie es uns manche Philosophen der Neuzeit (z.B. R. Descartes) einreden wollen (that the borders between man and animal should not be drawn as sharply as some philosophers of modern times want to convince us)" (Cherubim 2008: 113). Thus, Dmitrij Dobrovol'skij and Elisabeth Piirainen have included a long chapter on "Tiere als Symbole (Animals as Symbols)" in their important book on *Symbole in Sprache und Kultur. Studien zur Phraseologie aus kultursemiotischer Perspektive* (1996) that shows, "daß Tiere wie Bär, Eule, Fuchs, Hase, Hund, Schlange und Wolf einen Symbolcharakter in Tierphraseologismen annehmen können, der über die bloße Metaphorik der Übertragung aus dem Tierreich auf Verhaltens- oder Handlungsweisen des Menschen hinausgeht (that such animals as bear, owl, fox, rabbit, dog, snake, and wolf can take on a symbolic character in animal proverbs that goes beyond the mere metaphor of the transfer from the animal world on the behavior and acting of human beings)" (Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen 1996: 158-159). Thus the dog can, for example, be a symbol for inferiority, malice/aggression, faithfulness or quarrelsomeness, as can be seen from such phrases as "to go to the dogs", "let sleeping dogs lie", "faithful like a dog", and "to live like cat and dog". But whether animal metaphor or animal symbol, proverbs from the animal world get their expressiveness not solely from their texts but also from their different functions in various contexts.

All of this makes a lot of sense, and the many examples cited in the numerous publications on animal proverbs provide ample proof that they can be seen as generalizations about animal

behavior as such or as metaphorical or symbolic statements of human interaction as social beings. But there is one aspect that is missing in collections and studies of animal proverbs, namely the important fact that there are new or modern proverbs that differ considerably in language and metaphor/symbol from some of the traditional texts. But as will be shown by the following 117 (8.2%) proverbs from *The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs* (2012) with its total of 1422 proverbs edited by Charles Clay Doyle, Wolfgang Mieder, and Fred R. Shapiro, these newly identified and recorded animal proverbs with references to their earliest appearance in print once again contain in usually indirect (metaphorical, symbolic) language the all-too-human behavior of people.

Interestingly enough there is only one proverb that contains the generic noun "animal", and it started as a literary quotation from George Orwell's famous novel *Animal Farm* (1945): "All animals are created equal, but some are more equal than others (1945, 6; all proverbs will be cited with their year of first appearance in print followed by the page number of its registration in *The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs*). It started as an anti-proverb to the well-known proverb "All men are created equal" from the American "Declaration of Independence" (1776; see Mieder 2015a) that had been expanded to "All men and women are created equal" by the early American feminist Elizabeth Cady Stanton in 1848 (Mieder 2014a: 65-74). Orwell's statement has long taken on a proverbial ring, and its satirical tone in a way sets the tone for many of the following modern animal proverbs of which most are of American origin. What this new proverb expresses is, of course, that in the animal world and by extension the human world, nobody is really equal with some having more opportunities and a better life than others. This new proverb is thus a correct summation of modern existence with its unfair social inequalities.

There are a few proverbs that basically begin with a reference to "man" or "woman" and then bring into focus a certain relationship to an animal that is obviously not meant to be complimentary:

> A man is no better than his horse. (1905, 158)
> A man who kicks his dog (hound) will beat his wife. (1952, 159)
> A man is not a camel. (1911, 158)

The third text is perhaps in need of some explanation, as is so often the case with proverbs in general. In any case, nowadays the proverb jocularly justifies a need for the frequent slaking of human thirst, especially with alcoholic decoctions.

But then there is also the following proverb that indicates in a positive way how much men need women:

> A man without a woman is like a fish without a tail. (1909, 159)

The proverb may represent a collapsing of two lines in the old song "A Man without a Woman": "An Association without an object / Is like a ship without a sail, / A boat without a rudder, / Or a fish without a tail". But following that basic structure and reversing "man" and "woman", a new proverb was created that became a feminist slogan known in a number of foreign languages (Mieder 2015b: 247):

> A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle. (1976, 279)

It is also known in its variant form of "A woman needs a man like a fish needs 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). The feminist Gloria Stei-

nem disclaimed credit for originating the feminist expression, and it has now been established that 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.

> A man without a woman is like a fish without a bicycle. (1983, 159)
> A man without faith (religion, God) is like a fish without a bicycle. (1958, 160)

With such preoccupation with the ridiculous imagery of a fish riding a bicycle, it comes as no surprise that Jack Prelutsky came up with his humorous poem "My Fish Can Ride a Bicycle" (1990):

> My fish can ride a bicycle,
> my fish can climb a tree,
> my fish enjoys a glass of milk,
> my fish takes naps with me.
>
> My fish can play the clarinet,
> my fish can bounce a ball,
> my fish is not like other fish,
> my fish can't swim at all.
> (Prelutsky 1990: 146)

And here is yet another variant that has gained enough currency and distribution to be considered a proverb in its own right. Of course, this proverb emphasizes the freedom of emancipated modern women who are perfectly capable of handling their affairs without men:

> A woman without a man is like a fish without a net
> (A woman needs a man like a fish needs a net). (1993, 280)

Clearly the proverb derives from "A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle" but now with the meaning of a man being not just an absurd irrelevancy to a woman but an actual impediment to her success or happiness, even a danger to her.

To a certain extent these proverbs are based on somewhat of a wordplay since one does not normally talk about fish and bicycles in the same sentence. In the following proverb man is equated with animal to which is added an allusion to the animal proverb "There is more than one way to skin a cat", resulting in a fascinating wordplay about the vulnerability of modern humankind in an inhumane world:

> Man is the only animal that can be skinned more than once. (1920, 31 supplement 2)

There is also this next proverb based on a playful folk etymology uncovering the problems with unfounded assumptions:

> Assume makes an ass of you and me. (1975, 9)

Speaking of an ass (donkey, jackass) in the folk meaning of "stupid", here is another wordplay based on the absurd image of an unintelligent person:

> There are more horses' asses than horses (in the world). (1957, 125)

This type of crude or absurd wordplay leads to so-called proverbial interrogatives with plenty of wisdom being hidden in the seemingly simple question. The best example is the following proverb that was first recorded in Joseph Stein's *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964):

> A bird may love a fish, but where would they live (build a home, build a nest)? (1964, 21)

As can be seen, the proverb has become current in a number of variants, but it is usually cited as a comment about two socially or ethnically unmatched persons wanting to build a good relationship or to get married (Mahoney 2009).

Here is another proverbial interrogative that in its longer variant ends with a question mark and most likely had its origin in Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy's *Times to Remember* (1974): "Birds sing after a storm; why shouldn't people feel as free to delight in whatever sunlight remains to them?":

> Birds sing after a storm (so why shouldn't we?) (1974, 21)

The next proverbial question comes from the corporate world and had its origin in the claim that large multi-national corporations (gorillas) can do whatever they wish:

> Where does a five-hundred-pound (eight hundred-pound, etc.) gorilla sit? (1976, 109)

The obvious answer is "Anywhere it wants!" Regarding the next proverbial interrogative, it can be observed that it is truly nothing but a rhetorical question. Clearly it does not make a difference how a cat looks like in order for it to be a good mouser:

> Who cares if a cat is black or white as long as it catches mice? (1968, 35)

But things are not so simple or innocuous with the next proverbial question once one becomes aware of the fact that the "cow" stands for a woman, revealing the proverb as an anti-feministic statement:

> Why buy milk when a cow is so cheap (when you've got a cow at home)? (1957, 166)

In fact, the proverb probably originated as an anti-proverb responding to the anti-marriage saying "Why buy the cow when you can get milk for free?"

One is inclined to say, "Don't use this ridiculous and slanderous proverb", but unfortunately it has gained currency among male chauvinists. But speaking of not doing certain things, there are several modern proverbs that follow the long-established structural formula of "Don't …" as a solid piece of advice for proper behavior or action. It should be noted that there exist variants that indicate that some of these modern proverbs have not yet reached a standardized form:

> Don't use a sledgehammer (hammer, hatchet) to kill a fly (gnat, mosquito) (Don't try to kill a fly with a sledgehammer). (1910, 114 supplement 1)
> Don't try to swallow an elephant whole (It is possible to swallow [You can eat] an elephant – one bite at a time. (1921, 67)
> Don't fatten frogs for snakes. (1922, 88)
> Don't let the (same) dog bite you twice. (1932, 58)
> Don't let the same bee sting you twice. (1911, 18)

The last two proverbs obviously advise against getting into the same bind twice. They have the same meaning but use different animal metaphors. Regarding the last text, it might be of interest to cite the song "Don't Let the Same Bee Sting You Twice" (2012) by the British rock band The Veils where the proverb is employed as a leitmotif to deal with a problematic love relationship. Proverbs appearing in songs is nothing new, of course, and there is a long tradition of proverbs in various types of songs, including such modern artists as The Beatles, Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, and others (Mieder 1989: 195-221):

I left a message to myself
That girl ain't no good for your health
Unhooked my brother's telephone
Pretended nobody was home
Your love weren't nothing but trouble
I guess I'm only now paying the price
Don't let the same bee sting you twice
Climbing up your mama's stairs
Oblivious to your affairs
But really how could I have known?
Your lies were seeds carefully sewn
But now I know I should always have listened to dear daddy's advice
Don't let the same bee sting you twice
Well now ain't you meant to die after one sting, honey?
But you just keep on coming back for more
And I've been losing my mind over this and ain't it funny
I've still got no idea what it is you're looking for?
Oh, and here she comes again
And now you're standing at my door
Just too damn pretty to ignore
And I think that maybe I've gone mad
And your love really weren't so bad
And then you claim it was a case of neurotic perception
and I say "Maybe, well that sounds about right"
And then I let the same bee sting me twice
Yeah I let the same bee sting me twice
(https://genious.com/The-veils-don't-let-the-same-bee-sting-you-twice-lyrics)

Just like with older traditional proverbs, there are also modern proverbs that follow the pattern of "Never …", a formulaic way of giving advice against doing a questionable thing. The drastic or ridiculous imagery of these texts is meant to be humorous or satirical, and they certainly bring the message across that a certain action should definitely not be undertaken:

> Never get in a pissing contest (match) with a skunk. (1943, 198)
> Never wrestle (wallow with) a pig; you will both get dirty, and the pig likes it. (1946, 197)
> Never try to teach a pig to sing; it wastes your time, and it annoys the pig. (1973, 197) (see Dundes and Pagter, 1991)
> Never play leapfrog with a unicorn. (1977, 137)

Talking about wanting to do ridiculous things, there are also modern proverbs that express this idea by couching their animal metaphors into the structural pattern of "You can't …" It should be noted that once again some of these proverbs are current in variants:

> You can't rise with the lark if you've been on one the night before. (1908, 136)
> (Based on the wordplay with "lark" as a bird or as a frivolous undertaking.)
> You can't catch a fish without baiting a hook (putting the line in the water, etc.). (1921, 79)
> You can't get all your coons up one tree. (1937, 43)
> (i.e., you can't gain all the advantages through one act, stroke or operation.)
> You can't make chicken salad out of chicken shit (chicken feathers). (1949, 91 supplement 1)
> You cannot herd cats. (1992, 35)
> (As a simile betokening difficulty or impossibility ["like trying to herd cats", "as easy as herding cats"], the image or conceit of herding cats is probably older; certainly, the motif of herding hares, rabbits, grasshoppers, etc. is.)

All of these animal proverbs this far place a human being into a situation that is exemplified by way of animals. This is also true for such modern animal proverbs that are based on the common structural pattern of "If you … you …" (Mieder 2004: 6-7). This is clearly a matter of cause and effect, and the messages of the proverbs are primarily to give advice or direction for future action:

If you're going to be a bear, be a grizzly. (1908, 88)
If you can't ride two horses at once, you shouldn't be in the circus. (1935, 125)
(The proverb may derive from "No one can ride two horses except in a circus," itself an anti-proverb based on "You can't ride two horses at once")
If you want a friend, get (buy) a dog. (1941, 86)
(The proverb alludes to the old saying "A dog is man's best friend". It usually suggests that, in some particularly hostile or competitive setting (Hollywood, Washington DC, Wall Street), a dog will be the *only* friend that a person can hope to find – and that (human) friendship itself is a quality not only improbable but even undesirable.)
If you pay peanuts, you get monkeys (Only monkeys work for peanuts). (1953, 171)
If you are looking for (hunting) elephants, go to elephant country (go where elephants are). (1954, 67)
If you hoot with the owls at night, you can't soar with the eagles in the morning
(If you wish to soar with the eagles in the morning, you can't hoot with the owls at night. (1961, 34 supplement 2)
If you aren't the lead dog, the scenery (view) never changes. (1980, 58)
If you can't run with the big dogs, stay on (under) the porch. (1985, 58)
If you're going to swallow (have to swallow) a frog, don't look at it (don't think about it) too long. (1986, 88)
(The common attribution to Mark Twain appears to be spurious.)

There remains but one dominant pattern to be considered, namely "Sometimes you're …, and sometimes you're …" that results in modern proverbs that express the arbitrariness of life's situations. Once again, these proverbs exist in a number of variants:

Sometimes (Some days) you're the windshield and sometimes you're the bug (bird)
(Sometimes you're the bird (bug), and sometimes you're the windshield). (1981, 277)
Sometimes (Some days) you're the dog, and sometimes (some days) you're the fireplug
(Sometimes you're the fireplug (fire hydrant), and sometimes you're the dog). (1989, 59)
Sometimes (Some days) you're the pigeon, and some (other) days you're the statue. (1993, 198)
Sometimes (Some days) you get the bear, sometimes the bear gets you. (1970, 16)

It does not take much imagination to understand some of the unpleasant happenings that can occur at times. Such realia as windshields and hydrants together with the animals are indicators of the modernity of these proverbs that once again show how human beings can be exposed or confronted with animals that bring unexpected and negative consequences. Modern life has its pitfalls to be sure!

With this being said, these comments can turn to an alphabetically arranged review of various animals as they appear in modern proverbs. Once again it should be noted that many of the modern proverbs exist in variants, as for example in the following two texts with the keyword of "bear". The first proverb expresses the old proverbial idea of "to take time by the forelock" that is not in much use today any longer:

The time to shoot (catch) bears is when they are out (around). (1914, 259)
We killed a (the) bear (, but Papa (Brother, etc.) shot it. (1939, 16)

This second text is an indirect statement to silence a braggart boasting about his feats. It is not so much a proverb giving advice but rather a sarcastic comment that confronts someone with a needed reality check.

Things are considerably different with the proverb "The bee that gets the honey doesn't hang around the hive" (1906, 18) that had its start with the chorus of Ed Rose's song that also carries the proverb as its title:

> The bee that gets the honey
> doesn't hang around the hive
> and the man that makes the money
> 's got to work and strive.
> You can't get no honey buzzin
> 's round dis room
> unless you flop your wings your'e
> gwine to get stung soon.
> The bee that gets the honey
> doesn't hang around the hive.
> https://digital.gonzaga.edu/digital/collection/p15486coll3/d/4029

Numerous modern proverbs come from popular songs like this, while others are attached to famous people even though they might not have originated it. This is the case with the proverb "Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee" (1964, 31) that is usually attributed to the boxer Muhammed Ali (Cassius Clay), even though it has been established that it actually was Drew Brown, Clay's spiritual adviser and assistant trainer, who coined it in February of 1964.

Things are considerably easier with the following two proverbs from the world of birds, both of which use an animal metaphor to comment about some very basic human concerns:

> A robin's song is not pretty to the worm. (1938, 219)
> A bird never flies so far that his tail doesn't follow. (1969, 21)

Things are not much different with the first two of three "cat" proverbs, but the third text needs an explanatory comment to be understood:

> Sleeping cats catch no mice. (1903, 35)
> Cats look down on you, dogs look up at you, pigs look as you as equals. (1937, 35)
> (The saying has sometimes been attributed to Sir Winston Churchill.)
> Even a dead cat will bounce. (1987, 35)
> (This is a metaphor that alludes to the stock market bouncing back after a loss.)

Two modern proverbs based on a chicken or rooster are easily understood since they basically express the thought that a person might be alive and well one day and reduced to bits and pieces the next day:

> A rooster one day, a feather duster the next. (1907, 219)
> Chicken today, feathers tomorrow. (1958, 37)

In the following group of three "cow" proverbs the first two are once again perfectly clear but the third text does need a bit of an explanation since it does seem to relate to journalism in particular. This is an indication that some modern proverbs deal with matters that might not be known generally:

> Better a good cow than a cow of a good kind. (1922, 46)
> Salt (Feed, Pet, Court, Woo, Buy) the cow to get the calf. (1949, 46)
> Sacred cows make great (good, the best, gourmet) hamburgers (burgers). (1965, 46)
> (Proverbial wisdom from journalism where exposing famous people or important issues make great news stories.)

With this the larg group of modern proverbs that deals with the most popular pet has been reached. The proverb "A dog is man's best friend" from the middle of the nineteenth century is universally acknowledged, and since dogs are ever present in modern society, new proverbs continue to be coined even though there are so many in existence already (Mieder, Kingsbury, Harder 1992: 157-163). Two of these proverbs deal with insights concerning the ownership and the training of a dog:

> A dog is for life, not just for Christmas. (1978, 58)
> (The saying entered oral tradition as a proverb from a slogan introduced by the UK's National Canine Defence League to discourage the giving of puppies as Christmas presents. It as well as its allusive adaptations can refer metaphorically to concerns other than the disposition of puppies.)
> There are no bad dogs, only bad owners. (1949, 59)

This last proverb is based on the structural pattern of "There are no bad Xs, only bad Ys" on which the modern proverbs "There are no bad children, only bad parents" (1910, 38) and "There are no bad students, only bad teachers" (1958, 242) are based as well.

The next four proverbs, while addressing the behavior of dogs, clearly have human beings and their behavior in mind:

> It's not the size of the dog in the fight that matters; it's the size of the fight in the dog. (1911, 232)
> It's a poor dog that won't wag its own tail. (1922, 59)
> It's a dog-eat-dog world. (1935, 282)
> (The proverb probably alludes to the proverb "Dog does not eat dog.")
> It's a foolish dog that barks at a flying bird. (1975, 59)
> (The proverb first occurs in the song "Jah Live" (1975) by Bob Marley and Lee Perry that is comprised of a pastiche of proverbs and other sayings: "The truth is an offence / And not a sin, / And he who laughs last / Is he who wins, / It's a foolish dog / Barks at a flying bird." The proverb refers to any futility or pointless hostility.)

This leaves the relatively recent proverb "Dogs don't bark at parked cars" (1993, 58) which, in its literal meaning, makes sense as can be observed in the natural world of dogs surrounded by parked cars. But what then is its figurative meaning? It refers to changes in socio-political structures that will doubtlessly result in some expected opposition. Leaving things alone (parked), would bring no opposition (dogs) but also no progress.

It is perhaps somewhat surprising that the "duck" is represented several times among these modern proverbs. Their meaning is rather self-evident, with the duck of the first three proverbs representing a person so to speak. The last text, however, is referring to the idea of getting one's affairs or things in order:

> Go hunting where the ducks are. (1930, 64)
> It is better to be a big duck in a little puddle (pond) than a little duck in a big puddle (pond). (1934, 64)
> Nothing ruins a duck but (like) its bill (A wise duck takes care of its bill). (1955, 181)
> (The proverb warns against excessive or injudicious talking.)
> Get your ducks in a row. (1956, 63)

There is yet one more "duck" proverb that was registered in *The New York Times* as early as in 1948. For quite some time it did not appear with much frequency orally or in print, but it has become rather popular in more recent times. Why might this be? Probably because of the absurd image of a duck waddling and quacking along as well as its message that someone or something

is exactly what it appears to be: "If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck, it's a duck" (1948, 64).

In comparison to ducks, eagles are majestic birds of prey at the very top of the hierarchy of birds. Turkeys, on the other hand, are considered to be rather clumsy and stupid birds. In fact, "turkey" in its slang sense refers to a foolish, inept, or socially awkward person. Little wonder that metaphorically speaking eagles and turkeys are placed in opposition to each other in the following two proverbs:

> In any group (flock) of eagles, there will be at least one turkey. (1979, 111)
> It is hard to soar with the eagles when you are surrounded by (scratching with, running with, etc.) turkeys. (1980, 65)

Turning to "fish" proverbs, it should first of all be noticed that two of them state nothing else but two of the "duck" proverbs cited above, albeit this time relating the proverbial message by way of a "fish" metaphor:

> Fish where the fish are. (1901, 79)
> Better a big fish in a little pond (puddle, pool) than a little fish in a big pond (mighty ocean). (1903, 78)

Since both of these proverbs are considerably older than the "duck" equivalents, it could well be that they served as models for the "fish" texts. They are all well known today, and people simply choose one or the other depending on their personal preference or on a particular context. In any case, the next six texts contain clear-cut messages:

> A fish doesn't know it is in water (it is wet) (A fish doesn't know it is in water until it is taken out; A fish doesn't see water). (1909, 96 supplement 1)
> The bigger the bait, the bigger the fish. (1913, 87 supplement 1)
> A fish wouldn't get caught if it kept its mouth shut. (1921, 79)
> You've got to fish while they are biting. (1921, 80)
> Smart fish don't bite (don't get caught, keep their mouth shut). (1935, 79)
> Only dead fish go with the flow. (1989, 79)
> (Contradicting the proverb "Go with the flow")

Two additional modern "fish" proverbs deserve a short comment. The obvious truth that "Half a fish is better than none (at all)" (1905, 114) is clearly nothing else but a restatement of the much older proverb "Half a loaf is better than none" with the identical meaning. And the same is true for the proverb "A fish in the net (creel) is worth two in the water (sea, river)" (1902, 78) that is a reformulation of the very popular proverb "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush" with the same structure. This British proverb from the fifteenth century brings to mind the short poem "Which is Best? (1865) by the American poet Emily Dickenson which most surely is one of the most challenging proverb poems of the rich tradition of proverbial verse:

> Which is best? Heaven –
> Or only Heaven to come
> With that old Codicil of Doubt?
> I cannot help esteem
> The "Bird within the Hand"
> Superior to the one
> The "Bush" may yield me
> Or may not
> Too late to choose again.
> (Sobieski and Mieder 2005: 52)

While this poem contains an existentialistic depth, there is also the poem "Bird Watcher" (1993) that its author R. J. Owens wrote while he was a student at the University of Vermont. Here the old proverb serves to express the sadness of a lost love:

A bird in the hand,
Beats two in the bushes.
This is what they say.
But the bird, in my hand, has left.

One sunny afternoon, she flew away,
And now my hand is empty, vacant.
Like that of a young child,
Open, wanting to be filled.

So now I am a Bird Watcher,
Once again, Seeking to embrace.
Not birds, but a Single one.
In my hand, A magnificent bird.
Forever, So I can watch no more.
(Mieder and Sobieski 2005: 179)

Just as there are many traditional proverbs about birds, horses have also appeared in proverbs for centuries as a domestic animal of much use to humankind. Some of the modern "horse" proverbs don't seem particularly innovative in their insights, and one might wonder why the following three proverbs are of a relatively recent origin:

There was never a horse that couldn't be ridden. (1921, 125)
When you fall off a horse (bicycle), you have to get (right) back on. (1962, 125)
Always ride the (your) horse in the direction it's going (it wants to go). (1975, 124)

While these texts in their literal sense deal with the world of horses, they relate in their figurative way to their human riders and the challenges they face. That is not the case with the proverb "The horse is (already) out of the barn" (1961, supplement 3) that may be related to the much older proverbial phrase about the futility of "locking the (stable) door after the horse is stolen". The idea of something having been completed already has resulted in two somewhat later equivalents with different images but the same meaning: "The train has (already) left the station" (1976, supplement 3) and "The ship has (already) sailed" (1978, supplement 3).

While these proverbs can be used in various situations due to their general metaphor and meaning, this is quite different with the modern proverb "When you hear hoofbeats, think horses, not zebras (When you hear hoofbeats, don't look for zebras)" (1969, 123). It is a piece of advice given to medical students in the United States, telling them that they should look for simple answers when checking patients (Dundes, Streiff, Dundes 1999). In other words, they might merely have a simple cold (horses) and not a severe or obscure disease (zebras). This proverb does not necessarily have any wider application than the one in medical schools, but it is a perfect example for showing that there are many proverbs known primarily to a particular folk group. This also shows that proverbs might not necessarily be understood by those who do not belong to a certain section of the population. There is no doubt that the meaning of proverbs can be allusive, as is the case with the following proverbs and its variants, for which Charles Clay Doyle, Wolfgang Mieder, and Fred R. Shapiro present the attached references and explanation in their *Dictionary of Modern Proverbs* (2012):

There is (There must be, There just has to be, I know there is) a pony (in) there somewhere. (1958, 203)

(1958 H. K. Beecher, "Relation of Drugs to Reaction Components in Subjective Responses," in *Psychopharmacology*, edited by Harry H. Pennes (New York: Hoeber-Harper) 353 (re-

lating a story, which "many of you have heard," by way of illustrating the hypothesis "that whether one is optimistic or pessimistic is a matter of inborn temperament"): "The optimistic child was similarly locked in a room, containing only a large pile of manure. At the end, the child emerged covered with manure and smiles. 'I could not find it, but there must be a pony somewhere!'" 1960 James Kirkwood, *There Must Be a Pony! A Novel* (Boston: Little, Brown). 1966 Marvin J. Gersh, *How to Raise Children at Home in Your Spare Time* (New York: Stein & Day) 104: "... When he came out they asked him what he was so happy about. 'Of course I'm happy,' he said. 'With all that manure in there, there must be a pony somewhere.'" The allusive proverb satirically cautions against credulity or excessive optimism.)

Of interest are also two proverbs with monkeys appearing as substitutes for people who by their questionable behavior bring about disruptions of one type or another:

One monkey don't stop no show. (1961, 171)
Not my circus, not my monkeys. (2014, 91 supplement 1)

The second text with its earliest reference found thus far from 2014 is a perfect example for proverbs still being coined in the very modern age (Honeck and Welge 1997; Mieder 2015c: 38-44). Using the images of a circus and monkeys, it brings across the idea that someone is not responsible for or concerned with certain problems.

Speaking of problems, for most people mice in the house would be an unpleasant intrusion to be dealt with by way of handy mousetraps. Since catching mice is a rather common phenomenon, it is no wonder that there are two modern proverbs of relatively recent coinage. One might have thought that they would actually be a little older:

There's always free cheese in a mousetrap. (1962, 37)
The second mouse gets the cheese. (1997, 173)
(1997 *Sydney [Australia] Morning Herald* 13 Sep.: "Thought for the weekend, culled by Greg Cocks, of Brooklyn, from the Internet: The early bird may get the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese." The proverb might be thought of as an anti-proverb responding to "The early bird gets the worm"; often (as in the quotation) it appears in conjunction with the older proverb.)

But speaking of "second", here is a proverb that plays on the supposed stupidity of mules and the even greater ignorance of someone who gets kicked by it another time. And as indicated by an additional proverb, mules do not adhere to normal behavior in any case:

There is no (little) education (wisdom) in the second kick of a mule. (1966, 94 supplement 1)
Mules don't kick according to rules. (1968, 175)

Just like the mules actually stand for contrite people, pigs can also be equated with human beings, notably men, as is rather directly expressed in the first proverb of the following group:

Men (All men) are pigs. (1910, 158)
Pigs smell their own smells first. (1966, 197)
Pigs get fat; hogs get slaughtered (killed, butchered). (1967, 197)
(Usually referring to management getting the money while labor is deprived.)
You have to throw (put, pant) the corn where the hogs can get it. (1990, 44)
You can put lipstick on a pig but it's still a pig (A pig wearing lipstick is still a pig). (1985, 148)
(The *lipstick-on-a-pig* version is the predominant modern form of older expressions that assert the futility of dressing or decorating pigs or other animals.

The last proverb gained considerable notoriety during one of President Barack Obama's campaign events on September 9, 2008, at Lebanon, Virginia, that was blown way out of proportion by the Republicans and by especially the mass media. As it were, Barack Obama was commenting spontaneously on Senator John McCain's economic plan, peppering his remarks with the by now famous "lipstick" proverb while adding a second colloquially expressed thought based on a similar structure to it:

> John McCain says he's about change too, and so I guess his whole angle is, "Watch out George Bush –except for economic policy, health care policy, tax policy, education policy, foreign policy and Karl Rove-style politics– we're really going to shake things up in Washington." That's not change. That's just calling something [that's] the same thing something different. You know you can put lipstick on a pig, but it's still a pig. You know you can wrap an old fish in a piece of paper called change, it's still going to stink after eight years. We've had enough of the same old thing.

As can be seen, this statement definitely was directed at John McCain and not at his vice-presidential running mate Governor Sarah Palin from Alaska. However, in light of the fact that Palin had spoken of lipstick, hockey moms, and pit bulls in her speech of September 3, 2008, at the Republican Convention in Minneapolis ("I was just your average hockey mom. I love those hockey moms, you know, they say, what is the difference between a hockey mom and a pit bull? Lipstick."), it was easy to attack Obama's colorful remarks as being directed at Sarah Palin as an ill-chosen sexist remark. Even though this claim was utterly absurd, this accusation in the heat of the vigorous campaign gave Obama and his staff a few days of anxiety, to be sure. Luckily there were a number of journalists who very quickly helped to set the record straight by proving that the proverb or parts of it has a solid standing in American politics. Using paremiographical tools, they pointed out that the "lipstick" proverb has a 16th century precursor in the form of "You can't make a silk purse from a sow's ear." Similar proverbs are "A hog in armor [a person of strange appearance] is still a hog" (18th century) and "A hog in a silk waistcoat is still a hog" (19th century). From the twentieth century there are also such variants as "A pig in a palace is still a pig", "A pig with feathers behind its ears is still a pig", "The pig may have a tuxedo on, but he is still a pig", "A pig painted gold is still a pig", and "A pig in a parlor is still a pig." Since the word "lipstick" dates only from about 1880, its appearance in proverbial language also had to wait until more recent times. In fact, the earliest reference found thus far is from November 16, 1985, in the *Washington Post* (for all of this and more see Mieder 2009b: 83-85).

Things are not always that complex, as can be seen from the following animal proverbs arranged alphabetically according to the animal named in them. For some of them other proverbs have already been cited as examples for certain repeated structures above:

> *cockroach*. There is never just one cockroach (in the kitchen). (1991, supplement 3)
> *elephant.* Women and elephants never forget. (1904, 279)
> (The proverb probably originated as an anti-proverb, an ironic extension of the old saying (or belief), "Elephants never forget.")
> *frog.* If frogs had wings, they wouldn't bump their tails (butt, etc.) on rocks (logs, the ground, etc.) (If frogs had wings, they could fly). (1914, 88)
> *lion.* Until the lions have their own historians, the stories will glorify the hunters. (1971, 147)
> *rabbit.* Little rabbits have big ears. (1935, 213)
> (The proverb is an analog of the older "Little pitchers have big ears" with both proverbs referring to children listening to adult talk.)

skunk. There is nothing in the middle of the road but yellow stripes and dead skunks (armadillos, possums, etc.). (1967, 181)
snake. He who has been bitten by a snake fears even a rope. (1901, 235)
squirrel. Even a blind squirrel can sometimes find a nut (an acorn). (1928, 238)
(The proverb seems to be the prevalent modern version of "Even a blind hog can occasionally find an acorn.")
wolf. The caribou and the wolf are one; for the caribou feeds the wolf, but it is the wolf who keeps the caribou strong. (1963, 34)

With this said, these comments can turn to such modern 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" or offensive proverbs. But they have always existed, of course, with earlier paremiographers for the most part having been reluctant or kept from including them in their collections (Mieder 2012: 181-186). As will be seen by these examples of modern animal proverbs, they at times exist in clean and dirty variants for speakers to choose from:

If the dog hadn't stopped to shit (rest, etc.), he would have caught the rabbit. (1919, 58)
(The proverb usually means that excuses or explanations do not avail. It may have originated as a translation of the German "Wenn der Hund nicht geschissen hätte, hätte er den Hasen gefangen.")
Dead birds don't fall out of nests. (1952, 21)
(The "bird" here is a euphemism for penis, and the proverb goes back to an anecdote about Winston Churchill caught at some function with his fly-buttons undone. When his attention was tactfully drawn to this, he supposedly said, "A dead bird won't fall out of the nest.")
Take (Grab) the bull (life, the world) by the balls. (1954, 28)
(The proverb may have originated as an anti-proverb based on the older "Take the bull by the horns." In a literal sense, grasping a bull by the horns will allow a certain measure of control that would be absent in the grabbing of a bull by the balls (i.e., testicles)!
If you lie down with pigs, you get up smelling bad (covered with shit, etc.). (1966, 197) (The proverb parallels to the older "If you lie down with dogs, you get up with fleas.")
Play (Mess, Fuck) with a bull and you will get the horns. (1967, 28)
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. (1971, 8; see Dundes and Pagter 1987)
The sun doesn't shine on (up) the same dog's ass every day. (1976, 246)
Old rats like cheese too. (1977, 214)
(The proverb refers to an old person's (usually a man's) sexual desire.)
You can't run with the (big) dogs if you pee like a pup. (1986, 59)
When the chips are down, the buffalo (cow) is empty. (1997, 39)
(The proverb plays punningly on the idiom (from poker) "the chips are down" (in other contexts, *chips* is a slang euphemism for "feces".)

These proverbs are not particularly vulgar, and as can be seen, proverbs like "Old rats like cheese too" hide their sexual content quite well with this animal metaphor. Of course, they are also certainly not like "fairy tales" to which at least a couple of modern animal proverbs allude. But to be sure, the proverb "Every beauty needs her beast" (1973, 17) is a rather sexist statement even though it alludes to the common title or plot of the international folktale cycle "Beauty and the Beast." And then there is the popular proverb "You have to kiss a lot of frogs (toads) to find a prince" (1976, 89) that has gained considerable currency in English and in loan translations in many languages. It is not, as one might suspect, a reduction of the well-known fairy tale "The Frog King (Prince)" but at best an allusion to it (Mieder 2014b). Nevertheless, it is a splendid piece of folk wisdom couched in an animal metaphor to describe the difficulty of finding the right partner

in the modern world with the variant image of an unattractive toad making the task even more problematic. With the world of fairy tales or legends being put into question, it should come as no surprise that even the traditional hero in shining armor will not be able to defeat the monstrous dragon –whatever or whoever it is– any longer. This is expressed in the proverbial negation of the supposedly positive outcome of the struggle with dragons:

> Sometimes the dragon wins. (1981, 62)

Regarding this innovative proverb the folklorist and paremiologist Alan Dundes has stated that "Despite the 'never give up' philosophy of life, sometimes the opposing forces prevail and even heroes are defeated. Certainly in the heroic sagas of the golden past, the hero always slays the dragon. […] Modern counterculture with its cynical view of the past prefers a more realistic assessment of the hero's chances for success" (Dundes and Pagter 1996: 58-50). This type of realism can be seen in quite a few of the animal proverbs that have been discussed here, especially if they are interpreted literally. However, the modern animal proverbs with their metaphors continue to play the same role as the traditional proverbs have done for centuries. They are proof positive that the time of making new proverbs is definitely not over and they will continue to be used as verbal tools of indirection to express in a figurative way generalizations and observations about animal and human existence alike.

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