

## “THE PROOF OF THE PROVERB IS IN THE PROBING”

### ALAN DUNDES AS PIONEERING PAREMIOLOGIST

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**Abstract:** Alan Dundes (1934–2005) was one of the giants of international folkloristics whose voluminous publications and lectures delivered around the world touched thousands of scholars and students of folklore. The paremiological tribute to Alan Dundes has been divided into eight sections, a conclusion, and a list of references cited, i.e., 1. Honoring Alan Dundes with Three *Festschriften*; 2. Proverbs as Exemplifications of Folklore Theory; 3. Major Paremiological Contributions; 4. Proverbs as Expressions of Worldview; 5. The Darker Side of Proverbs: Ethnic Slurs and National Character; 6. Proverbs as Collateral Folklore References; 7. Major Monographs Based in Part on Proverbial Matters; and 8. The Interplay of Paremiology and Paremiography.

**Key words:** Alan Dundes, paremiology, proverbs, ethnic slurs, Dundes’s works

*A tribute to my hero and friend.*

There is no doubt that Alan Dundes (1934–2005) was one of the giants of international folkloristics whose voluminous publications and lectures delivered around the world touched thousands of scholars and students of folklore. In addition, he introduced over twenty thousand eager students to folklore studies in his more than four decades of teaching at the University of California at Berkeley. Many of them were so intrigued by this popular “Pied Piper of Folklore” that they earned their MA or PhD degrees in folklore either at Berkeley or other universities, the result being that there are “Dundes students” practicing the art of folklore studies at universities or in the public sector throughout the United States and the rest of the world. Under his directorship the Folklore Program at Berkeley became internationally known as the ideal place to pursue serious folklore studies, with the Berkeley Folklore Archives serving as a model for gathering various folklore materials from modern oral and written sources. Little wonder that many folklorists travelled to Berkeley to spend time with the master teacher and scholar, who always gave freely of his time and expertise to help others with their important work. While Alan Dundes

was obviously busy with his own projects, he always had the time to welcome visitors from near and far, thereby practicing what he preached throughout his productive and fruitful life, namely that folkloristics is the key to a better understanding of the human condition and that its practitioners should conduct their work on a comparative and international basis.

The following paremiological tribute to Alan Dundes has been divided into eight sections, a conclusion, and a list of references cited, i.e., 1. Honoring Alan Dundes with Three *Festschriften*; 2. Proverbs as Exemplifications of Folklore Theory; 3. Major Paremiological Contributions; 4. Proverbs as Expressions of Worldview; 5. The Darker Side of Proverbs: Ethnic Slurs and National Character; 6. Proverbs as Collateral Folklore References; 7. Major Monographs Based in Part on Proverbial Matters; and 8. The Interplay of Paremiology and Paremiography.

## 1. HONORING ALAN DUNDES WITH THREE “FESTSCHRIFTEN”

When Alan Dundes celebrated his sixtieth birthday on September 8, 1994, he was honored with three *Festschriften*, a perfect number of honorific publications for the scholar who early in his illustrious career had published an intriguing paper on *The Number Three in American Culture* (1968). Naturally he was particularly touched by the volume *Folklore Interpreted. Essays in Honor of Alan Dundes* (1995) edited by Regina Bendix and Rosemary Lévy Zumwalt and comprised of celebratory essays by numerous former students who by now for the most part are major players on the folkloristic stage in many corners of the world. These scholars knew Alan Dundes the best, with Rosemary Lévy Zumwalt speaking for all of them by characterizing Dundes's research approach as follows: *No matter the paths that Dundes was to explore, his work was always grounded in the search for meaning* (6), *For Dundes, the comparative approach for the study of folklore is crucial* (13), *To Dundes the psychoanalytical theory is necessary for the analysis of folklore* (18), and, quoting the master himself, *The study of folklore is nothing if it is not an international discipline* (26). The love and appreciation that these former students have for their “hero” is summed up in Regina Bendix's collectanea of “Dundesiana” that contains heart-warming campuslore, anecdotes, and memorates of Alan Dundes as teacher and mentor, whom they affectionately called *The big D*, *Uncle Alan* or even *Papa Dundes* (51) among themselves.

Obviously Alan Dundes was also very pleased with the volume *The Psychoanalytic Study of Society. Essays in Honor of Alan Dundes* (1993) that L. Bryce Boyer, Ruth M. Boyer, and Stephen M. Sonnenberg edited in recogni-

tion of his Freudian approach to folklore interpretation. As Michael P. Carroll observes in his introductory chapter, *Alan Dundes’s core message for folklorists is simple: Folklore is often the result of the sorts of psychological processes discussed by Freud* (4). But Dundes also has a core message for psychoanalysts who study folklore and it is simply this: *Folklore always exists in multiple versions. The very nature of the process by which items of folklore are passed along – oral transmission or imitation – allows items of folklore to be changed and modified. The result is variation, and to ignore this variation is to lose a great deal of valuable information* (6). And Carroll is, of course, absolutely correct in stating that *Dundes’s genius lies in his encyclopedic familiarity with folk materials and in his ability to use a few simple psychoanalytic ideas [primarily that of projective inversion] to discern previously undiscovered patterns in these materials, even if they have been pored over by dozens of earlier scholars* (7). Alan Dundes has perhaps best expressed his own creative genius in presenting innovative interpretations of traditional materials by way of the book title *Folklore Matters* (1989) with its ingenious double meaning depending on whether “matters” is read as a noun or verb. But there is also this revealing personal credo that A. Dundes added as an epilogue to his book on *Bloody Mary in the Mirror. Essays in Psychoanalytic Folkloristics* (2002): *As a psychoanalytic folklorist, my professional goals are to make sense of nonsense, find a rationale for the irrational, and seek to make the unconscious conscious* (137).

As editor of *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship*, I was in a position of dedicating its eleventh volume as a *Festschrift for Alan Dundes on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday* (1994). I began my introductory laudation on *Alan Dundes: Master Folklorist and Paremiologist* with the following claim that ten years later is even more appropriate and that would have continued to be proven valid, if the life of this magisterial folklorist had not been cut short by a massive heart attack while teaching a seminar on folklore theory on March 31, 2005:

*If there were a Nobel Prize for folklore, Prof. Alan Dundes would be a most deserving candidate for that honor. There is no doubt in my mind that he has been one of the leading international folklorists for the last three decades, and he certainly enjoys the respect and admiration of students and scholars throughout the world. He is indeed a unique individual, an exemplary educator, an innovative scholar, and a humanist whose knowledge is that of a Renaissance person.* (1)

At the end of my remarks, I added a personal tribute to my best of all possible friends that I would like to repeat here as an expression of my continued appreciation, admiration, and love for my hero Alan Dundes:

*When I was an inexperienced, insecure, and young proverb scholar in the early 1970s, it was Alan Dundes who took me under his proverbial wings and who encouraged me to keep up my own work. He criticized and praised my scholarship, always being supportive while expecting the best possible work from me. It is Alan Dundes who “internationalized” me in pushing me to publish my three volumes of International Proverb Scholarship. An Annotated Bibliography (1982, 1990, 1993 [now also a fourth volume, 2001]). Together we edited The Wisdom of Many. Essays on the Proverb (1981), and his spirit and knowledge are present not only in those volumes but in all of my paremiological studies. As a proverb scholar, he has guided and influenced not only me but also many others, and he has most certainly made his mark as a leading paremiologist. Alan Dundes is an exemplary scholar for us all, and to me personally he will always be a very special hero and friend. (5)*

Our mutual respect, influence on each other, and friendship continued to grow during the decade after these sincerely meant comments. From the very beginning of his long list of publications, Alan Dundes would refer at least in passing to some proverbs or proverbial expressions to clarify or illustrate a particular point. In fact, various forms of folk speech continued to be cited by him often at crucial points in his interpretive argumentation, hitting the proverbial nail on the head, so to speak. In other words, paremiology is of great importance in the folkloristic and psychoanalytic work of Alan Dundes, proverbs do indeed matter to him as expressions of worldview. Looking at A. Dundes’s vast publications dealing with literally all genres and aspects of folklore, it can be stated as a *leitmotif* that the anti-proverb “The proof of the proverb is in the probing” informed many of his intriguing, provocative, and illuminating studies.

## **2. PROVERBS AS EXEMPLIFICATIONS OF FOLKLORE THEORY**

Despite my intimate knowledge of Alan Dundes’s complete scholarship, I must admit that I discovered a unique one-page article on “Proverbs” (1966) only after his unexpected death. He had never mentioned it to me, perhaps because he had published it in *The New Book of Knowledge. The Children’s Encyclopedia*, wishing merely to introduce young readers to the fascinating world of proverbs without making any erudite claims in particular. As a family man with his supportive wife Carolyn always at his side and his three children Alison, Lauren, and David filling his large Berkeley home with joy, he quite

naturally felt the need to communicate with young minds, also supplying this children's encyclopedia with an entry on "American Folklore". While his short proverb essay with its two columns is replete with illustrative examples, it nevertheless already contains hints of A. Dundes's major paremiological contribution "On the Structure of the Proverb" (1975) that he published nine years later. The encyclopedia is long out of print, and I had some difficulty obtaining the page through interlibrary loan. But here are the pertinent statements from it that can be seen as precursors to A. Dundes's later more detailed proverb studies:

*A proverb is a traditional saying that sums up a situation, passes judgment on a past matter, or recommends a course of action for the future. Some proverbs state a fact, such as "Honesty is the best policy". But most proverbs are metaphorical. [---] Proverbs consist of at least one topic and one comment about that topic. They can have as few as two words: "Money talks"; "Time flies". Many proverbs fall into one of several patterns. [---] Proverbs are one of the oldest forms of folklore. [---] Proverbs are found among most of the peoples of the world, but very few have been reported from among the Indians of North and South America. [---] It is often supposed that proverbs are full of wisdom. In fact, a proverb has been defined as "the wisdom of many and the wit of one". [---] Proverbs fit certain situations. They are not always true for all time. Many proverbs, like certain folktales and folk songs, are truly international. [---] Proverbs often come from stories. [---]*

In fact, A. Dundes's idea that a proverb in its most basic form consists of a topic and a comment had already been expressed in one of his earliest theoretical articles on "Trends in Content Analysis" (1962). As so often in his many papers, A. Dundes draws on the proverb genre to clarify his explanations, with the proverb due to its shortness being especially suitable for explanatory comments:

*Proverbs are traditional expressions in which there is a topic and a comment. The simplest form of proverb would thus be "Money talks". The two basic structural slots, i.e., topic and comment, can be filled contentwise with greater or lesser extension of either topic or comment or both: "Barking dogs seldom bite" or "Still water runs deep", etc. Within the general framework of "topic-comment", one can distinguish clear-cut structural types of proverbs. [---] Just as there may be a limited number of structural folktale types, there may also be a limited number of structural proverb types. Content analysis would presumably seek to discover whether*

*a particular structural type was present in a given corpus. [...] The content might be political, religious, sexual, etc. (37–38).*

Such theoretical considerations show that A. Dundes was forever interested in the definition of genres by means of structural, textual, and also contextual analysis, as can best be seen in his seminal essay on “Texture, Text, and Context” (1964). It is certainly quite striking that he returns again and again to proverbs to explain what he means by this triad of analytical levels to be considered in serious folklore scholarship:

*In most of the genres (and all those of a verbal nature), the texture is the language, its specific phonemes and morphemes employed. Thus in verbal forms of folklore, textural features are linguistic features. The textural features of proverbs, for example, include rhyme and alliteration. Other common textural features include: stress, pitch, juncture, tone, and onomatopoeia. The more important the textural features are in a given genre of folklore, the more difficult it is to translate an example of that genre into another language. [...] The text of an item of folklore is essentially a version or a single telling of a tale, a recitation of a proverb, a singing of a folksong. For purposes of analysis, the text may be considered independent of its texture. Whereas texture is, on the whole, untranslatable, text may be translated. The proverb text “Coffee boiled is coffee spoiled” may in theory be translated into any language, but the chances that the textural features of rhyme will survive translation are virtually nil. [...] The context of an item of folklore is the specific social situation in which that particular item is actually employed. It is necessary to distinguish context and function. Function is essentially an abstraction made on the basis of a number of contexts. Usually, function is an analyst’s statement of what (he thinks) the use or purpose of a given genre of folklore is. Thus one of the functions of myth is to provide a sacred precedent for present action; one of the functions of proverbs is to provide a secular precedent for present action (254–256).*

Of course, as A. Dundes points out, *texture, text, and context must all be recorded* (264), and it is an unfortunate fact that *the majority of proverb collections provide just texts* (262). Regrettably, not much has changed regarding contextless folklore collections since the appearance of this article some forty years ago.

Always interested in the interrelationship of folklore and literature, Alan Dundes applied the criteria of texture, text, and context to literary folklore studies in his invaluable article on “The Study of Folklore in Literature and

Culture: Identification and Interpretation” (1965). It was published in the flagship *Journal of American Folklore*, bringing A. Dundes’s work to the attention of international scholars:

*There are only two basic steps in the study of folklore in literature and in culture. The first step is objective and empirical; the second is subjective and speculative. The first might be termed identification and the second interpretation. [---] However, folklorists themselves might be criticized for doing no more than identifying. Too many studies of folklore in literature consist of little more than reading novels for the motifs or the proverbs, and no attempt is made to evaluate how an author has used folkloristic elements and more specifically, how these folklore elements function in the particular literary work as a whole. [---] Folklorists plunge into literary sources and emerge with dry lists of motifs or proverbs lifted from their literary contexts. The problem is that for many folklorists identification has become an end in itself instead of a means to an end of interpretation. Identification is only the beginning, only the first step. a folklorist who limits his analysis to identification has stopped before asking any of the really important questions about his material (136–137).*

One year later, in a paper on “Metafolklore and Oral Literary Criticism” (1966), Alan Dundes returned to the importance of interpretation, i.e., meaning, on the basis of contextualized texts, turning to a proverb used in oral communication this time for the exemplification of this crucial point:

*Suppose a folklorist collected the following Yoruba proverb: “A proverb is like a horse: when the truth is missing, we use a proverb to find it.” Let us assume that he also collected the typical context of this proverb in which it is employed in an introductory capacity prior to uttering another proverb which was designed to settle a particular dispute. The introductory proverb announces to the audience that the arbitrator is planning to use a proverb and reminds them of the great power and prestige of proverbs in such situations. But from this text and context, does the collector know precisely what the proverb means? What exactly is meant by comparing a proverb and a horse? While the meaning(s) of a proverb are unquestionably involved in an individual’s decision whether or not the quotation of that particular proverb is appropriate in a given context, the folklore collector may miss the meaning(s) even though he has faithfully recorded text and context. One cannot always guess the meaning from context. For this reason, folklorists must actively seek to elicit the meaning of folklore from the folk (507).*

Again and again Alan Dundes employs proverbs to illustrate theoretical points for folklore in general, as in his well-known article on “Structuralism and Folklore” (1976), this time taking his idea that a proverb consists of at least one descriptive element that is made up of a topic and a comment to be a perfect example of a *minimal structural unit* (76). As such,

*this proposed unit of analysis also explains why there cannot be any one-word proverbs. There may be plenty of traditional single words in slang and folk speech, but such items would not be considered proverbs if this basic unit were accepted as a valid definitional criterion. And this brings us to one of the important purposes of structural analysis in folklore: the definition of genres (76–77).*

And finally, in one of his most cited articles on “Who Are the Folk?” (1977), A. Dundes presents the significant point that the modern age creates its own folklore, especially also new proverbs:

*The technology of the telephone, radio, television, xerox machine, etc., has increased the speed of the transmission of folklore. What used to take days, weeks, or months to cross the country can now move around the world in a matter of seconds. Moreover the technology itself has become the subject of folklore. Experimental scientists (and engineers) constitute a folk group with their own folklore. For example, Murphy’s Laws would be an excellent illustration of the folklore of this group. Many versions of Murphy’s Laws exist, but perhaps the most common single law is “If anything can go wrong, it will” (16).*

Later in his life Alan Dundes published collections of such modern folklore, locating it not only in the mass media and at the work place (office lore) but also on the global internet. Folklore clearly was a steadily evolving and changing phenomenon for this untiring scholar, as will be shown in another section of this survey below.

### **3. MAJOR PAREMIOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

Among the hundreds of articles and books on anthropology, culture, folklore, language, literature, psychology, religion, etc., there are fourteen studies that have proverbs as their main subject matter, making Alan Dundes a major force in interdisciplinary and comparative paremiology. The first article on “Proverbs and the Ethnography of Speaking Folklore” (1964) was written jointly with E. Ojo Arewa and presents twelve Yoruba proverbs dealing with child

rearing to show that the study of folklore in general and that of proverbs in particular needs texts in contexts in order to understand the actual meaning of the message. Thus folklore should be studied as a communicative process:

*In order to study the ethnography of the speaking of folklore (or, ethnography of speaking folklore, more concisely), clearly one cannot be limited to texts. One needs texts in their contexts. One needs to ask not only for proverbs, and what counts as a proverb, but also for information as to the other components of the situation in which proverbs are used. What are the rules governing who can use proverbs, or particular proverbs, and to whom? upon what occasions? in what places? with what other persons present or absent? using what channel (e.g., speech, drumming, etc.)? Do restrictions or prescriptions as to the use of proverbs or a proverb have to do with particular topics? with the specific relationship between speaker and addressee? What exactly are the contributing contextual factors which make the use of proverbs, or of a particular proverb, possible or not possible, appropriate or inappropriate? (71)*

These are fundamental questions that any paremiologist should ask in order to reach meaningful conclusions regarding the use, function, and meaning of proverbs in the communicative process.

Dealing once again with Yoruba materials and published in the same year, A. Dundes's paper on "Some Yoruba Wellerisms, Dialogue Proverbs, and Tongue-Twisters" (1964) makes the point that the European wellerism and dialogue proverb can also be found among the Yoruba in Africa. A particularly telling example of a wellerism discussed by A. Dundes is the following:

*"Shall I sit awhile?" says the parasite before becoming a permanent dweller.*

*The point here is that a human parasite at the beginning does not behave as though he will be a permanent burden. The proverb [i.e., wellerism] might be cited referring to a person who says he has come for only a short visit but who is suspected of planning to stay for a long time (116).*

And here is a typical example of an African dialogue proverb with A. Dundes's explanation as to the use and function of this proverb genre in oral tradition:

*The turtle sets out on a journey. They ask him, "When will you return?" He replies, "Not until I am disgraced."*

*Ajapa, the tortoise, is a popular figure in Yoruba folklore. Often he loses face or is made to look foolish. The proverb thus implies that it will not be long before the tortoise returns disgraced. The proverb might be*

*employed when A wants B to give up his plans or to cease a certain activity. If B threatens to go to an extreme, A may point out the consequences, namely B will lose face. If B replies that he is going to do it anyway, then A might quote the proverb (117).*

While much more is known today about the geographical distribution of wellerisms and dialogue proverbs, A. Dundes's collection of 7 Yoruba wellerisms and 3 dialogue proverbs (there are also 7 tongue-twisters) show that these two proverbial genres are certainly known and used beyond Western cultures and languages.

But speaking of different proverbial genres, there is also the article on "The Henny-Penny Phenomenon: A Study of Folk Phonological Esthetics in American Speech" (1974), where A. Dundes investigates stylistic characteristics of so-called proverbial reduplicatives:

*In the study of folk speech, a distinction has been made between binomials or twin formulae on the one hand, and reduplicatives on the other. Binomials consist of traditional pairs of words, e.g., "kith and kin", "hit or miss", etc. Reduplicatives in contrast involve partial or total repetitions of a single morpheme or word. Examples of reduplicatives would be tom tom, ding-dong, and higgledy-piggledy (1).*

Alan Dundes is, of course, correct in stating that

*clearly each of these idioms has its own individual history, and it would be absurd to attempt to explain them solely in terms of what I am calling the Henny-Penny phenomenon. [...] It seems safe to say that folk phonological esthetics may well play a hitherto unappreciated role in both the formation of idioms as well as the determination of which new formations or borrowings gain acceptance (6).*

And, as is often the case for A. Dundes, he concludes his long list of examples with the observations that *the phonological penchants in rhyme reduplicatives are already recorded in folktales, folksongs, and folk poetry (8)*, thus giving a folkloristic proof for the longevity of some of these proverbial reduplicatives like "hodge-podge" that have been traced back to late medieval times.

But all of Alan Dundes's work with various proverb genres culminates in his truly seminal study "On the Structure of the Proverb" (1975) that he published in the last issue of the *Proverbium* journal at Helsinki and which has been reprinted several times in English and translated into Russian. Looking at proverbs from a structural point of view, A. Dundes reviews a number of attempts to define the proverb and shows how previous structural definitions have failed. He also points to the similar structures of the proverb and the

riddle, explains that many proverbs are based on traditional semantic contrastive pairs, and eventually offers his own inclusive definition that he had worked towards in some of the publications mentioned previously:

*The proverb appears to be a traditional propositional statement consisting of at least one descriptive element, a descriptive element consisting of a topic and a comment. This means that proverbs must have at least two words. Proverbs which contain a single descriptive element are nonoppositional. Proverbs with two or more descriptive elements may be either oppositional or nonoppositional. "Like father, like son" would be an example of a multi-descriptive element proverb which was nonoppositional; "Man works from sun to sun but woman's work is never done" would be an example of a multi-descriptive element proverb which is oppositional (man/woman; finite work/infinite or endless work). Non-oppositional multi-descriptive element proverbs emphasize identificational features, often in the form of an equation or a series of equal terms; oppositional proverbs emphasize contrastive features often in the form of negation or a series of terms in complementary distribution. Some proverbs contain both identificational and contrastive features. The means of producing opposition in proverbs is strikingly similar to the means of producing opposition in riddles. However, whereas the oppositions in riddles are resolved by the answer, the oppositional proverb is itself an answer to a proverb-evoking situation and the opposition is posed, not resolved. In this sense, proverbs only state problems in contrast to riddles which solve them (970–971).*

One of my fondest memories is a discussion of this article with a group of graduate students who were in my seminar on the proverb that I offered as guest professor at Berkeley in 1981 upon Alan Dundes's kind invitation. We were all impressed with its logical argumentation based on structural premises. The definition is without doubt one of the best of the proverb genre, but we had to point out to the master that we were having problems with the very basic first sentence of the definition: *The proverb appears to be a traditional propositional statement consisting of at least one descriptive element, a descriptive element consisting of a topic and a comment* (970). More precisely, it was the concept of *traditional* that troubled us, i.e., while the master's definition does in fact define proverbs structurally, it does not help us to determine whether any given sentence consisting of at least one descriptive element is proverbial or not. In other words, the definition does not detect the major criterion of *traditionality* that is part and parcel of a proverb. A. Dundes's structural definition of a proverb, useful as it is for the definition of the proverb

genre, does unfortunately not provide us with a fool-proof method of ascertaining proverbiality as such, i.e., the traditionality of any given propositional statement needs to be proven by way of multiple references in order to establish that it is in fact a proverb. Alan Dundes listened to our concern, of course, pointing out that the concern with *traditionality* is true for all of folklore. His definition, as I recall his convincing argument, does at least provide a valid structural definition of the genre itself. And as such, it has proven to be immensely useful to paremiologists throughout the world as they deal with the vexing problem of finding the ultimate proverb definition. Thus far we have not really gotten any further than A. Dundes's invaluable work.

Having genre distinctions always on his well-structured mind, Alan Dundes published his provocative paper "On Whether Weather 'Proverbs' Are Proverbs" (1984) about a decade later. I had invited my good friend to submit a paper for the first volume of *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship* at the start of my editorship, and he was glad to help me in getting this new annual publication off the ground here in the United States. He starts with a review of major collections and studies of so-called weather proverbs and then claims that they are not proverbs at all. They are rather nothing more than superstitions in rhymed fixed-phrase form, probably for mnemonic purposes, as for example "Red sky at night, sailor's delight" and "April showers bring May flowers".

*Although superstitions are always literal, proverbs are not always metaphorical. One can cite a few literal proverbs (sometimes called aphorisms or maxims), e.g., "Honesty is the best policy". But the majority of true proverbs are demonstrably metaphorical insofar as they can be legitimately applied to a whole series of contexts and situations. Weather sayings to the extent that they are literal fall under the generic rubric of superstition. Most are sign superstitions (44).*

Alan Dundes acknowledges, however, that the texts "Lightning never strikes twice in the same place" or "One swallow does not make a summer" could be understood both literally and metaphorically. Nevertheless, he points out successfully that many "weather proverbs" are in fact superstitions or signs, and he is correct in calling for clearer generic differentiation at least on the part of folklorists. The folk itself does not necessarily agree with this hair-splitting genre preoccupation and quite contently continues to refer to traditional statements commenting on weather rules or superstitions as weather proverbs. In any case, I strongly believe that Alan Dundes has made yet another major contribution to proverb scholarship with this article. I thank my lucky stars that I knew about the important issues that he raised, and heeding his argu-

ments, my co-editors Stewart and Mildred Kingsbury and I used the compromise title of *Weather Wisdom. Proverbs, Superstitions, and Signs* (New York: Peter Lang 1996) for our scholarly collection of such traditional texts. And I was, of course, pleased when my good friend commented approvingly on this collection in an enthusiastic letter to me.

But there are so many wonderful memories that I treasure in my head and heart of my good friend Alan Dundes. One of them was my time as guest professor at Berkeley during the spring semester of 1981. While I was happily teaching a senior-level German folklore course and a graduate seminar on proverbs for his renowned Folklore Program, we also decided to edit a book together that would assemble some of the most significant essays on proverbs. I remember so well the many hours we spent together either in his office at the university or in his beautiful book-lined study in his villa in the Berkeley hills, with his wife Carolyn spoiling us with her culinary skills. It was no easy task to choose twenty articles from among hundreds of possibilities, but by way of stimulating discussions (quite often at Kip's pizza restaurant) we finally succeeded in putting together a representative joint volume on *The Wisdom of Many. Essays on the Proverb* (1981; rpt. 1994). We had so much scholarly fun writing the head notes for each reprinted article together, and as we did so, we became more and more convinced that we had assembled an inclusive introduction to modern proverb scholarship, including the work of such renowned scholars as Archer Taylor, Ruth Finnegan, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Peter Seitel, F. P. Wilson, Stuart A. Gallacher, Matti Kuusi, and others. The twenty essays begin with general overviews and questions of definition. This is followed by discussions of the function and meaning of proverbs in social contexts. Next we present examples of the proverb in literary contexts ranging from the Bible to William Shakespeare. Included are also detailed investigations of individual proverbs, as for example on the medical proverb "Stuff a cold and starve a fever". Other essays address the utilization of proverbs in psychological testing, the possible relevance of proverbs in identifying national character, and, finally, the influence of proverbs in the modern world of the mass media. To illustrate that proverbs are ubiquitous and that they should be studied comparatively, we chose articles that are based on analyses of African, Yiddish, Chinese, Spanish, Finnish, Irish, and English proverbs. Quite naturally we decided to reprint Alan Dundes's major article "On the Structure of the Proverb" (1975), thus making his theoretical findings available to many scholars and students. The essay volume was indeed well received upon its original publication in 1981 with Garland Publishing in New York. Naturally we were both very pleased when the University of Wisconsin Press at Madison published a paperback edition in 1994 that still finds interested purchasers

today. For Alan Dundes and me it was a project that solidified our friendship forever, with both of us agreeing that part of a scholar's work is to make good resources available to colleagues and students alike. This is something that both of us have done separately with numerous other essay volumes and case books on folkloric matters, but *The Wisdom of Many* volume always had a special meaning for us.

It is important to note here as well that Alan Dundes included articles on proverbs in a number of essay volumes that he edited over the years, a clear indication that he valued proverbs as an important folkloric genre. In his still valuable edited volume on *The Study of Folklore* (1965), he included John C. Messenger's significant study on "The Role of Proverbs in a Nigerian Judicial System" (1959), reprinting it once again in the first volume of *Folk Law. Essays in the Theory and Practice of "Lex Non Scripta"* (1994) that he edited together with his daughter Alison Dundes Renteln. In his collection of essays entitled *Mother Wit from the Laughing Barrel. Readings in the Interpretation of Afro-American Folklore* (1973; rpt. 1990) he reprinted J. Mason Brewer's "Old-Time Negro Proverbs" (1933), a discussion of proverbs concerned with the hardships of slavery and the attempt to gain freedom. In his most recent four-volume essay collection edited for the Routledge publishing house, he chose an article by the Lithuanian paremiologist Kazys Grigas on "Problems of the Type in the Comparative Study of Proverbs" (1996) for the fourth volume dealing with "Folkloristics: Theories and Methods". And my good friend also honored me by reprinting my essay on "'Proverbs Bring It to Light': Modern Paremiology in Retrospect and Prospect" (1997) in the third volume dedicated to "The Genres of Folklore". Obviously I had hoped that he might choose one of my articles to be included in these unique four folklore volumes, and I was so very thankful when Alan Dundes informed me of his decision. After all, he could have picked from a list of numerous other essays by various internationally known paremiologists. The fact that he zeroed in on one of my papers was one of the last presents I received from my dearest friend, and I will always be grateful to him for this kindness and recognition of my work.

Quite naturally Alan Dundes also asked himself from time to time when and where a particular proverb or proverbial expression might have been coined, how it was disseminated, and what its variants and varied meanings might be. Most paremiologists have undertaken such individual proverb studies, notably also the doyen of proverb studies Archer Taylor, someone whom Alan Dundes and I both hold in highest esteem, with my friend having had the opportunity of knowing Taylor at Berkeley. There is, however, one aspect to Dundes's studies of individual phrases that sets him quite apart from most other such investigations, and that is his psychoanalytic approach in trying to find the deeper

meaning behind the metaphors. This is certainly the case in his enlightening study “Towards a Metaphorical Reading of ‘Break a Leg’: A Note on Folklore of the Stage” (1994), showing that this proverbial superstition might well be

*based upon the gestural or postural conventions of curtain calls. If an actor or dancer performs well, he or she will normally receive applause from the audience. [--] When an actor or dancer acknowledges the audience’s acclaim, he or she typically bows. A bow consists in part of bending the head downward, away from its normal vertical axis. This could be construed metaphorically as ‘breaking one’s neck’. In similar fashion, a female performer might respond to the audience’s plaudits by making a curtsy. This involves bending the knees and dipping the body slightly. If the knees bend, then I suggest this could be considered in metaphorical terms as ‘breaking’ the leg (87).*

Another short article is entitled “‘Jumping the Broom’: On the Origin and Meaning of an African American Wedding Custom” (1996). Alan Dundes shows that the folk custom did not originate in Africa even though it was and continues to be practiced primarily at wedding ceremonies of African Americans. It is actually based on European superstitions and proverbial phrases such as “If a girl strides over a besom-handle, she will be a mother before she is a wife” and “She jumped o’er t’besom before she went to church” (in reference to an unmarried woman having a child). All of this seems to indicate *the symbolic significance of the ritual to be the ‘stepping over’ as a metaphor for sexual intercourse. If a woman’s jumping over a broomstick produces a child, one could reasonably assume that the broomstick has phallic properties (327)*. And there is also the fascinating study on “‘When You Hear Hoofbeats, Think Horses, not Zebras’: A Folk Medical Diagnostic Proverb” (1999) that Alan Dundes published together with his daughter Lauren Dundes and his son-in-law Dr. Michael B. Streiff. Here the three authors deal with a relatively new proverb that originated among members of the medical profession, stating that

*the ostensible meaning of the proverb in its more familiar medical context is to warn medical students about the dangers of looking too hard for esoteric rare diseases, thereby perhaps resulting in the overlooking of the most obvious and common diagnosis indicated by the symptoms manifested by the patient (99).*

While Alan Dundes and his two co-authors had no particular problem in establishing the fact that this medical proverb probably originated not much before 1960, it is a well-known fact that dating proverbs is often a very daunting if not impossible task. To show this, A. Dundes published a short note on “Praise

not the Day Before the Night': Guessing Age and Provenance" (2000). It was long believed that the proverb "Praise not the day before the night" originated in the European Middle Ages with the earliest text having been found in the *Edda*. But A. Dundes adds new textual evidence that the proverb has also been found in an Aramaic manuscript dating from the sixth or seventh century BC as "My son, do not curse the day until you have seen the night". This leads him to the following conclusion that is of value to folklorists and paremiologists alike:

*If this Aramaic proverb is indeed cognate with the other versions of the proverb, then we would have to re-think the age and provenance issue. The Aramaic text is at least fifteen hundred years earlier than the Edda text. And moreover it would in this context clearly be a mistake to label the proverb simply as an Anglo-American, Indo-Germanic, Balto-Finnic, or European proverb. The earlier Aramaic version would in and of itself constitute a good reason to consider the possibility of a Near Eastern origin of the proverb. What this suggests is that scholarship in comparative folkloristics must constantly be updated in the light of new evidence and this is nowhere more apparent than in the endless attempts to guess the age or provenance of any item of folklore (299).*

A. Dundes is correct in calling on paremiologists to take the guess work out of their conclusions regarding origin and geographical distribution of proverbs. But he has several other concerns regarding paremiological scholarship that he presented in a short essay with the alliterative title "Paremiological Pet Peeves" (2000). True to folkloric inclinations, he presents three concerns that could indeed be solved:

*The first of the pet peeves has to do with the failure to provide an inter-linear word-for-word translation of any proverb presented in another language. There is a world of difference between providing a free translation, say, into English, and providing a word-for-word interlinear translation. Without the latter, only a native speaker of the original language could possibly follow the internal logic and nuances of the proverb. In many cases, the free translation into English fails to convey the basic meaning of the proverb and there is no way for the reader who does not know the original language to check on this for himself (292).*

*The sloppy reporting of proverbs is just one pet peeve. Another concerns the failure to distinguish proverbs from non-proverbs [i.e., folk similes, proverbial expressions, superstitions, weather signs, etc.] in so-called definitive editions of proverbs (294).*

*There is one last paremiological pet peeve I should like to discuss and that is the repeated failure of folklorists to distinguish proverbs which are truly cognate from proverbs which are merely parallel in structure or message. Cognation presumes monogenesis and diffusion whereas mere parallels may stem from polygenesis. The basic idea may be the same, but the particular metaphor employed may not (296–297).*

Having said this, Alan Dundes returned to one more study of an individual phrase two years later that represents one of the finest examples of his paremiological work based on folkloric, linguistic, and psychoanalytic principles, namely “Much Ado About ‘Sweet Bugger All’: Getting to the Bottom of a Puzzle in British Folk Speech” (2002). The detailed study contains sections on the etymology of *bugger*, its use in limericks, its appearance in folk speech, and of course the origin, use, and meaning of the proverbial phrase *sweet bugger all*. A. Dundes explains the homosexual basis of the phrase by pointing to the fact that *bugger* refers to sodomy:

*What this suggests is that “bugger” equals “sod” equals “fuck”. The only difference is that “bugger” and “sod” have homosexual connotations whereas “fuck” can in theory refer to either sex.*

*A verbal technique of emphasizing the absoluteness of the state of “nothing”, especially with reference to the alleged degree of knowledge held by an individual, consists of inserting the adjective “sweet” before the idiom. Accordingly, while “bugger all” does mean “nothing”, “sweet bugger all” means “absolutely nothing” (39).*

The “outrageous” article contains rather explicit comments on homosexuality, and I do recall that A. Dundes was concerned whether he could get it published at all. But I encouraged him to submit it to the prestigious British *Folklore* journal, and there were no problems at all – much to the credit of the editor.

Finally, there is one more special interest that Alan Dundes had in the realm of paremiological matters. His fascination with iconography representing the folk resulted in one of his best books, co-authored with his Dutch undergraduate student Claudia A. Stibbe and published as volume 230 of the renowned Folklore Fellows Communications series in Finland with the title *The Art of Mixing Metaphors. A Folkloristic Interpretation of the “Netherlandish Proverbs” by Pieter Bruegel the Elder* (1981). The book represents a superb folkloristic and psychoanalytic interpretation of Pieter Bruegel’s (1520–1569) famous oil painting *The Netherlandish Proverbs* (1559) which is exhibited in the Berlin art museum. A. Dundes and C. A. Stibbe start their monograph with a short introduction presenting a survey of artistic proverb illustrations

and the scholarship by art historians and folklorists on them. Then follow 115 individual essays each explaining the origin, history, and meaning of a proverbial expression (only a very few of the 115 illustrated texts are in fact *bona fide* proverbs). Etymological, linguistic, cultural, and psychological explanations are included, and the book also contains four color plates of the original painting and three of the copies by the son Pieter Brueghel the Younger (1564–1637/38). Together these 115 interpretive essays represent a milestone in paremiological and folkloric research, finally making sense out of the painting by going beyond the mere identification of the proverbial illustrations to an interpretation of the message of the entire painting:

*Having discussed some one hundred and fifteen proverbs and folk metaphors [i.e., proverbial expressions] in Bruegel's Netherlandish Proverbs (including nearly two dozen not previously identified), we believe we have provided a sound basis for an interpretation of the painting either by art historians or folklorists. Several principle themes may be discerned. One is surely the theme of disorder or of a foolish attempt to violate the natural order. Related to this theme is the idea of a useless or futile action. Typically the paradox or opposition is created by having the wrong item or action in the right place or the right item or action in the wrong place (66).*

*But Bruegel does not stop with simply delineating oppositional pairs. Rather he is concerned with the ritual reversal of reality such that folly is wisdom, up is down, and vice versa, that is, wisdom is folly, and down is up. The upside-down world is a kind of emblem for the painting as a whole, but what turns the world upside down is metaphor or rather the misreading of metaphor. It is ultimately metaphor which is the subject of the painting, or perhaps man's ability to read metaphors. Translating verbal metaphors into pictorial form necessarily involved a literalization process. One must keep in mind that most proverbs and all folk metaphors depend for their meaning upon the ability to move from the initial literal image to a metaphorical one, Bruegel in this painting has reversed the direction insofar as he has moved from a metaphorical starting point to a literal depiction of the image. The literalization of metaphor can constitute a ritual reversal and in this sense, the entire painting represents a scene of countless reversals (67).*

*Not only did Bruegel's masterpiece ensure the faithful recording of some of the folklore current in northern Brabant in 1559, but it has provided an extraordinary mixing of metaphors (in the most positive sense imaginable) whose witty combination has resulted in a portrait of man show-*

*ing the fine line between wisdom and folly. Making sense of nonsense is an art and of this art Bruegel is a master. By rendering metaphors, folk metaphors, literally, and cleverly combining them, Bruegel succeeded in constructing a rationale for the seemingly irrational behavior of man. The successful translation of verbal foibles into visual fables will undoubtedly stand for centuries to come as an endearing monument to the artistic genius of Bruegel (69).*

This last paragraph with its emphasis on *making sense of nonsense* brings to mind A. Dundes’s credo that was cited above. Just as Pieter Bruegel, he excels in finding plausible answers to human conundrums, and it should surprise no one that it was my friend Alan Dundes whom I invited one year before his death to present the key-note address at an international symposium on the Pieter Bruegel(h)els and their *Netherlandish Proverbs* paintings. It had been my good fortune to be able to have a 1610 copy of the painting by Pieter Brueghel the Younger owned by Adele Klapper of New York travel to the campus art museum at the University of Vermont for a three-month’s exhibition. The symposium took place on March 26–27, 2004, and it was an unforgettable experience for all the speakers and the audience. Alan Dundes opened the proceedings with his magisterial lecture on “How Far Does the Apple Fall from the Tree?” Pieter Brueghel the Younger’s *Netherlandish Proverbs*” that is also the first essay in the handsomely illustrated volume on “*The Netherlandish Proverbs*”. *An International Symposium on the Pieter Bruegel(h)els* (2004) that I edited later during that year. It was to be one of A. Dundes’s last major public lectures, and he and his wife Carolyn enjoyed the entire meeting in good health and excellent spirits. The lecture was a brilliant *tour de force* of explaining some of the scatological images and their accompanying proverbial expressions. At the end, the audience reacted with thunderous applause to A. Dundes’s artistic Freudian paremiology that made a lot of sense out of P. Bruegel’s preoccupation with anality and feces:

*In any case [A. Dundes said in conclusion], one can only assume that Bruegel in some sense knew perfectly well on some level what he was doing and that may be why he decided to wink [i.e., the illustration of the phrase “een knip oog” with the meaning of “a snip-eye, or a wink” in the picture] at his audience in Netherlandish Proverbs. No one should be embarrassed by Bruegel’s earthy wit which accounts in part, I believe, for the continued engaging appeal of his oeuvre including, of course, Netherlandish Proverbs. It allows a much more upright and Puritan culture such as our own to consider in a socially sanctioned artistic framework a fundamental part of the human experience which is deemed taboo (42).*

Alan Dundes himself always had something P. Bruegelian about him. He enjoyed playing the devil's advocate, he liked shocking his audience or readers, but there was also that sparkling in his eyes or that compassionate wink, indicating that some of his outrageous interpretations were meant in good scholarly fun while they represent scholarly attempts at finally making sense out of what only appears to be nonsense.

#### 4. PROVERBS AS EXPRESSIONS OF WORLDVIEW

Throughout his long career, Alan Dundes has had a particular interest in folklore as an expression of worldview, and folk speech in general and proverbs in particular are frequently drawn upon to support his argumentation of the predominance of certain points of worldview. This was already a fact in his early and influential paper on "The Number Three in American Culture" (1968). While he amasses numerous texts to illustrate the dominant role of the number three in the American view of the world, he quite characteristically for his work method also includes many examples from folk speech:

*A final bit of folkloristic evidence for the existence of a trichotomic pattern in American culture is provided by folk speech. The model for America's theoretical heritage includes such triple constructions as veni, vidi, vici (and it was surely no accident that all Gaul was divided into three parts) or liberté, égalité, fraternité. Small wonder that American political style favors: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. [...] But nonpolitical folk expressions are equally three-structured: beg, borrow, or steal; bell, book, and candle; blood, sweat, and tears; cool, calm, and collected; fat, dumb, and happy; hither, thither, and yon; hook, line, and sinker; hop, skip, and jump; lock, stock, and barrel; me, myself, and I; men, women, and children; ready, willing, and able; signed, sealed, and delivered; tall, dark, and handsome; Tom, Dick, and Harry; and wine, women, and song [...] (407).*

The list goes on and on, literally overwhelming the reader with the mass of data, something that is so typical for A. Dundes's *modus operandi*! No wonder that he concludes his bottomless survey with the tongue-in-cheek statement: *At this point, if anyone is skeptical about there being a three-pattern in American culture, let him give at least three good reasons why* (422). And, of course, Dundes is perfectly aware of the fact that similar trichotomies can be found in other cultures as well.

Just a year later, he published another paper on "Thinking Ahead: A Folkloristic Reflection of the Future Orientation in American Worldview" (1969). It is here where he also deals with the theoretical implications of using folklore for generalized worldview analyses:

*There is one apparent problem in using American folklore as source material and that is the fact that so much of that folklore is patently derived from European tradition. Certainly one could find without difficulty cognate forms of many American proverbs in England and other old world cultures. Yet what is really most important in the present context [and in other worldview studies] is a proverb's occurrence and specifically its frequency of occurrence in the United States. In a way the critical issue is whether or not it is possible to distinguish "American worldview" from "Anglo-American" or "English" or even "Western European worldview" (55).*

A. Dundes clearly feels that with some caveats it is possible to discern characteristic worldview elements via the folklore of a culture. The fact that such proverbs as "The end justifies the means", "A stitch in time saves nine", "Let bygones be bygones", "Forgive and forget", "Where there's a will, there's a way", etc., are predominantly used by Americans justify A. Dundes to speak of Americans in general as people looking into the future rather than into the past.

Using a similar approach, he chose the proverbial title "Seeing is Believing" (1972) for a glance at visual phrases used by Americans to illustrate the important role that perception plays in this culture. The primacy of vision in American culture can clearly be seen from frequently found proverbs and phrases:

*American culture is pronouncedly concerned with empiricism, and this empiricism is explicitly visual. "Seeing is believing" and "I'm from Missouri" (which means "you've got to show me") are indications of the emphasis on seeing something for oneself and the tendency to distrust anyone else's report of a given event. "I saw it with my own (two) eyes" is a common authenticating formula, as is the invitation to "see for yourself" (9).*

In any case, as A. Dundes succeeds in showing, there appears to be a visual superiority over the other senses as indicated repeatedly by folk metaphors stressing the visual mode.

After these studies, A. Dundes also published his more theoretical paper on "Folk Ideas as Units of Worldview" (1972), in fact defining what folklore has to do with worldview:

*By “folk ideas”, I mean traditional notions that a group of people have about the nature of man, of the world, and of man’s life in the world. Folk ideas would not constitute a genre of folklore but rather would be expressed in a great variety of different genres. Proverbs would almost certainly represent the expression of one or more folk ideas, but the same folk ideas might also appear in folktales, folksongs, and in fact almost every conventional genre of folklore, not to mention nonfolkloristic materials (95).*

Alan Dundes argues that proverbs are particularly useful in trying to understand folk ideas. As an illustration he points out that one American folk idea is that there is no real limit as to how much of any commodity can be produced. This is underscored by such proverbial phrases as “There’s (plenty) more where that came from” and “The sky is the limit”. There is also the view that people can find salvation through hard work, as expressed in such proverbs as “Hard work will pay off” and “Where there’s a will, there’s a way”. Both ideas share a commitment to progress, and this worldview appears to be quite prevalent not only in proverbial speech but also in American folk narratives. And again, A. Dundes is perfectly aware of the difficulty of studying aspects of worldview of a particular culture, but he argues that folklorists can aid in the task of identifying certain basic folk ideas.

One of Alan Dundes’s last published papers, dedicated to me in a *Festschrift* in honor of my sixtieth birthday, deals once again with the issue of folk ideas, as indicated by the title of “As the Crow Flies’: A Straightforward Study of Lineal Worldview in American Folk Speech” (2004). He had already mentioned the predominance of the lineal orientation of most Americans in his paper on “Folk Ideas as Units of Worldview” (1972; see pp. 98–99) over thirty years ago, but in this new essay he goes much deeper into this subject matter with numerous examples to prove his point. Interestingly enough, he must have forgotten his comments in that earlier publication since he does not include this important paper in his bibliography. Citing such proverbs and phrases as “The shortest distance between two points is a straight line”, “to toe the line”, “to cross the line”, “to lay it on the line”, and many others, A. Dundes again proves his point:

*I would argue that both men and women in American culture think in lineal terms. This may be why there is resistance to the notion of reincarnation. Reincarnation implies that a person’s being or soul, after death, is recycled. A person is reborn and begins life anew. In some religions, the recycling is repeated ad infinitum. In American worldview, in contrast, the progression from birth through life to death is an irreversible path or*

*line. [---] There is a definite American propensity toward codifying reality in lineal terms. [---] Inasmuch as folklore does encapsulate native cognitive categories, we may through its analysis indeed be able to see at least some small portion of that lens through which we look (184–185).*

I do not know exactly why my dear friend chose this particular topic for his essay in honor of my paremiological work, but I do recall both of us as basically non-religious individuals speaking on occasion about life having a beginning and an end, progressing along with steps and mutations along the way. We both felt that as two “odd birds” we could do no more than to move along with our scholarly work and teaching in a lineal fashion “as the crow flies” before our short life span would straightforwardly come to its end forever. But I am so thankful that our paths crossed and that we travelled along side by side like the parallel rails of a railroad track for more than three decades of scholarly support and rewarding friendship.

## **5. THE DARKER SIDE OF PROVERBS: ETHNIC SLURS AND NATIONAL CHARACTER**

Always also being the psychologist, Alan Dundes was only too aware that folk ideas or worldview as expressed through folklore also has its negative darker side expressed by so-called ethnic slurs couched in easily remembered proverbial structures or stereotypical jokes. His early “Study of Ethnic Slurs: The Jew and the Polack in the United States” (1971) contains a revealing general statement that justifies the need for looking at these prejudicial matters:

*In examining the extensive national and stereotype scholarship, one finds surprisingly little reference to the materials of folklore. Stereotypes are described almost solely on the basis of questionnaires or interviews in which an a priori set of adjectives, such as “honest” or “stingy”, are assigned by informants to national or ethnic groups. One wonders, methodologically speaking, just how the researcher selects the initial list of adjectives and whether or not his personal bias in making up the list does not partially invalidate the result. What psychologists and others fail to realize is that folklore represents an important and virtually untapped source of information for students of national character, stereotypes, and prejudice. The folk have been making national character studies (that is, folk national character studies) for centuries (186–187).*

But this paper on jokes as expressions of ethnic slurs and his major contribution on “Defining Identity Through Folklore” (1983; esp. pp. 22–27) deal only tangentially with proverbial matters regarding ethnic, minority or national stereotypes. His invaluable investigation of “Slurs International: Folk Comparisons of Ethnicity and National Character” (1975) that has been reprinted a couple of times concentrates more fully on slurs that have become proverbial. This is an excellent study on the problem of international slurs or *blasons populaires*, dealing with such topics as stereotypes, national character, ethnocentrism, and prejudice as they are expressed in a single word, a phrase, a proverb, a riddle or a joke. After citing and discussing numerous examples of multi-group international slurs, including such proverbial triads as “The German woman excels in the shed; the Czech woman will have people fed; and the French woman is best in bed”, A. Dundes closes his survey with a justification for the necessary and responsible study of such invectives:

*Some may argue that a scholarly discussion of ethnic and national stereotypes accomplishes nothing more than helping to popularize and further circulate them. I am afraid that is a risk but I am convinced that it is a risk worth taking. After all, the slurs exist whether or not a folklorist chooses to collect and study them. The folklorist doesn't invent slurs: he merely reports them. [---] We cannot expect international slurs to disappear – there is evidently a deep human need to think in stereotypes. What we as folklorists can do is to examine the slurs to see what the stereotypes are and to label them as stereotypes. We should not let the humor of the slurs fool us into underestimating the potential danger of national character stereotypes (38).*

At the very end A. Dundes also states that his goal in identifying and interpreting proverbial stereotypes is *to build a bigger and better world* (38). Realizing the ills that nationally inspired folklore scholarship has caused, especially during the time of Nazi Germany, it is very significant that Alan Dundes as a world leader in folkloristics was willing to stress the ethics of serious scholarship and that he was prepared to take a moral stance.

It should not be a surprise then that he directed one of his masterful monographs towards Germany and the Germans' worldview and national character as revealed through their folklore. First published in the *Journal of Psychoanalytical Anthropology* in 1981, A. Dundes presented his fascinating findings with some changes in book form some three years later with the proverbial title of *Life is Like a Chicken Coop Ladder. A Portrait of German Culture through Folklore* (1984). One year later it appeared in German translation as *Sie mich auch! Das Hinter-Gründige in der deutschen Psyche* (1985), and a paperback

edition appeared in English in 1989, clearly making this controversial investigation one of Alan Dundes’s most successful books. The provocative study uses various folklore materials in a fair-minded attempt to understand German culture. Based on a vast amount of German proverbs, proverbial expressions, graffiti, children’s rhymes, songs, riddles, letters, and literary sources, A. Dundes paints a picture of the German national character. As the proverbial title “Life is like a chicken coop ladder – [short and full of shit]” (“Das Leben ist wie eine Hühnerleiter – kurz und beschissen”) suggests (for his discussion of this proverb see pp. 9–11), A. Dundes proceeds to argue that the preoccupation with scatology belongs to the German character. Following a brilliant discussion of various theories on national character, including the obvious dangers of such generalizations, he shows successfully that the Germans appear to have a more than ordinary interest in anal practices and products. He offers Freudian interpretations of this preoccupation with feces on the one hand and cleanliness on the other. He is even able to explain German anti-Semitism from the early concept of the “Judensau” (Jew-sow) to the Holocaust through this all-pervasive pattern. Proverbs, the so-called voice of the people, are clear reflections of the Germans’ scatological preoccupation, and A. Dundes quotes them repeatedly throughout his erudite yet controversial treatise. It represents an interdisciplinary approach to national character, showing how folklore together with anthropology, literature, psychology, history, and sociology can help to illuminate certain national character traits. At the very end, A. Dundes in all fairness states the lessons of his study, clearly without any malice or ill intent towards his German colleagues and friends:

*It is not enough to identify national character. One must analyze it so as to be better able to understand one’s own national or ethnic identity as well as the national or ethnic identity of others. [---] Without comparable insights in the study of national character and psychologies, we are destined to continue to live in constant fear of the threat of war and man’s seemingly endless inhumanity to fellow man. Folklore represents a potential source for the serious study of national character and national psychologies, an unrivalled source whose potential has not been sufficiently utilized. If I have learned anything from this exercise, it has been that folklore expresses in direct, uncensored form the basic truths about a people and these truths are said by the people for the people. It is not I who is claiming that the Germans love of order may stem from a love of ordure – it is in the folklore. It is not I who am suggesting that to the famous three K’s of the World War II slogan: Kinder, Kirche, Küche [children, church, kitchen] might be added a fourth: Kaka (Kacke) or Kot – it*

*is in the folklore. It is the Germans themselves in their own folklore who have said all along that life is like a chicken coop ladder (152–153).*

Of course, every time that Alan Dundes talks of “folklore” in this paragraph, he is also thinking of the many German proverbs and proverbial expressions that he cites throughout the pages of his book to substantiate his interpretation of at least some aspects of the so-called German national character. It is well known in folklore circles that A. Dundes was quite bitterly attacked by some German and also other scholars, but in general the book was actually received quite positively, including fair German reviews. As a German and as a personal friend, I helped Alan Dundes in gathering the rich folklore references for this study, and I did so gladly, as always. When he presented his findings and interpretation as a lecture at the annual meeting of the American Folklore Society in the fall of 1980 at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, it was not an easy experience for me. And yet, I felt instantly that my friend had presented a disturbing but necessary lecture, and I stood by him as the champion of honest scholarship that he has always tried to represent. I welcomed the book when it appeared in 1984, and I have had my advanced German folklore students read it ever since as a significant study of Germany based on rigid research methods grounded in folklore. This book enables them at least in a small way to gain an understanding of German anti-Semitism and its role on the path towards the Holocaust.

## **6. PROVERBS AS COLLATERAL FOLKLORE REFERENCES**

As has already become obvious, Alan Dundes’s scholarship is very much informed by all types of folk speech. Proverbs and proverbial expressions in particular are again and again cited as examples, to wit such references as “to hit the books”, “to go down the tube”, “to get brownie points”, and “to be called on the carpet” in his early collection of “Kansas University Slang: A New Generation” (1963). Shortly thereafter A. Dundes published a similar collection of “American Indian Student Slang” (1963) with such phrases as “to hit the pad”, “don’t sweat it”, and “I’ll clean your bones” (to defeat someone). But it was his outrageous collection and study (at least during the mid-sixties in the United States) of American graffiti that earned A. Dundes much acclaim as an innovative and original scholar: “Here I Sit – A Study of American Latrinalia” (1966). The study begins with the claim that social scientists have not paid enough attention to bathroom graffiti. Based on rich materials A. Dundes shows that latrinalia writings include advertisements of solicitations, normally of a sexual nature; requests or commands, often concerning the mechanics of defecating

or urinating; directions, which consist of false or facetious instructions; commentaries, either by the establishment or by clients; and personal laments or introspective musings. Some graffiti are definitely based on traditional proverb structures, and some of the sexual or scatological rhyming couplets have become proverbial throughout the United States, as for example "Shit or get off the pot", "Fucked by the fickle finger of fate", "No matter how you dance and prance / The last two drops go down your pants", and "Here I sit broken hearted / Tried (Came) to shit and only farted". A. Dundes also, of course, offers the theoretical idea *that the psychological motivation for writing latrinalia is related to an infantile desire to play with feces and to artistically smear it around* (104). And with typical irony he adds that anybody *skeptical of this theory [ought to] offer an alternative theory!* (104). A. Dundes, as so often with his Freudian interpretations, can at least claim to have offered a plausible explanation that is better than no idea at all.

Another unique article on "The Crowing Hen and the Easter Bunny: Male Chauvinism in American Folklore" (1976) investigates the male bias in American traditional culture and illustrates how male chauvinism is expressed in folk verses and expressions. One of the most striking examples is a widely disseminated proverbial couplet that is alluded to in the title: "Whistling maids and crowing hens / Never come to no good ends." A. Dundes cites numerous variants and explains that the metaphor refers to women attempting to act like men.

*From a male chauvinistic point of view, such a radical departure from the expected passive, docile, sex-stereotyped behavior is threatening. One superstition recommends a very specific course of remedial action. If a hen crows and you do not kill her, a member of the family will die within a year. By implication, a woman who acts like a man is unnatural and should be eliminated* (132).

Thank God that such remedies are merely psychological projections and that they are, hopefully, never carried out.

In any case, Alan Dundes is so steeped in proverbial matters that he quite often chooses proverbs or fragments thereof for his "telling" titles. In 1968, still wearing his anthropological hat, he published a collection of essays with the absolutely appropriate title of *Every Man His Way. Readings in Cultural Anthropology*. There is the proverbial title "Heads or Tails: A Psychoanalytic Study of Potlatch" (1979), an article on the light bulb joke cycle was most fittingly entitled "Many Hands Make Light Work or Caught in the Act of Screwing in Light Bulbs" (1981), and for a serious paper on the Aids disease A. Dundes came up with a unique pun on a classical Latin proverb: "Arse Longa, Vita

Brevis: Jokes about Aids” (1989). And the punster A. Dundes was also at work in the reversal of the phrase “method in (one’s) madness” for the following title: “Madness in Method Plus a Plea for Projective Inversion in Myth” (1996). These are not mere titular games, as my discussions with Alan Dundes about his choice of titles revealed. He labored hard on them, and I always instruct my students to pay special attention to their paper titles as well. After all, they are meant to titillate readers into reading the essay, and it behooves them as authors to come up with exciting and provocative formulations.

Alan Dundes does exactly that with his title of yet another fundamental Freudian essay on “Gallus as Phallus: A Psychoanalytic Cross-Cultural Consideration of the Cockfight as Fowl Play” (1993). The study deals with the sexual implications of the cockfight, leading him as an aside to the following fascinating proverb interpretation:

*The somewhat eccentric Wilhelm Stekel regarded sexuality as the most important component of gambling, and he used a bit of folkloristic evidence, a proverb, to support his contention. The [German] proverb “Glück im Spiel, Unglück in der Liebe”, unquestionably a cognate of the English proverb “Lucky at cards, unlucky in love”, does suggest a kind of limited good. There is only so much luck (= sexual energy). If one uses it up in gambling, for example, playing cards, then there will be insufficient for heterosexual lovemaking. There is some clinical evidence to support this conclusion. It involves a compulsive gambler who fell in love. He had abandoned gambling during the 18 months of involvement, and resumed it when “the love” was discarded. This view that there is a finite amount of sexual capacity, or perhaps of sexual fluid, is reminiscent of old-fashioned views of masturbation. The idea was that all the ejaculations resulting from masturbation decreased the amount of sexual fluids available for heterosexual acts. The connotations of the German word “Spiel” in the proverb, analogous to the English word “play”, do include explicit allusions to masturbation. The proverb might then be rendered, “Lucky in masturbation, unlucky in (heterosexual) love”. (This discussion of the proverb is mine, not Stekel’s.) The proverbial equation might also be relevant to the alleged connection between gambling and impotence. The argument is essentially that the excitement of gambling and the symbolic equivalents for sexual release built into many games serve as substitutes for sexual relationships (263–264).*

This is quite an interpretation of an innocuous proverb, but it is a splendid indication of Alan Dundes’s ever creative mind as he searches for connections and meanings in folklore as such and also in individual proverbs. And as ex-

pected, all of this sexual explanation does eventually help to explain the unconscious homoeroticism of the cockfight.

But there is also Alan Dundes's controversial article on "Why Is the Jew 'Dirty'? A Psychoanalytic Study of Anti-Semitic Folklore" (1997), drawing upon Sigmund Freud's anal erotic discussions. Throughout the paper A. Dundes returns to his interest in ethnic slurs, citing various proverbs to illustrate the widely disseminated anti-Semitic view of the Jew as being dirty, to wit such disgusting invectives as *Two smelly cheeses and one Jew, that makes three stinkpiles* (94; Polish), *If the Jew knew that the sow had swallowed a half Ko-peck, he would eat it* (99; Ukrainian), and *God protect us from trichinosis and Jewish noses* (106; German). Fortunately these proverbs appear not to be in use any longer, but they do belong to dozens of anti-Semitic slurs that did their part in demonizing and dehumanizing the Jewish people. As such, they are the unfortunate proof that proverbs can take on very dangerous roles in condemning people by their stereotypical messages. Writing this type of article is no easy task for a scholar of the moral fabric of Alan Dundes, but as stated before, he felt compelled to offer such explanatory studies in order to avoid discrimination and extermination of innocent people. This is folklore scholarship with an ethical commitment, and Alan Dundes deserves our respect and admiration for such heart-wrenching but scholarly studies.

It should not be surprising that proverbial references also play a considerable role in A. Dundes's major books. He cites them as supporting evidence whenever he can, just as he does with most other folkloric genres. Thus his incredibly detailed and enlightening study of *La Terra in Piazza. An Interpretation of the Palio of Siena* (1975), co-authored with Alessandro Falassi, contains an entire section of folk metaphors (156–161) referring to the annual horse-race festival at Siena, Italy:

*Perhaps the most impressive testimony to the impact of the palio upon the daily life of the Sienese lies in the great number of idiomatic expressions derived from events of the palio. For example, a person who tries – unsuccessfully – to force his luck may be said "battare nel canapo" ("to hit against the canapo"), which refers to the horse that, in trying to force the mossa [i.e., the start of the race], succeeds only in hitting against the canapo rope, and action that may result in injury and certainly not in a good start. A similar phrase is "battare una canapata" ("to make a very bad fall"). A politician who was soundly defeated at the polls might be described in these terms (156).*

*Another phrase is "saltare il canapo" ("to jump over the canapo"); it refers to an overanxious horse that in anticipating the start of the race vaults*

*over the rope before the signal is given. Metaphorically, the phrase might be applied to anyone who was impatient or who tended to exceed boundaries (157).*

*Chances of success or failure in general are commonly discussed in terms of horses. Thus “avere un cavallo bono” (“to have a good horse”) would suggest that an individual’s chance of succeeding were excellent, whereas “avere un cavallaccio” (“to have a bad horse”) or less common “avere una brenna” (“to have a sorry looking nag”) would suggest that an individual’s chances for success were poor (158).*

*The palio is felt as an omnipresent force in Sieneese life. The palios of the past are never forgotten and the palios of the future are constantly and anxiously awaited. The people themselves, well aware of this, express it succinctly in proverbial form: “Il Palio si corre tutto l’anno” (“The Palio is raced all the year around”) (161).*

The polyglot Alan Dundes, whose Italian, French, German, and Latin were very good, obviously delighted in citing various texts in the foreign languages as well as in English translation. He definitely practiced well what he forever preached to his students, i.e., to be a good folklorist, one has to work comparatively and that includes the knowledge of at least one or preferably several foreign languages. There appear many more proverbs and proverbial expressions throughout this fascinating analysis, showing that folk speech is part and parcel of Alan Dundes’s impressive *modus operandi* that makes his accounts and interpretations such an intellectual delight and pleasure to read.

## **7. MAJOR MONOGRAPHS BASED IN PART ON PROVERBIAL MATTERS**

During the last years of his life, Alan Dundes published four truly superb monographs on various folkloric matters with the Rowman & Littlefield Publishers of Lanham, Maryland. These volumes should be read by any student and scholar of culture, religion, ethnicity, anthropology, literature, language, and folklore. They are folklore research at its best, showing the interpretive skill of a true master who bases his psychoanalytic analyses on a plethora of relevant references and an inclusive review of previous scholarship. And, in typical Dundesian fashion, these books include numerous proverbial texts to shed metaphorical light from the language and worldview of the folk on the matters under discussion.

With the first monograph on *Two Tales of Crow and Sparrow. A Freudian Folkloristic Essay on Caste and Untouchability* (1997), A. Dundes took the courageous step to look at the Indian caste system and to offer a new set of explanations based on scatological and anal preoccupations. Repeatedly A. Dundes interjects paragraphs in which he drives home his argument with the help of a proverb:

*Implicit in the tales of crow and sparrow is the idea of immutability. A crow cannot be anything but a crow, in the same way that an untouchable cannot be anything but untouchable. Thus the very attempt of the crow to remove his "dirtiness" is in the Indian context itself a sense of humor. Proverbs attest to the crow metaphor in this connection. Consider such Tamil proverbs as "Even if a crow bathed in the Ganges, it will not become a swan" and "Even if a crow is washed and bathed thrice a day, it will not become a white crane". In both cases, the crow seeks through bathing to become more like another bird, a clean bird, but the crow's basic nature [just as the one of the untouchables] cannot be altered by bathing (49).*

*One significant detail common to both of our tales of crow and sparrow is the burning of crow at the end. In this context, the fact that sparrow and crow engage in a chili-eating contest in one version may be relevant. Chilis, hot chilis, have an indisputable effect on the digestive system including the anal area, often causing a "burning" sensation during evacuation. So in terms of the mouth-anus opposition, chilis taken in at the mouth result in the anus being burned when they come out. There is a relevant Hindi proverb: "If you eat fire, you'll shit sparks." Even more important, fire or burning is a highly regarded device thought to be able to remove pollution or impurity. Fire is definitely seen as being a purificatory force. Some expelled from a caste could be readmitted by submitting to an ordeal whereby "his tongue is slightly burnt with a piece of heated gold; he is branded on different parts of his body with red-hot iron". One form of customary punishment consisted of burning the accused's buttocks by means of heated tongs (53–54).*

All of these elaborations support A. Dundes's claim that the whole caste system is constructed on a series of interrelated forms of scatological impurities, and the proverbs add plenty of verbal ammunition to A. Dundes's interpretive insights.

It should not be surprising that A. Dundes's book on *Holy Writ as Oral Lit. The Bible as Folklore* (1999) is filled with proverbs as corroborative references

in his attempt to show that the Bible is to large degree folklore (see esp. 76–86). After all, the Bible itself is replete with folk proverbs that appear in numerous variants just as they do in oral communication. To a certain degree, A. Dundes constructs his major arguments on proverbs that supply him with convincing proof that the Bible must contain much folklore that by definition is based on variation:

*Someone unfamiliar with folklore might assume – wrongly – that fixed-phrase items such as beatitudes or proverbs would not exhibit variation. But fixed-phrase folklore, like all folklore, does indeed manifest multiple existence and variation. Consider Matthew 7: 12: Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? This is clearly a variant of Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them (Matt. 6: 20). Compare these with Luke’s version: For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes (Luke 6: 44). Matthew speaks of gathering grapes from thorn; Luke speaks of gathering figs from thorns. Matthew speaks of gathering figs from thistles; Luke speaks of gathering grapes from bramble bushes, the equivalent of thistles (76).*

*An interesting instance of proverb variation is illustrated by diverse versions of “A house divided against itself cannot stand”. Consider the following three versions:*

Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand (*Matt. 12: 25*).

Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth (*Luke 11: 17*).

And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand (*Mark 3: 24–25*).

*Matthew and Luke’s versions contain a reference to “desolation”, but Mark’s does not. Matthew’s version refers to “every city”, but Luke’s and Mark’s do not. The variations are minor, but they are variations nonetheless. This again confirms the fact that fixed-phrase items of folklore do manifest variation (80).*

A. Dundes amasses multiple versions of numerous major episodes in the Bible, and he literally delights in citing proverb variants from both the Old and New Testaments to

*attest to the folkloricity of the Bible. There is no one fixed text, but only multiple texts that manifest extraordinary variation in number, name, and sequence. The Bible may well be “the greatest book in the world” and*

*"the most important book in the world", but it is truly folklore, and it is high time that it is recognized as such (118).*

This last paragraph of his convincingly argued monograph might not set well with some Christians, but the facts speak for themselves, as Alan Dundes would respond to their heated criticism of his documented textual evidence.

The next book of this ever controversial and thought-provoking scholar was *The Shabbat Elevator and Other Sabbath Subterfuges. An Unorthodox Essay Circumventing Custom and Jewish Character* (2002), and once again he quotes numerous Yiddish proverbs to underscore his argumentation by means of such folk wisdom:

*It is not possible to overestimate the importance of the Sabbath for Jews and not just for Orthodox Jews. There are dozens of attestations of this. "Shabbat is more than just one institution among many, for Jews. It is the very heart of the Jewish religion." A proverb also confirms the centrality of Sabbath for Judaism. Like all true folklore, this proverb manifests multiple existence and variation. Some of the variants include: "As Israel has preserved the Sabbath, the Sabbath has preserved Israel"; "More than Israel has kept Shabbat, Shabbat has kept Israel"; "More than the Jews kept the Sabbath did the Sabbath keep the Jews" (75).*

*One of the most prominent of these dietary taboos has to do with the prohibition against eating pork. There has been a vast scholarship devoted to this matter, but most of the theories purporting to explicate the underlying rationale seem quite specious. [--] A clue as to the real reason for the taboo is suggested in a passage in Isaiah when idolaters are castigated for "eating swine's flesh ... and the mouse" (Isa. 66:17). What, if anything, could a pig and a mouse possibly have in common that would make them off-limits as a food item? The answer could be that they both can be observed eating feces, human or animal in origin. If a pig eats feces, then eating pork would mean eating an animal that ate feces. (That the pig has been observed eating feces is attested by a Yiddish proverb: "The pig swore that he doesn't eat shit.") And that would mean, in effect, that the eater of pork was an eater of feces. We have already seen from the passages cited above that eating feces is considered the ultimate despicable, disgusting act, which is why God reserves it as a punishment for those who disrespect him. As for the linkage between a pig eating feces and Jews being defiled by eating pig, we find that gross image depicted in the anti-Semitic Judensau (Jew-pig) iconographic image found throughout German-speaking Europe from the thirteenth century to the present day. In that image, a Jew is shown suckling from a pig that is eating feces*

*or in some instances, the Jew is placed beneath the pig's tail about to ingest the pig's feces (117–118; see also 167–168).*

Many more such proverbial excursions can be found throughout this profound study that in its own unique way sheds light on the complex nature of Jewish culture.

Having thus taken on Christianity and Judaism in two significant studies, obviously alienating and upsetting plenty of believers in both camps, Alan Dundes had the audacity of adding a third monograph on Islam which opens up the question whether the master folklorist was governed by that ultimate rule of the number three about which he knew so much. In any case, by this time his wife Carolyn and we as his friends were questioning him whether perhaps he was trying to get himself killed. Clearly he was upsetting people with some of his Freudian argumentation, but the committed scholar in him would not let go, and the result was a final intriguing book on *Fables of the Ancients? Folklore in the Qur'an* (2003). While it is shorter than the other volumes, A. Dundes once again cites numerous proverbs (see esp. 38–39) from the Qur'an of which many have parallels in the Bible. The fact that the proverbs appear in variations is taken as proof that like the Bible the Qur'an is based on folklore:

*Another example of minor variation may be observed in what is very likely a proverb: "Eat and drink to your heart's content. This is the reward of your labors" (52: 19). This may be compared to "Therefore eat and drink and rejoice" (19: 26) and "Eat and drink to your heart's content: your recompense for what you did in days gone by" (69: 24) and "Eat and drink joyously because of what you did" (77: 43). Similar variation can be observed in what is apparently the same proverb in the Old and New Testaments. There are five versions alone in Ecclesiastes, one of which is "Every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labor" (3: 13) (49).*

What becomes clear here is that the Bible and the Qur'an draw from the same fountain of folk wisdom, something that really should not surprise us considering the proximity of their geographical origin. Such wisdom literature was in widespread use in oral and written communication throughout the region, and it found its way into the two holy books without any God-given involvement. But A. Dundes is actually quite willing to give Allah the last word in his book on the folkloric Qur'an:

*Finally, it is noteworthy that Allah Himself makes no apology for using folklore to make a point. According to a verse in surah 2, "The Cow," we are told, "Behold, God does not disdain to speak in proverbs (parables) –*

*even that involving a gnat or a larger creature. Those who believe know that it is the truth from their Lord; those who don't believe ask ‘What is it that Allah means by this proverb (parable)? He misleads many by it and enlightens many by it. But he confounds only the sinners by it’ (2: 26) (70).*

And why would Allah or God not want to communicate with us mortals via proverbs, the traditional wisdom that he could be sure his human beings would understand? So there is folklore everywhere in the various holy books, and proverbs, as A. Dundes has shown so convincingly, are doubtlessly important verbal vehicles to assure effective religious and social communication.

Never resting on his so richly deserved laurels, Alan Dundes had started to work on yet another controversial study shortly before his death. He was once again returning to his fascination with the idea of national character, and this time he was turning to the Japanese and their folk culture. He had begun to collect materials, and one of the last communications between us was his request for proverbial materials from me. We have always helped each other with references for our research projects, and I had already supplied my dear friend with relevant Japanese proverbs and scholarship about them to supplement his own findings. But then death struck, preventing him from completing this investigation that surely would have shed considerable light on the Japanese national character by skillfully interpreting Japanese folklore as only Alan Dundes with his vast knowledge and keen intellect could possibly do it by combining folkloric and psychoanalytic research methods.

## **8. THE INTERPLAY OF PAREMIOLOGY AND PAREMIOGRAPHY**

It is true that Alan Dundes has not published a major proverb collection, but he certainly amassed thousands of proverbs and proverbial expressions as a partial basis for his hundreds of articles and books. His large study at his mansion in the Berkeley hills houses files upon files containing proverbial materials. Together they would prove Dundes to be a major paremiographer, but his superb interpretive skills and interests led him quite naturally from pragmatic paremiography to investigative paremiology. But there are, of course, also the famous Berkeley Folklore Archives that A. Dundes together with generations of his students assembled during a period of more than four decades. The many filing drawers that contain the proverb materials amount to one of the largest extant proverb collections. One of my dreams had been to join my good friend at Berkeley for a semester or two and to prepare this unique collection for publication. It would have amounted to a multi-volume proverb

dictionary, one that would have established Alan Dundes as one of the great paremiographers of the world. Who knows, perhaps I will still be able to accomplish the task of editing the proverbs for Alan Dundes, a labor that certainly would not be love's labor's lost.

Luckily, though, there do exist five book collections that Alan Dundes published together with his long-time friend Carl R. Pagter. While they contain all genres of folklore collected from the modern and urban "paperwork empire", they also include plenty of proverbial materials that is, how typical for Alan Dundes, quite different from the content of standard proverb collections. For A. Dundes and C. R. Pagter are not so much interested in citing traditional proverbs but rather they want to present parodies of proverbs, anti-proverbs, and also truly new proverbs. These folklore volumes do not abound in proverbs, but here are at least a few telling examples from each of them. The proverbial titles of some of the books can be understood as perfect indicators of the type of modern folklore texts and illustrations they include.

The first volume is entitled *Urban Folklore from the Paperwork Empire* (1975), and it includes not only Murphy's proverbial law of "If anything can go wrong, it will" that I have already cited above, but it actually presents an entire section on "Murphy's Laws" (69–75), among them:

*Left to themselves, things always go from bad to worse.*  
*Nature always sides with the hidden flaws.*  
*Nothing is as simple as it seems.*  
*Everything always costs more money than you have.*  
*Everything takes longer than you expect.*  
*If you fool around with something long enough, it will eventually break.*  
*If you try to please everybody, somebody is not going to like it.*  
*It's easier to get into a thing than to get out of it (71–72).*

There is also another list of proverb-like formulations under the title of "Confucius Say" (196–197) that are quite popular due to their double entendre with sexual connotations:

*Man who lay girl on hill not on level.*  
*Man who farts in church sits in own pew.*  
*Woman who cooks carrots and peas in same pot very unsanitary.*  
*Squirrel who runs up woman's leg not find nuts.*  
*Seven days on honeymoon make one whole week (197).*

While these modern creations might not be as well-known as traditional proverbs, they are nevertheless based to a large degree on proverbial structures and some of them have gained currency in oral use.

It was not always easy for Alan Dundes and Carl Pagter to find a publisher for their often rather explicit folklore materials in word and image, but twelve years after the first book the Wayne State University Press in Detroit agreed to put the second volume into print, showing considerable guts as an academic publisher by agreeing to print the title *When You're Up to Your Ass in Alligators ... More Urban Folklore from the Paperwork Empire* (1987). Some of the proverbial texts and drawings appear in a chapter on “The Writing on the Walls: Notices, Mottoes, and Awards” (90–117), giving A. Dundes the opportunity to return to his interest in graffiti:

*If you can't dazzle them with brilliance, baffle them with bullshit* (104).

*Rule No. 1: The boss is always right!*

*Rule No. 2: If the boss is wrong, see rule no. 1* (106).

*No problem is so big or so complicated that it can't be run away from!*  
(109)

*A neat desk is a sign of a sick mind* (110).

Having had considerable success with sales of this book, the same press agreed to print another volume of these entertaining and revealing bits of modern folklore: *Never Try to Teach a Pig to Sing. Still More Urban Folklore from the Paperwork Empire* (1991). There is an entire chapter with the quintessential American proverb “Different strokes for different folks” (225–276) as its title. Interspersed throughout its pages are proverbial gems and appropriate drawings accompanying them, as for example, “Never try to teach a pig to sing. It wastes your time and it annoys the pig” (71; somewhat reminiscent of the proverb “You can't make a silk purse out of a pig's ears”) and “To err is human. To really foul things up requires a computer!” (165; a take-off on the proverb “To err is human, to forgive, divine”). But there is also a fascinating list of “T-Shirt Quotes” (67–68) with proverbial slogans like these:

*Time flies when you don't know what you are doing.*

*I'm not playing hard to get, I am hard to get.*

*I'd rather be pissed off than pissed on.*

*Life is a bitch. Then you die.*

*Sex is the most fun you can have without laughing.*

*Perfect paranoia is perfect awareness.*

*The one who dies with the most toys wins.*

Strangely enough the Wayne State University Press did not want to commit itself to a third collection, an incomprehensible and not at all folkloric decision considering the popularity of these volumes among readers. But Alan Dundes and Carl R. Pagter found another publisher in the Syracuse University Press

that took on the publication of two additional collections of this wealth of urban folklore. The first appeared as *Sometimes the Dragon Wins. Yet More Urban Folklore from the Paperwork Empire* (1996), with the two collectors providing the following explanation for the titular new proverb:

*Sometimes the Dragon Wins*

*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. The very first fairy tale in the Aarne Thompson tale type index section devoted to wonder tales is Type 300, the Dragon-Slayer, a version of the classical story of Perseus and Andromeda.*

*Modern counterculture with its cynical view of the past prefers a more realistic assessment of a hero’s chances for success. In the following folk cartoon, the smug smile on the face of the triumphant dragon as well as his nonchalant use of the lance as a toothpick [and the destroyed armor of the knight around him] signal that this is one hero who will not return to fight another day (58–59).*

And there is also a list of “Aggie Sayings” (87–88), an “Aggie” being a *denizen of southwestern America who is unburdened by any notable amount of intelligence* (87). The following examples of such folk speech are primarily proverbial comparisons and proverbial exaggerations:

*Things were as disorganized as a bucket of worms.*

*She was as big as a skinned mule and twice as ugly.*

*I was trapped like a fart in a mitten.*

*I was shakin’ so bad I had to use a funnel to stick my finger up my ass.*

*It was as smooth as the inside of a schoolteacher’s thigh.*

*He was so ugly a fly wouldn’t light on him.*

*She was showin’ more meat than a butcher shop winda.*

The fifth volume in the series of these urban folklore collections appeared as *Why Don’t Sheep Shrink When It Rains? A Further Collection of Photocopier Folklore* (2000), and its pages once again contain many innovative anti-proverbs or slogans with appropriate drawings, as for example:

*The customer is always right and usually ugly, too (16).*

*Have a nice day ... “Asshole” (18).*

*There is no pleasure in having nothing to do – the fun is in having lots to do and not doing it (24).*

*There is no evidence that the tongue is connected to the brain (45).*  
*If you have to walk on thin ice, you might as well dance (62).*  
*Life is hard, then you nap (75).*  
*Dogs seldom outlive you (92).*

In the “Conclusions” (331–332) to this fifth volume A. Dundes and C. R. Pagter explain that the proliferation of modern or urban folklore is due primarily to the important functions it serves:

*It encapsulates ethical issues; it skewers the frustrating forces encountered in the course of every day life, and it provides welcome comic relief from the humdrum banalities arising from endless bureaucratic procedures. If laughter is cathartic, and we are fully persuaded that it is, the need for photocopier folklore [from the paperwork empire] is likely to accelerate in the twenty-first century (331).*

One thing is for certain, the five amazing collections of modern folklore with their many proverbial texts and illustrations are ample proof that the interplay between tradition and innovation in folklore is very much alive, and Alan Dundes together with Carl R. Pagter have done pioneering work in drawing attention to this creative spirit of the folk.

## CONCLUSION

It is painful to deal with the fact that Alan Dundes is no longer among us, that there will be no more fascinating publications by this original scholar, and that he will no longer be present at conferences and in the classroom. His contributions to folklore during more than four decades of work are immeasurable and they will without doubt live on and inform future scholarship. While he dealt with the entire field of folklore, Alan Dundes also had an incredible influence on paremiology and paremiography. His publications are almost always informed at least in part by proverbial materials interpreted from a psychoanalytic point of view. It is this Freudian approach to proverb scholarship that makes Alan Dundes a truly unique paremiologist, placing him among the other great proverb scholars of the twentieth century that have departed this world before him, i.e., Archer Taylor (1890–1973), Grigorii L’vovich Permiakov (1919–1983), Bartlett Jere Whiting (1904–1995), Matti Kuusi (1914–1998), Kazys Grigas (1924–2002), Demetrios Loukatos (1908–2003), and others. They were all touched by A. Dundes’s proverb studies, and we who are still laboring in the rich fields of paremiology have equally been influenced by his proverb scholar-

ship. In fact, future generations of paremiologists will continue to benefit from Alan Dundes's significant contributions to the identification and interpretation of proverbs. To me personally, he was my mentor, hero, and friend. It was an honor to work side by side with him for more than three decades, standing on the broad shoulders of this big man and thus being able to get a better and deeper understanding of proverbial matters. My friend is gone, but I carry him and his work in my mind and heart, and as I labor on in the service of international paremiology, I will also carry on the torch of light that Alan Dundes held in his capable hands. Alan Dundes was indeed a world-class folklorist and a magisterial paremiologist, a giant among us all, and the very best of all possible friends.

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