PROVERBS AS ARTISTIC MINIATURES: A STYLISTIC APPROACH

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Motto: "Written language is corpuscular and gains power by its density, whereas spoken language is wavelike and gains power by its intricacy".

M.A.K. Halliday (2003: 132)

Abstract. The article resumes some of the most relevant linguistic models that have been suggested for the adequate contextual analysis of proverbs and inquires into the use of proverbs in literary texts with special reference to the tales of Ion Creangă. This Romanian writer from the second half of the 19th century is frequently regarded as a great artist who managed to convert the plain resources of folklore and folk language into literary masterpieces. The stylistic approach we advocate focuses mainly on the discursive and textual traditions that influenced the author's style, on the prominent registers of influence and on the seminal texts that had an undeniable impact on Creangă's literary works. The analysis also brings forth uncharted aspects of Creangă's style, namely the use of proverbs, in order to put negative communication into effect. The theoretical issues discussed in the article are supported by relevant fragments from Creangă's tales, in both Romanian and English editions.

Keywords: *stylistics, pragmatics, proverbs, Ion Creangă, tales.*

1. PRELIMINARIES

The use of proverbs in literature enjoys a rich[3] and venerable tradition. There is a definite unanimity among scholars that literature and proverbs stand together since the dawn of antiquity[4] (Alster 1997, Cohen 1911, Gordon 1968, Taylor

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[3] The repertoire *Proverbs in World Literature. A Bibliography* (1996), compiled by Wolfgang Mieder and George G. Bryan, contains 2,655 entries.

[4] The oldest collections of proverbs known so far date from around 2600–2550 B.C. and are part of larger corpora usually labelled as 'wisdom literature' (Kramer 1951). As shown by the various scholars interested in the cultural productions of the Ancient Near East civilizations (Langdon 1912, Alster 1975, Beckman 1986), this major genre of sapiential writings served both sacred and practical (mainly educational) needs. In fact, as pointed out by Cohen (1911) and Mieder (2004), proverbs

RRL, LXI, *4*, p. 379–403, Bucureşti, 2016

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1962), but there is a less clear understanding of the cognitive and compositional drives that govern the use of proverbs in fiction and in other socio-cultural areas: advertising, education, law, letter-writing, mass-media, music, painting, politics, religion and so on. Since each area[5] has been scrutinized with various theoretical and methodological instruments, it is rather complicated to measure the common ground on which the study of proverbs is built. There are also voices which point out that concepts like LITERATURE[6] and PROVERB[7] are challenging and difficult to define; at different times, they mean different things.

Within the vast paremiological bibliography[8], the scholarly debate on the functions of proverbs has been undertaken from various perspectives, ranging from folklore and folk psychology to rhetoric, linguistics and cultural studies (Mieder 1997: 410–414, 2014a: 19–54). The multi-coloured umbrellas of the different scientific approaches led to "asking different questions and, as a result, obtaining different answers" (Grzybek 2014: 68), since each of the suggested models privileged certain facets while shadowing others.

The present article, devoted to the use of proverbs in tales, adopts a stylistically-based point of view. Our objective is to approach proverbs as "discrete little texts[9]" (Norrick 2008: 222) interwoven in the fabric of literary storytelling. The main task of such a study would be to contrast folk narratives[10] against written literature in order to identify the common and the distinctive roles attributed to proverbs, but we lack a general methodology "for assigning functions to proverbs in textual and discursive contexts based on the usage of proverbs in concrete, context-related statements" (Jesenšek 2014: 158). In order to compensate for the methodological shortcoming, two stages are followed. The first stage consists in briefly reviewing some of the models concerning the functionality of proverbs in their (literary or otherwise) contexts. The second stage aims at addressing the use of proverbs in some of Ion Creangă's tales so as to gain a better insight on their specific functions.

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enjoyed great prestige across the ancient world and they are still preserved and valued as culturally salient idiomatic artifacts.

[5] See, for instance, the issues of *Proverbium*, the yearbook of international proverb scholarship directed, since 1984, by Wolfgang Mieder. Another useful contribution is the handbook edited by Hrisztova-Gotthardt, Aleksa Varga (2014).

[6] The "object of literature is a certain ineffable beyondness which can only be suggested and that it is essentially the imaginary realization of the unrealizable" (Sartre 1988: 171).

[7] "The definition of a proverb is too difficult to repay the undertaking; and should we fortunately combine in a single definition all the essential elements and give each the proper emphasis, we should not even then have a touchstone" (Taylor 1962: 3).

[8] The internationally acclaimed scholar Wolfgang Mieder (1997: 401) states that his annoted bibliography on proverbs registers „4,599 books, dissertations, and articles" and grows „with the impressive number of over 200 entries per year".

[9] The hypothesis that proverbs are texts is also discussed in Norrick 1985.

[10] On the path traced by such classical studies as James George Frazer's *Folklore in the Old Testament: Studies in Comparative Religion, Legend and Law* (1918-1919), scholarly contributions like those of Dundes (1999), Jolles (1930) [Romanian edition 2012] or Ong (1982) [2002] revealed the distinctive features as well as the confluence between orality and scripturality (literacy).

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2. MODELLING

The 20th century European linguistic theories proved very effective in the design of structural and functional models of proverb use. Virtually every important school of linguistic thought passed on its scientific legacy in the field of paremiology. Saussurean semiology made a successful career in folklore and anthropology[11]. The conceptual heritage of the Russian Formalism and the theoretical rigour of the Prague School of linguistics left undeniable traces in Permyakov's logico-semiotic classification of paremias. Bühler's Organon model and Jakobson's functional model of language were also applied to proverb use (Krikmann 1985, Gavriilidou 2003, Dominguez Barajas 2010). Halliday's systemic-functional linguistics provides the frame[12] of Norrick's seminal pragmatic approach on the use of proverbs. Dell Hymes' ethnography of speaking was particularly influential upon the works of scholars such as Dundes (Arewa, Dundes 1964), Seitel (1981) and others (Abrahams, Babcock 1977, Siran 1993), whereas some core elements of the generative framework – namely the *competence*/*performance* and *surface structure*/*deep structure* distinctions – became quite common in proverb research (cf. Mieder 1997, 2004: 131–133). The development of cognitive linguistics was paralleled by cognitively-oriented paremiological studies mostly interested in capturing the figurativeness of proverbs (Gibbs jr. 1994: passim, Gibbs jr. 2001, Honeck 1997, Lewandowska, Antos, Gläßer 2014: 162–182, Malmgren 2007). Corpus linguistics brought its contribution and proved very useful in dealing with the issues related to the automatic recognition and processing of proverbs (Steyer 2014: 206–226).

Though brief and rather incomplete, this overview allows us to observe that a generally accepted linguistic methodology created to inquire the contextual functioning of proverbs should, in fact, overcome the lively competition among the epistemological tools devised within various schools of linguistics. The desideratum of an overarching linguistic technique of paremiological analysis seems even further away if we are to think that during the 20th century the majestic tree of linguistics grew fruitful yet divergent branches inasmuch as today it seems close to the impossible to harmoniously bring together the different schools and

[11] "Saussure's structuralism, which was adopted by notable scholars concerned with folklore such as Lévi-Strauss, Roman Jakobson, Petr Bogatyrev, and Dell Hymes, is the distinction of *parole* (translated from the French as both "word" and "speech") and *langue* ("language" or "tongue"; summarized by folklorists following Noam Chomsky as "competence") wherein the former represents the utterances of members of a language community (in speech acts, or "performance"), which manifest an underlying structure, and the latter is the generative structure" (Bronner, in Dundes 2007: 6).

[12] "As Halliday (1977, 1978 and elsewhere) would put it, a proverb *means* in various ways simultaneously: *textually*, *interactionally* (his interpersonally) and *ideationally*. The ideational mode of meaning is what I want to get at in investigating proverbs as texts independent of textual and interactional environment; the other two modes of meaning appear only in texts and interactions" (Norrick 1985: 11–12).

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trends. It is nonetheless true that linguistic areas[13], not so long ago situated at the frontier between linguistics and other kindred or non-related disciplines (artificial intelligence, computer science, biology, medicine, philosophy, psychology, sociology etc.), became fields of scientific inquiry in their own right and their methodologies were successfully applied to the functional analysis of proverbs.

2.1. The structural-functional models

Under the influence of the Prague linguistic circle (Vachek, Dubský 2003: 10), the *theme*/*rheme*[14] opposition gradually overshadowed the *topic*/*comment*[15] distinction in standard linguistic terminology. In the early 1960s, as well as later on, in the 1970s, the latter pair gained ground in the structural description of riddles and proverbs (Georges, Dundes 1963, Dundes 1981). As explained by Dundes (1981: 50), this structural approach

> "assumes that there is a close relationship between proverb structure and riddle structure (…) A minimum proverb or riddle consists of one descriptive element, that is to say, one unit composed of one topic and one comment[16]. It is true that in riddles the referent of the descriptive element is to be guessed whereas in proverbs the referent is presumably known to both the speaker and the addressee(s)."

In its basic form, this model aims at uncovering the paremiological invariants and the relationships between them. It also reflects the author's view that "words do not necessarily possess an intrinsic or a historically emergent significance" (Bronner, in Dundes 2007: 6), but acquire a certain value due to the relationships they establish with one another. Following Saussure, Dundes describes riddles and proverbs by virtue of the relationships that "underlie and generate" utterances and order reality (*ibidem*).

[13] One may ponder, for instance, on the rapid development of linguistic anthropology, pragmatics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, corpus linguistics and the like.

[14] "In the Prague School approach to linguistics, theme is opposed to rheme, producing a distinction similar to that of topic/comment, but interpreted with reference to the theoretical framework of functional sentence perspective. In this theory, the theme is defined as the part of a sentence which adds least to the advancing process of communication (it has the lowest degree of communicative dynamism); in other words, it expresses relatively little (or no) extra meaning, in addition to what has already been communicated. The rheme, by contrast, carries the highest degree of communicative dynamism" (Crystal 2008: 483). See also Vachek, Dubský (2003: 10).

[15] "A term used in semantics and grammar as part of an alternative binary characterization of sentence structure to the traditionally found in the subject/predicate distinction; the opposite term is comment. The topic of a sentence is the entity (person, thing etc.) about which something is said, whereas the further statement made about this entity is the comment" (Crystal 2008: 488).

[16] "A *descriptive element* consists of both a *topic* and a *comment*. The *topic* is the apparent referent; that is, it is the object or item which allegedly described. The *comment* is an assertion about the topic, usually concerning the form, function, or action of the topic" (Georges, Dundes 1963: 113).

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The framework according to which proverbs are language phenomena that act as models of relationships between objects was explicitly formulated by Permyakov, who also added that proverbs are "folklore items, artistic miniatures reflecting facts of everyday life in a vividly expressive form" (Permyakov 1979: 163). However, as Norrick (1985: 57) rightly concludes, the *topic*/*comment* structural model "provides no ground for distinguishing proverbs from slogans, aphorisms and quotable quotes generally. Indeed, there seems to be great agreement among linguists that any full sentence or statement in a text can be analyzed in terms of old information and new information, of topic and comment or of the equivalent pair of terms: *theme* and *rheme*".

In Permyakov's (1979: 148–155) logico-semiotic theory on cliché[17], the taxonomy of the paremiological units[18] is built on six pairs of structural properties, out of which three characterize the external structure[19] of any paremia, and three, its internal structure[20]. Consequently, proverbs are deemed as i) synthetic, ii) phrasal, iii) closed and iv) image-motivated paremiological units. In other words, proverbs are structurally defined as fully clichéized polysemantic utterances with image-motivated meanings. Although meticulously constructed, structural definitions of this sort reflect, according to Krikmann (1985: 73), the "essential misconception" that proverbs are frozen fixed-form clichés. In oral communication, argues Krikmann (1985: 75), proverbs typically display "a rich and multidimensional variability" in lexis, syntax and euphonic patterns, and this argument allows us to add that proverbs, like any other type of language phenomena, obey the same mechanisms of language evolution and change, on the one hand, and the powerful pressure of certain socio-cultural traditions (Bland 1997: 1–21, Obelkevich 1987: 43–72), on the other hand.

The original and stimulating theory devised by Permyakov also includes a set of *pragmatic*/*text* functions attributed to paremias, according to their dominant communicative role or purpose:

[17] See Grzybek (2014: 103–106) for a synoptic presentation of Permyakov's structural approach.

[18] In Permyakov's view, paremias are equated with clichés, but they are not to be confounded with the ordinary phraseological units.

[19] According to their external linguistic structure, clichés are classified according to the distinction between phrasal units (i.e. units consisting of single sentences) and supra-phrasal units (i.e. units consisting of short strings of sentences). Furthermore, phrasal units are divided into closed (i.e. fully clichéized) and open (i.e. not fully clichéized) units, whereas supra-phrasal paremias are separated into monologic (i.e. units that can be reproduced by one person) and dialogic (i.e. clichés which take at least two persons to be reproduced) clichés.

[20] In the light of their internal linguistic structure (a concept related to Humboldt's 'innere Sprachform'), paremias are classified according to the distinction between synthetic (polysemantic) and analytic (monosemantic) clichés. Each of these types is subsequently divided into subclasses, according to the presence or the absence of general meaning motivation, and the result is a further division between motivated and non-motivated units, either synthetic or analytic. As far as the motivated units are concerned, they are also classified into image-motivated and directly-motivated paremias.

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(a) the *modeling* function reveals „that a paremia possessing this function provides a verbal (or thought) model (scheme) of some real-life (or logical) situation" (Permyakov 1979: 141). Proverbs, for instance, act as cognitive and verbal frames of real-life situations;

(b) the *instructive* function of clichés is „most apparent (and dominant) in what I term "practical clichés", as well as in riddles, problems, puzzles and tongue-twisters" (Permyakov 1979: 141), and its purpose is to instruct;

(c) the *prognostic* function can be found in "natural omens, beliefs (superstitious omens), "prophetic" dreams and oracular sayings", and its essence lies in "foretelling the future" (Permyakov 1979: 141);

(d) the *magical* function is present "in various exorcisms, spells, curses, wishes, toasts, oaths and certain threats" and its essence "is to cause the desired effect by verbal means" (Permyakov 1979: 141);

(e) the *negative communication* function "is most readily seen in (and is obligatory) in so-called nonsense-talk, "nuisance or endless" tales, facetious answers, and additions" and its essence is "to say something without telling anything, or to avoid answering (awkward) questions or to counter an opponent's (interlocutor's) argument" (Permyakov 1979: 141);

(f) the *entertainment* function is present in "facetious locutions and facetious riddles and jokes 'with a catch'" intended to amuse the audience (Permyakov 1979: 142);

g) the *ornamental* function embellishes the speech. Permyakov (1979: 142) argues that this function is neither dominant, nor indispensable, as stated by "other paremiologists".

Just as Jakobson (1960: 353) asserts that the structure of the any given verbal message is governed by a predominant function which, in turn, varies from case to case by virtue of "different hierarchical order of functions", Permyakov (1979: 143) distinguishes between leading (dominant, obligatory) functions and optional (non-obligatory) functions and adds that, in practice, any type of cliché is "capable of paremiological transformation" (idem: 146), which means that a paremiological unit of some sort has the contextual potential to acquire the functional identity of another sort[21].

In theory, the dominant function of proverbs is the modeling function. In practice, however, "one can easily select a context in which a proverb is used to avoid giving a direct reply, for the sake of fun, or just to sound witty" (Permyakov 1979: 145) and such instantiations mirror that proverbs may be used to enact negative communication, entertainment and ornamentation. In short, proverbs with the same dominant function may differ in the details of usage. For example, a well-

[21] "There is a marked similarity, too, between the pragmatic text functions of paremias and Propp's structural-folkloristic functions denoting different types of folk-tale action. Propp has observed the "one and the same" action in a folk-tale may acquire different meanings depending on its place" (Permyakov 1979: 145–146).

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known Romanian proverb like *Lupul îşi schimbă părul, dar năravul, ba* 'A wolf may change his mind but never his fur' (Mieder, Kingsbury, Harder 1992: 90) can be easily transformed into a humorous riddle: *Ghiciți ghicitoarea: Cine-şi schimbă părul, da' năravul ba ?!* 'Guess who may change his mind, but never his fur?'[22].

Jakobson's functional model was successfully adopted in proverb studies. In the sociolinguistic research of Dominguez Barajas (2010) concerning the use of proverbs in the conversations among the members of the López family, an extended family of both transnational immigrants living in Chicago and people living in the western Mexican state of Michoacán, out of the six Jakobsonian functions, only four were considered to have socio-discursive relevance. According to Dominguez Barajas (2010: 70),

> "the members of the López social network called on proverbs (1) to support an argumentative claim concerning behavior; (2) to teach or promote reflection by way of advice; (3) to establish interpersonal rapport. An additional aspect in the use of proverbs which could arguably be considered a purpose in itself seemed to be (4) to add variety to a conversation and thus entertain or engage the listeners by virtue of verbal creativity manifested in the proverb's poetic quality, but this seems to be an additional social function to one of the first free".

Dominguez Barajas observed that only the expressive, the conative and the phatic[23] functions seemed to play leading roles in the conversational use of proverbs, whereas the poetic function was found to play only a minor, rather ornamental part. In simpler words, proverbs help speakers to capitalize on group solidarity, to express attitudes and to evaluate social behaviour, to teach or to promote reflection (Dominguez Barajas 2010: 70-71), and only secondarily they serve to entertain the audience. Proverbs prove very useful when it comes to support an argument, to give advice, to promote common values and to liven up the conversation. In contrast to the repertoire of the predominant functions of proverbs in conversations, a different picture is expected to be revealed by the studies on literary narratives. As Jakobson (1971: 661-662) rightly showed, the poetic function acts as the dominant function of (verbal) art, and, consequently, the hierarchy of the other functions is aesthetically determined by mimesis.

2.2. The pragmatic models

Aristotle's *Rhetoric* provided one of the earliest scholarly accounts on proverb definition and use. In line with the rhetorical tradition, the stylistic and

[22] http://orasulvechi.ro/evenimente/padurea-povestilor-ciao-baramici/, accessed on 3.10.2016.

[23] In the verbal interactions among the interlocutors, Dominguez Barajas (2010: 71) noticed a "prolonged exchange of proverbs that seemed to serve no other social function than to communicate a shared code (or "channel"), and this clearly furthered their rapport and made moments of solidarity-formation evident".

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pragmatic approaches[24] towards the discursive and textual use of proverbs led to a consistent progress in the analysis of proverbs in relation to a variety of topics: phonetic and prosodic patterns, grammar and meaning, figures of speech, use of quotatives, discourse or text positioning, communicative intentions and effects, persuasive potential and so on. The focus on the contextual functions of proverbs highlighted a rich array of uses. In concrete situations, proverbs "can function as expressions of *speech acts* such as warning, persuasion, argument, confirmation, comfort, appeasement, conviction, admonition, reprimand, assessment, characterization, explanation, description, justification, or summarization" (Jesenšek 2014: 135). According to Krikmann (2008: 107), "proverbs are actualized in the context of everyday communication, performing the same functions, in principle, as other utterances. They serve to confirm opinions, make prognoses, express doubts, reproaches, accusations, justifications, excuses, consolations, derision or malicious joy, regrets, warning, recommendations etc" and their functions reflect the semiotic scale *statement → evaluation → prescription*.

The pragmatic frameworks refreshed the linguistically-based approaches on proverbs. Unlike the structural models, some of the seminal pragmatic explorations assumed the tenet that proverbs are not mere utterances, but texts (cf. Norrick 1985: 1–10). This shift from the traditional view allowed researchers to broaden the scope of their investigations and to study proverbs not only for what they explicitly express, but also for what they implicitly mean. Proverbs are indirect[25] speech acts in disguise. They allow "the speaker to disguise his true feelings, to leave himself an escape route, to offer his hearer choices and to indicate real or imagined consensus". Moreover, proverbs occur in conversations or in texts as *evaluative comments*[26], *evaluative arguments*[27] or *directly applied*[28]. According to Ruxăndoiu (2003: 43), the use of proverbs implies that "the actual relationship between the speaker and the interlocutor is doubled by a virtual relationship between the tradition as emitter and the collectivity as receiver". This means that the proverbs' perlocutionary function (Ruxăndoiu 2003: 42) mirrors the pressure

[24] Some researchers (Hickey 1993, Burke 2014: passim) use such terms and syntagms as *pragmastylistics* or *pragmatic stylistics* to signal that stylistic and pragmatic analyses share common research objectives, concepts and methodological tools.

[25] "Proverbs are therefore doubly indirect. First, they are quoted. As such they express observations not original with the speaker; the speakers need not take full responsibility for their form or content. Second, proverbs generate implicatures. The speaker means what he says on the literal level, but he means something more in context. It is up to the hearer to piece together the intended implicature. Consequently, as in other cases of quoting and indirect speech acts, the speaker can to some degree deny responsibility for the implicatures" (Norrick 1985: 27).

[26] "The proverb generalizes inferentially from the concrete situation, avoiding reference to particulars in it" (Norrick 1985: 13).

[27] Proverbs can "serve to state or support positions in arguments" (Norrick 1985: 16).

[28] Directly applied proverbs have no evaluative function; they simply fit the situation (Norrick 1985: 16).

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exerted by a generic context[29] upon a functional context[30]. Simply put, proverbs enable speakers to express their ideas by appealing to ready-made judgments, comments and observations typically associated with tradition and usually marked by specific quotatives such *as they say*, *it is said*, *an old saying*, *as the proverb goes* etc. By virtue of their prestige, proverbs act as communicative umbrellas that allow individuals „to avoid personal commitment and refutation" (Norrick 1985: 27), since any speaker "quotes the linguistic community itself" (Norrick 1985: 26) when appealing to proverbs.

The pragmatics of proverbs evolved under the auspices of Grice's influential perspective (Norrick 1997, Nuessel 2009) and it also nourished from the mainstream research on politeness[31] (Dominguez Barajas 2010). Another solid branch of pragmatic inquiry was to study proverbs in the light of speech act theories conceived by Austin and Searle (Penfield, Duru 1988, Jesenšek 2014: 149–153). As "part of active verbal communication" (Mieder 2004: 134), proverbs are strategically used to negotiate consensus (Ruxăndoiu 2003: 29).

Pioneering studies in the field of literary intertextuality concluded that a "proverb is detachable and ready-made for writing down because it embodies its situation of use and because it becomes an important means of re-situating the reader *vis-à-vis* the impersonal and dissociated text" (Abrahams, Babcock 1977: 429). In other words, proverbs relay life to fiction. More recent research focuses on the textual positioning of proverbs with regard to their potential of organising and structuring the text (Jesenšek 2014: 153–157, Järv 2009). Such an approach will be taken into consideration in section 3.

2.3. The semiotic models

The flourishing of proverb pragmatics is partly rooted in Halliday's systemic-functional linguistics. In its elementary architecture, the model assumes that language is a unique social semiotic medium of communication, "a vast open-ended system of meaning potential constantly renewing itself in interaction with its ecosocial environment" (Halliday 2003: 25). Language has a threefold functioning: ideational (language construes human experience), interpersonal (language enacts human relationships) and textual (language creates the discursive order of reality that enables the other two functions) (Halliday 2003: 249). This semiotic perspective infused proverb research both in structural, context-free (Yassin 1988) and pragmatic, context-bound approaches (Norrick 1985).

[29] The generic context refers to the largely known signification of a proverb (Ruxăndoiu 2003: 97).

[30] The functional context is the speech act *per se*, either spoken or written, in which the proverb occurs (Ruxăndoiu 2003: 136).

[31] The interest in the norms of politeness and their impact on the usage of proverbs was invigorated in the anthropologically-oriented paremiological research (Arewa, Dundes 1964: 79).

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Another rich vein explored in the study of proverbs stands in close connection with the semiotic dimensions theorized by Charles Morris. This scientific legacy was thoroughly reviewed by Grzybek (2014: 68–111), who had already suggested an adequate frame with regard to the semiotic analysis of proverbs (Grzybek 1987: 39–85). To resume, Grzybek finds that proverbs are optimally described by three interrelated semiotic categories: *heterosituativity* (the meaning of a proverb depends on the situation of use), *polysemanticity* (proverbs have a manifold meaning potential) and *polyfunctionality* (the same proverb may serve different functions in different contexts). On the basis of these categories, the author distinguishes three classes of paremiological functions:

(a) a set of *pragmatic* functions implying that proverbs signal the communicative awareness of speakers, in terms of intentions and fulfilled effects;

(b) a set of *social* functions revealing that proverbs establish and maintain effective social and cultural norms;

(c) a set of *strategic* functions showing that proverbs codify information about strategies of dealing with reality.

Even if each model clearly displays its distinctive features, a parallel among them could be inferred. Grzybek's notion of *polysemanticity* seems to echo Halliday's *ideational* function, which, in turn, resonates with Morris's *semantic* dimension of the sign. The concept of *polyfunctionality* converges with Halliday's *textual* function, which, in turn, seems to evoke Morris's *syntactic* dimension. Last but not least, *heterosituativity* seems to recall Halliday's *interpersonal* function, which, in turn, reminds us of Morris's *pragmatic* dimension. However, to say that the mentioned semiotic models are concordant does not mean that they overlap. In fact, the semiotic architecture conceived by Grzybek is a proverb-specific model, Halliday's functions are language-related, whereas Morris gave prominence to the simultaneous relationships of any sign with the designated object(s) (semantics), with other signs or classes of signs (syntax) and with the sign users (pragmatics). A more fruitful comparison could be made between the pragmatic (text) functions defined by Permyakov and the three classes of functions discussed by Grzybek. The issue will be approached in section 3.

3. THE ENIGMA OF PROVERBS IN ION CREANGĂ'S TALES

In spite of the fairly large number of studies devoted to the life and works of Ion Creangă, a revered Romanian writer from the second half of the 19th century, there is surprisingly little research carried out on the use of proverbs in his literary creations. This author was typically referred to as "our Homer" (Ibrăileanu 2010: 439), a Rabelaisian spirit (Călinescu 1982: 487), "probably the most read prose writer" (Simion 2014: 13), and yet the debate on the stylistic finesse of his writings

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hardly focuses on the proverbs though they are deemed as striking style markers. Creangă's literary work was considered to be akin to that of such major writers as La Fontaine, Rabelais, Sterne, Anatole France (Călinescu 1982: 487, Streinu 2010: 56–57), Cervantes (Tabarcea 1982: 271), Mark Twain and Chaucer (Taylor 1975). We are the recipients of a rich tradition of literary criticism that praises the genius of a canonical writer who elevated the linguistic resources of the folk language to aesthetic prominence, and yet the curtain that hides the secrets of the writer's stylistic alchemy has hardly been raised.

The mainstream literary criticism of Creangă's works frequently nourished on the assumption that style analysis is apt to reveal the bundle of expressive feature that mirror the author's originality, but the stylistic framework meant to support the critical assessments was rarely disclosed or developed. It comes then as no wonder that other facets than style were foregrounded, whereas the compositional matters related to the use of language were either backgrounded and set for future scrutiny or called into question as circumstantial evidence in the service of more ambitious claims and goals. Like other language phenomena, proverbs were called to arms in order to prove or to disprove various hypotheses related to either the folkloric nature of the writer's work or the inimitable majesty of his fictional worldview. The use of proverbs was judged in favour of both ends. Creangă, the rustic storyteller, shared the same stylistic emblem with Creangă, the genius who turned the plain, common language into an artistic marvel.

Not so many studies undertook the task of identifying the style markers that could shed new light on the writer's place in the literary canon and even fewer studies were devoted to such detailed yet relevant issues as the use of proverbs in Creangă's writings (Taylor 1975, Negreanu 1989). Luckily, the in-depth folkloric (Bîrlea 1967) and stylistic (Iordan 1977, Tohăneanu 1969) studies enable us to adopt a frame of analysis focused on the following aspects: a) a brief cultural outline concerning the discursive traditions of the 19th century Romanian literary writing; b) a synopsis of Creangă's dominant style markers in contrast with the style of Romanian folk narratives and c) a case-study on the negative communication function of some proverbs featuring in Creangă's tales.

3.1. Cultural outline

In spite of the debate on Creangă's nature of artistic talent (popular story-teller vs. great writer), many scholars agree that several discursive and cultural traditions should be distinguished in his literary writings.

The most obvious is the undeniable mastery of *the art of story-telling*. According to the accounts of his contemporaries, Creangă, a former priest, was a beloved orator, a great humorist and an excellent performer of tales (Negruzzi 2011: 181, Panu 2013: 144–148). He was also a gifted teacher and a nationwide

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respected author of schoolbooks (Popescu-Sireteanu 1981, Livescu 2013). Regardless of the situation he found himself into, he would resort to a tale, a joke or a proverb[32]. Such relevant biographic details allow us to consider that, as a writer, Creangă assiduously refined, enriched and surpassed the stylistic patterns of the traditional oral story-telling (Bîrlea 1967: 7), by re-reading and re-writing his literary works (Livescu 2013: passim).

Another oral tradition which left a stylistic marker on Creangă's writings was *the art of preaching*. As a certified attendant of the seminary and as a former orthodox deacon, Creangă must have had a good understanding and command of the norms governing the composition and the delivery of sermons. This rhetorical training becomes apparent in some of his stories in which certain characters[33] seem to preach rather than to engage in 'usual' conversation.

Last but not least, one must not neglect the veins of the *pedagogical tradition*, for Creangă devoted himself to teaching, after being excluded from priesthood. As a matter of fact, the writer's formal education converged with the informal, empirical education received in the family, as shown in his much celebrated autofiction entitled *Amintiri din copilărie* (*Memories from my Boyhood*). To be more precise, Creangă did not only gain a solid reputation as a teacher, by converting the art of story-telling into a reputable and admired didactic tool (Popescu-Sireteanu 1981: 67–76), but also gained a recognition as the co-author of several schoolbooks.

Each of the three major traditions comprises two facets, the oral and the written, and each aspect is, in turn, part of a larger cultural historical stream. Needless to say, within every tradition proverbs play significant pragmatic, social and strategic functions. In other words, Creangă's literary style is the outcome of a sophisticated mixture of different types of traditions, registers and discursive/ textual influences, as shown in Table 1.

Since we mentioned the stylistic force of the three oral traditions, let us briefly exemplify the seminal power of some written sources. It is well known that the great impact of the Bible favoured the emergence of the so-called languages of the Bible (Kowalská 2007: 52–64), generated during the translation of the Scripture into approximately 800 languages (Nida, Taber 1982:1). In fact, the Bible has been a major source of proverb[34] dissemination across Europe, along with the literary artifacts of the Greco-Roman antiquity, the Medieval Latin and the natural circulation of proverbs from one people to another (Mieder 2014b: 28–48). Thus,

[32] "În toate împregiurările, şi la câştig, şi la pagubă, şi la veselie, şi la întristare, el scăpa cu o poveste, cu o anecdotă, cu un proverb" (Slavici, in Popescu-Sireteanu 1981: 140).

[33] In the *Tale of Harap-Alb*, the female character suggestively named Holy Sunday preaches the hero about the Christian virtues of absolute faith in God, patience, modesty and obedience (Creangă 1978: 261).

[34] "These proverbs have become so well integrated into various European languages that native speakers often are not at all aware of the fact any longer that they are citing Biblical wisdom when using them" (Mieder 2014b: 35).

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the Book of books spread a lot more than interculturally negociated linguistic symbols; it spread old ideas infused with a new life. According to Mieder (1990: 12), "the languages of most culture for which the Bible is the major spiritual book contain between 300 and 500 proverbs that stem from the Bible".

Table 1

The cultural constituents of the Creangă's individual literary style

INDIVIDUAL STYLE						
TRADITIONS	religious		pedagogical		literary	
REGISTERS	oral	written	oral	written	oral	written
	customs and habits	biblical and exegetical	informal	formal	folklore	authored literature
DISCURSIVE AND TEXTUAL INFLUENCES	sermons, songs, religious rituals etc.	the Bible; books of prayers; patristic literature; hagiographies etc.	parental advice, learning from peers etc.	schoolbooks	folk-tales, jokes, games etc.	narratives, drama

The common reader is unaware that, when reading Creangă's masterpiece, *The Tale of Harap-Alb*, (s)he comes across an ancient Jewish piece of wisdom, under Romanian disguise: *Părinții mănâncă aguridă, iar părinților li se strepezesc dinții* (Creangă 1970/I: 97). The reader of the Bible will, however, discover the origin of the proverb either when it is quoted in Jeremiah 31: 29, or in Ezekiel 18: 2: *The fathers have eaten sour grapes, /And the children's teeth are set on edge*[36]. Again, in one of the dialogues among the characters of the same tale, the average reader will probably recognize another wise teaching, *Nu-i după cum gândeşte omul, ci-i după cum vrea Domnul* (Creangă 1970/I: 99), but the origin of this Romanian saying is to be sought in the Biblical book of Proverbs 16:9: *A man's heart plans his way/But the Lord directs his steps*. Scholars like Archer Taylor (1962: 55) assume that the Latin maxim *Homo proponit, sed Deus disponit* originates in a quote from the famous *Imitatio Christi* (I, 19, 2) by Thomas à Kempis. Today, the medieval clipping has paremiological cognates in many European languages. Yet, in spite of such concordances and correspondences, it is

[36] The proverb is indexed in Mieder's glossary of English proverbs with Biblical origin (Mieder 1990: 26).

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impossible to find out whether Creangă learnt the proverbs straight from the Bible or from the oral tradition of the village he was born into, either by hearing it in the church or learning it from his in-group members (family, neighbours, peers), or by discovering it in a schoolbook. One can find arguments to plead in favour of both oral and written sources. On the one hand, the proverb *Părinții mănâncă aguridă, iar părinților li se strepezesc dinții* seems to have been acquired from the oral tradition, since Creangă introduces it with a quotative usually referring to what is being said (*vorba ceea* 'as they say'). On the other hand, it can be argued that such quotatives are mimetically borrowed from the oral style of story-telling and stand in no connection to the fact that what is being quoted is excerpted from the oral tradition or from a written source. The absence of typical paremiological quotatives also raises questions. The saying *Nu-i după cum gândeşte omul, ci-i după cum vrea Domnul* features in a dialogue between characters and bears no stylistic marker to make the reader aware of its proverbial nature. It is as though Creangă thought of such wise words by himself. How could anyone possibly draw a precise distinction between the oral and the written registers since a Biblical sequence like "Blessed are the meek *for they shall inherit the earth*"[37] (Matthew 5:5) is alluded to as if it just sprang from the popular wit: "doar n-am trăi cât lumea, *ca să moştenim pământul*"[38] (Creangă 1970/I: 80)? Should it be added that in Western Europe the golden age of proverbs lasted between the second half of the 16th century and the early 17th century[39], whereas in South-Eastern Romania, the vogue for proverbs lasted between the second half of the 18th century and the end of the 19th century? The delay between the two cultural "meridians" can be explained, among others, by the fact that only in the second half of the 18th century a growingly vigorous program of translations started to take shape and, as a consequence, a great stock of cultural imports rapidly developed (Jeanrenaud 2014: 15). At the same time, the great Oriental tradition of paremiological erudition was reaching its zenith through the marvelous *Povestea vorbii* ('The Tale of the Wit'), published by Anton Pann, in 1852. For the Romanian literature, the 19th century was an age of stark contrasts between conservative tradition and open cosmopolitism, between implicit, yet bold experimentalism and explicit, yet fading appeals to embrace the tradition. At the European gates of the Orient[40], the cultural and textual history of proverbs was as complicated, surprising and fragile as the history of man.

[37] "Fericiţi cei blânzi, că aceia vor moşteni pământul" (Matei 5:5).

[38] In the English version of the tale, the translators overlooked the [+Biblical] stylistic marker of the sequence: "for I shan't live for ever nor have all the treasures of the world left me" (Creangă 1978: 239).

[39] "In the second half of the sixteenth century and early seventeenth centuries the vogue for proverbs was at its height, with more new sayings appearing than in any other period; (…) Proverbs might turn up anywhere – not only in texts and in speech but in such improbable media as tapestries, plates, knife blades and sun dials. They were also voluminously collected" (Obelkevich 1987: 56–57).

[40] "Que voulez-vous, nous sommes ici aux portes de l'Orient, où tout est pris à la légère" (Raymond Poincaré).

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3.2. Proverbs as literary style markers

Several in-depth linguistic studies highlighted the phonetic, prosodic, grammatical and lexico-semantic phenomena that constitute the prevalent style markers in the economy of Creangă's literary writings (Arvinte 2002, Iordan 1977, Mancaş 2005: 172–190, Tohăneanu 1969). Other studies (Diaconu 2011, Simion 2014) reviewed the critical dossier in order to establish new points of interest to literary critics. However, only a few studies (Bîrlea 1967, Ruxăndoiu 2003) revealed the stylistic contrasts between the folk art of story-telling and Creangă's art of literary writing.

The reputed Romanian folklorist Ovidiu Bîrlea granted a book-length study to the issue and concluded that Creangă is a highly paremiological author:

> „What clearly differentiates Creangă from the folk story-teller is the unusual frequency of sayings and proverbs. The folk story-tellers resort to proverbs and sayings only incidentally (…) On the contrary, Creangă likes to generously quote proverbs and sayings with the same obvious pleasure of being delighted by their plasticity. It could be said that Creangă feels a sensory pleasure in using them, and this pleasure goes beyond their notional frame. They deepen the context in which they are interposed and they give it an unusually accentuated shape. This is a bas-relief technique that denotes an extraordinary language awareness" (Bîrlea 1967: 183).

To support the argument, the folklorist adds that in 276 pages of text, more than 280 proverbs and sayings could be counted, a ratio which stands for a median value of more than one proverb per page of text. In fact, certain tales contain a greater number of proverbs and sayings. The tale of *Dănilă Prepeleac*, the man who challenged and defeated the devils, contains 26 proverbs and sayings in 12 pages. *The Goat and Her Three Kids* includes 20 proverbs and sayings in just 9 pages. *The Tale of Harap-Alb* displays a ratio of 80 proverbs and sayings in 48 pages. Obviously, Creangă amasses proverbs in some of his tales and uses these artistic miniatures for the "pleasure of the text" (Roland Barthes), which means that the higly ornated narrative should be perceived by its readers as folksy, didactic and highly persuasive.

First, the paremiological built-up serves the strategic function of devising a new scheme of story-telling, designed to shed a brighter positive light on folk values and folk wisdom. In this respect, Ruxăndoiu rightly states that folk performers "do not abuse of proverbs in their story-telling style" and that Creangă's skilled adjustment of adding strings of proverbs in the fabric of the tale was quickly imitated by various collectors of folklore from the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, a vogue which favoured the "naissance of didactic style of "reproducing" the folk-tales" (Ruxăndoiu 2003: 77). In a similar vein, Mieder (1986) revealed that, in the first half of the 19th century, one of the famous Grimm brothers, Wilhelm, consciously adjusted the style of his

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collected fairy-tales by adding proverbs and expanding the folkloric text. One of the reasons to justify such interpolations was that Wilhelm Grimm was probably pleased about the didactic potential of proverbs (Mieder 1986: 75). „For him they were attempts at conforming certain fairy tales to a style which reflects folk speech and they most certainly were not conscious falsifications of the text" (Mieder 1986: 78).

Second, the amassing of proverbs serves the social function to attract and to connect intellectual, urban readers to the language, wit and humour of the peasant world. This seems to be the reason of including Creangă, with his "primitive and unpolished talent" (Negruzzi 2011: 182), among the elites of "Junimea", the most prestigious Romanian literary society from the final decades of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

Finally, in Creangă's tales, the dense network of proverbs serves certain pragmatic and aesthetic ends: to provide the frame of certain episodes and dialogues or even of entire texts, to please the author and to entertain the reader, by means of satire, humour and language play, and to elevate the simple, low, rustic style of folk story-telling to the rhetorical standards of the original and richly-ornated style of the authored literature of the time. "Didactic writers", argues Taylor (1962: 172), "naturally show a great liking for proverbs. A satirical tone and an appeal to fundamental emotions encourage the use of proverbs. A proverb is often a ready-made epigram, sums up the situation effectively, drives home the point, and appeals to the reader's or hearer's sense of humor".

At the end of section 2.2, it was argued that the textual positiong of proverbs activates certain stylistic (compositional) roles. In anteposition, i.e. in the beginning of the text, the proverb institutes the frame and introduces the topic, acts as an attention-directing device and may activate the function of thematic progression, by establishing coherence and cohesion with other textual structures (Jesenšek 2014: 153–155). In postposition, i.e. in the end of the text, "the most important function of a proverb is to summarize what has been stated before", by means of generalization and emphasis (Jesenšek 2014: 156). Such text-structuring functions of proverbs are most present in newspaper articles. In conversation and in narratives, as argued by Norrick (1985: 13–16), proverbs may function as *evaluative comments* and *evaluative arguments* or they may be *directly applied*. Other scholars point out that

> "the artifices by which a proverb may be used as a literary device are of two kinds – purely external tricks and psychological exploitation of the inner content of the proverbs. The tricks may be classified, in ascending order of importance, as: accumulation, adaptation, allusion, adaptation-allusion, crossing, twisting, and word play. The more subtle psychological exploitation, which makes use of some of the external devices, may provoke lively and progressive dialogue, develop the thought of a single person (although it may not seem so, this is more subtle than dialogue), or even carry forward the development of the plot" (O'Kane 1950: 364).

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Creangă uses both techniques.

In anteposition, proverbs are rare in Creangă's tales. One such instance can be found in the beginning of the tale *Capra cu trei iezi* (*The Goat and Her Three Kids*[41]): "Era odată o capră care avea trei iezi. Iedul cel mare şi cu cel mijlociu dau prin băţ de obraznici ce erau; iar cel mic era harnic şi cuminte. *Vorba ceea*: „*Sunt cinci degete la o mână şi nu samănă toate unul cu altul*" (Creangă 1970/I: 13). In a rather intuitive and empirical fashion, without a clear-cut theoretical framework to rely on, Negreanu (1989: 530) notes that the proverb in this sequence has an ascertaining function. In fact, the proverb acts as a comment by which the narrator makes a didactic claim frequently met in tales: bad things will happen to naughty children. At the same time, the proverb works as an attention-directing device, because it makes the reader wonder what will happen to the "bold-faced beyond measure" kids.

All in all, this rather gothic tale rooted in Aesop's fables – which tells the story of a goat who loses two of her kids because a cruel wolf, the kids' godfather and the goat's friend, comes at her house when she is away and eats the naughty kids - seems to be the literary illustration of three well-known Romanian proverbs that do not appear in the text: *Lupu-şi schimbă părul, dar năravul, ba*[42], *Cine sapă groapa altuia cade singur în ea* and *Ochi pentru ochi şi dinte pentru dinte*. Whereas the first proverb seems to motivate the option for the character which plays the villain, the others originate in recurrent Biblical quotes, *He who digs a pit will fall into it* (Psalms 7: 15, Proverbs 26: 27, Ecclesiastes 10: 8), and *An eye for eye, and a tooth for a tooth* (Exodus 23: 24, Deuteronomy 19: 21), which warn against the boomerang effects of evil deeds. In fact, Creangă's tale fully illustrates the Biblical *lex talionis*, as anyone can notice from the goat's final rhythmic reply when the retaliation plan of burning the wolf to death into a hell fiery pit is completed[43]: "– *Moarte pentru moarte*, cumătre, *arsură pentru arsură*, că bine-o mai plesnişi dinioare cu cuvinte din Scriptură!" (Creangă 1970/I: 20). This transparent allusion to Biblical proverbial rhetoric proves that the art of preaching can be skillfully embedded in tales. Moreover, such convergences and allusions reveal that very familiar proverbs can act as conceptual topics whereas the tales that actually illustrate them act as textual comments, just like in the art of preaching, where the Biblical quote constitutes the theme, whereas the sermon acts as the rheme.

[41] "Once upon a time there was a she-goat who had three kids. The elder and middle one were bold-faced beyond measure, while the youngest was hardworking and good, As the saying goes: "there are five fingers on a hand and no two are alike" (Creangă 1978: 161).

[42] The wolf may lose his teeth, but never his nature/A wolf may change his mind but never his fur.

[43] "Death for death, brother, burn for burn, you did well to rattle out the words of the Scripture just now!" (Creangă 1978: 170)

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Proverbs and sayings fulfill a more diverse set of text-structuring functions in the narrative body of tales. They anticipate the plot[44], emphasize the climax[45] or indirectly conclude the outcome of some episodic actions[46].

The use of proverbs in postposition is rather uncommon. Like many other tale writers, Creangă does not give up the stereotypical formulas of folk tales; to do so it would mean to deconstruct the very pattern of story-telling. On the contrary, the author polishes the formulaic language, by means of rhythm and rhyme. On occasions, he reconfigures the expressive potential of the final formula, by adding a humorous twist to it, as one can see at the end of the tale of Harap-Alb[47]: "Şi a ţinut veselia ani întregi, şi acum mai ţine încă; *cine se duce acolo bè şi mănâncă*. Iar pe la noi, *cine are bani bea şi mănâncă, iară cine nu, se uită şi rabdă*" (Creangă 1970/I: 128).

The largest number of proverbs infuses the dialogues. This compositional peculiarity is consistent with the finding that, apart from their ideational and textual functions, proverbs serve an interpersonal function as well. In Creangă's tales, they are mainly aimed at "characterizing, ascertaining, explaining, concluding, arguing, justifying, warning together with consolation, threatening, specifying, comforting", and a few others (Negreanu 1989: 541). Interestingly, some characters speak sapiently, like the great old kings and prophets of the Bible. One such character is the Holy Sunday from the tale of Harap-Alb. In the narrative economy of the story she is the episodic character who foretells that the hero will become emperor and helps him in three of his quests. Holy Sunday blends witchcraft and fortune-telling with the teachings of Christ. The proverbial tone of the pulpit rhetoric is obvious in one of her longest replies[48]:

[44] "Then the she-goat went out and set off on her business, while the kids closed the door behind her and bolted it. *But there is an old saying: walls have ears, and windows eyes*. A fiendish wolf – and who do you think he was? – the kids' own godfather who had long waited to crunch up the kids bones, was eavesdropping behind the back wall, while the she-goat was talking to her children" (Creangă 1978: 162).

[45] "The little one crept up the chimney and propping his legs against the mantle-shelf, his nose buried in soot, he lay as quiet as a mouse and shook with fear like an aspen leaf. *Yet fear is the mother of wisdom*. And so the second brother quickly clashed under a tub; he squatted there as well as he could, silent as the grave, his flesh a-tremble with fear. *Running away may be cowardly, but it's most wholesome!*" (Creangă 1978: 163).

[46] The wolf "carefully lifted the tub, seized the kid by the ears, then pulled him and tore him to pieces! *As you might say: every bird is lured to death by its own call*" (Creangă 1978: 164).

[47] "And they made merry for years and are still merry-making. *Whoever goes thither may eat and drink his fill*. Whereas with us, *those who've got the money do the eating and drinking, while those who haven't, just look on and lump it*" (Creangă 1978: 296).

[48] "Say what you will, if trouble is in store for you, you'll go out to meet it if it lies ahead, or wait for it, if it's behind. To put it bluntly, such is the way of the world and whatever you do, it'll stay as it is; you cannot put your shoulder to it and turn it backwards, not for anything. As the saying goes: It's the way of the world and there's an end to it. Now let's leave all aside and for the time being let's see what's to be done about the stag, for Smooth-Face will be waiting impatiently for you. And after

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> "Zică cine-a zice şi cum a vrè să zică, dar când este să dai peste păcat, dacă-i înainte te sileşti să-l ajungi, iar dacă-i în urmă, stai şi-l aştepți. Mă rog, ce mai la deal la vale? Aşa e lumea asta, şi de-ai face, ce-ai face, rămâne cum este ea, nu poți s-o întorci, măcar să te pui în ruptul capului. Vorba ceea: zi-i lume şi te mântuie. Dar ia să lăsăm toate la o parte, şi până la una la alta, hai să vedem ce-i de făcut cu cerbul, că spânul te-a fi aşteptând cu nerăbdare. Şi dă! Stăpân nu-i? trebuie să-l asculți. Vorba ceea: leagă calul unde zice stăpânul" (Creangă 1970/I: 99).

In essence, the worldview expressed in this reply is fatalistic. Man cannot do anything to change his destiny or the ways of the world. That is why it is better to embrace resignation and obedience. This lecture on the ways of life is meant to prepare the hero for the time when he is to be crowned the ruler of the realm. A true king should be wise, righteous, valiant and good-hearted, for he understands the ways of the world and the minds of common people. This is moral philosophy in the flesh of idioms, sayings and proverbs.

3.3. Negative communication

A closer look at the functions of paremias advanced by Permyakov (1979: 141–142) indicates that proverbs perform several important roles in Creangă's tales. They obviously carry out a *modeling* function, by acting as frames for certain scenes, episodes and dialogues. In *Dănilă Prepeleac*, for instance, the main character speaks in proverbs whenever he gets into trouble. After trading a pair of oxen for an unmanned cart, the cart for a goat, the goat for a gander, and the gander for a bag, he resumes some of his unusual trades with proverbs and sayings about misfortune and loss, as if the goal of such a peddling were none other than to illustrate the truth of proverbs[49]: "– Na! c-am scăpat de dracul, şi-am dat peste tată-său"; "Na-ți-o frântă, că ți-am dres-o!"; "m-am pornit cu graba şi m-am întâlnit cu zăbava" (Creangă 1970/I: 30–31).

The *instructive* function is also at work, as we could see, in the teachings of such characters as the Holy Sunday from the tale of Harap-Alb. Proverbs are also used to *entertain* the readers. The tale of Danilă Prepeleac includes humorous proverbs, sayings and idioms about the devil, as the main character manages to fool and scare the devils away: *Tot mănăstiri să croieşti dacă vrei să te bage dracii în seamă* (Creangă 1970/I: 33), *a râde şi de dracul* (Creangă 1970/I: 34), *Dracul când n-are ce face îşi cântăreşte coada*[50] (Creangă 1970/I: 35). The *ornamental* function

all, he's the master, isn't he? You've got to do his bidding. As who should say: tether the horse where the master bids you" (Creangă 1978: 261).

[49] "– There! Rid of the devil and landed with his sire"; "– Now you've made a hash of it!"; "I left in a hurry and left to dawdle" (Creangă 1978: 181–182).

[50] "It's cloisters you've got to build, if you want the devils to take notice of you" (Creangă 1978: 185); to laugh at the devil (Creangă 1978: 186); "The devil you know well what he does when he has nothing better to do! In he walked, and started brushing the old man's nose with that curly tail of his" (Creangă 1978: 187).

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of proverbs mirrors Creangă's bold artistic endeavour to elevate the simple, low, rustic style of folk story-telling to the rhetorical standards of the original and richly-ornated style of the authored literature of the time.

In Permyakov's view, proverbs as well as other types of clichés can fulfill a *negative communication* function. The essence of this function is "to say something without telling anything" (Permyakov 1979: 141). In other words, proverbs are used to "avoid giving a direct reply" (Permyakov 1979: 145). It is possible to speak in proverbs, just for the sake of proverbs, for the pleasure of uttering them, without the intention of using them to mean something specific. The phenomenon is not out of the ordinary. Searle (1969: 24), for instance, notes that "one can utter words without saying anything". By that, he means that utterance acts, which "consist simply in uttering strings of words" (idem) should not be confused with illocutionary and propositional acts.

Typical instantiations of negative communication can be found in the tale of Harap-Alb. For example, when the youngest prince asks his father to provide him with the horse, the weapons and the clothes which the king owned in his youth, the answer to the request is reluctant, elusive and discouraging[51]: "– *Hei, hei, dragul tatei, cu vorba aceasta mi-ai adus aminte de cântecul acela:* Voinic tânăr, cal bătrân,/ Greu se-ngăduie la drum! *D-apoi calului meu de pe atunci cine mai ştie unde i-or fi putrezind ciolanele! Că doar nu era să trăiască un veac de om! Cine ți-a vârât în cap şi una ca aceasta, acela încă-i unul…* Ori vorba ceea: Pesemne umbli după cai morți să le iei potcoavele" (Creangă 1970/I: 83).

The only point of this reply is negative communication. The king does not give his son a straight answer and resorts to the folkloric mockery of songs and paremias to avoid telling the truth. As noted by the narrator, the king's mimicry and gestures are more than eloquent in this respect. When asked about the horse, the weapons and the clothes, the king looks "none too pleasant" (Creangă 1978: 243) and knits his brows. After the young prince discovers the wonder horse, the king inquires about the stallion "rather under his breath" (Creangă 1978: 245).

On another occasion, when the hero complains about the heavy task he is about to undertake, his father's noble steed adopts the king's verbal strategy of negative communication and starts rhyming about the unpredictability of future. Due to this strategy, the unknown is expressed in an equally indeterminate formulaic language[52]:

[51] "Oho, my dear son, these words remind me of the old song: A young night and an old mare/ Hardly make a valiant pair! As for my horse of long ago, how should I know where his bones are rotting away, for it's certain be wasn't destined to live as long as man. It was a queer sort of person who puts this into your head, or, maybe, you're after dead horses to get their shoes" (Creangă 1978: 243).

[52] "Don't be so impatient! How do you know that things won't turn out well for you? It is man's lot to fight a hard fight against the ups and downs of life, for there is a saying: things happen in an hour, that will not happen in a year. When time and luck are on your side, through fire and water you may ride, and come out unscathed. As the saying goes: If born upon a lucky day,/ No peril e'er can bar your way" (Creangă 1978: 268).

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"*Nu fi aşa de nerăbdător! De unde ştii că nu s-or schimba lucrurile în bine şi pentru dumneata? Omul e dator să lupte cât a putè cu valurile vieţii căci ştii că* este o vorbă: nu aduce anul, ce aduce ceasul. Când sunt zile cu noroc, treci prin apă şi prin foc*, şi din toate scapi nevătămat.* Vorba cântecului: Fă-mă, mamă, cu noroc,/ Şi macar m-aruncă-n foc" (Creangă 1970/I: 105).

Moreover, in a narrative digression, the story-teller pretends to have no knowledge on that will happen in the story and adopts negative communication to let the reader know of this. Rhythm and rhyme, the saying and the song are called in to convince the reader that the fortune of the characters and the outcome of the tale are indiscernible mysteries[53]:

"*Dar iar mă întorc şi zic: mai ştii cum vine vremea?* Lumea asta e pe dos/ Toate merg cu capu-n jos;/ Puţini suie, mulţi coboară,/ Unul macină la moară. Ş-apoi acel unul are atunci în mână şi pânea, şi cuţitul şi taie de unde vrè şi cât îi place, tu te uiţi şi n-ai ce-i face. Vorba ceea: „cine poate, oase roade; cine nu, nici carne moale". *Aşa şi Harap-Alb şi cu ai săi*; *poate-or izbuti să ieie fata împăratului Roş, poate nu; dar acum, deodată, ei se tot duc înainte şi, mai la urmă, cum le-a fi norocul. Ce-mi pasă mie? Eu sunt dator să spun povestea şi vă rog să ascultaţi*" (Creangă 1970/I: 112).

In the realm of literature, negative communication is, to a certain degree of relevance, a symptom of modernity, in the sense that the writer becomes aware that language is ultimately finite and rather unable to express the inexpressible. This awareness seems to indicate that a crisis of language is on verge of being produced. The literary critics and linguists alike noticed that Creangă overtly cultivates allusion and ambiguity (Tohăneanu 1969: 170) and these features could easily be interpreted as style markers of negative communication, for they promote indirectness as a style-defining strategy.

4. CONCLUDING REMARK

The study of the proverbs used in literary texts is an interesting and rewarding area of research that could greatly benefit from the recent advancements in text linguistics and cognitive poetics. To approach proverbs as discrete little texts is also a promising way of developing the field of diachronic stylistics, by

[53] "Yet I retract a little and say: who can reckon with time and tide? The world is topsy-turvy quite,/ All goes wrong and nought goes right,/ Few do well and more do ill,/ And only one grinds at the mill. And that one holds both loaf and knife, and cuts where he wants and as much as he wants, and you just look on and can do nothing about it; as the saying goes: He who can eat, eats meat and bone,/ And he who cannot, starves alone. So it was with Harap-Alb and his men. They might succeed in winning the Red Emperor's daughter and or they might not; yet at present they are just pressing on, and as for the outcome, it will be as luck will have it. It's all the same to me; I just have to tell the story and beg you to listen" (Creangă 1978: 276).

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tracing the versatile intertextuality of proverbs. In fact, beside the observance of "the customary functions of proverbs in literature", which are "to assure popular appeal and to enhance the impact of the message" (Woods 1969: 52), the stylistic study of literary texts reveals that proverbs are artistic miniatures with a very old and complex cultural and social history. Therefore, the analysis of their functional potential in the works of such 19th century Romanian writers as Ion Creangă, Iordache Golescu, Costache Negruzzi, Anton Pann and others will reconstitute the forgotten gallery of gnomic erudites for which the proverb was a precious piece of literary jewelry.

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