

## ROMANIAN PROVERBS

The interview with Maria Mona Vâlceanu was conducted by Elena Armenescu



Maria Mona Vâlceanu is a Romanian language teacher and a writer.

**In your career, you have also taught lessons about folk literature, including anonymous poets and proverbs - considered a treasure of wisdom. How can we motivate this beautiful definition "treasure of wisdom"?**

Folk literature itself is a treasure trove of cult literature. As for the proverbs, let us think of Anton Pan, the clever one as a proverb and the eternal story of speech, who perceived this very treasure of wisdom and gathered it into a collection that faces the times. The proverb has a moralizing purpose, to protect us from laziness, hatred, stupidity, greed, we can say that it is a true code of ethics that has been passed down from generation to generation.

**One of the most important proverbs is this: "Whoever has a book has a part", close to "The book is the mother of teaching." What would be the explanation?**

Let's think about the symbol of the book first. The book means learning, enlightenment of the mind, for a nation busy throwing seeds in the furrow, raising their flocks and defending their ancestral estate is very interesting how this symbol of the book remained, enlightenment of the mind, high destiny in life. By learning from books and not only you will be able to achieve your goals, to succeed in everything you set out to do, and superficial learning can sometimes be detrimental. A book is like the torch of the world, and the teaching is the best fortune of each of us.

**Do you think that the ironic spirit of some proverbs, for example, "Like a fly to the plough", helps to understand the message, is it enough to say for the interlocutor to understand?**

The proverbs expressively reflect the nature of the Romanian, inclined towards beauty, love, justice, harmony. They represent, as I said, a code of ethics, satirize, sting the flaw to get rid of it, but also a collection of teachings that you must take into account in life. I don't know if the expression "like a fly to the plough" can still be understood by the younger generation, but the teachings of other proverbs can be easily accepted even today. The Romanian knows something about life and teaches his descendants precisely through these proverbs, as Ion Rotaru also beautifully aligned them: *The Romanian knows that if he wants to get far he has to get up in the morning, that only autumn counts the freshmen and that what is in his hand is not a lie and that is why it is not good to give the sparrow in the hand for the one on the fence, self-praise does not smell good, and the satiated never believes the hungry.*

**We are a country where archaic rituals are still practiced. How do you explain that these as well as folklore in general and proverbs have not disappeared?**

Yes, this question is well thought out, Mircea Eliade is the one who emphasizes this ancestral substratum, showing the importance of rituals and myths for the imposition and preservation of that primordial time, of the beginnings, so rich in sacredness. They could not disappear, they are part of the being of our nation, which has kept its language, its customs and its place on this earth, despite so many winds that have beaten it throughout history.

**Are they in danger of perishing in the face of the new wave of globalization?**

The problem is more complex, it takes time for us to notice it, but I believe that as long as folklore has passed into cult literature, it can no longer perish, it will always be known and valued. I noticed that the Romanians who now work in other countries take in their hearts as if on a shield or as a connection, the love for our folklore, as if they take part of our dowry with them. There is evidence that globalization makes folklore even more loved by the departed Romanians, for whom folklore means home among foreigners.