



The art of communication exists undoubtedly, and it displays an incredibly wide range of manifestations. One of the sweetest, the tale, has proven one of the most enduring too. Whether in oral or written literature, originating in reality or pure fiction, the tale seems to be welcomed with immense joy and passed on like a talisman. A tale is alive, and it always brings about a state of well-being, to young and old alike. But will tales still be necessary to oncoming generations? I dare say yes. I believe they are an essential ingredient of our spiritual survival.

Browsing the works of Romanian philosophers, playwrights, prose writers and poets, one discovers deep interest, often coupled with real vocation for this superb genre. Without claiming to be complete, this volume offers a carefully balanced selection of Romanian classics, naturally keeping the door open to further expansion. We have also put on record the beautiful thoughts of a few great authors and gifted intellectuals, all faithful tale lovers.

Do we really need tales? I believe we do; and I can only hope that the samples enclosed here are as convincing as they are challenging.

A.F.

As a student, sometimes I would amuse myself translating word for word Romanian expressions or proverbs into English – actually, into a non-existent language that resembled English. When I took to “real” translations, the fun melted away, as I found out that different systems of reference cannot always be brought together at gunpoint, as it were: one has to search for their rather erratic points of contact, i.e. being a good speaker of both (or many) languages is next to nothing in the absence of substantial education. Well, a smack of talent will do no harm either... But there is a tricky, or rather dark side to it. Ten translators will give ten different versions of a name such as Păcală, one of which perhaps will just keep the Romanian word and explain it in a footnote (see Petru Lisiévici, *The Mighty Last-Born Syndrome*); this is likely to happen to Rumpelstilzkins, Houyhnhnms, or Grimalkins. Likewise, you’ll find here different renditions of the traditional closing formula in most Romanian folktales – and a rhymed one at that (literally: ...and I mounted on a saddle/and so I told you the story.) Translation is always perfectible (make sure you set firm deadlines when you commission one!), which makes every issue of this collection less than perfect. Is this frustrating, or what?

We hope you will enjoy the good parts, and smile away the less deserving ones – or, much better said:

Ours be your patience then, and yours our parts;
Your gentle hands lend us, and take our hearts.

(Shakespeare, *All’s Well That Ends Well*, Epilogue)

A.S.