

fois, les mots ont été orientés vers des territoires artificiels. Par exemple, parmi les mots à étymologie inconnue, la linguiste (en roumain «casbec», «haladit», «cascarabeta» etc.).

Ainsi, on peut parler d'un terrain assez instable pour l'investigation linguistique dont la diversité linguistique et l'évolution interne de la langue peuvent être remarquées seulement par les spécialistes, par ceux qui sont familiers avec toutes les variantes stylistiques de la langue.

À la fin de cette brève présentation du livre de Rodica Zafiu qui permet une incursion claire sur le territoire linguistique sur lequel la créativité anonyme connaît un ample développement, on peut dire que, au-delà du caractère relativement clos et codé de l'argot, où on reconnaît différentes modalités de fronde, de provocation et de joie, l'argot reste quand même un important type de langage qui confèrent aux groupes sociaux une certaine solidarité et une certaine cohésion. Incontestablement, l'apparition de ce livre le prouve pleinement.

Rodica Zafiu, *101 Cuvinte argotice*,
Humanitas, Bucuresti, 2010



Fascinated by the world of words...

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Fascinated by the world of words, the preeminent Romanian language scholar Marius SALA (also Vice-president of the *Romanian Academy*) had the brilliant idea of launching a new collection entitled “Viata cuvintelor” [The Life of Words] in his generous attempt at taking both common readers and linguists on a fascinating linguistic adventure, exploring the Romanian language in all its complexity and ever-changing beauty. Sharing his immense knowledge of and equally immense delight in the Romanian language, as well as his outstanding expertise in Romance languages and their dialects, the author wrote an exceptionally lively and erudite 250-page volume on the origin and evolution of Romanian words.

Embarking on a voyage of lexical exploration and discovery, Marius Sala structures his book in two major parts.

The former part, entitled “Despre cuvinte, în general” [On Words], presents the criteria to be employed in establishing the correct etymology of words and ultimately constructs a biographical sketch dedicated to the Mighty Word. Thus, the discussion of *when* and *how* words are born (the subchapter “Certificatul de nastere al cuvintelor” [The Birth Certificate of Words] is followed by a consistent presentation and argumentation of *why* words come into being. Metaphorically regarding words as valuable goods in great demand on the *communicative* market (p. 35), the author identifies internal and external mechanisms of lexical enrichment and focuses on the presentation and illustration of borrowings or loan words. Animated by the conviction that words *cannot live by themselves* (p. 93), Marius Sala places the life of words under a generous magnifying glass and provides us with an interesting selection of word-stories from various lexical fields such as the human body, animals, colors, food and attire. The story of the Romanian word *ficat* [liver] is particularly appealing. Thus, the Latin word *ficatum* belongs to a group of five hundred Pan Romance words to be found in most Romance languages today. Borrowed from Greek, the word actually replaced the older Latin term *iecur*. The borrowing of the Greek word is obviously related to the well-known practice of goose fattening, when dried figs were fed on geese to enlarge their liver and the Greeks used the syntagm *hépar sykotón* to refer to this type of liver. Interestingly, the Romans turned the loanword into a fashionable culinary term by translating it as *iecur ficatum* [fig-stuffed liver]. The subchapter “Moartea cuvintelor” [The Death of Words] closes the circle opened by the first part of the book and projects the image of languages as living entities.

The latter part of the book is entitled “Despre cuvintele românești, în special” [On Our Romanian Words] and is dedicated to the portrayal of the Romanian language as an appealing and prominent Romance language. After discussing the Latin lexical inheritance and a number of significant borrowings, the author opens up a fresh 3D perspective the Romanian language capable of performing three complex roles: *importer*, *creator* and *exporter of words*.

This book will both satisfy and spark the curiosity of anyone who has ever been intrigued, befuddled, or awed by words.

Marius Sala, *101 cuvinte mostenite, împrumutate și create*
[101 Inherited, Borrowed and Created Words],
Humanitas, București, 2010, 250 pages