

**Ion Popescu-Sireteanu, *Cuvinte românești de bază*,
Iași, Editura Alfa, 2014, 484 p. (Radu Pașalega)**



The title of the present tome is a very technical one. Yet, this is the official denomination which does represent the continuation of a glorious tradition and, simultaneously, an intensely *subjective* attitude. Subjective but scientific: this is the distinctive and genuine feature of the present work which, in our opinion, is excellent news for the future evolution of Romanian linguistics. The tome is composed of little pieces having about equal dimensions, formerly presented through radio broadcasts or published in (not so strictly) specialized journals. (p. 5) Or, such spreading paths do suppose, simultaneously with the largest dissemination possible for a local level, strict technical constraints and an intended impact as powerful as possible. Through these circumstances,

Professor Sireteanu continues the tradition of *Junimea* with its public lectures (though in a rather laconic form). The author deliberately avoids the scientific jargon (p. 6) and mostly addresses young people, (p. 8) resembling in that to the enthusiastic *Junimists* of the 19th century. The author is courageous enough, in our days, to assume the Romanian *patriotical* perspective (p. 5-6) but his ultimate attitude is a *politically correct* one: “Direct loans, of which we are speaking, do in no way state for the superiority of a language in respect to another, but instead witness for the existence, throughout history, of some close relationships among the speakers”. (p. 7) He does as well choose to be a “rebel” in respect to the properly scientific jargon of linguistics, by making use of *narrative procedures* in his discourse (yet justified by his *Junimistically*-shaped intention). A brief *poem in prose* (p. 10-12) states the author’s *quasi-Darwinistic* vision of the common words, understood as *living creations*. It is a *romantic* perspective, but we estimate it as being judicious in the current context of ruthless globalization. Some well-known folklore expressions are *narrated*, in a style which deliberately situates itself halfway between a documentary and a fairy-tale. (p. 13-16) The author takes into consideration, for comparative purposes, the dialects of the Romanian language and makes use of *whatever literary (cultured) source* he might have found. His style may be narrative, but the discussed terms (organized as a repertoire) are elucidated almost exhaustively in what concerns their respective semantics; therefore, the possible (and expected) objection of “vulgarizing” in respect to the scientific jargon has no grounds to stand upon. The chosen strategy preserves the presented scientific data but it also maximizes their impact *through literary means*. This methodology is quasi-invisible yet highly effective. We do appreciate it as the most adequate in the current linguistic context of the Romanian language. Should we make use of an “indecent” word for this context, in order to defend and to carry on with the tradition wherefrom he has come himself, the author is “bidding” for the future through a massive effort of *captatio benevolentiae* focused towards young

people. The present tome is abundantly filled with both attractive and instructive linguistic details about *the most common among words*. Thereby, the author is “luring” towards linguistics a large part of the profane public. An abruptly elitist jargon-like treatise would have brought, let us not be hypocritical, *an opposite effect*, rebutting the average reader. The author’s chosen approach is double: simultaneously (and extensively) *synchronic* in what concerns the dialects of the Romanian language - we have to remark the fact that most of us do know under this denomination *its Daco-Romanian dialect only*, that is to say one among several! - but as well deeply *diachronic* when it comes to each of the studied words!... Thus the author does provide a rich amount of information in an accessible and catchy (but not at all ostentatious!) form. He advances *no hypotheses*: what he intends is a historical survey only. But the value of the present work lies (apart from the scientific side) in the diversity of means he does make use of in order to accomplish it and, above all, in the *maestria* he has proven in order to adjust these means in such a delicate equilibrium of proportions.