

**Iustina Burci, *Terminologie geografică populară. Dicționar de sinonime*,  
Craiova, Editura Universitaria, 2014, 295 p. (Radu Pașalega)**



The author is one among the preferred disciples of the late Professor Gh. Bolocan. He had built during a lifetime and, naturally, instituted, at the University of Craiova, a strong and rich tradition of scientific investigation which is now continued by the author. Since it is entitled “dictionary”, a less attentive eye might consider the present work as just another compilation. Yes, the author does make use of statistics as a powerful instrument, but... Since the Professor was a fully accomplished *homo encyclopaedicus*, his disciples are, at least morally, due to take the same path and, most of all, to embrace the same attitude towards science. In the *Preface*, the author states as her main source *Dictionarul entopic al limbii române* (Bolocan *et al.*, 2009 , 2010) and explains her determining choices in what concerns the present work. In the matter of statistics, she adopts the methodology illustrated by the above mentioned work. As for the present one, the object of its embodied study are *toponyms*. As the author states: “Their correct interpretation does, thus, require, among other things, good knowledge of the *vocabulary* of that language - in our case, of the geographical popular terminology, which is considered to be the ‘ground of toponymy’ for each people”. (p. 5) They also express a deep and strongly *sociological* dimension: “By making use of its own terms only (...), geography could not have been able to denominate all of the (positive or negative) fluctuations of the field, considered in the broader sense of the word; some of them might have even been meaningless in the officials' eyes (therefore not registered upon maps), yet very important for the inhabitants of the villages into or nearby which they are situated, due to the fact that they serve as well-known orientating items”. (p. 5) As she comes upon linguistic ground, the author plentifully illustrates the *encyclopaedical tradition* instituted by the great Professor but still being careful to approach it through logical grounds. She does that from the very first words of the *Preface*: “The appearance of whatever toponym supposes the existence of accumulated items: historical conditions, geographical environment, means of the language, human perception (often subjective) of the denominated object's peculiarities (especially when it comes to landscape)”. (p. 5) Strolling around and crossing between domains and disciplines become natural necessities, due to the complexity of the studied phenomena: “In what concerns the terminology of entopics, it includes, apart from the scientific ones (which are encountered as well in the literary Romanian language as in vernaculars), names which belong to some as diverse as possible lexical domains.” (p. 5) The author counts them, as specialized subspheres of the general vocabulary: + *human anatomy, psychology and behaviour*; + *fauna and flora*; + *natural phenomena*; + *colours*; + *food*; *clothing*; + *householding*; + *ecclesial*. (p. 5-6) These names own, in spite of their diversity, two common features: they are all “names with a local and vernacular circulation” (p. 6) and they are all “made use of, in the geographical space, with another sense than their basic one”. (p. 6) They all reflect:

“The linguistic and historical context of the concerned region or locality”. (p.27) A very interesting perspective is drawn by the author in the matter of *semantics*: she divides the concerned terms in two large categories, which she considers to be intrinsically different one from the other: “Should we refer to the richness of senses, to the spreading and the frequency of topic names, we would ascertain the fact that these are not equal”. (p. 8) As a statistically proven fact, the author also states that: “Following a strictly linguistic analysis, the popular geographical terms are, in their majority, monosemantic”. (p. 24) Furthermore, she quotes from the above mentioned *Dictionary* the exception able to confirm this statement: “The polysemantic feature of some among them is to be better explained through the existing relationships among terms pertaining to different vernacular systems rather through the different natures of the designated objects by themselves”. (p. 24 , footnote 10) Thus, the former category is the one where they: “accurately reflect the surrounding physical reality”. (p. 6) And the author continues: “They raise to a much lesser extent the people's imagination, thereby they do not carry too many senses. Yet, as a compensation, their number is much larger than the one of these which are endowed with a diverse semantic development”. (p. 27) However, there is a connection between the two categories (stated by Professors Bolocan and Silvestru) quoted by the author: “(...)insofar an entopic term should be more spread and known, its semantic features, namely its polysemantics, would grow as unclear”. (p. 23) For profanes, the fact may seem surprising that the genuine choice of popular denominations does not obey ...scientific criteria, but the author has the “courage” to admit it as a principle (“the arbitrary of the linguistic sign”): “(...) the choice of some names, the same or different ones, for geographical realities that are identical or diverse”. (p. 7) The latter category could, thereby, only be the one where literature comes explicitly into, and the author gladly admits that: “The existing relationships among the words from the literary language and the vernaculars, the entopic system and the one of the sites designators are, as for the rest, very tight”. (p. 27) Consequently: “Others, for a change, reflect the same reality, yet filtered through the prism of human imagination”. (p. 6) The same type of terms: “(...) are issued from metaphors, through the mental and verbal conceptualization of the geographical space elements”. (p. 7) A semantic antithesis is created between the two categories: “Unlike the former, should landscape be particularly referred to through a metaphor-shaped term, its semantic spectrum could be considerably dilated”. (p. 27) An important comment is also made: “The words used by the literary language with a highly general sense which are adapted by the speakers to various contexts do find themselves in the same situation”. (p. 27) For the author, all of the language sides are, therefore, “communicating vessels”... Each group of synonyms is described by the one and only synthesis phrase; it has to be, simultaneously, objectively descriptive and highly suggestive. To adequately translate these synonyms would mean Hercules' works... but they are, yet, rigorously and alphabetically disposed within an *Index of geographical folklore terms* which concludes the present tome. As for the catching phrases, we also have to remark the quasi-literary criterion of alphabetically ranging them too: the initial letter in Romanian of each of them. Considered as such, the corpus of these explanatory phrases is able, in our opinion, to also fulfill three other purposes: a great reading book for the native Romanian little ones; an excellent material to be considered by the foreign students studying the Romanian language; a very attractive advertising “leaflet” for the wishful tourists. This is how the author, as a disciple, does fulfill and carry on the great tradition instituted by the regretted Master.