BOOKS

Elena Platon (ed.), *Enciclopedia imaginariilor din România II.*
Patrimoniu și imaginar lingvistic. **General editor: Corin Braga.**
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Comprised of twenty studies and spanning over almost 500 pages, the second volume of the *Encyclopedia of Romanian Imaginaries* ("Enciclopedia imaginariilor din România") brings forward the idea of imaginative universes born through the usage of language, and proposes to offer readers a comprehensive depiction of the Romanian linguistic imaginary. Along with the other four volumes in the series, which examine the literary, artistic, religious and historical dimensions of the imaginary, this volume focuses on the forms of the written and spoken word, complementing and completing the others with the analysis of the imagery and symbolism generated by speech and discourse.

Elena Platon commences the foreword to the volume by addressing the seemingly conflicted relationship between the concepts of *linguistic heritage* and *linguistic imaginary*. If the former is a generally acknowledged term to describe the social and cultural byproduct of both the spoken and written act of communication, shaped by centuries of language usage, the latter poses the issue of being inaccurately regarded as a "chaotic space, meant for the offspring of human fantasy, which lack both consistency and coherence" (p. 11). Yet, as Platon claims, the tension between the stability of the heritage and the dynamism of the imaginary is easily explainable, if one were to look at the very nature of language, which is ambivalent in itself and is thus able to link such contrasting notions.

Availing itself of terms such as *image of the linguistic imaginary*, *profiling*, and *linguistic pools* to describe its analytical processes, the linguistic imaginary goes beyond the borders of mere imagination, fantasy or creativity, although it relies, to some extent, on the functionality of such language capacities. Rather, it is an expression of how

the employment of language shapes reality, as well as the users' perception of reality - specifically, "a mirrored description/descriptive mirroring, as well as an interpretation of the world through language, in a certain community" (p. 22). According to Platon, there are three approaches that the study of the linguistic imaginary must take into account: *the metalinguistic perspective* – the speaker's understanding of their own language, *the ethnolinguistic perspective* – the general representations of the world, as seen in the speakers' communal culture, and *the cognitive perspective* – the imaginative templates on the basis of which new concepts and metaphors are created (p. 24).

As far as the research methodology is concerned, Platon draws attention to the fact that the emphasis of the analyses is predominantly put on lexical and phraseological units, since these elements contain "an inventory of concepts and of essential values for the existential, social and cultural layers of a linguistic community", at the same time capturing the uniqueness that makes them difficult to be translated into other languages (p. 26).

Although the studies are not explicitly split into sections, distinct research directions can be identified according to the linguistic *micropools* tackled in each of them. To begin with, the first group of studies deals with the *micropools* that have had an impact on the emergence of the Romanian language, both synchronically and diachronically; the authors (A. Chircu, G. Chivu, C. Silaghi, B. Harhătă) examine elements of linguistic substratum and superstratum, focusing on Slavic, Latin, Romance, Hungarian or German influences. The next group of studies (authored by A. Puşcaş, M. Ştefănescu, D. Roman, A. Arieşan, C. Berindei, E.

Platon, A. Ursa) links the concept of linguistic imaginative universes to that of identity (for example, national or religious), showcasing the analyses of various spaces or communities: in the Moldavian Republic, in the new Romanian diaspora, in the dimension of folklore, as well as in that of memory and remembrance. Three more studies (M. Balaban, L. Vasiu, I. Sonea) research the linguistic imaginary created by the usage of expressions of alterity and foreignness (such as that posed by the Jewish or the Romani minorities), or by the discourse and ideology of Romanian political regimes (with a view to the Legionnaire Movement). Five other studies (D. Vîlcu, D. C. Vîlcu, A. Radu, M. Mincă, C. Bocoş) investigate the realm of trends, be they linguistic, social or cultural, as well as their impact on the shaping of the imaginary: the usage of anglicisms, the language of civilian protests, the linguistic mechanisms used in Romanian advertisements, the utilization of slang expressions, as well as that of cyberlanguage. Last but not least, one other study (S. Misirianţu) delves into the territory of literary translation, observing how the linguistic imaginary has been altered by the translation process.

Any reader of the volume might come across challenging ideas and engaging analyses that include both linguistic data, in concise and clear language, as well as interpretations of their occurrences in communication. For example, C. Bocoş's study of anglicisms notes that the usage of English borrowings in contexts where it would be semantically and lexically possible to use their Romanian counterparts does not stem from "linguistic snobbery", but rather from one's "individual active bilingualism", namely the expression of "the competition between

the two languages used simultaneously" (p. 139). Oftentimes, the studies in the volume focus on the idea that the emergence of a social group may have its roots in the communal use of a certain linguistic *micropool*, such as that of civilian protesting. D. Vîlcu claims that "the social imaginary of the Romanian people is reflected through the linguistic phenomena manifested in protesting" (p. 369); for instance, one may notice the "heterogenous structure of the participants", united by a single purpose, but very different in their social backgrounds, or the occurrence of "defining elements for the conscience of the Romanian people", such as the continuous references to historical images (that of Vlad Țepes, of the 1989 Revolution, etc.). A similar idea regarding the link between the social dimension and the linguistic imaginary is made by M. Balaban, whose study on alterity argues that "discovering the other implies becoming aware of one's own qualities and flaws", and that "the voices of alterity become intertwined, generating linguistic attitudes" (p. 277). Thus, "the relationship between alterity and linguistic imaginary has the principle of indeterminacy at its core" (p. 277): even through the mere act of direct observation can a subject modify the properties of the object.

As mentioned in the foreword, the publication of the volume has two underlying objectives: on the one hand, to make speakers of Romanian reflect more acutely on their own language by becoming aware of issues regarding their communal linguistic usage; on the other hand, to offer a thorough description of the imaginary created through the employment of language, as well as to prove that it can act as a "matrix" (p. 28) towards the understanding of cultural, historical and social phenomena. It is safe to claim that both aforementioned aims are fully achieved: the analysis of the linguistic aspects, trends and processes researched is carried out meticulously and in-depth, and the effects of language usage on the contouring of the linguistic imaginary are examined on multiple levels (lexical, semantic, semiotic, pragmatic, etc.). Beyond the technicalities and the register specific to academic discourse, the volume is within the reach of comprehension for any language enthusiasts, be they professional or not. Moreover, the collection of articles also caters for the needs and the intellectual inquiries of those interested in the study of the imaginary, providing them with the instruments necessary to ponder over the universe created through and by what might be regarded as a core element of any culture and civilization.

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