

## NOTES AND REVIEWS

**Mărioara Stanciu Sălăgean, *Niște amintiri de o viață...*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Bucharest, Semne Press, 2019, 576 p.**

“The memories represent possessions that we travel through life with” is the motto that describes this book best. Nonetheless, due to what they reveal to us, the memories can sometimes become the possessions of the others: we can learn from the experience of our fellows, or, when the people who decide to write their autobiographies intend to describe their birth place specificity too, regarded in all its aspects (people and places, language, customs etc.) – as in the case of our author: “my wish is to preserve the archaic language, write it down for some dear successors of mine” (p. 9) – the memories can become sources of information for cultural and scientific studies.

Mrs. Mărioara Stanciu Sălăgean<sup>1</sup> depicts (retelling us gracefully) her own childhood and youth within the community from the locality of Cigmău, Mureș River Valley, the county of Hunedoara. As a matter of fact, there are two books, organically merged into one: the author’s autobiography and the monograph of her birth place village. In front of our eyes, there are unfolded either insignificant or great events from her life, presented in the context of the countryside living: working in the fields, having the meals, types of foods, jobs of the people, descriptions of the traditional costume from the region during the holidays or the regular days of the week, customs related to the major events from people’s lives (birth, Christianisation, wedding, funeral), traditions from the holidays, religious rituals on Palm Sunday, Easter or Epiphany Days etc., the Sunday Service etc., *claca* – group working (an opportunity to describe the weaving loom), measuring units used in the area (*stânjen* – fathom, *ferdela* – 1/4 acre) etc. The author then talks about the respect for the village teacher and the priest in the time of her childhood, along with some merrier and down to earth things: “There were heard nasty cursing words coming from the men during the working, when they would verbalise their sorrow to either the animals or the inanimate surroundings, whenever something went wrong... Other swearing words were mentioning church-related objects, or biblical characters”. And, the author continues humorously: “The man, when in trouble, hopes for any kind of unusual help, which is of no use nevertheless” (p. 256). The dialogues between her own relatives and the villagers depict the dialect of the region accurately; these dialogues are extremely delightful, and also interesting for the eye of the dialectologist. A particularity of the language used by the dweller of Cigmău is, for example, the use of the final *u* – *onu firu de busuiocu* (with the correct form: “un fir de busuioc” – a stalk of basil) –, which has the role “of making the final consonant and the word sound softer and milder in pronunciation” (p. 21).

On addressing our field of interest, the author offers us a lot of examples of people names, catching the pattern of the popular denomination while creation. Thus, “uncle Todor was called «Todoru Săvetii li Ghiuca»” (p. 13). This formulation, in which it is evidenced the relation of filiation, used to be intensively used in the rural area, and it is still used

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nowadays, because people living in village know the nicknames better than the family names. Here are other examples: *Ion a li Ula*, *Laia li Nicodin* etc. “When it comes to me and my brother, people used to say: Gheorghiu and Mărioara li Laia Săvetii li Ghiuca” – an entire chain of generations. It ought to be noticed the use of the local form of the possessive: *a li*, instead of *a lu(i)* – son/daughter of.

We also find out about the perpetuation of certain names within some families; in the present case: *Maria* and *Ion*. Generally, the local inventory of the baptising names used to be: *Maria*, *Ana*, *Lina*, *Saveta*, *Fia*, *Fica*, *Aurelia*, *Ioana*, *Raveca* etc.; *Avram*, *Aron*, *Anton*, *Ion*, *Niculae*, *Gheorghe*, *Petru*, *Vasile* etc. The author also notices the fact that: “Nowadays, such names are not given to children anymore. I am sad to hear, in the village regions, names as: Robert, Carmen, Corina, Sorin, Ramona or, maybe, Afrodita, Medeea and Desdemona” (p. 16). Fortunately, the name *Maria* has revived lately.

The nicknames are met extremely often and “rule” in the village, because, as Mrs. Mărioara Stanciu Sălăgean accurately notices: “... the nicknames near the baptising names were identifying unmistakably the person in case. By using the surname, it would have been much more difficult, if not impossible, to identify somebody. The family names were scarce in such a small village” (p. 21): *Başca*, *Bogatu*, *Buha*, *Bănuţoaia* (marital nickname), *Ciuta*, *Găzdău*, *Gărjob* (the last two, family nicknames), *Grofu*, *Murgu*, *Neamţu*, *Pardon*, *Prădatu*, *Prune Albe*, *Pticuţ*, *Răguşitu*, *Tocana*, *Uşu*, *Verdele*, *Zupa* etc. In some few cases, we are also offered the origin: *Uliţoică* was somebody who would wander around, more on the lanes-uliţă(e) of the village (p. 257).

An anthroponomic particularity this time is the unarticulated usage of the baptising names, instead of the articulated ones. The question *What’s your name?* was answered: *Ană*, *Mărică*, *Lină*, *Savetă*; this form is explained by the author thorough the use of the Romanian vocative: *Ană*, *Lină*...*get into the house, it’s going to rain!* (p. 33)

The people are not the only ones present in the book, from the nominal point of view, but also the animals. Here are the names of the beasts from the household: “I am also going to tell you few names of oxen, the ones that I can remember. I know that, we used to have an ox called *Iambor* and one *Bodor*. Or one called *Mişca*. I think there was one called *Paicu* and maybe one called *Sâmboan*, and I can’t recollect others... For the cows, there were: *Lunaia*, *Mândraia*, *Joiana*, *Dumana*, *Rujana*, *Florica*” (p. 227).

The observations on this book are going to be stopped here, the people interested in it need to discover its charm while reading it personally. Moreover, the author makes the experience even more pleasant and easier, by creating a Cigmău language – Romanian language dictionary (pp. 490–545), and a list of village sons and daughters (pp. 547–570).

There can be remarked the fact that, through this work, “filled with wise sincerity, biographic events and interesting monograph details (Sorin Preda, p. 5)”, Mrs. Mărioara Stanciu Sălăgean fulfilled her duty to give something, from her own transformed-self, back to the ones that formed her: the family and the birth village.

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