

NOTES AND REVIEWS

George Steiner, *The grammars of creation*, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 2015, 375 p.

Concrete result of research grant awarded by one of the most prestigious European institutions in 2011, *The grammars of creation* can be a starting point for the intricate relationship which the humanities can have with various institutions and sponsors as regards supporting and promoting that research which is not strictly scientific and technological: *what does scientific research in humanities mean and how can it be distinguished and separated from the technical or technological one?*

A late work, in which creation is followed and pursued in its separate or mixed evolution forms, from *Creation as Genesis* up to creation in the most mundane possible sense, *The grammars of creation* represents an inventory of its major significances in the manner they are described in the area of Western culture. Other areas of reference are refused: the Chinese, Hindu or Arabian cultures are only allusively taken into consideration. Everything is limited to the Western area and its offers. A few references to Hery Corbin and his brilliant studies devoted to Islam and Islamic philosophy, a little more mentioned and more substantial ones referring to Jewish culture and Jewishness, properly speaking-constitute all the excursion undertaken outside the assumed Western area.

The beginning – it could not have been otherwise! – belong to the sacred text strictly circumscribed to the chapter of *Genesis*. The correlations between the two cultures more closely engaged in its assuming and promoting, the Christian culture and the Jewish culture, amplify and enlarge the possibilities of understanding and interpreting. From this follows the immediate emergence of new meanings and contexts. First the Greek culture, from whose vast and difficult to cover thematic area there appears actual poetry and philosophy. Homer and Hesiod are consulted about creation, gods' intervention and inspiration. From here also comes the contribution brought by the intervention of transcendence and merit.

O, Goddess, sing the wrath – the absolute beginning of culture in its Western version – as illustrated by Hemer's Iliad, is the subordination of human creation to the goddess, to her benevolence and gifts. In such a faith in which that what is going to be: the epopeic song-moves away or, anyway, maintains the distance. How much of the creation can be subjectively ascribed to the aed, to the poet or to their human instance and how much belongs to the divine or the transcendence? The verses do not count on such an answer and do not mean to, but anyway, the problem exists and the similarity of *creation* in the sense of biblical genesis is obvious.

So the significances become similar or dissimilar but are also extracted, or derived and create a common context which is not important.

From here, with Homer and Hesiod on top of the list, poetry makes the transition. Further, Steiner closely pursues what seems to him to be the most relevant myth, in a manner, to tell the truth, that is subjective and personal but not irrelevant: the myth of the *Demiurge* as he constructs by a logic easily recognizable and identifiable with Platon. The latter's dialogue *Timaios*, responsible for a good and long tradition of the Western culture from antiquity until the dawn of modern age (and with echoes further, even if they are fragmented, diluted and transfigured).

The bases for discussion being laid down, the subject follows his own logic, easy to locate in all the cultural areas, no matter if it is about music, architecture, poetry and novel. The creative spirits are consulted and summoned on the theme: the actual creation. The way they look at it, the way they bear with it and especially the way they practise it. But it is not an inventory resembling statistics or a dictionary in which they are to be found in alphabetical order, the way a late caricature character was trying to build his cultural background (Jean Paul Sartre, *La Nausée*).

The writer easily passes from one author to another, who are allotted restricted or extensive space. Thus, a special place and proper space is granted – it could not have been otherwise! – to Dante and *La divina commedia*. The apparent meanders of the creative process are ordered and disciplined, in accordance with his explicit or implicit consciousness.

A long experience concerning philology, interpretation and analysis, commentary and applied thinking provides an efficient methodological strategy, especially where Steiner does not benefit from clear expositions about the way creation evolves. Steiner's methodology is functional especially in what is implicit.

Not less important, philosophy is present. Steiner's old pieces of writing especially devoted to the theory of culture (*Bluebeard's castle*), to philosophy (*Heidegger, masters and disciples*, and so on). So, philosophy is present in this approach in the same measure as literary theory and criticism.

On the whole, *The grammars of creation* is a baroque, mixed piece of writing, in which genres interfere, epochs communicate and methods interfere with each other. Without being an original work, not even a work of reference, *The grammars of creation* has the merit of having pursued one of the most subtle and difficult themes of culture in its whole complexity.

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Adelina Emilia Mihali, *Toponymy from Maramureș region. Vișeu upper valley, Cluj-Napoca, Mega Publishing House, 2015, 256 p.*

The paper submitted by Mrs. Adelina Emilia Mihali is part of a series that provides a contribution to knowing and preserving our toponymical inventory unaltered, by presenting a monograph of the names of places recorded in the settlements Borșa, Moisei and Vișeu de Sus, “an area less examined” (p. 18) in this respect, but whose importance is related to the historical moments in this region's past and to its linguistic, ethnic, and socio-economic characteristic features.

About the objective that generated the book (initially a PhD thesis) – “the wish to complete the studies of Maramureș toponymy” (p. 17) in the context of an increasing interest in this type of researching and of highlighting the region's language and history – as well as about the stages of carrying it out, the lady author succinctly speaks in the *Introduction* (pp. 17-20). Then, in *Brief outline of toponymy researches* (pp. 21-30) she goes on to introduce us in the topics of the approached subject; she starts from a few theoretical aspects (the defining of the concepts used in the domain) and then continues by reviewing Romanian research on place names from the beginnings up to the present. From this survey one can notice the gradually growing interest in toponymy, a wide range of historians and geographers being involved in this activity. But the prominent part in interpreting the facts is played by the linguists, the names of places being firstly elements of vocabulary.

The Research methodology (pp. 31-33) represents the second chapter of the paper. A most detailed analysis of a region's toponymy requires both interdisciplinary knowledge (of geography, history, ethnography, dialectology, semantics, etc.) which the lady author proves to fully master and also the usage of several methods of research. The methods used by Mrs. Adelina Emilia Mihali in order to gather and process the local material were of the following types: linguistic, geographical, comparative-historical and cartographic; she made investigations on the ground, using as sources of information persons selected on pre-established criteria and also appealed for the data provided by the maps of Borșa forest administrative zone, the tourist maps, the classified list and plan of the streets as well as the farming registers of the settlements included in the research.

The IIIrd chapter – *Geographical and historical considerations* (pp. 43-54) – has been, in fact, subdivided into the following: 1. Geographical aspects (location, neighbourhood, approaches,

characteristics features of the land forms, climate, vegetation, places of interest, economic evolution, occupations, etc.), 2. Historical considerations (the official documentary testimonial of the settlement, owners, remarkable moments in its history), 3. The origin of the oiconims (the forms in which they were attested in various documents throughout the centuries, theories about names etymology). The three settlements are minutely described with regard to all the stated aspects.

Glossary of the place name (pp. 55-175) is the most substantial chapter of the book. Each toponym constitutes a separate article, in the following set-up: the type of the named object, location, etymology. The phonetic transcription, for which the author opted in order “to capture the exact pronunciation of the toponyms” (p. 19), enables the comparison between the dialectal form and the official one, remarkably catching the local specific character.

The analysis of the information recorded in the *Glossary* is carried out in the next section: *Classification of toponyms* (pp. 176-221). The lady author takes into consideration the three aspects: semantics, typology and etymology.

The semantic criterion determined the division of the material into two subdivisions: a) place names derived from appellatives (the most part of the indigenous terms refer to land forms, hydrography and vegetation, taking into account the mostly mountainous zone in which the three settlements are situated), b) place names derived from proper nouns – Christian names (through function change, transformations or associations) and toponyms (the transfer of name from a geographical entity to another situated nearby). Regarding typology, the presented place names fit into two patterns: simple and compound. Their detailed analysis sets forth the interrelationship of the three compartments of language: lexic, anthroponomy and toponymy. The toponymical layers – Romanian, Old Slavic, Magyar, Ukrainian and German – found in Borșa, Moisei and Vișeu de Sus represent the object of the last criterion of analysis, the etymological one.

The work ends with *Language characteristic features* (pp. 222-227), a short chapter which presents the phonetic, morfo-syntactic and lexical characteristic features of Maramureș dialect and the way in which these are present in the local toponymy, followed by *Conclusions* (pp. 228-230) and *Bibliography* (pp. 231-245).

Through the analysed material and the etymological solutions proposed, Mrs. Adelina Emilia Mihali's book easily finds a place among the significant works on toponymy, contributing to the turning to good account of the plentiful and various information, which often risks being lost, due to the modification of the area's geomorphological aspect.

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Georgeta Ghionea, *The history of the urban banks in Oltenia in statistical data and correspondence (1880-1948)*, Târgoviște, Cetatea de Scaun Publishing House, 2015, 451 p.

A paper dedicated to the history of the urban banks in Oltenia during the period of the years 1880-1948, – from the founding of the National Banks of Romania and until the setting up of the totalitarian socialism – is welcome. It comes to enrich the fact of getting familiar with the banking system and the ways through which the financial institutions, either branches of the National Bank or of other central banks, either bigger local banks or smaller ones had supported, through their very mission, the effort of modernizing the economic life in this part of the country.

The paper is judiciously structured in five chapters, to which the list of the documents and statistics, the introductory study and the bibliography are added. It not only has the task of completing the few historiographical information now available concerning the chosen subject, but also equally represents

a necessary and valuable contribution to knowing and thoroughly studying an extremely interesting subject, closely related to the evolution of financial-banking system in Romania. The approach to such a complex field had required the undertaking of serious and indispensable investigations at the National Archives County Services of Dolj, Gorj, Vâlcea, Olt and Mehedinți, as well as the examining of some speciality papers, statutes, reports and periodicals which illustrate the various aspects concerning the banking and credit system in Oltenia. The paper comprises 108 documents and 5 statistics, all of them having a special importance both for the historians and for those preoccupied by the economic history. As regards the selection of the documents, the lady author remarks that only those documents were published which “were about the setting up, the evolution and the balance of certain banking societies, having an outstanding role in supporting the local economy, and not only”.

The confidential correspondence between D. I. Dimitriu and personalities of Romanian financial – banking life (I. G. Bibicescu, Anton Carp, Th. Ștefănescu, Eugeniu Carada), contracts of association, instructions of the economic and financial situation of Vâlcea county during the first decades of the XXth century, requests for merging, the establishing of the branches and special agencies of the NBR in Oltenia in the year 1948 are only a few of the subjects which the lady author approached in the first chapter of the paper entitled: *The NBR branch and agencies in Oltenia, between the instructions of the Central Administration and the engagement in supporting the economy.*

On the basis of the studied documents, in the second chapter with the title: *The banking movement in Oltenia (1880-1948). The urban commercial banks and the interaction with the economic environment*, the lady author took into consideration the organization and consolidation of the credit institutions in the researched region, within a national financial economic system. The evolution of the banking operations, the impact of the economic crisis, of the monetary reform of 1947, the nationalization of 1948 and its consequences for the Oltenian banking system are only some aspects which we find in the statistics and documents in this chapter.

The establishing of the Bank of Commerce in Craiova, in December 1897 was closely related to the economic and social function which this town had in the XIXth century. Its organization, role and evolution until 1948 was treated in the third chapter of the paper entitled: *The organization and functioning of the Bank of Commerce in Craiova (1897-1948)*. In a short time it had become, as the lady author remarked, the most important private bank in Oltenia, set up by means of Romanian capital and focussed on a wide range of financial operations, with favourable consequences for all the social categories.

The IVth chapter was devoted to co-operative system in urban Oltenia. In the two statistics dedicated to the co-operative societies for credit, but also to those for consumers, to the cooperatives for forestry, agriculture, supply and marketing, the lady author successively examined the stages of their setting up and activity ever since the end of the XIXth century. The statutes for functioning, the general statistical data, the exchange of letters with the National Institute of Cooperation, the reports after the inspection undertaken by cooperative institutions are subjects we find in the documents that complete this chapter of the book and offer us information about the role and place of the system of credit, of production and sale, within the larger system of cooperative movement in Oltenia.

In the last chapter of the book, the lady author carried out two statistics about the structure of the shareholders group and the office holders of the urban banking societies in Oltenia, starting from the idea that “the success and performance of some institutions or the failure of some of the largely depended on the quality of human resources”. The lady author took into consideration the possibility that the statistical the image of some local leaders, better known “for their engagement in the cultural or political life and less for their contribution to the development of the financial and banking system in Oltenia”.

Without insisting on other details, I consider that this paper has undoubtedly covered the subjects approached and that it asserts itself as a substantial piece of research, being ranked as a valuable contribution worth taking its proper place in the contemporary historiography, in the series of books and studies devoted to presenting the history of the national economy.

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Mihai Ghițulescu, *Reign and Government, Organisation and operation of the government institution in Romania (1866-1940)*, Craiova, Aius Publishing House, 2015, 236 p.

Mr. Mihai Ghițulescu propose to clarify in the paper named *Domnie și guvernare. Organizarea și funcționarea instituției guvernului în România (1866-1940)* [*Reign and Government, Organisation and operation of the government institution in Romania (1866-1940)*], an ambitious objective, complex and quite difficult to analyse, the author itself admitting from the beginning the fact that this analyse is not exhaustive, but more likely brings into attention “new ideas” about the problematic that the book is built around.

The objective of the paper, named in the *Introduction* by the author, is targeting “the correlation of the constitutional-legal norms with the practices and putting in context the Romanian norms and practices” (p. 5), using an o comparative analyses of Romanian democracy with western democratic regimes, and also with the east European ones, the end result being, in author’s opinion, “a roughly accurate image of Romanian democracy and its originality” (p. 6).

Considering the mentioned objective, the author is structuring his paper in six chapters, each having a variable numbers of sub-chapters, having titles more or less common for a classic scientific research paper: I. “How many and witch Powers”, II. “The Monarch – «the Pivot of Power »”, III. “The Council of Ministers or «Ministers Reunited in the Council»”, IV. “The Ministers. «The Wretched Refresh »”, V. “All the Government People... in the Territory” and VI. “Epilogue (1939-1940). «All the King’s Men»”.

Nevertheless, on a more careful lecture of the contain of the chapters can be seen that the titles are eloquent for the problems approached by the author that, under “unusual” titles retraces classic subjects giving them a note of particularity inculcated by the writing and analysing style of the author.

On the whole, the book of Mr. Mihai Ghițulescu proposes a “different kind” of lecture to the reader that highlights interesting ideas about the evolution of the government institution between the years 1866-1940, chronological limits identifiable with the Romanian constitutional monarchy system, keeping the proper rigours for the years 1938-1940.

A thoroughgoing study of the research started in this book (besides another objective announced by the author in the *Introduction* of the book) will be capable to provide, probably, a more detail image of the epoch, of the operation of the government institution during Romanian constitutional monarchy, period (1866-1938) considered by the specialists to be the epoch of Romanian traditional democracy, as well as for the period of the authority regime of King Carol II (1938-1940). At the same time, we consider that using and analyzing some primary, newer and richer documentary materials will provide the author new perspectives and interpretations regarding the problematic of the paper.

Thru the manner of approach used by the author to treat the subject, we can say that *Reign and Government, Organisation and operation of the government institution in Romania (1866-1940)* represents a synthesis paper that can be useful to students in History or Political Studies but also to specialists.

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Florin Nacu, *The fulfilment of the forty-eighters' revolutionary desiderate, during the ruling of Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Iași, "Tipo Moldova" Publishing House, 2015, 233 p.*

It has been repeatedly evoked the idea that there is an organic connection between the ideals of the revolution of 1848 and the age of the great reforms, which coincides with the ruling of Alexandru Ioan Cuza and continues until the gaining of the national independence.

Undoubtedly, this represented the reason for which Mr. Florin Nacu, PhD, researcher within "C.S. Nicolăescu-Ploșor" Social Humanistic Research Institute, decided to start this research. I acknowledge, in my experience so far, this has been the first time I have discovered the theme of the title being enounced in an independent study. Mister Florin Nacu started to show preoccupation for the question, conferring the appropriate attention in his doctoral thesis, deciding to treat it separately, on the first occasion. That came with the present paper, published under exceptional circumstances at «Tipo Moldova» Publishing House.

It is mandatory to notice the fact that the manager of the institution, Professor Cezar Avram, PhD, knew to accurately direct the creative energies of the collective of researchers that he coordinates, for such exquisite works, through form and content, to be able to emerge to light.

The work is based on two essential aspects, such is, firstly, the historiographical analysis concerning the evolution of the issue, the interpretation of the concepts and, secondly, a comprehensive set of annexes. Although there are opinions that say the annexes only make complete the space designated to a book, implying that there should be placed there only the new, the approach of PhD Florin Nacu deserves our entire consideration, due to the fact that, amongst the incredible amount of information, it is extremely difficult for an advised reader to go from one article to a volume of documents, or to consult dozens of electronic pages, without knowing if the found text is totally authentic. Mister Florin Nacu presents in the annexes the acknowledged texts, but the ones that illustrate the analysed issues, which confers an obvious advantage to this work. Basically, the analysis and the annexes create an inseparable complex.

Moreover, the work is unquestionably, a work instrument. It gives the readers a starting point. They know that somewhere, a young researcher had the idea to interpret data and to bring forward the text, on which was based the research.

The author underlines once more, with plenty arguments, the fact that the evolution of the modern Romanian society was impossible without the pleiad of forty-eighters, both politicians and men of culture as Vasile Alecsandri, Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Nicolae Bălcescu, Mihail Kogălniceanu, along with the men of action as Nicolae Pleșoianu, Christian Tell, Gheorghe Magheru, who knew how to create a political platform that, at the right moment, to materialise into veritable political institutional reforms that led, in almost 10 years, to the circumstances in which the modern Romania was able to retrieve some centuries of delay.

The period of the forty-eighters connected Romania to the trend of modernity, to the revolutionary conquests, but it was nevertheless able to impose, during the peace periods, the personalities of some men who managed to settle the things into a special and progressive manner.

In conclusion, the work of mister Florin Nacu, PhD, is a special accomplishment for himself, as a historian, but also for the remarkable collective in which he thrives.

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