

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.

Ion MILITARU

Romanian Academy

“C. S. Nicolăescu-Ploșor” Institute

for Research in Social Studies and Humanities Craiova

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,