

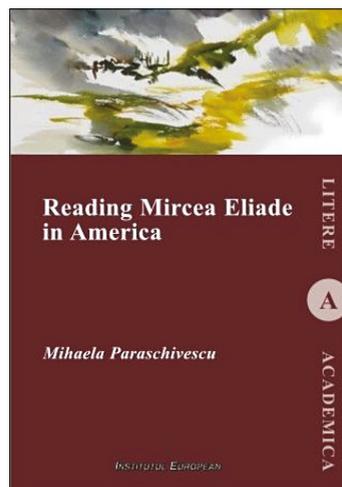
Book Reviews

Mihaela Paraschivescu
Reading Mircea Eliade in America
Institutul European, Iași 2015

The present volume represents a genuine contribution to the understanding of Mircea Eliade's complex legacy and especially the reception of his work in the USA. Based on her Ph.D. thesis, presented at the University of Bucharest in the context of the school of American studies, Mihaela Paraschivescu's work is relevant due to the small number of papers with respect to the issue of Eliade's reception abroad, in the USA and only few works regarding Eliade's reception in Romania.

Written from the perspective of cultural studies, *Reading Mircea Eliade in America* consists of three large parts. While the first part is dedicated to the life and work of Mircea Eliade, the second one presents aspects of the reception of Eliade's *oeuvre* in the USA and in Europe, especially after 1990. Finally, the volume focuses on Eliade's fiction and its reception abroad. In addition to the mentioned topics, the author deals also with Eliade's political journalism.

Mrs. Paraschivescu begins her analysis describing the relevant steps in the development of the intellectual personality of Mircea Eliade in the difficult time that marked the start of his academic career. Eliade was a productive fictional writer even before he went to university. He studied philosophy and as a Ph.D. student he spent three years in India, where he got inspired not only for his future research in the field of history of religions but also for his fictional work. The novel *Maitreiy* is based on his experiences in India. After his return to Romania, Eliade became the assistant of Nae Ionescu, one of the most important Romanian philosophers at the time. Involved in the Extreme Right Movement, Ionescu influenced also the



political views of the young scholar, which got even arrested because of this fact in the year 1938. After this episode, Eliade succeeds to obtain a job at the Romanian embassy in Portugal, where he spends several years during the Second World War. The writer's last visit to Romania in 1942 was marked by sadness because his natal country was involved in the war. In 1945 Eliade moved to Paris and in 1956 he settled in Chicago, where he became a professor for history of religions. In 1961 he founded the *International Journal of Comparative Religious Studies*, a journal destined to play an important role in the contemporary cultural life and to assist the cultural dialogue. Eliade passed away in 1986 and 900 persons attended his funeral, a considerable number that proved the fact that he was a highly respected personality.

One of the most important concepts imposed by Eliade in his work was the concept of *sacred*. This is why Mihaela Paraschivescu focuses on the critical approaches toward this concept in the USA. The authors mentioned in this part of research, such as Bryan Rennie, Ninian Smart, Russel McCutcheon, Robert Segal or even Carl Olson, were mostly criticizing Eliade's approaches, some of them referring even to the writer's nationalism and his connections to the Extreme Right Movement in the period between the two World Wars. Another relevant point of view in the interpretation of Eliade's work is Douglas Allen's phenomenological approach towards another important concept, *the myth* and also the Theory of Religion. An important aspect of Eliade's perception in the USA was his connection to C. G. Jung's theory. Concerning this issue scholars also have different opinions, some of them even considering Eliade a Post-Jungianist.

The forth chapter of Mihaela Paraschivescu's volume is analyzing the US response to Eliade's fiction, the translations of his opera but also how *Maitreyi* was interpreted in the 1990s from the perspective of the American Radical Multiculturalism. Francis Ford Coppola's approach toward the novel *Youth without Youth* is also mentioned.

The critical reception of Eliade's work in the USA is divided. This is one of the main conclusions of the book entitled *Reading Mircea Eliade in America*. His political views and political journalism are presented in a contextual manner by the author, as well as the scientifically context of impressing syntheses and sweeping generalities. Eliade's concept of *sacred* was criticized as being of highly subjective evaluation.

The importance of Mihaela Paraschivescu's present volume consists in the critical analysis of a relevant volume of literature. Notable is the effort of remaining objective between the Romanian interpreters of Eliade's work and the American ones.

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