# AN ANALYSIS OF SITUATIONAL VARIATIONS IN THE LITERARY REASONING OF CLEMENTINA MIHĂILESCU'S *NEW DIRECTIONS IN BRITISH AND AMERICAN STUDIES*

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*Abstract: The paper entitled "An Analysis of Situational Variations in the Literary Reasoning of Clementina Mihăilescu's New Directions in British and American Studies" expands upon an interesting case study of various theoretical interdisciplinary issues, starting from Kelly's theory of personality, Jung's psychological model based on the process of individuation, Lacan's three registers of human reality, White's narrative contemporary historical theory, Lakoff's psycho- cognitive approach to metaphor, metonymy and mental imagery, Ricardou's theory of metaphor, Proust's model, T. S Eliot's phono-prosodic model and Lupaşcu' s theory of the comprised third person, all meant to reveal the importance of the metaphor of vision which means to make the interpretor take account of facts that have been disregarded so far or to assign new moral and aesthetic values to those facts.*

*Keywords: Degrees of Awareness, Kelly, Jung, Lacan, White, Lakoff, Ricardou, Proust, T.S. Eliot, Lupaşcu*

Mihăilescu Clementina's contribution entitled New Directions in British and American Studies has been written with a view to solving the conflict between the classical and the interdisciplinary approaches to literature by offering a case study as regards various theoretical interdisciplinary issues and their application on literature. The author has started from the assumption that people might understand literary works more productively as researchers if they identified themselves with the operations of particular research methods. It has also been assumed that from among what we see as our available choices we would choose what choice we expect will improve our situation as literary researchers.

Thus, the author's first choice, as a methodological entry, has been George Kelly who has provided a theory of personality based on creative anticipation through the idea that man actively predicts his or her future course and acts in the light of that knowledge through constructs, defined as "transparent patterns or templates" human beings create and apply "to fit over the realities of which the world is composed", in Kelly's terminology.

Mihăilescu holds that most of the characters belonging to both British and American literature can be regarded as a unified self or ethos that results from the intersection of his emotional and logical constructs. Kelly's vectors of perception and action, through the constellations "anxiety/certainty", "threat/fear", "guilt/courage", on the one hand and through the constructs of "aggressiveness" and "hostility", on the other, together with his commonality and sociality corollaries, which imply that only through understanding people and through playing significant social roles we can establish meaningful relations, have extensively been applied in her analysis.

Jung's psychological model, more precisely his process of individuation "based on the integration of the conscious and unconscious sides of the characters' individuality through the assimilation of various archetypes", has also been employed.

Jung's process of individuation which resembles Murdoch's unselfing and Plato's theory through the Platonic ethical implication of knowledge as virtue has intensively been



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employed in her study. On the other hand, following Sartre's concept of the image and his claim that to perceive something or to make an image of something are both relationships between a real object and a consciousness, that objects as well as people escape control of consciousness which grants them the possibility to change and the freedom to act, have also been taken into consideration.

Lacan's distinction among the three registers of human reality: the imaginary, the symbolic and the real, where the symbolic is referred to in terms of the meaning attached to those things around us, while the real would represent what is logically excluded from our reality, has also been expanded upon.

White's narrative contemporary historical theory based on the distinction between chronicle and narrative, Ricoeur's three degrees of temporality and his new theory of postmodernism and White's considerations on literary discourse and historical narrative have been dealt with in relation to Swift's novel.

Lakoff's psycho-cognitive approach to metaphor, metonymy and mental imagery as being central to reason rather than an adjunct to the literal has been another direction of approaching modern American poetry, employed by Mihăilescu.

Ricardou's theory of metaphor, Proust's model, Jung's archetypal model and T. S. Eliot's phono-prosodic model have been those directions meant to initiate a trend in approaching literature from an interdisciplinary perspective. This interdisciplinary perspective has modified Mihăilescu's view on particular pieces of literature due to a new apprehension of knowledge which has proved profitable to her analyses of various novels from British and American literature.

Mihăilescu has closely analyzed Vianu's two major directions in literature, namely Stream of Consciousness and Post-Stream of Consciousness, also called Postmodernism, or Desperado Age (in Vianu's terminology). Firstly, the author of this study had identified essential postmodern features, approached in terms of categories, and then, she tried to differentiate her point of view from them, proposing various interdisciplinary choices of interpreting postmodern literary contributions.

It was a real challenge for Mihăilescu to observe the fact that the postmodern hero is depicted as unstable and unable to play any significant social role in relation to the category of time, which is introduced as present tense. However, real time, referred to as present tense, is not stable, constantly feeding on an imaginary time, whereas the future also undergoes a distressing shift, ending up in dystopia. The present is confused and the future is threatening, so, the postmodern hero keeps returning to his past experiences, without taking any concrete action. Fascinated by his past, he searches and discovers various tricks of the memory, that takes him either towards hazard and towards psycho-analysis.

Instead of siding with the categorial theories of personality, the basis of postmodern approaches to literature, Mihăilescu has closely considered Kelly's theory of personality, and Jung's psycho-analytical theory, the former through Kelly's symbolism of the box and his constructs about change and the latter, through the process of individuation (the surfacing of the dark contents of one's personality in order to keep them under control) and to accomplish the fulfillment of a complex personality. The author of this book has also turned to good account the classic Aristotelian constructs of Logos, Pathos and Ethos.

We, the literary reviewers of her book entitled New Directions in British and American Studies, consider that such an approach has granted novelty to Mihăilescu's research, as she has ventured on a journey to find out whether there is "a unity underneath what seems to be an ambiguity" in postmodern authorial ethos.

Mihăilescu has argued that Kelly's P.C.T. has successfully been applied to diverse fields such as education theory, environmental studies and aesthetic theories, but not on



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literature, so, she has decided to apply it on literature as well. We will focus on some of the contributions inserted in the book and identify the sources of the author's originality.

A remarkable postmodern author interdisciplinarily approached in Mihăilescu's book New Directions in British and American Studies is Angela Carterand her novel The Magic Toyshopgrounded on the novelist's "magic realism", asserts the author of this book. The interesting mixture of real and non real has been explained resorting to Bahtin's concern with popular culture and the carnival. For Carter's novel to reveal both its realistic and its half-magic half-dreadful psychological connotations, Kelly's theory of personal constructs has extensively been turned into account. The assumption that a person is some sort of scientist concerned with a personal inquiry into the sense of the self within the troublesome modern environment together with the expansion upon the concept of the self regarded by Kelly "as if" it were a "community of selves" has helped Mihăilescu to organize her methodological approach, offering interesting interpretative clues, through analyzing the two pairs of orphan triplets, each regarded as a "community of selves" that share in common Philip's house.

So that this unfamiliar tyrannical background deprived of any sign of affection could be properly depicted, Kelly's model based on the "tight box-like" symbol has closely been observed in her text analysis.

An original entry to this new and powerful psychological reality described in Carter's novel has emerged from Kelly's model, the box-like house of Philip. Regarded by Vianu not as a reality which is beyond reality, but as undesired type of life, Mihăilescu has related it to Kelly's basic assumption that "man is a form of motion", in Miller's terminoligy. The author of this contribution has suggested that this potential fluidity might be instrumental for regarding the orphans not only as being in the box (the magic toy-shop), but as being the box itself. Symbolically, they have physically and spiritually identified themselves with one another as victims of Philip, the mad puppeteer.

Mihăilescu has finally exploited another Kellian imaginative devices, assuming that the end of the novel, where the characters are somehow caught in the house on fire only to miraculously be rescued by one other, can be also interpreted via the "tight box-like" image. Since, according to Kelly, the box is no longer made of card boards, but of skin, and feels like a womb, fire and death have symbolically been interpreted as womb-like devices.

The ethical connotations of the novel were tackled in connection with the characters being regarded as being pushed back into their mother's womb, where they experienced a symbolic death, the death of their old, damaged, horrified, dark self and the subsequent recovery of their lost identity. We, the literary reviewers, side with Mihăilescu's conclusive statement that emphasizes the fact that this is the kind of transformation of awareness contemplated by Kelly and imaginatively applied in this original methodological approach to Carter's novel "The Magic Toy-shop".

The title of Angela Carter's novel Nights at the Circus, through the word "circus", has offered Mihăilescu, as an entry to this highly inspired literary production, Bahtin's considerations on carnival. „Since carnival is neither a pure theatrical form nor a definite form of art as it is located on the borderline between art and life, the actors and the spectators equally share the feast", claims the author. Without rules, actors, or spectators and lacking stage props, the carnival gives the impression that life itself is the real performance, in Bahtin's opinion.

Identifying the carnival under the modern form of the circus, it has been assumed by the author of this contribution that the difference between illusion and reality arises from the performance of the unusual feminine character Sophie Fevvers. The fantastic life story of the beautiful fair-haired winged trapez artist based on the assumption that she got born out of an egg is only questioned by the American newspaper-man, Jack, Mihăilescu points out. It is



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further assumed that the sequence of events associated with his becoming attracted and fascinated by Sophie to such an extent that he decides to join the circus as a clown to be close to her, their trip to Siberia marked by the explosion on their train, his loss of memory, and consequently his being turned into a real buffoon - creates a genuine but contradictory double world. Moreover, her assumption that Carter's exploitation of Jack's double self can offer a new reading of the novel as "the parody of the self", an idea inspired from Grigore and closely demonstrated with strong psychological arguments have convinced us, her literary reviewes, of her potential to understand and originally apply various theories while interpreting literature.

In order to get to what Jack's private self is feeling, for the sake of convenience, Mihăilescu has imaginatively approached the circus as a "tight box-like" place with Jack not only looking at it, but being in the box-like circus, as a circus clown. Considering Kelly's psychological perspective based on feeling and imagination, the author assumed that feeling implies "touching and being touched by experience", and she furhter debated upon this issue, following Miller's assumption that exploring "felt engagements" ultimately reveals significant changes in the characters' awareness.

Mihăilescu's research component derives its substance from Kelly's basic assumption that "man is a form of motion" and, as such, she has assumed that Jack's private self has imaginatively been perceived not only in the box, but as the box itself, having physically and spiritually identified with the victim of the explosion (the explosion is the source of Jack's psychologically charged journey).

Another imaginative move proposed by Kelly and fully exploited by the author of this contribution, which fits well Jack's case, is that the box is no longer made of card-boards, but of skin, and "feels like a womb". Here, the author seems to have noticed and applied Kelly's theory coupled with Jung's approach to death as if it were "a womb". Her genuine interpretative assumption imaginatively grounds on the fact that the character in there can see through the womb, to the outside world, a world based on new purified principles where Jack and Fevvers' love story can come true.

It is further assumed in the analysis undertaken by Mihăilescu that the explosion that generated Jack's improved and transformed state of consciousness revealed, through the employed interdisciplinary grid, the interplay between the Kellian "logical" and "affective" selves (Jack's logical self equates the one interested in the truth of Fevvers' life story, his "affective" self concerns his true attachment to the kingdom of love).

The originality of her approach mainly arises from having applied Kelly's Personal Construct Theory on Carter's novel in order to suggest multiple interpretative possibilities. Elevating the circus into an entirely different psychological world, the author has actually intended, in our opinion, to cognitively approach the novel as a debate on how the"logical" and "affective" selves can be bound into a creative whole.

Mihăilescu has enlargedthe interdisciplinary perspective of her research activity with the approach to John Fowles' The French Lieutenant Woman, highly regarded by the critics for its experimental devices and interpreted by her via Sartre's existentialism. Iris Murdoch, in her essay entitled "The Existentialist Hero", opines that Sartre's "La Nausee" is a good entry to understanding the modern literary background, because it does not reveal "the normal novelistic procedures". Murdoch claims that Sartre perceives "our beliefs, our world pictures of the world, our loves and hates as being discontinuous with the selves". Moreover, the author of the book has stood up with Sartre's aesthetic theory due to the fact that it is based on the idea of the image, as a "negative", that reveals something else that what exists. As concerns freedom, Sartre conceives it as "the annihilation of the given", adding that this involves the consciousness' separation and liberation from the past through action.



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Mihăilescu starts from the assumption that Fowles, often regarded as the XX$^{th}$ century existentialist author, turns to good account Sartre's concepts of image and freedom through employing "the mask", and argues that it resembles Sartre's image.

According to the author of this contribution, Fowles' genuine literary game is based on the dichotomy appearance-essence with the obvious intention to parody the Victorian age by reconstructing the British habits characteristic for the XIX$^{th}$ century, on increased employment of irony, on the two endings of the novel.

The novelty of her approach arises from having interpreted the novel through the looking-glass of Sartre's and Fowles' existentialism, grounded on the concept of freedom regarded by Grigore as a "metaphorical process" and on Foucault's theory on sexuality, power and knowledge. This approach has helped her acquire a cognitive understanding of postmodernism from the analysis of Fowles' novel in terms of social roles.

Mihăilescu's increased concern for postmodern authorshas led her to Doris Lessing's The Golden Notebookfocused on the relation that exists between fiction and life, literature and history, Stalinism, psychoanalysis, neurosis, modern world, women's emancipation, sexual experiences, the colonial system and racism.

In order to prove Lessing's capacity to move from intuitive perception to critical apprehension of the above-mentioned issues, the author of this book clearly makes her point as concerns her having taken into consideration Vargas' remark that the novel represents an analysis of politically and culturally alienated progressive European intellectuals. Equally relevant has been Varga's suggestion, quoted by the author, that Lessing's basic concern is "the failure of utopia". It is mentioned the fact that this failure has been experienced by Anna Wulf, the progressive woman intellectual of her novel "The Golden Notebook", who constantly tries to improve the world and herself.

The body of analysis consists of the very structure of the novel which has offered her the opportunity to analyze the five notebooks (the black, red, yellow, blue and golden) inserted within the five episodes and to draw the conclusion that in spite of various literary experiments (disconnected sequence of days, years, incidents, experiences, stream of consciousness, and the intermingling of the rational and the irrational under the form of Marxism or psycho-analysis) the novel is not an experimental one.

The themes of children-parents relationship and of historical narrative, where literature and history merge with each other in a genuine way, are revealed in Anna's diary, Lessing's own invention and literary convention.

The novel has been interdisciplinarily interpreted by Mihăilescu by turning to good account White's contemporary historical theory. The author of this book opines that similarly to the historical narrative where the story is an imitation of an event which happened in some region of historical reality, Anna's narrative covers her post war British experience.

The profound social, political and historical connotations of the historical events presented in Anna's narrative seem logical, because, according to White's theory, she has also provided an explanation to them (her own motivated dissatisfaction with socialism and communism).

Anna's reaction to the contradictory political and social reality, experienced both by her and most progressive intellectuals of that time has further been approached following the Aristotelian distinction between logos (the intellectual self) and ethos (the acting self). Mihăilescu, emotionally involved with Lessing's character, has depicted how the politically disappointed Anna becomes attached to British communitarian needs through teaching night classes to delinquent kids. The contribution's conclusive statement regarding such a choice has been interpreted as being revelatory for a transformed state of consciousness, in firm opposition with other interpretative attempts at tackling the novel's social discourse.



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Further drawing upon postmodernist deconstructivism, the author of the book has approached Aldous Huxley's Brave New Worldin terms of the idea that any type of totalitarian society is a failure because the intention of creating the perfect state, perfect life or perfect human being can never come true. Kelly's and Vianu's concern with understanding people, in the case of this novel-Huxley's characters, has imaginatively and psychologically been turned to good account while anlyzing the characters' human behavior, even if most of them are techno-made products of the XXV$^{th}$ century

Mihăilescu's approach has been concerned with taking a close look at the techno-made society in order to get a fuller sense of the variety of experiences, directions or deviations, existing in such a standardized environment. In order to approach the so-called "ideal" organization of that society characterized by addiction to the "transfiguring" drug "soma", immoral habits, predestination, sterility, ready-made sentences, she has resorted to Lacan's "Construction of Ego" that has provided specialized vocabulary and interpretative clues. Lacan's "three registers of human real: the imaginary (the spectacular), the symbolic (the meaningful) and the real (the meaningless) have closely been employed in relation to Huxley's characters.

The innovatory character of this interdisciplinary grid arises from focusing on Huxley's characters and from interpreting them as "falsifying egos" in "the mirror phase", in Lacan terminology. Moreover, we, the literary reviewers of her contribution, posit that Lacan's approach to doubling and the image has offered her an interesting reading of the two somehow different characters – Bernard and John. „John, regarded as Bernard's double, has managed to surpass the mechanical limitations and move from the imaginative (spectacular) register to the symbolic (meaningful one)".

Our conclusive statement to Mihăilescu's contribution is that she has emphatically underlined that the major source of irony in Huxley's novel is precisely human condition and what can become of it if we are deprived of ethical values, ordinary joys or feelings.

Postmodernist deconstructivism has been contemplated in relation to George Orwell's 1984grounded on the author's knowledge of the Soviet Union and communism in the countries where it took over and on his moral concern with revealing its consequences by imaginatively foreseeing its evolution in a future England, in the period of "Ingsoc" (English Socialism). For psychologically interpreting the socially and politically alienated individual who unconsciously experiences the diminishing of his defense mechanism against all types of psychological pressures, Lacan's psychological model has extensively been employed by her.

The innovatory interdisciplinary interpretative grid has been focused on Lacan's identification of the three registers of human reality: the imaginary (the spectacular), the symbolic (the meaningful) and the real (the meaningless) and on his clarification regarding the confusion between speech and language, analyzed and commented upon by using, besides the specialized terminology, a large pallette of insightful remarks meant to convince her readers that what has been described in there is true.

We, ourselves, the literary reviewers of her contribution, have been invited to respond to her genuine and courageous approach to Orwell's text with insights from our presonal readings and opinions on it. As such, we side with her assumption and sociological proof that the ethical dimension of Lacan's theory arises from the symbolic register identified in the novel under the form of various "symbolic structures" (the Communist Party, the Communist state, the "telescreen" and the "thought-crime").

Lacan's assumption that a "sympton" may be literally regarded as "a word trapped in the body" has been associated with the fact that all those "symbolic structures unconsciously generate fear and severe obedience". The symbolic representation of the charismatic but terrifying communist leader "Big Brother" has been approached via Lacan's concepts of "the



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ego in the mirror phase", a genuine opinion that should be continuously promoted by all those who are likely to read her book. Mention is to be made by us that the consequent assumption regarding the fact that all the citizens of Oceania can be regarded as "falsifying egos", because they go through the false experience of their apparent coherence, sounds equally convincing. „Alienation in the register of image intermingles with alienation experienced in the register of language through the abstract mechanical linguistic networks activated by the Communist leaders".

The author of this contribution has correctly sensed the fact that the only character who strives to oppose the deliberate distortion of truth - Winston Smith, who, ironically, works for the Ministry of Truth, is actually preoccupied with concealing reality. The research component also includes a substantial analysis of Winston's alternative to survive in an anti-democratic society by opening a diary on the 4th of April 1984, thus establishing, from a cognitive perspective the intra- and inter-individual differences among himself and the other characters, which we highly appreciate and consider the strongest part of her contribution.

Mihăilescu's strong ethics of interpreting such an experience has revealed itself in relation to Winston's attempts at hiding his thoughts, gestures and feelings. Betrayal and supervision mark all his efforts. He is caught and tortured. And yet, while experiencing the slow-braining washing, Winston secretly keeps writing in his diary, sadly observes the author of the inspiring contribution. Her conclusive statement suggests that „the source of Orwell's modernity arises from having merged literature with journalism and political theory in order to offer a real and credible warning for the whole world regarding fanatical political regimes".

To further enlarge the interdisciplinary interpretative background, the author has proposed another genuine approach to Graham Swift's novel Waterland. We have attentively read this contribution and we appreciate that it is both an original and systematic research due to the fact that the novel contains issues which are related to history and literature as well. Since the novel has been related to postmodernist narratives, the reality present in it has been decoded, reconstructed and deconstructed in order so that the author might get its real significance. Under these interpretative circumstances, White's approach to narrative has been considered by us, the literary reviewers, a genuine entry to Swift's novel. From White's concern with narrative, it has been highlighted: the distinction between "historical" and "fictional" stories, the definition of narrative as "a perfectly valid mode of representing historical events and even of providing an explanation to them", the difference between the chronicle and the narrative.

The function of the narrative has been dealt, within her approach, in connection with Ricoeur's considerations on plot and time. Ricoeur's analysis of time has provided valuable considerations on "degrees of temporality", all reflected in the three types of experiences or "representations of time in consciousness" (ordinary representations, related to the time when events take place, those representations focused on the weight of the past, and those which grasp the unity of future, present, past), commented with a strong sense of understanding and of siding with such ideas.

We posit that grounds for confidence regarding the author's interpretation of Swift's novel via White's historical theory and its literary implications arise from Crick's personal background. As a teacher of history, Crick proves to be familiar with White's approach to history as story telling. The employment of the valuable concept of historical narrative by Swift himself through Crick has been inferred by Mihăilescu from the fact that by narrating his history, rooted in Waterland, he has reconstructed the history of that region and his own life story.

We, the literary reviewers of Mihăilescu's ample and well-constructed contribution, have assumed, as intuitive evaluators of literature and of the social life reflected



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in it, that postmodernism, interdisciplinarily approached, has revealed its ontological connotations due to the troubled individual destiny after WWII so well depicted while analyzing prestigious British and American novels, charged with the most paradoxical states of mind.



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