

Florentin Smarandache - a poet with the dot under the i

Florin Vasiliu

The author of these lines is confronted with two assertions. The first one: who is Florentin Smarandache? The second: the poet has no biography; his poetry is his biography. But the latter assertion comes to eliminate the former and, the problem of choice is no longer a problem. However, when a reader would be interested in a poet's life? A passionate reader of poetry might answer: "never", while another particularly impressed by the poet's work may feel the need to know some data about his life.

Poets impose themselves with difficulty to the world of readers. A volume of poetry, has a circulation of 2-3000 copies even in good times. After ten titles written in 15-20 years, a poet is known only by those 30.000 readers, owning sometimes only a single title from his ten ones. If those who read him are ten times more, the poet in question may consider himself well placed in the conscience of his nation. These considerations may be approached to those poets who have lived here - in Romania - and have published book after book at the Romanian publishing houses. But this "happy regime" is not for Florentin Smarandache, who from 15 titles could see only two books published at home, with more than 12 years between their issue. Meanwhile, he

wasn't allowed to publish here and he took the way of the exile. And this is why today, opening this volume - and learning for the first time about Florentin Smarandache - the reader who discovers - only from these 80 haiku - a genuine poet - is entitled to wonder who is this poet, what has he written and what is the echo of his other books?

Florentin Smarandache is stil young for one can speak about his biography. At his return at home for talking part at the delivery of his latest book, we decided together to publish this volume simultaneously in Romania and U.S.A. I thought it was necessary to mention here his scientific and literary merits, so that, especially the Romanian readers would not to be found among the last people who learn of the activity of a compatriot so productive in some segments of culture.

Florentin Smarandache was born in 1954, in Bălcești - Vâlcea, and he graduated from the Faculty of Mathematics at the University of Craiova. He worked as programme analyser at IUG Craiova (1979-1981), teacher at the College in Bălcești (1981-1982), professor at the "Sidi El Hassan Lyoussi" College in Sefrou Marocco (1982-1984), teacher in mathematics at the "Nicolae Bălcescu" College in Craiova (1984-1985) and then at the school in Drăgotești - Dolj (1985-1986); finally he lost his job, earning his living by preparing school-people and students (1986-1988). From this

short sequence of didactic activities during the "golden days" finished in unemployment is brought to evidence a light ascendant trajectory followed by an undeserved collapse- one may guess the moment when, being rejected to participate with speciality works at Congresses on mathematics in Canada and California, he openly manifested his discontentment and his first sign of disagreement towards the totalitarian regime, and as a result of this fact he lost his job. He couldn't bear the situation and, in 1988 he managed to cross the border illegally and arrived in Turkey, where he taught French for a year and a half. In 1990 he reached the U.S.A. where he became professor, and are passing the Master exams at the University of Tempe - Arizona, under the coordination of Prof. Bremmer. He is working now as research engineer at the Honeywell Computers Corporation Inc. in Phoenix - Arizona, where he lives with the family who joined him at the beginning of 1991.

Florentin Smarandache isn't a refugee in literature because he has failed in his speciality. He's published four works on mathematics in Fès and Casablanca (Marocco) and Chicago (U.S.A.), over 40 articles in reviews of mathematics in Romania, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland, Canada, U.S.A. and he's been present with works at national and international seminars, colloquies, symposia and congresses in Craiova and Yassy (Romania 1978), Calgary (Canada

1986), Berkeley (1986), Los Angeles (1989), Las Cruces (Mexico 1989). He is the author of the Smarandache Function from the Number Theory [$\eta: Z^* \rightarrow N$, $\eta(n)$ is the smallest integer such that $m!$ is divisible by n], included - like other main works - in dictionaries, anthologies and encyclopedias of speciality in Great Britain, France, Spain, U.S.A. He is member of the Mathematics Association in Romania (1990), and of the American Association on Mathematics (1983).

The literary debut of Florentin Smarandache took place in 1979 at the "Năzuințe" ("Aspirations"), Magazine, with the poem "Figures have started vibrating". He continues to publish here and there poems in different literary reviews. In 1980 together with a group of young writers he launches "The Paradoxist Movement". The editorial debut was made by the volume of poems "*Formule pentru spirit*" ("*Formulae for the Spirit*"), Bucharest, Editura "Litera" 1981. In 1983, the volume was translated in French by Chantal Signoret from the University of Provence. The French translation, entitled "Etat-de-moi", ("The Ego Status"), under-signed by the poet Ion Pachia Tatomirescu from Timișoara, appeared in the same year at the "Expres" Printing House, from Fès, Marocco. This was followed by *Culegere de exerciții poetice* (*Collection of Poetical Exercises*), Fès, Marocco 1982. *Legi de compoziție internă. Poeme cu... probleme* (*Laws of Internal Composi-*

tion. *Poems with... problems*), Fès, Marocco 1982, all in Romanian, and then, a series of volumes, in French: *Le sens du non-sens*, Fès, Marocco, 1984, containing a non-conformist manifesto for "a new literary movement: the Paradoxism", *Antichambres et Antipoésies ou bizarreries*, Fès, Marocco, 1984, and *Le Paradoxisme: un nouveau mouvement littéraire*, Bergerac, France 1992. The same year it also appeared *America, paradisul diavolului (America, the Paradise of the Devil)*, journal of an emigrant, edited by Editura "Aius" Craiova. The majority of his works were, fully or in part, translated into English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, some of them having a third edition in S.U.A. The poet has collaborated at to literary reviews in Romania, France, Belgium, Turkey, India, Japan, Germany, Canada, Australia, Marocco, U.S.A.

He's also been awarded in Romania with literary prizes (1981, 1982) and in France (1990). He was elected as International Eminent Poet by the International Academy of Poets from Madras (India, 1991), and obtained the "Honorary Diploma in Fanciful Poetry" at the Contest of the Academy of Filology and Art, from Périgord (France 1992). His poetry was selected in nine literary anthologies appeared in Craiova (1980), Caen, Puymeras, Paris, Bordeaux (1989, 1990, 1991), New York, Colorado (1991, 1992), Seul (1991). He also has two journals of emigration, with over 1000

pages and four plays, some of them written for children. One of these, *Out in the left Field* (*Străin de cauză*) has already been performed on the stage of a theatre from Phoenix (U.S.A.). A lot of other hundreds of poems in manuscript are on the way to printing houses or almost ready to meet their readers.

There is still time until it will say about Florentin Smarandache that his work can't be studied without knowing his life, when it will be analysed - to paraphrase Oscar Wilde - how much genius and how much talent were distributed and still can be found in his life and, in his creation. But from these few directions of his literary steps, one can distinguish three ones: the prose - comprising the journal and the plays - the paradoxist movement that he promoted, and the poetry .

His published prose in Romania consist only in the book *America, the Devil's Paradise* - journal of emigration - covering the period between 23 March 1990, when he left Turkey, and 3 sept. 1991, a period spent in the U.S.A. It is a severe and intransigent radiography of the space he's lived in, attentively observed by him after the experience gained within the totalitarian system. The journal reveals lived facts, a concrete reality, with quite a few elements of shock, all in a fluent language, with shorts sentences, written with nerve, reminding us Hemingway's style. The university professor Ion Rotaru, refering to this work points out that it is "a book

of great success, written with a lot of poetical talent and polemic verve, reflecting the biternesses and the out of common adventures of a young Romanian intellectual who, escaping from the communist Romania didn't meet ... "He has the Romanian language, in all its expressivity, in the tip of his nib. The Oltean and the peasant from the bottom of his soul come out to light in a charming way among so many sarcasms and puzzles of the strangered, little, beginner, Panait Istrati" ("Romanian Reality, 1 sept. 1990).

Concerning the paradoxism and the literary movement promoted by him - statuated in 1983 and definitely led by Florentin Smarandache - they have, as an ideatical basis, concepts and thesis identical or closed to those promoted by the modern literary currents, running on the known ways of negation and of vanguard absurd. Having its roots in Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque's cubism, in the cult of creative inconsistency of the futurism of Marinetti, Hlebnicov and G. Govoni, in the negation of any link between thought and expression, thesis sustained by the dadaists, such as Tristan Tzara, H. Ball and R. Huelsenbeck, in suprarealism, perceived as modern nihilism and consistently practising "the psychical automatism and the order of thought in the absence of any control of the thought" (Jacques Gaucheron), come to the fore at the beginning of this century by André Breton - through its

manifestos rather than through its poetry - but with brilliant characters like R. Desnos, A. Artaud, L. Aragon, P. Eluard, giving birth to currents, schools and poets without some adhesion to a poetical catechism. In our country had aligned with this current Ilarie Voronca, C. Nisipeanu, M.R. Paraschivescu, Ion Vinea.

After World War II, the West was assaulted by the neovanguard, postmodernism, experimentalism, and all sorts of new schools, like Izidor Isou's lettrism, neodadaism, etc. "In comparison with the great centres in the world, Bucharest was after 1945, the most fertile center of artistical experiences and, dare I say, the most orthodox" (Aurel Dragoș Munteanu; *Opera și destinul scriitorului, The Writers Work and Destiny*, Cartea Românească, București 1972, pag. 132) here becoming famous poets like Gherasim Luca, Trost - the creator of oniromancy - Paul Păun, Ion Caraion, Virgil Teodorescu.

With regard to the paradoxism, the appearance of this movement - whose roots were plenty watered, by the absurd and saturated with contradictions, and paradoxes universe of the late system - is not just a name labelling a sort of a literary scandal, destined to an ephemeral glory. The essence of paradoxism consists in negation, having on its literary frontispice the emblem NON. In the "Nonconformist Manifesto", published in the volume of poems *Le sens du non-sens* (1983)

Florentin Smarandache displays some of the mechanism of the paradoxism: excessive contradictions, strong antithesis, figurative expressions, taken as literal sense, semantical transformations, contradictory comparisons. Speaking about the literary paradoxist movement, the literary critic Constantin M. Popa reconfirms the possibility to enlarge the literature through negative concepts. "Paradoxism does not intend to destroy literature. It is interested in finding a new writing practice, efficient and tensioned, preserving the energy resulting from the touch of opposite semantic fields. But the impact will be always unforeseeable (...). The paradigm of negation becomes literary object because everything (...) falls back in literature. It is an unavoidable paradox..."

Paradoxism is then "... the belief that into the space of the poem can enter everything (...) a literature «disappears» while it is still being written" (...) the paradoxists experimenting with lucidity the tragical consequences of the language discrimination" (The Literary Paradoxist Movement; Xiquan Publishing House, Phoenix-Chicago, 1992).

"Studying the negativist attitude within literature" one can observe that "the paradoxism existed before the statuation of the paradoxist movement" (C.M. Popa; q.w.). The series of paradoxist poets is formed - according to the same author - by Urmuz, Mihail Cosma

(Claude Sernet), friend of Marinetti, Geo Bogza, Taşcu Gheorghiu, Gelu Naum, Nichita Stănescu, Marin Sorescu. The poet Ion Pachie Tatomiurescu, adds also Leonid Dima, Emil Brumaru.

Florentin Smarandache launched the Literary Paradoxist Movement not only by a manifesto. He also brought in the patrimony of The Movement from its very beginning three volumes of poetry, spread all over the world, knowing a large echo. The literary Paradoxist Movement has representatives in the literatures from Romania, France, Belgium, Canada, U.S.A., U.K., Germany, Spain, Poland, Brasil, Marocco, Camerun. Radiographing his volumes of poetry, sugestively entitled *Nonpoems*, *Formulae for the Spirit*, *The Sense of the non-sens*, and others, we discover a poem where contradictions, associations, contrasts, oximorone, paradox are in the best company. "At the Birth of a Demise", "The Insolent Politeness", "At the Hight of the Fall", "The Practice of the Theory", "Breakfast of Illusions", "Indigeste Poem of Digestion" are some titles of poems which surprise the lectures; they not only let the reader "perplex, shocked and undecided" but they also "make the brain vibrate" (Robert Chasseneuil - Member of "Art and Poetry of Touraine" - France). Here it is an example of most "inocent" of his poems, called "Lesson of Philosophy; "It is raining and the Saints are rotting in churches/ at the windows the thought/ flap the

wings// Let's then come to philosophical/ meditations -
close the eyes and let's go/ Anyone is smaller than
oneself// -To be, is it a projection into infinite?// We are
of negligible size, but we want/ each, to be a bigger
nothing// -The void is the emptiest emptiness// -I have
an "I have not" of my own// the rain raps rhythmically/
like the blood/ waters are running to the future".

The titles of the poems as well as the philosophical "thesis" from this poem are significant examples for the poet's propensity for bringing in light contradictions, antithesis, paradoxes; as well as mastering the skill of essentialised expressions, which makes him a potential poet of short poems, either for haiku or even for *poem in a single verse*. It was not a little joy when, in 1990 the poet Ion Pachia Tatomirescu from Timișoara sent us some of the Florentin Smarandache's haiku to be published in our Magazine HAIKU.

For the reader who learns for the first time about the haiku, we consider necessary to open a parenthesis, in order to explain some useful notions before reading the poems.

The haiku micropoem, of Japanese origin, is a species of poetry with fixed form, which is characterised by three group of rules: prozodical, structural, and aesthetical ones. On the prozodic aspect, the haiku is a tristich with 17 syllables as a whole, distributed in three lines by the rule 5-7-5. Structurally, the tristich

must comprise *kigo*, a word indicating the season of action of the topic and the answers to the triad of questions - *when?*, *what?*, *where?* ; it must have *kireji*, that is a cesura after the first or the second line, indicated by a punctuation mark, (hyphen, colon, semicolon, full stop etc) and finally, it must end by a noun. In aesthetic point of view the haiku is plenty of rules which call for a thoroughly study (see the work *Interferențe lirice - Constelația haiku / Lyrical Interpenetrations - The Haiku Constellation* by Florin Vasiliu and Brândușa Steiciuc, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1989, and the HAIKU Magazine). We mention here some of the most important rules.

The fundamental rule which lays to the basic of the haiku creation is that the topic of any haiku is nature. The haiku pulls out its sap from the phenomenology of nature. The haijin - the poet of haiku poems - it a subtle and skilled observer of the univers of events and facts to which he is witness surprising from the whole surrounding phenomena those single moments that have address exclusively to the sensibility of a poet, unique phenomenon that he transposes within poetical expression. As Otsuji, a theoretician of the haiku poetry said, "the artist's own nature and the environment melt together in the haiku". One of the essential conditions of the haiku aesthetics consists in the fact that the micropoem is the result of an unique experience, ex-

pressed through "the image that speaks". By its shortness, the haiku enforces the render of "normal, unemotional things, linking flat intervals from among intense moments", from which results a poem, "a concentrated elixir of pure essence" (Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch).

A second rule of the haiku aesthetics, directly connected to the first, imposes the empiric reality "should be immediately «caught» by the poet, in its dynamic impulse"... each event of the contact between creative subject - object, taking place once for all and lasting only a moment, then "disappearing without any trace". Stanca Cionca - Romanian Nipponologist - states that "the haiku school is a science of image concentration within the detail, fragmentary":

*"How a trouble thing!
On the path of the mountain
a poor violet".*

Matsuo Bashō(1644-1694)

Emil Eugen Pop - another Romanian Nipponologist - considers the haiku as "...syllables that give the measure of the step with which the haikai wanders through the world, namely through himself".

A third aesthetic rule of haiku sends us to the *mu-shin* concept, with the sense of "without spirit" originated in the daoist void considered as substance, like the emptiness of a container that obliges the matter to take its inner form, or like the space between the

spokes of a wheel, that makes the wheel and elbows its way. "...the things put into evidence the empty place that they sustain as well as the few words of a haiku put in evidence the silence from which they took birth and to which they return" (Andrei Pleșu: *Pitoresc și melancolie / Picturesque and melancholy*, Ed. Univers, 1980, p. 173). This aesthetic concept may be often found in haiku by the absence of the things covered and hidden in the atmosphere of mist, by the state of evanescence that dominate them, like in this haiku:

*"Waves are hummily coming,
but neither a boat,
nor a seagull."*

Vasile Moldovan (The Romanian
Haiku Society - Bucharest cercle).

The fourth aesthetic important rule is defined by the pair of terms *ryūkō-fueki*, meaning temporary / everlasting, ephemeral / eternal. They are contradictory concepts which must be present within the poem, balancing one part of the haiku, dominated by the phenomenal unstability, with the other part, mastered by the non-phenomenal constancy, both equal but opposed as creative phenomenal articulations.

*"The old pond -
A frog plunged.
The sound of the water."*

In this famous and long commented Bashō's poem

the first line evokes through the word *old*, the oldness, and through the *pond*, the eternity while the frog's jump calls forth the ephemerality, and the *sound of the water*, opposed to the eternal quietness of the pond, presumes movement, life. These elements settle "...the sense of the poem and a part of its virtue to cling to the opposition between the adjective old and the noun sound" (Etiemble, "Sur la traduction du «haiku»" / "About the translation of haiku", In *Cahiers roumains d'études littéraires* , 1/1976, p. 42).

Another important aesthetical rule is based on the pair of terms *wabi/sabi*, with meaning approached to loneliness, melancholy, dismay, concept used in connection with the beauty of the daily life / solitude, time elapse, time patina, terms used with reference to the aesthetical aspect from literature.

*"Escaped from spinney -
the watery lilly lives
in asceticism."*

Matsuo Bashō

The haiku apperead within the Nippon literary space in the 17th century, presently existing in Japan over ten associations of haiku, a few magazines, over one thousand circles of haiku, each with one thousand published over one million haiku, there are organized annual contests and prize awards. The micropoem entered Europe at the end of the last century and it was

adopted by prestigious names of the universal literature: Ghiorghe Seferis (The Nobel Prize in 1963), Octavio Paz (The Nobel Prize in 1991), Ezra Pound, Giuseppe Ungaretti, T.W. Holme, Antonio Machado, F.S. Flint, Allen Ginsberg, W.S. Merwin, Kenneth Yasuda, Donald Eulert - who was, until 1974, lecturer of American literature at The "Al.I. Cuza" University from Yassy (Romania). In Romania, the haiku was introduced in the fourth decade of this century by the poets Al.T. Stamatiad and Traian Chelariu and it was cultivated by poets like Ștefan Baciu, Aurel George Stino, Nichita Stănescu, Ștefan Augustin Doinaș, Marin Sorescu, Aurel Rău, Gheorghe Tomozei, Veronica Porumbacu, Toma George Maiorescu, Gh. Grigurcu, Bazil Gruia, Vasile Igna, Gligor Sava, Vasile Smărăndescu (with a book of haiku, *Carte însingurată, Solitary Book*, in the Haiku Magazine Collection), Nicolae Alexandru Vest, Eugenia Bogdan, Virgil Bulat, Liliana Grădinaru and others.

During the preparation of the work *Interferențe lirice - Constelația haiku / Lyrical Interpenetration - Haiku Constellation*, we discovered in the Romanian literary reviews, new names from the period 1970-1989 a new wave of authors who sign haiku, new names, a lot of poets coming from literary clubs, others, and not a few, beginners. The political changes that took place in Romania at the fall of 1989 permitted us to publish

even from beginning of the year 1990 The HAIKU - Magazine of Cultural Romanian- Japanese Interpenetrations, that publishes in every issue hundreds of translated and genuine haiku, many of the Romanian ones being presented also in English and in French.

Florentin Smarandache is an authentic poet of haiku, whom we present also to the English and French speaking readers through the version of Miss Rodica Ștefănescu and the poet Ștefan Benea. This booklet, called *Clopotul tăcerii, The Silence's Bell* after a metaphor taken over a haiku, suggestive for the "noise" created by the big bell as figurative acceptance for the haiku, whose big-bang is rather silence that any toll, and, even more, an echo of a silence consumed during the reading of the 17 syllables of the poem.

The distribution of these 80 haiku on the four seasons was realised both on criteria of topic and of ambience that they give off, and may have an approach to a season, but not necessary the very one to which it was attached.

The analysis of the poet's haiku, compared with the rules a haiku must follow - shortly expressed above - brings to light some findings that deserve to be mentioned both to determine clearly the position facing the haiku that Florentin Smarandache cultivates and the evolution of the Romanian haiku - generally speaking - as well as of the poet performing haiku.

The poet writes a poem with a number of syllables distributed between 9 and 21, with the maximum of 15 syllables (16 haiku), followed by those with 17 syllables (12 haiku) and with 16 syllables (10 haiku), totalizing 50% of the volume. From the 12 haiku with 17 syllables, only two have the lines with a length of 5 and 7 syllables, not in the order 5-7-5, but 7-5-5, that doesn't mean a significant deviation from a haiku. According to these notations we may conclude that the poet doesn't follow the "classical" current of the haiku with a prosodic fixed form, but the one of the free form, known under the Nippon denomination of *jiyūritsu noka*, very frequent especially out of Japan; from the whole prosodic structure, the poet observes only the rule of a tierce, the number of the syllables being different both among the haiku and the lines.

It is worth mentioning that the majority of the haiku - 52 poems respectively 64,2% - have less than 17 syllables, a fact rarely met to the poets of haiku, who usually overtake a little this norm, for reasons easy to be understood. This brings into light a clear characteristic of the poet - to whom the eloquence and retoricism are strange - the one of setting his poem under the sign of lapidary poetical expression, of direct confession. This proves also that the poet does not turn back to work his first formulated poetical expression. Unlike the poetry with rhythm and rhyme, the poetry with fixed

form, where it is supposed there are two moments, one of conception and one of execution, the application of the prozodic rules permitting the perception of a distance between the initial poetical thought and its final expression, making possible the distinction between "the reality of the thought" and "the reality of the effects" (Paul Valery), Florentin Smarandache sets his words into the line fixed with the mortar of expression, without any subsequent change in its structure. The poet does not defy the norms; the total liberty is his norm. Therefore he affords to compose haiku with 9 and 21 syllables.

The poet's inclination towards a type of poem much shorter than a haiku determined us to enter more deeply into the structure of his poem. This have led us to identify two types of poems in Florentin Smarandache poetry. On the one hand the genuine haiku, like the following example:

*"Pe dealuri bătrâne
zvon de vite
cu ugere moi."*

*"Up on the old hills
rumour of many cattle
with tender udders."*

★

*"Stropi cad pe asfalt
ca niște grenade.
Plouă la plus infirmit."*

*"Drops fall on asphalt
like certain little grenades.
Rains at endless plus."*

★

"Ca o fată lăăăie
seara cade în gemunchi
lângă geam."

"Like a nimny girl
the evening falls on its knees
next to the window."

On the other hand, another type of poem, which contents, spirit and structure puts it among the *one verse poems*, which creator was Ion Pillat. It is a type of poem of 13 or 14 syllables, built on iambs, thus with a compulsory metrics, full of beauty and grace, generated by the moments of torture and feast of the creation, a poem very closed to the European spirit - Pillat tells us that he noticed the one line poem in some of Victor Hugo's verses, which could be isolated and let independently of the context - but within the myorical space, i.e. in the Romanian soul. Florentin Smarandache writes poetry in tristich, respectively haiku, unaware that, sometimes, he is more far from the difficile spirit of the Nippon poetry and aesthetics, and not closer, but right on the native soil of the one line poem, wich lacked from the Romanian literature, from its apparition, in 1936 - when the poet wasn't borned yet - until 1986 when it will appear the third volume of Ion Pillat's works, where are also included his one line poems, about which it is very possible the poet, as out of job and struggling hard for living, wouldn't have the opportunity to find out about this.

Here there are some examples from his poems which are rather one line poem than haiku:

"Ne ia ușor zefirul pe nesimțite coarne."

"The zephyr takes us easy onto the quiet horns."

*

"Izbucnesc salcâmi în hohote de muguri."

"The acacias burst into guffaw of buds."

*

"Elajini cocori aduc pe aripă căldura."

"Kindly cranes bring the warmth on their wings."

*

"Arinii-și pleacă la pământ, capul greu de somn."

"The alders incline to ground their sleepy heavy head."

It is a gain for the poetry to realize one line poem, and Florentin Smarandache, with his gift if he cultivated this species, he could offer us pretty soon a bunch of precious flowers, that may place him among the Ion Pillat worthy successors of this type of poem; among names like Lucian Blaga, Virgil Teodorescu, Bazil Gruiă, Ion Brad, Grigore Vieru, Gheorghe Grigurcu, Ion Serebreanu, Nicolae Tatomir, Lazăr Cerescu, Valeriu Bucurescu, Ion N. Daia and ... Geo Bogza, but also others.

The topics tackled in the poems respect the fundamental rule of haiku, being extended on a large scale of the nature elements in all its diversity. The poet waked up by the dawn goes out in his country yard (rarely appears the street and the town) and than wanders the lanes of his village and there it... is where

he picks up from subjects like: the sun, the field, the flowers - snowdrops and hollow worts - the path, the trees - acacias, pines, poplars, alders, limes - the blue sky, the birds - the nightingale, the cranes, the herons, the eagles - the peasants, the hills with cows, the corn, the bell, Alp horn, the vineyard, the wine, the heart, the thought, the violins, the music, the dance, the longing, the evening, the stars, the moon, the lovers, the clouds, the rain, the wind, the pain, the death, these are the poet's predilected topics. In these concentrated flowers, it is almost everything that we find in hundreds of haiku at the great classical Japanese poets of haiku. In all his haiku the poet is strongly anchored in reality, knowing the Nippon lesson that "without reality there is not haiku". He also respects and totally or partially applies the rule "time - space - object":

<i>"Fragezi ghiociei</i>	<i>WHAT?</i>	<i>"Fresh snowdrops</i>
<i>trag de sub zăpadă</i>	<i>WHERE?</i>	<i>pull under the snow</i>
<i>primăvara."</i>	<i>WHEN?</i>	<i>the spring."</i>

*

<i>Blajini cocori aduc</i>	<i>WHEN?</i>	<i>The kindly cranes bring</i>
<i>pe aripă</i>	<i>WHERE?</i>	<i>on their wings</i>
<i>căldură"</i>	<i>WHAT?</i>	<i>the warmth."</i>

In this haiku the spring and the cranes are not grammatical answers to the question WHAT?, but to WHEN?, the terms from the answer structurally defining the season in which the action takes place and

constituting the *kigo*.

Let's try to enter into the intimacy of the poems and into the arsenal of Florentin Smarandache's poetical means. The 80 haiku are grouped on seasons: Spring with 12 haiku, Summer with 28, Autumn with 25 and Winter with 15. In this group of haiku, ones are on topics directly linked to the nature, others of a reflexive character, within which the author thinks through images of a great expressivity.

The poet begins his book and the chapter about Spring time discovering himself as captured by the time: simple glance under the sign of observing or maybe his reveal on significance? We can't know:

<i>"Timpul deschide</i>	<i>"The time opens</i>
<i>fereastra unei clipe</i>	<i>the window of an instant</i>
<i>și î se uită la mine."</i>	<i>and looks to me."</i>

Seemingly in reply to the question mark puts by the time it comes the answer by his own introduction:

<i>"Tînăr sunt,</i>	<i>"I am a young,</i>
<i>ca un început</i>	<i>like a beginning</i>
<i>sub clopotul răsăr itului."</i>	<i>under the dawn's bell."</i>

The triad young - beginning - dawn represents the shout of an age that has to bring a message in the world, for which the dawn's bell sounds too.

Than the poet proudly enters the season- so as it seems he wanted to appear us at this beginning of book - assisting to the nature birth process. But he does not

contemplate the nature, he only discovers its secret processes, telling us *how* the spring comes and *how* the Zephyr wanders through the world, *how* the fields show their hunger, *how* the shoots grow, *how* the cranes come, and *how* the acacias laugh. Florentin Smarandache has under his glance the same spring time seen by Alecsandri, but in which the passing "from the things' heart to the one's own heart" happened with a different code, specific for his lab of creation, with which he will operate the whole work. In the course of the analysis we'll try to decipher his code and if we'll succeed, we'll see also the difference of poetical sense between the classical lyrical descriptive poem and the one cultivated by the poet.

Beginning with the 9th haiku the poet starts to share us some of his thoughts, but he doesn't make it with the terminology specific to the domain, but borrowing the concepts from the nature stage property. Because he isn't concerned by an idea, but him:

"Zbârâie gărgăunii mulți ai urui gând"	"Hornets are buzzing many of a thought"
--	---

The summer is rich in poems proving how much poetry could be concentrated in these 17 syllables of a haiku:

"S-atingi cu fruntea dimineții cântecul privighetorii"	"Touching with brow in morning the nightingale's song"
--	--

"*Diafane mirosuri,*
prin lunci
își caută floarea"

*
"*Diaphanous scents,*
overspread through the meadows
look for their flowers"
*

Zăresc țărani
în carul cel lung și mare
al cerului"

"*I catch sight of peasants*
into the long and great cart
of the blackish sky"

Onlooker attracted by the mirage of hazard, by the miracle of changes, in whose texture discloses the accents that slips to the common eye, the poet sees how "*the springs spout*" from the bird's song, how "... *torpid, ... the sun is frozen/ and gazes immovable*", he realizes the tiredness of the acacias "*within the liquid warmth of the summer*", he hears a "*rumour of cows... on old hills*", he feels how "*the stars seethe*" in the "*blue blood/ from the sky*", meanwhile, somewhere in the village "*a burning street lamp/ strikes with the light/ the fence*".

Not richless in aestheticism the third season is looking:

"*Toamna pictează stins*
strigătul florilor
adormite."

"*The fall paints lustreless*
the shout of the dried flowers
like sleeping puppets."

As we presume - living abroad, since over five years - the poet composes his poems from remembrances, from reminiscences, from usual things, from actual images, analogies of situations - similar to those lived at home, offering to himself the sensation of the con-

tinuity of his presence on the natal earth, proving to us his strong anchorage within the Romanian reality. A single empty bench, seen nowhere, permits to him the building of a scenery in absence:

"Pe o bancă lângă lac "On a bench near the lake
un sărut - a kiss -
și-ndrăgostiții nicăieri." lovers are absent."

The poet is witness to the flowers' fading, to the birds' leaving, but he sees differently than us all the field of riped corn: "*The corns / light the lanterns / under the arms.*" Even if in Arizona the lime trees turn to yellow, the poet writes about "*the Eminescian limes / in pale haemorrhages / of leaves*", and when "... *the wind blows / ... the trees / turn their back to me*". He himself recognizes that "*The wine / drops in the glasses / remembrances*", and sometimes, when "*Through the night's mud / the stars walk in the boots*", I again "*Open a bottle / full of morose / desires*".

The winter begins with a haiku of high day:

"Rege pe străzi "King in the streets,
Crivățul The north wind
cu buzunarele goale." with empty pockets."

The majority of the haiku from this season are situated in the area of personal reflexions, confessions about things, where we may found out that "*The violins pass / the strings / through our ears*", or how "*At the window / the light hangs heavy / of the lamp*", but there are also the remembers about him. But this time it

tired, "But I run / I run / to catch by hand / the time", feeling that time took advantage on him; still more he feels how "Falls the curtain / like a heavy night / of December." But he ends the volume on an optimistic note:

"Să nu mă așteptați,
voi întârzia puțin
printre stele."

"Don't wait for me,
I'll be late a little
among the stars."

as if willing to remind us the function of a passionate dreamer - explicitly underlined just in this haiku - and that returning from there he will offer us the next volume of haiku.

The reading of these haiku gave us the occasion to discover a poet who made the surrounding nature his faithful muse, his lyre being tuned to its shades and its vibration frequency. We notice also how the poet is instrumenting the second fundamental law of the haiku, whereafter the reality is «captured» in its cruel instance, avoiding the inferior step of *description*, operating with the superior one, that of things' *nominalisation*. And if this *nominalisation* is made in metaphor, allegory, comparison, metonymy, there is no doubt that this is his primary language, of the "reality of thought" - above mentioned - where the flower of speech has its queen and where it occurs from, in poetical notation, with the easiness of the current utterance.

Here in the haiku, Florentin Smarandache employs a percutant style, marked by the lyrical seal of the paradoxism - guffaws of buds, snakes of light, toothless smile, shout of flowers, the sillence's bell, the night's mud - somehow mitigated by the laws of the lyrism of this species of poetry, but not to the extent to forget the silver law of the micropoem - *fueki / ryûkô* = eternal / ephemere - omnipresent in the majority of his poems: the time / myself, the clouds, the sea / the bird, universe / breeze, infinite / rain, desert / flowers, stars / mud, etc.

In this volume there are flowers full of images of a surprising freshness, with the origin in a reality caught in its pure nudity - by the look of a reporter having the touch of a sword sharpness lucidity - transfigured into poetical expression through the grill of a rhapsode who penetrated the cosmos of words, masters the alchemy of the language-keeping aside from the oxides and the acids of the words used by Alecsandri and working with modern cathenar and cyclic complexes of the language, so coming without any difficulty to the essence of the poetics.

His haiku is still a successful test of this variety of Nippon poetry, within the Romanian creation, at the crossing point with the *one line poem*, and Florentin Smarandache enters the circuit of the poets of haiku by the front door. This volume gives ground to the hope that the poet will rise up the level of his own poem in

his own benefice and of the poetry in general. Editura Haiku (The Haiku Publishing House from Romania and the Xiquan Publishing House from USA) which prepared this volume to be printed, gave an extra-chance, by making it accesible to the readers in English and in French. The endeavour to render the poems and the foreword, from the Romanian version into both languages, as faithful as possible, along with the responsibility for the faults belongs to Mrs. Rodica Ștefănescu, editor of the Haiku Magazine, and Mr. Ștefan Benea, poet, member of Romanian Haiku Society.

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- * Florin Vasiliu is the author of some well-known works about the culture, civilization and history of Japan (*Pe Meridianul Yamato / On the Yamato Meridian*, Editura Sport-Turism, București, 1982, *De la Pearl Harbor la Hiroshima / From Pearl Harbor to Hiroshima*, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1986, and co-author Brândușa Steiciuc, *Interferențe lirice - Constelația Haiku / Lyrical Interpretations - Haiku Constellation*, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1989, *Umbra libelulei, The shade of dragon fly, An anthology of the Romanian haiku*, Editura Haiku, București, 1993, *Japoneza în 30 de zile, The japanese in 30 days*, Editura Garamond, București, 1993 (with the collaboration of Ștefan Benea). Florin Vasiliu is member of the Romanian Writers' Union, President of the Romanian Haiku Society, and member of The Haiku International Association from Japan.