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POPA: LE
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CONSTANTIN M. POPA: LE MOUVEMENT LITTÉRAIRE PARADOXISTE

This is an amazing little volume and a paradox all of its own. It is published in the United States, in a French translation of a compilation of essays from the original Romanian made jointly by Paul Georgelin and the man it is all about: Smarandache.

Florentin Smarandache, currently associate professor of mathematics at the University of New Mexico University, is a Romanian exile who has spent years in Turkish refugee camps and who lost many of the manuscripts that he had tried to get out of the country during the Ceausescu era. He is a Leonardo de Vinci Renaissance-type man-of-all-trades: mathematician, philosopher and writer in three languages (Romanian, French and English), inventor of another and artist (the publication under review includes the

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The essay titles are:

1. QU'EST QUE C'EST LE PARADOXISME? — What is paradoxism?

This section defines firstly "*paradox*" (in the words of Alexandre Paleologu as

l'alarme de l'intelligence, un contact inédit avec la vérité — the alarm-bell of the mind, a unique contact with truth

and secondly traces the history of Romanian avant-garde literary and artistic movements which grew out of contacts with Marinetti, Breton and Apollinaire. After briefly reminding the reader of the influence of Tristan Tzara (dadaism), Brancusi, Victor Brauner and Ionescu, the essay jumps to the development of the paradoxist movement out of 1960s post-modernism, and in particular to the work of Florentin Smarandache.

2. LA TRADITION DU PARADOXISME — The tradition behind paradoxism.

A brief history of the movement, with examples of poetry by Urmuz, Mihail Cosma, Ion Vinea, and Luca all of whom reject formalism and who produce various degrees of anti-poem ending logically (their logic not mine) in the non-poem (sometimes mere lists or haphazard consonant clusters or stutterings). Some are in French, some in Romanian (for which I don't have all the diacritics. An example is this

one by Gherasim Luca:

vreau sa zic mîniîmmînimîini
mîini mîinile
sssss sss ssssss ssss...

of which only the first two words, "vreau sa", meaning "I would like to" are recognizable; "zic" is the Romanian for "proverb" chopped in half, the rest (22 lines) mere letters... The poem literally peters out into pure sound.

3. LES MECANISMES DU PARADOX —
The mechanism of paradox.

4. UN FRANC-TIREUR PARADOXISTE
— A paradoxist sniper

A collection of collage poems (one entitled Emigrant Day records the poet-artist's arrival in the land of freedom) and drawings and a "verses noires" (for "vers noirs", no doubt) which is simply a black square on the page. Smarandache has invented a language of his own "pirissanorench" spoken only by himself of which this extract from the poem RTFGJKMNB is an example:

Sfd ffghrt plkl. Xvnbvnnmm
dfgshrqz dfgshrqz !!

5. ADDENDA: A letter (or poem... it's hard to tell) by Smarandache and a sensible letter back from a

Romanian professor thanking the poet for his Nonpoems, and sympathising with his ideas, but warning him that creativity cannot go from something to nothing, that it must tend towards something, or die.

I heartily agree with him!

Even if the French translation is at times rather quaint, I found myself drawn into the reading out of sheer curiosity. I have a lot of sympathy with a protest movement that grew out of life in a totalitarian state and admiration for such a polyglot. If you do nothing more, look him up on the www!

reviewer: Jacqueline Karp-Gendre.