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Journal Review: Third International Anthology on Paradoxism

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The Third International Anthology on Paradoxism is available from Bell & Howell, 300 N. Zeeb Road, P. O. Box 136, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 or http://www.umi.com/bod/

Recently I received a copy of this fascinating journal of paradoxist, tautologic and dualistic distichs by writers from fifteen nations, including the United States. You may be unfamiliar with the “distich” but, before I give its definition, it is pertinent to describe the movement out of which this term emerged.

A new movement in literature called paradoxism—which makes heavy use of opposites (antitheses, contradictions, oxymorons and paradoxes) at both local and global levels in creative work—began in the 1980s in Romania. Its initial driving force was an anti-totalitarian protest against a closed society where the entire culture was manipulated by a small group. Anthology editor, Florentin Smarandache, who now lives and teaches in New Mexico, responded to the crisis with the idea, “Let’s do literature...without doing literature!” In short, by keeping silent and, for example, observing that a bird in flight is itself a poem (a “natural” poem, needing no words).

This beginning then led to an emphasis on contradictions. Most in Romania lived a double life—an official one conforming to the political system and another “real” life. People said “life is wonderful” when, in reality, “life is miserable.” Language opposites were flourishing! Thus paradoxism was born. Folk jokes, which said one thing and meant the opposite, were very prevalent during Ceausescu’s era.

Paradoxism has introduced a number of literary terms; here are several of them:

Paradoxist distich: a two-line poem in which the second line contradicts the first, but both lines together form a sensible explanation of the title.

Example (by Smarandache):

SCAPEGOAT

Even if he didn’t
he did

Tautological distich: a two-line poem that appears to be redundant, but the pair of lines deepens the explanation of the title.

Example (Smarandache):

IMITATOR

Discovered
What others have already discovered

Dualist distich: a two-line poem in which the second line is the dual of the first, and together they explain the title.

Example (Smarandache):

MULTIDISCIPLINARY

History or art
Or the art of history

The Third International Anthology on Paradoxism entertains and puzzles its readers with nearly one hundred pages of distiches and variants, all offered in English but some also provided in Chinese, Italian, Romanian and Spanish.

Here are several samples:

from Paul Haugh (Australia):

CUTTING REMARKS

Sharp as a knife
Blunt as a cork

from Paulo Bauler (Brazil):

ORDER

Someone with all the reasons is
Somebody with no reason
from Maria do Carmo Gaspar De Oliveira (Brazil):

**DISCOVERERS**
Portuguese discovered Brazil
Already discovered by Indians

from Victor Chnagnone (China):

**ENEMY**
Fails
When we succeed

from Richard Cheevers (England):

**URBAN JUNGLE**
On a London street
Zebra crossing

from Anand Rose (India):

**WISE**
When you know
you don’t know the answer

from John Grey (USA):

**MAD WORLD**
you’d be crazy
to be sane

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**Real Numbers, Math Lives**

*Arnold Trindade*

*Glen Cove, NY*

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It was so true the cone did age
Ten-fifteen billion
It is so true the earthly age
Four and a half billion.

It is yet true my only age
The forties
My end, it will surely come
The eighties-nineties.

Nature, her organic-inorganic wonderings
In the wings, on cue
Appear, disappear
On a temporary reflector revolving.

See trembling aspen leaves, a grouse
Alluring nest on the ground hatches
In twenty-one days the fledglings drowse
From on high the goshawk watches.

See this year the drumming grouse
Their numbers few, heard scarcely
The goshawk lays eggs only two
Instead of four when prey a plenty.

See cold Arctic the hunting lynx
Pursues the snowshow hare, a meal
See as sunlight the flowerings control
So hare fleets the lynx withhold.

The numbers when genius Jason dawned
Bursting forth at nine and two
See poor Jimmy come faster born
Came four weeks with raw limbs too.

Earth a scientific developer
Counts hours, days, seconds too
Releasing light darkness covers
In revolutions and leap years new.

Can we figures, give up forget?
Can we cycles, senses insensate?
Do we deny light-matter nets
Food webs, equilibria, numbers-kind?

Thus the dispersing universal cone
A developing matrix electromagnetic
Her offspring, her coordinates dynamic
Show moving graphs, patterns, bones.

Thus do light packets, photons
Imprisoned energy, nucleons
In seconds, minutes exposed
Produce on matter-film sequential codons
Alluring pictures, images
The living kind!