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**Major Directions in the Reception of the
Japanese Spirit in the Romanian Literary and
Publicistic Realm between 1920-2010**

PhD Thesis

Summary

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2. Key-words: reception, Romanian literature, Japanese literature, Japan, Exotism, alterity, traveler, translation, haiku, Modernism, Postmodernity, love, death, cell phone novel, myth, identity, exegesis, literary theory.

3. General summary

The central theme of the reception of Japanese spirit into the Romanian literary and publicistic realm describes a significantly large area in the Romanian cultural and literary imaginary. This work aims at exploring and developing the impact produced by the Japanese cultural imagery and feeding further on our need for alterity. Grafted on a history of almost a century of interrelations, the reception of the Japanese spirit in Romania has been given in historically and mentally conditioned sequences. These sequences have shaped the reception, filtering it through exotism and cliché, so that we could discover a different, strong, lasting, authentic, spiritual background. Alterity is very important within the theory of reception, given the fact that man is a social animal, and, as Jean Paul Satre states, „art cannot exist but for and through *the other*”.

The reception of literature through the act of reading is primarily necessary to man of all times. In Umberto Eco’s opinion „fictional texts come to help our metaphysical smallness”. Reading does not take into account boundaries and man is learning especially from other cultures, from the wisdom of alterity. Reception requires an ontological and epistemological opening towards the *other* in a search of the world and of the self. Under its multiple occurrences, reception is a topic here from the literary point of view, which is divided into several necessary types. The artistic, historical and exegetic aspects form the body of the thesis, which is oriented in the direction of comparatism, as well as in the direction of history of literature, touching lightly the idea of mentality studies, with semiotics of reception, so that at the end we will have incorporated all dimensions of cultural reception of the Japanese spirit, the way it is made visible gradually ramified in the literary text, with the sections: Romanian literature inspired by the

Japanese culture and Japanese literature translated into Romanian; and in the publicistic text, which has developed an exegetic and historical reception during more than a century of intercultural relations.

The present perspective directs the approach diachronically toward a practice by two major trends, one of them focusing on the influence of the Japanese spirit on the Romanian literary and publicistic realm, and the second one analysing the mechanism, the chronological pattern of the modern and contemporary Japanese prose diffusion in successive translated editions. Both trends are analyzed through the specific historical conditions which have marked the Romanian spiritual development: the pre-war, Communist and post-Communist periods.

The study of the Japanese literature, a literature which a short time ago was viewed as exotic, is followed on three levels. An historical-cultural level, which analyses the difference of perception and reception during the two periods that are still defining us, the pre-Communist and post-Communist age, in which the social dimension, detectable in various forms of media (cultural and literary journals, newspapers, volume editions) has marked the evolution of reception, revealing a higher level of cultural, political, socio-economical bilateral interest. This interest has been also highlighted by the diaristic prose or *travelogue* type, while the contacts between the two countries has developed into a strong relationship so that we may ascertain the results of Japanese and Romanian researches within the specialized studies, in the translated literature and in artistic creations.

A literary level, concerning the reader's horizon of expectation, detectable in the image of the Japanese culture, as it appears in the literature of Japanese inspiration, but also in the translated Japanese literature (and thus, accessible to the Romanian public) breaks down the reception in these two directions that enlarge the spectrum and homogenize the perspective. The result is that through the prose of Japanese inspiration (be it the case of half-autobiographical (Ion Timuș), historical (Gheorghe Băgulescu) or fictional (Florina Ilis), by the poetical formulas that follow the Japanese pattern grafted on the Romanian imaginary, but also through the Japanese prose and poetry, translated into Romanian, a literary area was created, which requires a serious and informed analysis. This paper has the goal to prospect and analyse the mentioned fertile area, without being exhaustive.

At the third level – the critical one – we sketched an analysis of the reception of the Japanese literature in the Romanian critical mentality, dealing with various fictional texts of

some of the translated Japanese authors, among which Mishima Yukio, Abe Kōbō, Murakami Haruki, Murakami Ryū, Ōe Kenzaburō, interpreted from the perspective of the following themes: the identity problem, between fight and abandonment; Europe – an ultramarathon of civilization; demythization and desemantization in the contemporary Japanese novel; from *seppuku* to *hikikomori*; narrative representations of love. The section was conceived as an openness toward the development of the critical demarche which this segment of prose needs at the moment, being aware, at the same time, of the complexity of the approach and the time conditioning.

In essence, the present thesis proposes the development of a mechanism of reflection, mirroring two literatures, cultures and mentalities. Being so different, the two literatures have found a fertile vitalizing channel, in which diversity meets unity. Trying to analyse and reach to the invisible, but powerful resorts that support the artistic and human nature, we may observe two literatures communicating. The influence of the Japanese spirit is considerable if we refer to haiku poetry, it is exotic if we refer to ikebana, origami, martial arts, and it is prolific if we refer to the numerous translated literary texts.

The reception of this world reveals, through the pluralism of approaches, the actuality of interest and, at the same time, the maintenance on a position of *outsiders*, still cedind to exotism, to cultural encoding of the much debated integrated alterity. Mapped with the Occidental compass, these coordinates of investigation have only underlined the structural difference between East and West. Subdued by a collonial tradition, the West tolerates, due to the background, the elision of a fundamental premise – the reverse perspective. In the Postmodern context it was just one edifice that was not shattered: the one of the cultural encoding. If the reception is made through the same code, subtleties will remain foreign and, consequently, unknown. A hypothesis of reaching truly the cultural and mental profoundness would consist in undertaking the difference and bringing the unknown implied by this difference toward our known, keeping and accepting, as we have already pointed out, the essence of that alterity.

4. The Summary of the Main Parts

Being fully conscious of the scope and richness of such a subject, we have strived to highlight its most important directions: after a necessary contextualization of the Japanese

cultural, political and religious extent, we dealt with outlining the implicit and natural relations that are established between creation, translation and reception, following the theories of reception, the history of translation as a discipline, and then the way in which these domains cooperate. The reception, as the premise of this research, is established as a regulatory mechanism, allowing an opening toward alterity, valued in unique artistic creations or in translations. The theories of reception and translation complete and lead the comparative perspective of the research, as the paper highlights the cultural translation of the Japanese spirit, quantified in the appeared texts approximately in one century. The reception of literature through the act for reading is primordial necessary to man in all times. Umberto Eco mentions that “The fictional texts come to help our metaphysical smallness” so that beginning with fairy tales, man felt the need for tales, to “escape time”, to live other experiences, to feed his imagery and to understand and come closer to the world. The reading (more than the spectacle) can project the “modern man beyond his time and integrate him in other rhythms, making him live another history”, as Mircea Eliade argues, and *in extenso* to live History, to fully understand the Sense, beyond any temporal, spatial and linguistic boundary, actualizing the World through the Word.

Literature, as “verbal art must inevitably reflect the characteristics by which it is built of” (Roman Jakobson). The *word*, vehicle that transports the world “from itself to itself” (the words of Nichita Stănescu) must be loyal to the sense, the message, being the icon that gives life, procesual coherence and historicity to the event, be it social, historical or artistic. Reading does not take into account the boundaries, man learning more from other cultures, from the wisdom of the alterity. Thus, the reception requires a natural opening of ontological and epistemological nature towards the *other*, functioning as a searching engine, searching the world and the self. The alterity occupies an important place in the theory of reception, given the fact that the basis is the man as the social animal, as Jean Paul Sartre asserted that “art cannot exist but for and through the other”. As long as reading is interpretation, reception is the finality of interpretation, transforming the sense from a primary one during the reading into a secondary one, full of virtualities, after the reception.

We thus reach the condition of the receiver, the reader or the attacker – the one who has the liberty of interpretation. In the economy of this study, the triad reception – translation – creation represents the situation *beyond the mirror* of the natural process creation – translation – reception. This perspective gives us the possibility of moving the emphasis from the creative act

to the act of the reception. In the relation creation-reception we may identify a series of dichotomies, delineating the condition of the reader. A fertile analogy appears in our binomial relation *creation-reception*, and in the Asian philosophical one – *full-empty*: on the one hand creation, through its fixed character, is established as *full* (that can't be more than it already is), and on the other hand, reception, through its flexibility, representing the empty that activates the latent virtualities of the work. Another dichotomy is instituted in the representation part: the perception supports the act of creation, having as narrative instances the assessors (narrator and actor), while the reception supports the act of reception with the receptors as its instances (narrator and reader). The reception supposes an intellectual and emotionally active engagement on the behalf of the reader that has the power of sense-making. From this point of view, we may notice two types of readers: the *prime reader* or the reader with power, who is the *native* reader and the translator, having direct access to the text; the second one, the *second reader* or the reader of the translation is the *foreign* reader, who can have access to the original through the quality of the translator as a conductor. The narrator projects the ideal reader as being the native reader so that the foreign reader has access to a conditioned reception by the constitutive factors of the collective mentality specific to the source culture. But the benefit from such a situation is revealed in the access to another world, a plentiful access that extrapolates the limit.

The problem of *translation* and, implicit, the access to the text through this filter, has developed numerous interventions – pros and cons – regarding the imperfection of a translation. More recently, the theory of translation accepts this as an inevitable cultural fact, as through translation cultures and societies may come closer to each other. The translation itself, says Romanița Constantinescu in the preface of the study *Actul lecturii* by Wolfgang Iser, “does not multiply the ways of saying, but finds the remembrance of the pure language. It does not exist for the sake of the original, but for the sake of the language beyond the idioms”. The reader of a translation is unprivileged *ab initio* not as much by the transposal from another language, but by the cultural, mental, historical and philosophical context of the original language, which they need to know for a responsible and de-coded reading. We observe through translation a literature of a second degree, a re-created literature. This re-creation does not reside in impairing the original sense with the translator's „creativity”, but in the creative choice of the lexical, grammatical, semantic forms that are most suitable with the target-language with the aim of the optimal equivalence of the message from the source-text. In the case of Japanese literature,

which is hardly accessible due to dependence on the context, we may discuss the relationship between translator and reader, confirmed by the tacit agreement of collaboration and trust. The iconic property of the Japanese literature consists in the non-discursive, visual-sensitive attributes that manifest photographically toward the meaning so that the translator has the responsibility of translating significances and subtleties.

The Japanese literary area is now just a part of the cultural diversity present in the editorial market in our country. In the spirit of integration and globalization, the fascination for intangible spaces, protected by distance, fades away, facing a more adequate reception: the one of the financial power. Money fascinates in the postindustrial world so that the exotic has undergone a morphological mutation through which Japan is perceived as the second economic power of the world. The contemporary Japanese literature unlaces its anguishes, limits, problems in a search of post-occupational and post-Occidental humanity and identity.

4.1. The Cultural-Historical Reception

The chapter that opens the research is the reception from a historical and cultural perspective, where the analysis is focused on the evolution of the Romanian-Japanese relations starting with the first signs of contact between the two countries, following their development on social, economic, politic and, most of all, cultural and literary plans. From 1902, with a break between 1944 and 1959 until nowadays, the bilateral contacts were characterized by a sinuous path due to the political aspects. Both the Romanian pre-war royalty and the post-war Japanese Communism had generated favorable contexts for developing political, economic and cultural relations, manifested by cultural exchanges (exhibitions, conferences, congresses, sports, booklets) or educational (scholarships for students and for businesses). Thus, we learn from diplomats' information (from the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or from published volumes), from travelers' notes (simple traveling notes, subjective, fragmentary in nature or well documented) the variety of contacts and the profundity of some of them with long-term effects. One example would be the Japanese-Romanian Dictionary from 1940, written by the secretary of legation Radu Flondor instructed at Waseda University, collaborating with a team of Japanese specialists (professor Kenzō Nezu, interpreter Fukashi Hayashi and proofreader Kiyomitsu Aoyama); translators from Japanese, but also into Japanese, Niponologists/Romanists (Stanca Cionca, Ioan Timus, Gheorghe Bagulescu / Naono Atsushi and Sumiya Haruya); the emergence

of Romanian-Japanese Associations with official character, which had monitored the activities of collaboration, others with cultural character, based on the twinning of two cities (Musashino-Brasov, Yokohama-Constanta).

Historically speaking, the reflection of the literary level imposes two periods of creative effervescence: the first one is the inter-war period, when Ioan Timuș (1938) and Gheorghe Băgulescu (1939) affirm themselves, but in which works of commercial quality became successful, continuing the tradition of Pierre Loti or of commercial prose – Vasile Pop (1921). The second period is the post-communist one, when the attention is directed toward the Japanese space, defining another age of literature. We encounter the short Postmodern prose of Ruxandra Cesereanu and the novels of Claudia Golea, Florina Ilis and George Moise. There are also reverential novels of Mihai Epure, in which the literary labor of fictionalizing Băgulescu's biography and autobiography stops at a weak epic narrative. There is also his poetry, which, despite the obsolete charm of the 19th century, is nothing but amateurism.

Compared to prose, in poetry, dissociating the reception in poetry that innovated through the content of cultural Japanese inspiration and poetry that followed the Japanese form, we may notice an active presence. During the inter-war period, Alexandru Macedonski (1927) and Al. T. Stamatiad (1935) promote the Japanese cultural and literary space. In the post-war period, we meet Eugen Jebeleanu (1958), Aurel Rău (1973), Marin Sorescu (1973), Nichita Stănescu (1978), Adrian Păunescu (1987), who include as an eccentric tendency the Japanese pattern in the imagery of their works. Focusing on the Japanese literary lode until identification is the trait of the poets named *haijini*: Florin Vasiliu, Mioara Gheorghe, Vasile Smărăndescu, a name that helps us to differentiate them.

The reception of this space may be analysed through the foreign literature of Japanese inspiration, which may be framed historically in three periods, characterized by the need of the exotic and new world. The first period is the beginning of the 20th century, represented by Pierre Loti, the one who had lead the biographical and creative path for many writers, bringing in the foreground the exotism of *geisha*. James Clavell is the representative of the second half of the 20th century, who through a different narrative approach reveals an unknown aspect of Japanese mentality (*samurai*), leading to the reception of the large audience. In 2006, Arthur Golden brings to the Romanian public another type of perceiving the *geisha* – a disenchanting *geisha*

from Loti's exoticism, but charming due to the narrative pathos of the tale from within, of the biographical fiction, which opens the door of authenticity for the contemporary reader.

From the historical point of view, the Japanese literary background is reflected in the cultural and daily press of the time on two segments: one situated before 1989 until the presence in the Romanian press was weakly represented, marked by the interruption of the relations that was difficultly remediated in the Romanian mentality. After 1990, the inter-cultural dialogue is manifested more freely, while the reflection in the press being much more dynamic. There are specialized and scientific journals as *Studia et Acta Orientalia* (1957; articles in English and French: *How to Teach Sino-Japanese Ideograms*, Radu Flondor – no. 1/1957; *La transcription dans la langue roumaine du système phonétique japonais*, Ioan Timuș, - no. 2/1959) or journals of culture and literature like *Studii nipone* (2000; established by several enthusiastic youngmen and the first issue is focused on Mishima's personality), while there are journals focused on poetry like *Haiku* (1991), *Albatros* (1992), *Hermitage* (1993), *Orion* (1995), *Orfeu* (1998), *Roku* (2010). All of them speak of the academic and amateur interest, promoting the Japanese culture and civilization, bringing closer to the public a large variety of perspectives. We also ascertain the appearance of thematical issues in journals like *Secolul XX* or *Vatra*, as well as a variety of articles presented in numerous literary and cultural journals, all of them representing the moving image of the reception of the Japanese artistic spirit. The historical path of all these literary and cultural representations is an ascendant one, revealing the nowadays assumed interest with professional competence and no traces of facile exoticism.

From the editorial point of view, the Japanese literature translated into Romanian follows an ascendant path, in direct proportion with the development of the programs of Japanese studies. An investigation of the editorial appearances reveals that, although initially the majority of translations came through the European ways (French, German, English), later on appeared revised editions, translated from Japanese, besides from the first editions translated directly from Japanese. The editorial appearance of Japanese literature in the Romanian media and editorial context, with all its hesitations, reissues and victories of bringing on the Romanian soil such a remote space (physically, culturally and linguistically speaking), as well as the struggle of forming an informed public is an ascendant, but jumpy one, although resistant, because a phenomenon that testifies it is the focusing of some big editorial houses on this segment of foreign literature, publishing extensively works of authors like Murakami Haruki,

Murakami Ryū, Abe Kōbō (Polirom), Ōe Kenzaburō (Rao), Kawabata Yasunari, Mishima Yukio, Yasushi Inoue, and bringing into reader's attention an editorial diversity: Enchi Fumiko, Miyamoto Teru, Ariyoshi Sawako (Humanitas). On the other side, we remark an ascendant interest for translating the Romanian literature into Japanese, some echoes being signaled in the press of some translations from Mihai Eminescu, Lucian Blaga, Zaharia Stancu, Tudor Arghezi, Mihail Sadoveanu, Mircea Eliade (entirely translated), Urmuz, Fanus Neagu, Eugen Barbu and others. The stocktaking of the works on the Romanian market from the criterion of the source language traces this path toward quality in the spirit of an optimal understanding of the *other*.

In his quality of cultural translator, the traveler was the first ambassador of the remoteness, the first promoter of intercultural communication. The journey means discovery, conquest, fascination and seduction of the unknown, the *Other*, thus, an apologia of alterity, an intrinsic premise of globalization through which the remoteness becomes closeness. The journey to the Rising Sun was dominated for centuries by the exotism of the situation at the opposite pole of Earth, on the one hand, and on the other hand, by the unwonted of an extremely different civilization compared to the Romanian Balcanism. The travelers have searched the different par excellence if not the opposite of what „home” means. The desire to know, to enlarge the pantheon of the human civilization through journey has been manifested through a variety of forms, but in this paper we have focused on those that made possible the reception of the Japanese spiritual space in the Romanian literary space. The section *Interferente* deals with an overview of the Romanian travelers in Japan from the first approximations to the cultural and mental studies of high recognition, as it is the case of *Caracterele civilizației japoneze*, in which there are studies of Ioan Timus and Gheorghe Bagulescu, awarded by the Society for Cultural Relations (Japan) at an international contest for celebrating 26 centuries from the establishment of the Japanese Empire. Names like Spătarul Milescu, Eugen Relgis, Elie Bufnea, Radu Flondor, dr. Gheorghe Ionășescu, Ion Frunzeti, Radu Lupan, Ioan Grigorescu, Mitică Detot, Mihai Epure, Constantin Vlad, Florea Țuiu, Paul Diaconu, Andrei Pleșu, Emma Tămâianu, Cătălin and Roxana Ghiță or Emil Eugen Pop had brought news from the Rising Sun, who, being in official, political, cultural or sportive mission, presented many times the Country of the Rising Sun with an eclectic narrative flair or from the economical perspective in numbers, offering especially before 1989 a global and systematic image, in which the authentic impressions are sometimes copied by the responsibility toward the fulfillment of political expectations. These were ambassadorial aspects

for our country there and they told the experience of alterity in a diversity of styles: from the historical-geographical accounts to reporter and spectator role and to the narrative exposure, sometimes humorously, sometimes desperately presented in a diagram from objective with completeness tendencies toward subjective, dominated by fragmentarism and ludic spirit.

4.2. The Literary Reception

The central theme of this thesis brings into foreground the reception of the Japanese spirit as it is reflected in various literary and linguistic creations like: novels of Japanese inspiration, theatre being weakly represented, then haiku poetry (very well received and developed on the Romanian ground), as well as other forms of Romanian and Japanese poetry. The interaction path of the two cultures seen retrospectively, points out the ups and downs, the stagnation and revitalizing of the contacts. From the literary perspective, the reception functions as a boomerang, turning in an eclectic way in various forms that emphasize the Japanese specificity, as it is the case of the novels of Japanese inspiration, placing the action in the Japanese space, or in forms specific to the Japanese literature, but which emphasize the specificity of the Romanian imaginary, as it is the case of the *haiku*, *tanka* or *senryū* poetry, in which it is set off the Romanian culture.

The Occident represented Japan every time through its own epistemology. The intimate, genuine understanding of this extremely Oriental insular space depends on the abolition of the Occidental perspective or its reversal. Having as a starting point a theory of alterity, that world may be associated to the other face of Janus, as the reversal of our world; arts, poetry, thought are activated by another type of mechanism. There are, of course, similarities and connections, an aspect that contributed to a dialogue between collective consciences so that the studies referred alterity to identification. The unknown and the different had been judged through the known. Europe had labeled as *exotic* everything that was from the *outside*, *foreign* (<gr. *exotikos*) and had developed a dialectics of the reception of the different through *exotism* and *alterity*. From a historical perspective, this dialogue involves a third concept, that of *identity*, and Ștefan Augustin Doinaș in an analysis of the exotic brings together the three concepts defining the exotic as the “ideal space in which the alterity of things is asserted, (...) [and which] constitutes, at the same time, an exam of identity with yourself”. Therefore, the exotism makes the “two irreducible realities: *Ego* and the *Other*” to communicate. It is necessary a conceptual demarcation of the

term, as the theoreticians of the exotism have formulated a disjunction: we separate the exotism that preserves an aura of the sacred (Umberto Eco) or, in Blaga's perspective "enhances the mystery" that, led by a high conscience, may be found in the work of art, and the facile, touristic exotism, found in the rush after weird souvenirs. This distinction is due to the fact that since the "journey absorbs the heterogeneous, it dissolves the exotic" (Ștefan Augustin Doinaș), reducing the diversity of the real to kitsch, exhausting its power of representation.

Through the dichotomy explicit/implicit we want a taxonomy, which demarcates and emphasizes the process of reception of the Japanese artistic space, process that proves to function diachronically and synchronically. The mechanisms through which the Japanese culture and world have come to us have a large usage, but we are focused here on few directions, like the journey that was the basis of the future reception, the foreign readings that had shaped and directed reception, and translation that had brought the Romanian reader close to a variety of texts, leading the reception toward an understanding closer to reality and authenticity.

We may notice three waves of reception, one at the beginning of the 20th century through the travelers, then, at the half of the 20th century through translations from German or French of the Japanese poetry, and starting with this second half we begin to distinguish a wave of direct translations from Japanese prose and poetry. There was developing a literary development of wide scope of *haiku* poetry that passes over diachronically these waves, making efforts to become a form of poetry adapted to the Romanian spirit.

In the Romanian literature, Japan considers the whole range of modified hypostases of cultural and identity morphology: from an identification with the Japanese tradition in Băgulescu's style or Ioan Timuș's assumed authentic exotism through *haiku*, *tanka* or *senryū* to Ruxandra Cesereanu's intertextuality and Claudia Golea's exiting taboo.

Situated at the literary frontiers, in the area of popular literature and easy prose, Vasile Pop fictionalises the journey experience through the exotism in the novel *Vândută de propria mamă*. The intention of the writing, revealed by the bombastic title in the spirit of this type of literature, excludes the author from the sphere of serious literature, but our interest in this novel is exploratory, taking into account the theme of exotism and of reception of the Japanese spirit in a period in which diary notes (fictionalised or not) constituted the only rapprochement of mentalities.

Ioan Timuș in the novels *Transiberiana*, *Ogio-san* and the drama in seven scenes *Hara-kiri* (only mentioned as existing in manuscript) reveals himself as a prose writer, effervescent in narration, paying attention to details, unveiling a fine sense of humour, a remarkable ability of handling the sentence and reaching for the delicate and profound structure of the insular spirit as an insightful analyst of mentalities and language, the qualities yet un-explored by the Romanian criticism. Written in 1938, the novel *Ogio-san* is from the perspective of phenomenology of culture an act of force, bringing not the exaggerated exotism from the fashionable books at that time, but an incursion attentively balanced regarding the inherent subjectivism and the informed objectivism into the Japanese reality in the years of opening toward Occident.

The novel *Suflet japonez* (1939) written by Gheorghe Băgulescu is a success of intercultural communication, given the fact that his writing was spontaneous, thus, authentic, with no political commitment. The novel itself is the product of an amateur effort, situated at the confluence of canonical and amateur literature, succeeding to offer a truthful image to the historical document, as well as a fascinating fictional perspective, tracing the essence of the traditional Japanese spirit in the Romanian language. This triumph was recognized and appreciated in Japan and based on this fact we may classify this novel as a lesson of the alterity reception, disenchanted by exotism due to the fact that the author recreates a foreign topos with a certainty of narratological movement that disconcerts the horizon of expectations of the informed reader. Far from being included in a theoretical taxonomy, although the Romantic and Realist elements may be discussed, the novel survives the time due to the factor of documentary accuracy and the internal net of significances that ensures the factual coherence and sometimes the dynamism, sometimes the discursive delicacy.

Inclined toward a stylized language, Mihai Epure tries to render what the historical document loses (that shred of life and emotion) by applying the epic form, but the texts remain at the level of romanced rendering of the biographical facts in a tendentious presentation, with no narrative force, which reduces significantly the reader's attention. *Dor de Sakura* (2007) is a homage novel to Gheorghe Băgulescu, in which the author narrates the diplomat's biography, elaborating his stay in Japan and presenting epically the love affair with Ueno Akiko. The failure as a prose writer is due to the lack of narrative talent and lack of vision. Instead, the lyrical space seems more suitable for him and even if at the amateur level, he is more credible. The eulogist

discursive style specific to a necrology induces a state of compassion and revolt against destiny and human smallness.

The narrative discourse is radically changed in Claudia Golea's literary work. The style of auto-fiction allows the author to hide and to discover in a postmodern attractive and edgy manner the reality called the "underground" reality in Tokyo, named this way as a cliché. *Planeta Tokyo* (1998) and *Tokyo by Night* (2000) are just two explosive novels in Murakami Ryū' style, in which the reality is exposed as nudity, bluntly and shamelessly. *Vară în Siam* (2004), *French coca-cola* (2005) are novels that continue the biography, the first of the Thailand experience and the second of childhood and teenagehood in so many places that the Japanese word *gaijin*, foreigner, defines her destiny. *Flower-Power Tantra* (2007) unveils the power of the vice, adopted as the second nature. The reception of Claudia Golea's works has met vehement critics, but also positive appreciations, being conscious of the narrative and discursive change. We consider that some reticence is necessary: unleashing in promiscuous language and underground imaginary, under the cover of auto-fiction doesn't certify the literary value.

The value is re-confirmed in the case of Ruxandra Cesereanu by the short story *Bătrânețea periculoasă a domnului Hokusai*, included in the volume *Nebulon* (2005). In a postmodern mosaic, the prose brings in the same existential plan the creator of famous matrices that influences substantially the artistic style of impressionists, Kurosawa – the representative of modern Japanese cinematography – Kawabata and Mishima – great personalities of modern Japanese prose. In a globalizing intention of abolishing the distances, the author gives up the historical linearity and adopts the logic of synchrony so that the discourse flows naturally through Japanese and European names, while the fictional line traces zigzags through time, space, history, culture and religion.

Florina Ilis, already a prominent figure of the nowadays literature, has transposed the passion for Japan in poems that complete the volume that leads toward an intentional traditional-artistic Japanese reception (*Haiku și caligrame*, 2000) and in the novel *Cinci nori colorați pe cerul de răsărit* (2005), which brings the reverse of that enthusiastic-exotic reception of the Japanese space in the actuality of a hyper-technologized reality in which the traditional survives in rich contexts where ceremonial is kept by generations as cultural and identity decorum. Florina Ilis' fictional game is not a simplistic one. The story is simple, while the implications are numerous and places on levels of symbolization. In the backstage of fiction, Florina Ilis slides

with subtlety from the Japanese world behind the mask, where the informational espionage pulls the strings, to the underground Romanian world from the metropolis of the extreme East. The name Darie, homonym with that of the Romanian restaurant in Tokyo, screen for the hidden relations of the officials of the two countries and the industry of exporting entertainment girls may refer, in esopic key, to the underground reality of the diplomatic secret.

The debut with an auto-biographical novel with an epistolary structure, *Iertați-mă că nu sunt japonez* (2011) announces George Moise. Conceived as letters for those who are at home, the novel renders the first year of the narrator-character in his new life in Japan, the first year towards another “home”. The narrative conscience, present in the text, certifies the authenticity of the story, narrative course, so that these letters are the “reloaded” form for the Reader. The reader is involved in the text, inherent procedure for the epistolary style, but Moise’s model reader is an intimate one, because, although the reader had started by being the closest human being – the mother –, through publishing we talk about Eco’s model reader. The author manages to handle a familiar relationship between the text and the reader, so that the reception of the Japanese space, with all its mental differences, the pros and cons (non-exotic) has become an open, dynamic, plausible one, never met in the Romanian literary context.

Thus, we may notice that in the representation of the Romanian proses, which have the subject of Japanese cultural, literary, social, historical imaginary, there is an evolution from a simple narration under the influence of the commercial novels toward a critical and literary assumption of amateurism specific to Postmodernity.

In Romania, the phenomenon of the Japanese poetry has developed in the forms of *haiku*, *tanka*, *renga* or *senryū*. There were established literary societies that had thematic journals, there were conferences organized and international associations were formed, as well as contests and international awards so that *haiku* has become today the most outspreaded form of Japanese art. The poem of Japanese origin had pervaded firstly through edited anthologies, translated from French and German languages, and then from Japanese, and only later they were tried as species of the lyrical genre by Romanian poets attracted by exotic and unusual poetic formulas. Few are those who succeed in getting closer to the poietics of the formula and to withdraw behind the words, saying a tenth and suggesting the other ninth, process of distilling the feeling that was proposed under the form of distilling the thought, aiming at the same passing beyond concrete and derisory, pointed out by Ion Pillat in his poems in a verse. The poetry of

Japanese inspiration is found on Romanian soil in the following hypostases: *haiku*, *tanka*, *renga*, *senryū* and in the poetry with a Japanese subject, as it is the case of Macedonski's poems, Florin Iaru's postmodern formula, Eugen Jebeleanu's and Mihai Epure's thematic poetry or Emil Eugen Pop's combining formula.

In its Romanian hypostasis, the poetry of Japanese inspiration form is often characterized by metaphors, intellectualism and bookish influences, fading away from the essence of the Japanese poetry. A rigorous draught of quality is imposed due to the fact that *haiku* poem should reach its goal of temporary illumination. The frenzy of writing *haiku*, *tanka*, *renga*, the variety of poets and the vastness of creations make the reception suspended in error. In the multitude of poems the reader loses the interest for the essence of this type of poetry: he cannot stop the moment, running through poems – too many of them metaphorical, interpretative and cryptic. Those who are reminiscent and stop the moment by enhancing the mystery are about to get lost. That is why we have identified in the poetry of *haiku* three types of writing: a superficial one that keeps the form of the 17 syllables, but transmits nothing (the message being paradoxical, unintelligible); one specific to the Romanian imaginary, dominated by metaphors and European intellectualism (named in *haiku style*); the third follows truly the way of the Japanese aesthetics, removing, layer after layer, the features of the European discursive and interpretative spirit in order to stay true to the flash of the authentic moment of desubjectified feeling of communion with the Universe.

The history of writing poetry in the Japanese style has in the Romanian context an evolution marked by three periods. The first one – the exotic – was realized through translations of various types and through writings of some travelers in Japan, among whom we mention here Al. Vlahuță, George Voevidca, Al.T. Stamatiad, Traian Chelariu, Ioan Timuș, Gheorghe Băgulescu, Alexandru Macedonski, this period being set between 1911-1943. The second period – the awareness – is a period of linguistic and creative initiative, encouraged at one moment by the direct linguistic competence, having as results anthologies of Japanese poetry, translated from Japanese, but also lyrical creations with Japanese themes or shy attempts of *haiku* of some well-known Romanian writers. The second period is between 1945-1990, and we mention Eugen Jebeleanu, Maria Banuș, Ion Acsan, Dan Constantinescu, Aurel Rău, Florin Vasiliu, Octavian Simu, Emil Eugen Pop as representatives. The last period from the proposed taxonomy is the contemporary one (1990-2010) - the aesthetic -, a period of poetic explosion and aesthetic

rigour, this being the most constructive and rich period, in which poets with national and international success have become prominent (Cornelia Atanasiu, Mircea Petean, Constantin Abăluță, Alexandra Flora Munteanu, Ion Codrescu, Eduard Țară and others). Some theoreticians of the Romanian *haiku* have appeared (Florin Vasiliu, Brândușa Steiciuc, Ion Codrescu), as well as journals, publishing houses and specialized societies (*Haiku*, *Orion*, *Albatros*, *Hermitage*, *Orfeu*; Publishing House *Haiku*, Publishing House *Alcor*, Publishing House *Ambassador*; the Romanian Society of *Haiku*, Society of *Haiku* in Constanța, School of *Renga*, *haiku* student societies, *on-line* journal *Roku* and others). There are also some recent blogs and sites (romaniankukai.blogspot.ro, mariuschelaru.blogspot.ro/, haikudomm.blogspot.ro/) that express a creative dynamism of the phenomenon.

The poetry in Romanian formula uses a Japanese imaginary and it is created under the exotic influence of literary readings, be it the case of symbolic-parnassien nature (Macedonski), under the influence of the events of the nuclear conflict (Eugen Jebeleanu), under the direct experience (Mihai Epure, Emil Eugen Pop) or the postmodern linguistic game (Florin Iaru, Mihai Vieru). The reception of this poetry by the Romanian reader is tributary to exotism and fascination of the Extreme Orient, being appreciated less due to the message quality or form. Classified in poetry of a fixed form, in the classic formula, in the free verse or in postmodern deconstruction, this poetry represents for most poets a niche in their creation, proving the influence of the enthusiasm toward the condition of the *stranger*.

The demarche of placing face to face two different epistemological systems, through the literature interface (emphasized here through the function of keeping and revitalizing the profound mechanisms of the collective subconscious), deals with observing, investigating and analyzing the way in which the reception is realized – what is adopted mimetic, what is filtered by the own culture and mentality, what is transformed in a new authentic product, based on the spatial-temporal fact in the reception culture.

4.3. The Critical Reception

Concerning the Japanese literature, we have opened more directions of reception, of this charming realm, dealing with the modern Occidentalized period, trying to present the Western intrusion in the collective mentality and in the Japanese cultural imaginary, as well as the local reminiscences, which, together with the contribution of cultural, social, economic and political

alterity, build a different social and cultural entity, although profoundly Japanese. The Japanese have not overtaken the Western culture, but have filtered it through their mentality, adjusting it to the Japanese spirit and developing a new identity, a recognizable identity. The rhythm in which this transfiguration was produced was a quick one (along time the Japanese gave proof of an exaggerated frenzy, in many occasions, which cost them much – see Katō Shūichi, 1998) and alienating in many cases. The history of the last century may be compared to a journey with Shinkansen, in which the eye (*ie* the brain) does not have the time to perceive the landscape changes and, once got at the destination, tries a feeling of ontological bedazzlement. The quick industrialization and technologization, the restoration after the nuclear catastrophe, as well as after the psychic defeat after the war, the rhythm of the daily life – all these are aspects to absorb organically and then mentally by the individual, creating at the subconscious level an acute feeling of derooting, of losing identity. These aspects were reflected in the artistic moments (the anguish literature with Western references – Camus, Kafka, Ionesco, Dostoevsky – feeding then literary the phobias born from the historical trauma. Our interest is constituted in this part of the moving sands, still changing, coming closer to the commercial value, but being proof of a singular experience in the world history – of shadow petrification (*See* the atomic effects in Hiroshima!).

The chapters of this section include a short contextualization of the modern and contemporary Japanese literature from the perspective of the literary history, including operative concepts, such as *shishōsetsu*, and literary trends – Romanticism, Naturalism, Postmodernism; the reflection of the Romanian exegesis upon the edited Japanese literature in volumes of criticism, anthologies, studies of Japanese language or in media in critical articles and reviews. In this area we mentioned that the degree of critical professionalism had overcome rarely the level of review or critical article in the specialized journals. The variety and multitude of articles, reviews point out the ascendant direction of the critical reception, while the volumes (*Dicționar de literatură japoneză*, Octavian Simu, *Haruki Murakami. Jocul metaforic al lumilor alternative sau Speriat din vis de vântul hoinar... Studii de semiotică a culturii și poetică japoneză*, Rodica Frențiu, *Ghid de literatură japoneză*, Angela Hondru, *Haiku. Estetica tăcerii*, Mihaela Hașu; *Limba japoneză. Schițe de gramatică funcțională*, Emma Tămâianu-Morita) may represent a solid foundation in the exegesis building.

A more dynamic part is constituted in the exegetic analysis of some of the works and authors early mentioned, expressing the epic premises and analysing symbolic, cultural, psychological, fantastical aspects, revealing affinities between the authors, with the European space, followed in the case of some themes as autism, myth and demythization, suicidal patterns, interculturality and internationality, love or the stories of the young generation, a ground and mutilated generation from the identity perspective. What we have experienced in this section is a sounding of the actual Humanity, of the problems of spiritual-universal essence, identifying one of the proposed solutions by literature as ancestral art – that of the cosmological and eschatological power of the Word.

The modern and contemporary Japanese literature proposes an alternative to suicide and alienation. Even if authors like Abe Kōbō and Murakami Ryū engrave in their novels a hurtful facet of reality with a direct cause in the lack of communication, more emphasized and devastating so that the voluntary claustration, as well as the autism are the negative effects of the lack of communication and indifference, there are still other new ways and means to regain humanity. The suicide (Mishima Yukio, Taguchi Randy, Yamada Taichi) is a social act, individual though execution and collective through cause and motivation. Therefore, the society must make a step side and look the entire picture to identify the problem, the cause and the solution. On the other hand, the Japanese novels project love (Natsume Sōseki, Kawabata Yasunari, Inoue Yasushi, Ariyoshi Sawako, Kanehara Hitomi) profoundly, although this is a different type of love compared to the Western vision, but the power of the feeling, related to the inherent virtues of the Oriental spirit and the flusters of the soul, bring in the foreground the fascination of the *emptiness* and the limit of the *fullness*, of the flesh.

On another level of the Story, we have observed and analyzed the internationalization of the writing (Murakami Haruki, Mishima Yukio), which highlights the same problem of identity, but from another angle, from the reader's angle, more and more informed culturally and scientifically. This brings us to the conclusion that, in the actual context of globalization, internationality is *a fact*, not a choice. The question that emerges and which we feel as being acute is if there may be anything national, rooted in the forefathers' land, giving identity and stability.

Fabricating myths through the Word's power of bringing into being, man has protected himself from the unknown and has developed the artistic imaginary. Thus, the myth becomes a

defensive mechanism, but also a means of escaping from the reality. We may shape the re-mythizing perspective of the contemporary literature, as the natural order does not permit stagnation, only evolution, and, after, experimenting the crisis, the imaginary will open new reading proposals of the myth. Brought in front of these experiences, the character and the reader understand life differently, being conscious of the existence of *before* and *after*. The limits of the reality, spatial temporality, spread by the intrusion of the unreal in case of authors as Enchi Fumiko, Murakami Haruki, Taguchi Randy provoke the imaginary to a resettlement of the metaphors of the actual world, to a reestablishment of priorities, aiming at reaffirming the Man through an explosion of the subconscious safeties.

A new fictional form, *keitai shōsetsu* (the novel written on the mobile phone) though it is far from being literary in the sense of the high literature, is the type of popular literature among the young generation, which, in this hyper technologized context, does not perceive reading as the richest entertaining. Created in the time between school and home, in a colloquial, elliptical language, in series, these novels are the product of the Japanese post-technological culture in which the speed, the high technology on one hand, and the visual iconic specificity of the Japanese language on the other hand, are a form of psycho-affective therapy of the teenagers confronted with various temptations and dangers as sex, drugs, disillusion, need of a happy end. Thus, the Story remains in man's affective imaginary; the fairy tale with heroes and princesses survives over time and fashions.

Additionally, we've opened the reception toward the virtual space of blogs and the social-literary space of inquiries in an exploring reception. The actual form of reception and more difficult to analyze is the virtual dimension through which the one that stays hidden in a digital relativity. The blog is in its primary, etymological sense, a "disseminated diary through the internet" (Iulian Boldea). Thus, the blog becomes the easiest form of contact between the author and the reader, the blog is the presence at a click. The revealed identity almost in the manner of the intimate diary is also the one that hides and fictionalizes itself. The blog as a virtual form of literature reception – through reviews, essays, opinions, literary creations, extensions toward other pages – has another advantage of continuing the reading in a virtual form depending on the electricity, but in a direct contact with the teenage reader and with the future.

The literary inquiry and a series of interviews with translators (of Japanese literature) has unveiled that the reception of the modern Japanese literature, represented by the translated authors is the effect of the universal literary canon. The reading of these authors, although heavy, demanding, is predictable in the academic formation in a demarche of an archeologist searching for the internal mechanisms of the text or of the spirit or of the confirmation of the preset value judgments. Regarding the reception of the Japanese literature as the mirror of Japan, Kawabata's novels have been perceived for a long time as a mimetic reflection of reality. The author still suggests that Japan of his novels is a projection of *pharmakon* type, which treats the terrible anguish of those years, fact that determined Ana Scuturici to say: "It is not Japan that created Kawabata, but Kawabata created a Japan". In this way, the reception depends on a cliché and this exotic cliché originated in a cultural-mental and cultural-psychological non-understanding that needs to be annulled.

It seems that now, at the beginning of the 21st century, becoming conscious of the responsibility of reception is an acuter issue and, lacking the instrumentation to *translate* the difference for a proper acceptance, everything remains at the level of easy exotism in front of a closed world. We may hear here and there that "you need a Japanese mind to understand truly a haiku" or "the Japanese language, depending on the context, with its visual property of pictographies, transmits the sense vertically". These assertions function as cultural-linguistic barriers and will influence the access to reality. The reception of the Japanese space is based on coming close through familiarity and European status.

Therefore, we consider that Japan's opening and westernization has been perceived as truncated. The westernization has been made in the sense that the West had pervaded roughly the *tatami* of the Japanese spirit, while a true opening had not occurred. We may talk about a first stage – a voluntary one for modernization – when the opening was directed in a single way: the Japanese had obtained the information, absorbed it in their thought and mentality, without giving up their inner specificity – profoundly – but even here we may observe their closing nature. Those who wanted to know them discovered the evasive, the foggy suggestions – harsh barriers of volcanic stones for the European mind accustomed to a more direct attitude.

The second stage of opening – involuntary, forced by the military defeat – has functioned in the same one way; the Americans came, made pictures of the arched bridges with the petite geishas, brought the technological comfort, while the Japanese changed their clothes

(the exterior, the mask), becoming businessmen and giving up the small steps that retained the glance and delayed the rhythm of Transition, wearing high heels and sheering. Nevertheless, they are not opened toward the West, they are closed under the politeness mask of the smile and evasive, and even if the West thought that they had decrypted the Japanese, the reality is different. Despite the fact that even their literature *seems* western, using the trivial language, bringing into discussion the American music, the European paintings, the Greek myths, the Japanese literature is something else. That is why we still perceive the Japanese as aliens. The discussion is long and it opens brightly on one side, just in order to make us realize that it closes on the other – painfully and frustrating for us, who analyze it.

If Japan's stigma in the Western imaginary (Romanian included) is represented by the exotism of the cherry flower, of the charming and refined *geisha*, of the respect toward nature, of the Emperor cult and Kawabata or Mishima literature, then this work tries to suspend this horizon of expectation, multiplying the reception of the space of latent valences through an epic and lyric perception of the Japanese spirit. The paper highlights the means of the Romanian literature to find the fertile soil in exploring a remote reality, bringing it closer sometimes through an assumed fictionalization, sometimes just an exotic reality, while bringing in the foreground another face of the country of the Rising Sun – a translated, much Westernized, alienated, under the influence of the vicious night temptations, of despair in front of the failure, of the lack of communication that is uncontrollable, of lost loves, extreme violence – all played greatly on the scene of life and death. This is a world with no high aspirations, in which the man fights for survival in a reality captured more and more by machines, but which still has the power of transmitting the message: “it's OK; the world is still under your feet. I stay on this ground; the same ground where are tress and ants that are carrying sugar to their hillocks, and girls who playing with the ball, and puppies that are running” (Murakami Ryū).

The thing that made the Westerner to understand, to respect and to love this evasive space, full of delicacy and rigidity, is precisely the power of this spirit of suggesting, of not telling, of leaving the richness of significance to float *beyond* the palpable of *Yes* and *No*, in that space full of latency and virtuality that *enchants*.

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