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UFOs: Unidentified Literary Objects in French Contemporary Poetry

Since symbolism, perspectives on the notion of 'object' in French poetry have known a long genealogy made up of upheavals and renewals. From Dada's objet trouvé to Ponge's materialism in passing through Ghérasim Luca's 'objectively offered object', the 'object-poem' has become a central issue in the search for new modes of expression in French poetics. The recent years, however, saw, in France the rise of new forms of 'object poems' cutting across all forms of traditional formal techniques and criterion of identifications. In their two influential volumes of *La Revue de Littérature Générale* published in 1995 and 1996, French poets Pierre Alferi and Olivier Cadiot offered an inventory of techniques of composition (loops, cut-up, braiding, badgering, grafting etc) to produce what they termed 'OVNIS'. This acronym whose play on word refer to both their uniqueness ('Objet Verbaux non Identifiés', 'Unidentified Literary Objects') as well as their peculiarity (OVNI is the French equivalent for UFO) were texts based on the manipulation and the grafting of textual residues ('ready-mades') which often incorporated filmic or pictorial fragments that migrate throughout other fields, genres and media and demonstrated an engagement with the 'real' through contextual displacement and the redeployment of texts far removed from literary contexts (legal documents for instance) often to political ends. Since, the ufologic metaphor has been used in different contexts that include visual arts arts (OLP for 'Objets Littéraires Plastiques', 'Plastic Literary Objects'), installation (IDO for 'Installation Déréalisantes d'Objets', 'Derealized Installations of Objects') or music (OSNI for 'Objets Sonores Non Identifiés', 'Sonic Non Identified Objects).

Although these practices extend our understanding of the poetic and invite us to reconsider notion of literariness and genre, some influences of earlier direction in French poetry (Dadaism, Situationism) and of Anglo-American poetry (The objectivist, Beat, Language and Neo-conceptualist poets) can be identified in the work of contemporary French poets. This paper will examine the terms and engagements with these traditions in the work of several contemporary poets (Jérôme Game, Suzanne Doppelt, Eric Sadin, Franck Leibovici etc.) It will show the ways in which these new forms of appropriation create new forms of poetic object that enabled these poets to reverse the lyrical dialectic (narcissism/emotion) by another

conception of writing based on a constructivist approach (objectivity/construction) that lets language mirror and surface. Finally, it will examine how these techniques of assemblage impact the reader and generate new forms of knowledge and experience.

Bill Brown

University of Chicago

Poetry and the Object Form

While a host of poets in the 20th century worked to represent things, others worked to render the poem itself more thing-like. How can poetic discourse have the feel and the force of a physical object? William Carlos Williams is famous for his poems about things, beginning in the 1920s, but the thing-like character of writing becomes most manifest as he composes *Paterson*, his epic assemblage, which he continued to work on until he could no longer work (in the first years of the 1960s). After focusing on various efforts to make language concrete (from André Breton's *poème-objet* to the experiments of the LANGUAGE poets) this talk will track the logic within the work of Williams that propels him from the poetry of objects to the object form of writing.

Jana Cindlerová

Silesian University, Opava

The Vital Things

The only play František Langer ever wrote, called *Bronzová rapsodie* (“A Bronze Rhapsody”), has never been staged. The author himself never thought it would either given by the contemporary situation (the play is concerned, among other things, with a leading role of masses, and was written in the 1950s) and the work as such (initially also its length) as he would, as he put it, let it grow “by leaps and bounds”. Despite its strong scenic potential and due to both reasons (the form and the intention), *Bronzová rapsodie* can be perceived as a book drama – as a form chosen for *literary* expression, as a poetic image in both the general and the specific sense of the word. Moreover, one of the protagonists is a poet.

In his very last play, František Langer returns to antiquity, be it through the story (manufactured on the basis of several lines from the *Iliad*), or, similarly to his dramatic debut *Svatý Václav* (“Saint Wenceslas”), through the Homeric enunciation in the hymns of the blind rhapsode Diomedes, passing the mythological narratives from generation to generation. The meaning of objects that abound on both levels surpasses their functions as props or as mere characterizations of their owners. However, it does not stand as “otherwise inexpressible” symbols (which is, undoubtedly, the intention). Such “things of daily use”, seemingly jostling forward within a “realistic story”, define (and sometimes also limit) the thinking of those whom they belong as well as their place in the society (a spear made of ash wood, a crutch, a hair ointment); yet it always depends on the extent the owners identify with them.

Bronzová rapsodie can be compared to a fresco: it expands temporally and spatially, it sums up the author’s knowledge about art and his own works as well as life. It is *things* what enables us to navigate and explore its vast expanses.

Michel Collot

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The Objective Lyricism of Francis Ponge

Objectivism and/or the explicit nature of avant-garde poetry movements which would intentionally refer to Francis Ponge would also be considered as the counterparts of lyricism derived from Romanticism and the poetry inspired by it. In his approach to poetry, Francis Ponge would stress “*le parti pris des choses*” (the voice of things) and “*compte-tenu des mots*” (the consciousness of words), but he would also attempt to express through them something that escapes an emotional utterance and introspection through the speaker, and thus only reveals itself when touching the outer world. Therefore, Ponge’s materialism is associated with “objective lyricism”. This paper will introduce some of his predecessors in the history of modern poetry, and seek to shed light on some of the objective lyricism’s paradoxes with the help of the term “*matière-émotion*” (matter-emotion).

Sylva Fischerová

Charles University, Prague

Ekphrasis and the Ancient Novel

In my paper I will first introduce the concept of ekphrasis as defined in the *progymnasmata* of Theon and Nicolaus of Damascus, the crucial principle being that of *enargeia*, i. e. the vivacity of presenting an object before one's eyes: “‘Vividly,’ ἐναργῶς, is added (scil. to the definition of ekphrasis) because it is in this respect that ekphrasis differs most from *diegesis*. The latter sets out the events plainly, while the former tries to make the listeners into spectators” (Nicolaus of Damascus, *Prog.* 68,9). Second, the application of this concept to the narrative technique of ancient novelists will be explained. We can even speak of a “topos of theater and image” (*theatrum et pictura*) which can be seen as an integral part of the so-called “formula” of the novel and which plays an extremely important role especially in Achilles Tatius' novel *Leucippe and Clitophon* and in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*.

Wolfgang Funk

Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz

The Poetry of Deep Time: Female Poets Making Fossils Talk

At least since Mary Anning dug the first ichthyosaur skeleton from the cliffs of Lyme Regis in 1811, fossilised remains of prehistoric life forms have figured as a significant link back to a time out of mind. Most prominently, the scientific conclusions drawn from their discovery were instrumental in stretching the time line of the earth as far back as to, more or less conveniently, take in the necessary ‘deep time’ required for Darwinian natural selection to take place.

In the first part of my paper, I will address in more detail this scientific revolution ushered in by the discovery and interpretation of fossils by introducing the key players in this context, who include Anning, William Smith, Charles Lyell, William Buckland but also supposedly ‘lesser lights’ such as Gideon Mantell and Samuel Woodward. I will show how the ‘reading’ of prehistoric finds has always reflected concurrent notions of ‘man’s place in nature’ (Huxley) as well as helping develop insight into questions of the history of the world as well as ideas on the nature of time itself.

In a second step I will try to show how these scientific developments were taken up and interpreted in late 19th century women’s poetry so as to provide a counter narrative to a supposedly conventional interpretation of a Darwinian evolution based on competition and the struggle for survival. I will be briefly talking about pertinent texts by the likes of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Constance Naden and Isabella Southern, before focussing in particular on the work of May Kendall (1861–1943), which in poems such as “The Lay of the Trilobite”, “Ballad of the Ichthyosaurus” or “The Philanthropist and the Jelly-Fish” repeatedly features fossilised speakers, who more often than not challenge traditional account of their own role in the history of the world.

Jakub Hankiewicz

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Nature of Things in Polish Poems

This paper explores various concepts of an object in poems “Study of the Object” (1961) by Zbigniew Herbert and “The Revolution of Things” (1956) by Miron Białoszewski. Both Herbert and Białoszewski made their mark on Polish literature in 1956 – a debut belated because of the political situation – and immediately became the leading poets of two major types of post-war poetry: neoclassical and neoavantgarde respectively. Despite the difference between the movements, the early works of the two poets share the central issue – a thing and its nature. Moreover, Herbert’s text is a response to that of Białoszewski.

Apart from the aforementioned affinity, the poems also share a philosophical undertone; while Białoszewski employs a cosmological vocabulary and the title to allude to Copernicus and his *On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres*, parallels can also be drawn between Białoszewski and the philosophy of Martin Heidegger (such attempts were also made in a different context by Adrian Głęń). Herbert’s “Study of the Object”, on the other hand, uses the formal strategies of Heraclitus’ wisdom writing while, in terms of topics and vocabulary, there is a connection with Plato’s dialogues *Timaeus* and *Republic*.

This paper will, firstly, offer an interpretation of the poems as well as a summary of what constitutes an object in the works of these two authors, and secondly, tackle the essential question of how the poetical devices and philosophical approaches differ when the authors ask what the nature of an object is. In this respect, I will take up Wisława Szymborska who admonishes literary critics for the way they write about Zbigniew Herbert’s poetry: “Nobody is asking why this is poetry, not a philosophical treatise”.

Eliška Dana Härtelová

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“I am in love with things, taciturn companions”. An Object in the Poetry of Jiří Wolker

Czech avantgarde poetry of the 1920s labelled as “proletarian” will be discussed here, specifically its major poet, Jiří Wolker. Wolker’s poems will be viewed within a specific context, his penchant for the things of everyday life as proclaimed by Devětsil, the art movement Wolker was a part of.

Therefore, Wolker will figure here as a concrete realization of a Soviet concept of transformation of passive capitalist goods that gave rise to workers’ alienation from his product into an active socialist object constituted in the Russian constructivist Boris Arvatov’s article *Byt i kultura veshchi* (“Everyday Life and the Culture of the Thing”). In particular, the theoretical papers of the Devětsil movement stressed a direct portrayal of reality exasperated by the refusal of post-Kantian philosophy that focuses on phenomenon and the art movements that stemmed from it in the European avantgarde, especially Cubism, Futurism and Civilism. According to Devětsil, things ought to have been portrayed directly and, ideally, from the perspective of the purposefulness of their shape.

This framework will serve as the basis for various approaches (a primitivist portrayal, functionalism, exoticism, collectivism) to portraying objects of everyday life in the poetry of Jiří Wolker who, in his first collection of poems, aims to portray intimately the speaker’s world, while his second collection represents a gradual objectivization of a subject in its matter.

Josef Hrdlička

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Things on an Island: The Horizons of Life with Things

With more than half a century between them, two poets, Saint-John Perse and Elizabeth Bishop both wrote a poetic variation on the story of Robinson: “Crusoe: Images pour Crusoe” (1905) and “Crusoe in England” (1970s). In both cases, the poets also consider things and, partially in a similar fashion, show their transformation after Robinson’s return to civilization. Here, the nature of things differs from the epic narrative of the novel. More than the necessity of things for survival or their usefulness (things bring fundamentals of culture to the island), the poems talk about the intimate life with things, the proximity to objects and people, unique in this island situation. After Robinson goes back, the things lose their aura, which indicates two issues. One is the horizon through which we perceive things and that determines the relationship of intimacy and closeness. The other issue is the artificial environment of the island: in Defoe’s story, it is not based on a real experience. In these poems, this fiction is further expanded by imagination or dreaming which corresponds to Bachelard’s concept of dreaming (*reverie*). In this sense, imagination stands in an interesting relation to fiction and also represents a method of getting to know things. Moreover, it leads to a reconsideration of the relation between things and the imaginary, or dreaming.

Anne Hultsch
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In Mandelstam's Kitchen

Osip Mandelstam (1891–1938) is considered one of the most important members of Acmeism, and he is also the author of its manifesto. The paradigm of poetry, as seen by this Russian poetic school, brought back the objects, more specifically the object-oriented poetry. The axiom of Acmeism is “A = A.” The Acmeists stress the exact meaning of words. Their texts revel in the particularities of daily life, in everyday objects, to which they ascribe their own dignity. These objects are secular, specific and three-dimensional, meaning that metonymy is more prevalent than metaphors or symbols. Putting poems together is considered a craft, the poems are therefore crafted objects. This type of thinking about poetry makes the Acmeists closer to the classicist view of literature.

Apart from other issues, this paper also addresses the notion that the periods in which object-oriented poetry is written always belong to the so-called prosaic periods, given that we understand the development of literature as a movement between two mutually exclusive style types (see models such as Curti's pendulum or Chizhevsky's waves). I intend to examine both Mandelstam's essays and his poems. Interestingly, some of the objects are to be found in both of those, aimed at adults, but also children, for example Primus (a gas stove). In his essay called “On the Nature of the Word” (1922), Mandelstam talks about an “inner, domestic Hellenism”. For Mandelstam, Hellenism is “an earthenware pot, oven tongs, a milk jug, kitchen utensils, dishes; it is anything which surrounds the body. Hellenism is the warmth of the stove experienced as something sacred; it is all possession that makes a person part of the outer world, the clothes that we wear (...). Hellenism is the conscious surrounding of man with domestic utensils rather than impersonal objects, the transformation of impersonal objects into domestic utensils, and the humanizing and warming of the surrounding world with the most delicate teleological warmth.” It is not about things or objects themselves, but about the ones that carry meaning in everyday life, the ones humans have claimed by using them.

From there, I ask a second set of questions: what, and how, plays out between the objects and the meanings we ascribe to them? Peeking into Mandelstam's real kitchen also means catching a glimpse of his poetic kitchen.

Matouš Jaluška

Institute of Czech Literature, CAS

Stones to Seed, Seed to Flesh. Material Fluidity in Medieval Miracle Poems

And think not to say within yourselves: We have Abraham to our father. For I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. (Mt 3:9–10)

In proposed paper I will examine the corpus of 13th century West-European miracle poems focused on the Virgin Mary, esp. the collections of Gautier de Coinci (*Miracles de Nostre Dame*), Gonzalo de Berceo (*Milagros de Nuestra Señora*) and Alfonso X the Learned (*Cantigas de Santa Maria*), looking for instances of transitions between the “lithic”, floral and animal (or, rather, “carnal”, i.e. “fleshy”) realms facilitated by the saintly agency, specifically excluding the changes realized or underwent by relics. Coinci’s collection will be read with respect to an image from the first prologue, where the Virgin takes the form of a chess queen, a common, passive, carved object that can be easily used to practice the sinful activity of gambling, but in this case it becomes extraordinarily powerful and able to defeat the devil in his own game. The principal image of Berceo’s poems (likewise taken from the prologue) presents the world changed by the Incarnation and subsequent activity of the Virgin under the guise of a fresh, succulent garden, where the particular miracles take the form of tall trees providing shade. In *Cantigas* I will focus on the connection between the transmutations of the matter (water, stone, and wood) and the laughter it provokes among the onlookers. Generally, I will follow the trail blazed by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen in his *Stone: An Ecology of the Inhuman* (University of Minnesota Press, 2015) with the aim to expand this strand of thinking towards the miraculous, comprehended in this paper in Augustinian vein as a faculty imbued into the created world as a whole at the very beginning of time, waiting for actualization through the joint effort of mortals, saints and the Creator. It will be (hopefully) shown that the most mundane of things in these poems offer in fact the most profound and efficient way of connecting the human and the celestial sphere.

Jiří Jelínek

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The Description of Objects in Martian Poetry

The aim of this paper is to present and analyze the methods of the object description by the authors of the so-called “Martian Poetry”, a minor movement in British literature of the 1970s and 1980s. The center of their writing is an attempt to observe the world in the way a hypothetical visitor from a foreign planet would perceive it. There are various ways how to reach this “alienation”; by giving alternative names to objects, by pointing out their roles, both real and presumed, by describing their outward appearance, by surprising comparisons with other objects, and by other methods.

Focus will be put on the texts written by the pivotal writers of the movement; among them especially Craig Raine, author of the famous poem “A Martian Sends a Postcard Home”, but also Christopher Reid, known for instance for his poem “Baldanders”. The paper will try to answer which things are chosen by the poets and why (for example a book or a car as a symbol of human civilization), and what are the specifics and eventually differences of their methods and what do they accent.

Additionally, the paper aims to examine the idea of “Martian writing” in wider context, for example in comparison with comparison with Viktor Shklovsky’s thoughts on defamiliarization, and the possibility to understand the “Martian” approach as one of the common ways how to write poems about objects. This approach could be sought both in older and newer literature, not necessarily related to the Martian poets; and it can also serve as one of the possible interpretation techniques of poetry reading or as a starting point of creative writing practices.

Zornica Kirkova / Olga Lomová

Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin-Preußischer Kulturbesitz / Charles University, Prague

Objects and the Self: “Poems on Things” (*yongwu*) in Early Medieval China

Among the poetic genres that flourished at the courts and literary salons of early medieval China (220–589) there are poems “versifying about a thing” (*yongwu*). *Yongwu* poems were usually improvised during social gatherings and aimed at an original and witty presentation of an object chosen at random – either from the natural world or man-made objects and luxury items. These highly descriptive compositions have traditionally been read as shallow “still lives,” devoid of deeper significance and personal feelings. The present paper will argue that in addition to “investigating reality” many of these supposedly non-figurative pieces convey personal or allegorical meanings as well. I will take a closer look at the ways metaphoric meanings are engendered in these poems and explore how particular physical features are re-interpreted, imbued with new connotations and associated with human values. To what degree are these poetic depictions determined by referential accuracy and to what degree are they conditioned by established descriptive patterns in poetry, and by the traditional system of allegorical connotations? Consideration of these issues will also allow a better understanding of the nature of verbal representations of material objects in early medieval *yongwu* poetry.

Kirill Korchagin

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Andrey Monastyrskiy's Emptiness with Arkadiy Dragomoshchenko's Wholleness: Two Ekphrastic Strategies in the Contemporary Russian Poetry

Andrey Monastyrskiy and Arkadiy Dragomoshchenko are regularly linked with a competitive couple of trends in the Russian Poetry of the latter half of the 20th century. The first one was acclaimed as a father of the Moscow (romantic) conceptualism and an initiator of *Collective Actions'* groundbreaking performances, and the second one as a master of neo-modernist poetry which absorbed the language of continental philosophy mixing it with the language of post-war literary avant-garde. For both authors, the phenomenological philosophy was quite *tour de force*: it posits a question of the origin of human conscience and subjectivity in their link with individual perception. Monastyrskiy was fascinated by Edmund Husserl while Dragomoshchenko was Maurice Merleau-Ponty's reader, and a study of connection between perception and subjectivity was crucial for both of them. Therewith, the poets were inspired by semi-popular guides for Eastern philosophy, especially by Dr Suzuki's treatises on *Zen-Buddhism* that was widely circulated in the Soviet *samizdat* literature in the early 1970s. In these texts, emptiness was observed as a crucial concept: "all things here are characterized with emptiness," as Suzuki's translation of *Prajnaparamitahridaya* sutra proclaims. In Monastyrskiy's and Dragomoshchenko's poetry, Buddhist thought became combined with phenomenological one: in poetic investigation into subjectivity, the principle is *the thing*; the core of all things is emptiness; i.e. the perception is a contact with emptiness. There are two masterpieces in which this treatment of subjectivity is extremely clear: Monastyrskiy's *Poetic World* (*Поэтический мир*) and Dragomoshchenko's *Dinner with Gentle Gods* (*Ужин с приветливыми богами*). If the first regards every thing as a construction built of empty atoms, the second erases the border between different things in order to show how perception proliferates itself from one thing to another and beyond. In addition, these poems may be regarded as true guides to the world of emptiness: they immerse readers in a quasi-trance condition where a deep inquiry of their subjectivity takes place.

Jakub Kornhauser

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Face of the Last Things. An Introduction to Polish Object-oriented Poetry

I would like to discuss the crucial points in the evolution of the object-oriented poetry from the inter-war period (and the Avant-garde – with the quasi-Surrealism of the early Aleksander Wat – meaning of the object), through post-war prose poems of Zbigniew Herbert (*The Study of The Object* etc.) and its French Cubist (Jacob-like) formulas, Miron Białoszewski's "everyday things," New Wave's fascination with the American Objectivism (Reznikoff, Williams), Concrete Poetry of Stanisław Dróżdź in his poems-installations, up to today's body- (or, even, posthuman-) poetry inspired by the New Materialist ideas (Bronka Nowicka or Marcin Mokry, for instance).

I think this phenomenon could be applied in literary and cultural studies as a twofold paradigm: on the one hand, it focuses on the verbal or textual aspect of the Avant-garde experiments (utilizing Bürger's or Barthes' formulas), on the other, it gives an opportunity to acknowledge their anthropological, or sociological character, marked by Baudrillard, Danto, Foster, or Krajewski. In this perspective, the substantial process of abandonment of reality (Lyotard), which stands for the dominant element of the Avant-garde aesthetics, could be linked with the crisis of representation, as well as with the binary nature of the object (at the same time textual/internal and contextual/external forms) itself. From this point of view, the notion of object is considered not only a key concept of a revolutionary aesthetics, but also an announcement of the modern "theories of things," linked with anthropology, design and cultural studies.

Olga Kubeczková
University of Ostrava

Objectiveness as an Aspect of Poetry for Children

This paper explores objectiveness in children's poetry as it is a significant aspect of this genre that occurs in various shapes and forms. Here, I focus on modern Czech poetry for children. This stands for an innovative type of children poetry, which originated in the 1930s and the 1940s, and was made famous by Czech poets Vítězslav Nezval and František Halas. These poets and other Czech poets inspired by them (mainly from the 1960s onwards) were looking for ways to enliven the poetic expression by looking at the world of children and the child personality.

The paper introduces two poems illustrating this understanding of poetry. The first is Halas's "Před Usnutím II" (Before Falling Asleep II; published in his collection called *Ladění* [Tuning]) which offers two views on objectiveness: 1. Objectiveness inspired by the concreteness of child reality and expressed with means typical for the child subject (the so-called child metaphor), 2. Objectiveness in the background of the communicative situation which forms another layer of the poem's meaning.

The second poem is "Kámen v botě" (The Pebble in the Shoe) from a collection called *Bačkůrky z mechu* (Moss Slippers) by Milena Lukešová. Her poetics has an even bigger tendency towards the loosening of the verse, towards an unaffected, natural expression. The poem is dialogical; it gives space to the child speaker and its contact with the world. The child claims the world around them by personifying; the objects are familiarized through the attributes of childhood. Focusing on objectiveness, there are three levels in this poem: 1) Objectiveness on the level of the theme, the objective scene is connected to the subjective perspective of the child, 2) The notion of objectiveness creates a specific reception potential: apart from the message itself, the poem also gives its readers a space for their own imagination, 3) Objectiveness is also expressed through the visual side of the poem; the way the individual stanzas are arranged stresses the sensory character of the scene (a pebble that is being shaken out of a shoe).

Miloš Kučera

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Rilke's Dinggedicht

Rilke would disagree that the difference between *Dinggedichte* and other poems lies solely in the distinction between the *description* of the object and the *feeling* of the subject.

The value of "The Panther" (an analysis will follow) is neither zoological nor Zoo-logical (it is not against vicious people locking up animals), it's psychological/anthropological: the image of "body imprisoned in soul" (presented here in a reversed way, as opposed to the common "soul in body"). Eventually, it's about *projection* of Rilke's status and disposition.

Explicitly, Rilke understands the difference between his poetry and poetic works of the past as the difference between "creating *feeling*" (*das Gefühl bilden*) versus "evaluating one's *feeling*" (*über sein Gefühl urteilen*), and – affectively phrased – distinction between (obsessive) indifference versus (hysterical) whining (see *Requiem für Wolf Graf von Kalckreuth*). In both cases, the *feeling* is pivotal; in case of *des Dinggedichtes*, however, it's acquired by identifying with the object, its *introjection* and *projection* (example will be presented), thereby creating the so called "*Weltinnenraum*" (see *Es winkt zu Fühlung fast aus allen Dingen*).

Objects turn into complexes of signifiers, and because these can sometimes be rather general, the poem may appear more *anonymous* (another Rilke's requirement); the selection, however, succumbs to the initial idea, author's intuition that the introjection could, after the attempt to create a poem, overlap with projection.

What is more important: While reading Rilke's lyric poetry *in relation to Ding*, two harmful tendencies emerge: 1) The tendency to transform all objects, deeply felt signifiers, to *super-Ding* "death", where Rilke requested a number of figures, *Gestalten* (typical in the Existentialist interpretation); 2) the tendency to transform Rilke's favourite signifiers into a fixed idiolect, independent on the context, and to interpret particular poems only comparatively as a combinations of these (as in E. Leisi's reading of *Sonnets to Orpheus*).

Mariana Machová

University of South Bohemia, České Budějovice

“Not the Thing Described, Nor False Facsimile”: Object Description in Modern Poetry

The paper will focus on the poems (mostly by modern poets writing in English) for which the accurate, detailed description of things (or objects) is fundamental, and it will examine the various approaches to the poetic description of an external object. In his 1945 poem “Description Without Place” Wallace Stevens claims that “Description is revelation. It is not / The thing described, nor false facsimile. // It is an artificial thing that exists, / In its own seeming, plainly visible // Yet not too closely the double of our lives, / Intenser than any actual life could be”. Modernist poets were famously attracted to objects in their poetry (in a move against the self-centered egotism of the lyrical poetry of the earlier periods), but they stressed the gap between the “thing described” and the poem, which is an autonomous artistic creation, “an artificial thing”, largely independent of the external object it refers to. While by most modernists this gap between the thing and the poem is seen as liberating, allowing for creative freedom, experiment, and examination of the possibilities of art, for later poets, who are more skeptical both about the potential of art and about the human ability to know the surrounding world, it seems more like a limitation, a barrier isolating their poetry from the “actual life”. In my paper I will look into the ways these poets handle the divide between the description and the thing described, and I will point out their tendency to use description of things to different purposes than to create an autonomous “artificial thing”. The authors referred to in the paper will include Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore, William Carlos Williams, Elizabeth Bishop, Seamus Heaney, and others. Among the critical sources I will rely on, there is Willard Spiegelman’s book *How Poets See the World: The Art of Description in Contemporary Poetry* (2005), Bonnie Costello’s *Planets on Tables: Poetry, Still Life, and the Turning World* (2008), or John C. Stout’s recent book on *Objects Observed: The Poetry of Things in Twentieth-Century France and America* (2018).

Iva Málková

University of Ostrava

Poetry of the Early Protectorate: Changed Perception/Acceptance of the Outer World and its Objectification

Thus far, I've never approached the post-1938 poetry from the perspective of things' presence. In the past, my work focused on the following topics: the decline of avantgarde, transformations of genres, thematic dominances, natures of lyrical subjects. In this paper, I look at objective depiction in poetry related to Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Based on either the first re-reading of poetry books that have since become classics, or reading of long-forgotten volumes of poetry, dated 1939 or 1940, following matters appear to be of interest for analysis: The power of an object; the invasion of specific things into events in poetry; materialization of incorporeal phenomena (darkness/gloom, sigh, breeze, mother's speech, echo); the presence of things representing pain, illness, death; the confirmation of identity by the means of elements linked with material or materialized world; overcoming subjectivity of the self (in relation to the point of view of the observer, the witness, the outlaw, the shepherd, the enchanter, the hobbling strider). Things enter the "story," the "event," often through personification or as a form of addressing someone.

Following the introduction to the early years of the Protectorate, I demonstrate the form and nature of things on the particular poems of Vladimír Holan, Vítězslav Nezval, Jan Ryba, Klement Bochořák and Josef Hiršal.

Pavel Novotný

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The Poem as Rotary Object

This paper will address two poems that share the characteristic of rotation: “Leuchtfeuer” (The Lighthouse) by Hans Magnus Enzensberger and “tom du tümmel“ (fry them tom) by H. C. Artmann. Enzensberger’s poem speaks of a lighthouse, describes it objectively, while its permutational rotation corresponds with the motion of lighthouse’s beam. Archaic metaphor of word as a light becomes transformed into a poem and its dynamic; it is articulated right in the textual flow. Artmann’s poem works similarly, it, too, rotates around its own axis, also casting beams of light around; but these are the flashes of deadly bullets shot out of the aircraft gun turret. The word which is supposed to be the manifestation of life, flash of light in the darkness, and the beginning, thus becomes also an instrument of death.

Hans Magnus Enzensberger (* 1929), commonly described as a modern *poeta doctus*, is a literary montage maestro who combines modern experiment with traditional poetic techniques. Since 1950s, Enzensberger has been considered one of the most significant poets writing in German. In 1960s, Enzensberger founded the notable *Kursbuch* magazine and also participated in establishing the exclusive Die Andere Bibliothek edition. Hans Carl Artmann (1921–2000) was a spontaneous poet-genius, a member of the legendary Wiener Gruppe in 1950s, with whom he developed the techniques of dialect poems and language structure disruption. Irony, poetic disguise and the use of various personae are notable attributes of his works.

Martin Pšenička

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From Human Being to a Thing and Back: Dead Bodies in Poems of Things

The poems of things are often largely defined on the basis of lyrical subject and the manner of how it relates to the perceived object; the very nature of the object, its place within common categories (statue, animal, plant etc.), is rather secondary. In favourable conditions, almost anything that an eyesight can take in – and that isn't another perceiving subject at the same time – can therefore become a “thing”. The boundary between the thingly and human is set by the poet, who also can make the object cross it one way or another, e. g. by choosing a particular part of the object for description or by choice of metaphors representing it. When “objectifying” what's human in nature, the poet weakens the bond between the object and the reader; on the other hand, by emphasizing the aspects that liken the object to a human being, this bond gets stronger, and if taken further, encourages the reader to identify with the poem's object. On the example of poems depicting dead human bodies, particularly Seamus Heaney's poems of bog bodies (“The Grauballe Man”, “The Punishment”), this paper seeks to examine this boundary, poetic techniques used to cross it and its impact on the reader.

Justin Quinn

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Objects & Hyperobjects in Two Irish Poets

Seamus Heaney's "Sandstone Keepsake" is an object poem in the line of Zbigniew Herbert. A thing as the poem's *donnée* allows the poet to range widely through European culture and contemporary politics, while phenomenologically anchored by the piece of rock that he holds in his hand. This for Heaney is a kind of guarantor of the poem's authenticity, and it is a device that he frequently used in his poetry. In Paul Muldoon's poetry, however, we do not encounter such phenomenological underwriting, instead he explores techniques to represent what the ecological philosopher Timothy Morton has called "hyperobjects."

Muldoon frequently returns to the theme of global warming (one of Morton's primary hyperobjects) and ecological disaster, but he thematizes these topics in an oblique manner, avoiding the slightest tone of agit-prop. I will look at Muldoon's strategies for representing such "non-things" as this in his poetry, and briefly compare these with the approaches of other contemporary poets.

Dalia Satkauskytė

Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore

Object in Modern Lithuanian Poetry: From Metaphor of Subjectivity to Social Imprint

The aim of the paper is to present the main paradigms of Lithuanian poetry, oriented towards object representations: a poem-object as a modernist experiment in Judita Vaičiūnaitė's (1937–2001) poetry, a description of object as a minus-device (Youri Lotman) in Nijolė Miliauskaitė's poetry (1950–2002), the relationship between object's representation and postmodern irony in Kornelijus Platelis' (b. 1951) poetry, and the intermedial and performative play in some experimental activities of poets as post cards of Ričardas Šileika (b. 1968) and the collection of shoes in Virgilijus Gasiliūnas (b. 1962) blog. The communication discusses not only the textual effects of meaning in the poems, but also the role of the object-poem in Lithuanian tradition of poetry, dominated by the lyrical mode of expression. By referring to the theory of sociocriticism (Pierre V. Zima) I am going to discuss how this type of poetry reacts to the Lithuanian social discourse and to expose the imprints of post-Soviet social world in the poem-object.

Alena Snelling

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“Face to Glass Face”, or the Mirroring in Margaret Atwood’s Poetry

In her oeuvre, Margaret Atwood employs many strategies of subverting and redefining tradition, literary canon and the idea of femininity. Much has been written about Atwood’s talent of reversing the gaze, of the postcolonial subjectivity in her poems as well as female metamorphoses that upset the patriarchal literary tradition and objectifying description of female bodies. And while she is known for the specific subversion of gender, for instance, by way of rewriting the canonical poems by Charles Baudelaire, the intertextuality that comes into play when envisioning the self in Atwood’s poetry comes from borrowing the structure of some of the textbook examples of the predominantly masculine, Western tradition of object-poems.

Atwood takes objectification of one’s body in the strictest sense of the word. The view of the self is necessarily a foreign one. Typically, the speaker intensely peruses her reflection in the mirror and conveys an image close to a dismembered body. The detached gaze, predominantly thematized in the situation of “face to glass face” through a recurring motif of a mirror, focuses on the individual parts of the body, often heavily imbued with mythical or symbolic value; their shapes, and their metamorphoses simultaneously associated with natural imagery. The body is the object (of the poem), it is the objectified, it is the objectifying. She uses structure very similar to Rilke’s poems that came to represent what we today associate with the concept of *Dinggedicht*: through a detached image of an object, in this case a body, and an epiphany that ensues the reflection of this estranged, alienated thing. By addressing self and, most importantly, self-knowledge, which comes to light during the epiphanic moment, she pays homage and at the same time surpasses the given literary tradition and vice versa. This situation is present in more than just the recurring motif of a mirror. In other situations, the words “object” and “subject” switch roles: That which lacks a voice and finds one, and on the contrary, that which is perceived as having agency is turned into wood like the totems and wooden people in her poem “Some Objects of Wood and Stone”; that which is usually gazed upon becomes alive and gazes back (such as a landscape).

This paper therefore focuses on the postmodern intertextual play with myths as well as the particular literary tradition of *Dinggedicht*. Atwood's poetry is unique as she addresses language and nature as well as various political and social issues through rewriting, thus redefining the concept of object-poems.

Michael Squire

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Portraits, Poems & Pictures: The Interface of Optatian

This paper examines portraiture as a particular type of representational object, no less than the history of representing it through the medium of poetry. Throughout the long and varied development of western picture-poems, portraits recur as a favourite figurative subject. But the origins of this mini-*paragone* between words and images, I argue, lie squarely in classical antiquity. As objective embodiments, stand-ins or substitutes, portraits were understood to provide a touchstone for the representational limits of iconic form. By staging literary responses to this visual phenomenon, moreover, Greek and Roman poets reflected on the respective resources of art and language in figuring their subjects. The resulting questions have helped to shape western ideologies not only about the phenomenology of portraiture, but also of visual and verbal media at large.

The paper revisits this history through the lens of a single case study: an 'iconotextual' object by Graeco-Roman antiquity's most ingenious – and conspicuously overlooked – picture-poet, Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius ('Optatian' for short). Writing in the first decades of the fourth century A.D., and addressing his Latin poems to the emperor Constantine, Optatian recurrently probed the iconic potential of writing. But his third poem homes in on the objects and objectives of portraiture specifically, purporting to picture the countenance of the emperor (*uultus Augusti*). With a view to our 'Things in Poems – Poems of Things' remit, it is the underlying paradox of this picture-poem that interests me. On the one hand, Optatian seems to frame his project in terms of classical mimesis, boasting that his painted page will outstrip antiquity's most celebrated painter (it 'will dare outdo the waxes of Apelles', *uincere Apelleas audebit pagina ceras*). On the other, the form of the picture contained within the poem appears to eschew mimetic representation, rendering its 'portrait' as an apparently non-figurative, geometric object.

What is at stake in this paradox, and what might it mean for approaching the longer history of object-poems? My paper attempts to contextualise its case study against a longer tradition of medial criticism, while also situating it within a critical cultural historical moment – one when ideas about both objects and subjects (no less than ideologies of words and images) were

being radically rethought. What we find in Optatian's exploration of 'portraits, poems and pictures', I argue, is an *oeuvre* that slips and slides not only between visual and verbal media, but also between different ideologies of the sign. Optatian's pictorial-poetic creation consequently offers an object lesson in cultural historical transformation: his portrait stands at the very interface between classical interpretive responses and the rise of Christian hermeneutics – between the mimetic frameworks of classical visuality and the very different symbolic languages of mediaeval art.

Alice Stašková

Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena

Poetics of Objects in German Physico-Theological Educative Poem of Early

Enlightenment: Barthold Heinrich Brockes

German novelist Arno Schmidt called Brockes one of the first realists of German literature. Even though Schmidt failed to acknowledge the context of physico-theology of the early Enlightenment with this statement, it is still an inspirational classification, especially because it is an attempt to create a continuous history of representing objects in German poetry from the eighteenth to the twentieth century.

The paper looks at the approaches towards the canonical understanding of how objects were depicted in the period between the early Enlightenment and the (narrowly defined) modern German literature, and also how these approaches transformed. It follows both the changes in poetic methods and approaches to poethics (Emil Staiger, Hugo Friedrich, the contemporary scholarship on historical phenomena) in the given period. More than just confirming this continuity, this paper stresses the crucial differences in the notion of objects in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and the early twentieth century while also taking into consideration the influence, as well as the decreasing obligatory effect, of the ancient norm.

Karel Thein

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What Does *Ekphrasis* Want?

Starting with the polarity between the natural acts of seeing, imagining, and speaking on the one hand and the unnatural act of detailed description on the other hand, the paper deals with how *ekphrasis* makes use of imagination while subtly imposing new constraints upon its natural and rather abstract working. Without entirely neglecting the modern ephrastic efforts (such as Emma Bovary's wedding cake), the paper then takes a closer look at how this activity reflects on the treatment of *ekphrasis* in ancient *progymnasmata* or rhetoric manuals that present us with a number of remarks on the imaginative transformation of palpable matter into "the living image" (to use Thomas Mitchell's oft-quoted expression). The paper concludes with some considerations about how the *progymnasmata* legitimize the exemplary position of Homer's ephrastic shield of Achilles, which may well be a blueprint for all types of *ekphrasis* and certainly is a prototype for a series of other shield-*ekphrasis* from the pseudo-Hesiodic *Aspis* or Virgil in *Aeneid* 8 to Quintus Smyrnaeus or Nonnus of Panopolis.

Jaromír Typlt

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The Brazenness of Things in Czech Surrealism of the 1960s

Ever since the surrealist movement in France started, it has become obvious that an eerie relationship was being formed between its poets and things – objects. “Concrete irrationality”, a term that Salvador Dalí established within the surrealist theory, is very often recognized right within variously grouped and re-created things of everyday life. This goes for surrealist art as well as poetry; poetry known by its imagery that is very often (especially in poems written by Benjamin Péret) literally objective.

Yet, the role of things in Czech surrealism is relatively unexplored as it was far from done during its foundation period of the 1920s and the 1930s. Arguably, its importance was on the rise in the first half of the 1940s when the surrealist activity – often developed covertly and carrying high personal risk – became one of the most significant epicenters of the resistance, first against the Nazi, then against the Communist totalitarian ideology for many poets and artists throughout several following decades.

This paper will attempt to give an account of how Czech surrealists intentionally restricted and confined the surrealist imagery in response to the absurd changes in society. Therefore, the surrealism of many authors from the circle that formed around the critic and poet Vratislav Effenberger shifted to surprisingly non-imaginative, “material” realism, the effect of which stemmed from the confusion and uncertainty of what such “matter” in things actually means.

Later, the generation of poets that joined Effenberger in the 1960s, Milan Nápravník, Stanislav Dvorský, Petr Král, Karel Šebek among others, took this shift and turned it into an astonishing polymorphic work that manifested itself mainly in the ways of observing things that had been seldom noticed in the Czech poetry before and bringing them to life. Such things, that included planks, shovels, cloths, ropes, rails etc., as if revolted against their original purpose and started to disintegrate the original arrangement of the world with malicious humor that could have made readers uncomfortable.

Jakub Vaněk

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Thingness of a Body, Corporeality of a Corpse in Two Poems by František Halas

This paper examines the thingness of the human body which has become inanimate, i.e. dead, in two poems by František Halas from the 1930s and the 1940s. The dead body can hardly be perceived outside of the terms set by religion, ethics, and aesthetics. In spite of (or, perhaps, because of) these layers, it is the focus of many images and meanings of individual poems by Halas, and also their interpretations. Here, I demonstrate that using death as a motif, or rather referencing human remains, is not a self-serving or private mannerism of Halas's poetics, but can be read in connection with aesthetic and philosophical thoughts of European art (Bachtin, Blanchot), and also within the wider context of the historical events of the 20th century.

Specifically, I focus on two poems by František Halas that refer to a corpse and its relation to a living body in a different way. The first poem is "Staré ženy" [Old Women] (1935). The living bodies (here, these are the aged women's bodies) are described with metaphors for a corpse. My other example is the poem "Potopa" [Flood] (written mainly 1941–2), an unfinished project. The chosen fragments of the poem illustrate a reversed approach: the corpses of war victims are represented by metaphors of a living body.

This distinction, related to a particular thing (cadaver), can be understood on the level of the topic (old women are described in a way that monumentalize the secular/mundane, and, in the second poem the flood has biblical connotations), but also the historical context ("Staré ženy" was written during the Czechoslovak Republic and "Potopa" during WWII).

Josef Vojvodík

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“*Res in cera depositae*”: A Reminiscence of Roman Architecture – Milada Součková’s “Il Gesù”

This paper addresses Milada Součková’s (1899–1983) poem “Il Gesù” (approx. 1976), inspired by the main church of Societas Iesu in Rome, built in 1575–1584 and designed by Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola and Giacomo della Porta.

In his innovatory treatise „Das Dinggedicht“ (1926), written during the atmosphere of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, with terms like *Sache*, *Sachlichkeit* as well as *Ding*, *Dinglichkeit* and *Verdinglichung* being an essential part of its aesthetic approach, Kurt Oppert speaks about the architecture in poetry as “the things of architecture” (*Dinge der Architektur*) the value of which is provided by their purpose and function. However, the architectonic object is not only a “thing of art” (*Kunst-Ding*) created in a specific way: it is possible to see architecture – though with a certain reserve – as a specific form of speech. According to Roger Scruton (*The Aesthetics of Architecture*, 1979), architecture also has its “syntax,” consisting of the combination and distribution of structural parts. In this sense, it is possible to “read” and understand the object of architecture, the “syntax” of its structural parts analogously to a literary work. The Il Gesù church in Milada Součková’s poem occupies a unique position in the semantics of her poetry and the archi-tectonics of her memory: it’s a specific building that, while being, as an “objectified” memory, transformed into a work of literature, gains a fictional dimension. For Součková, Il Gesù is a place (*locus*), where concepts of poetics and cultural history, semantics, cultural and art historical and aesthetical theological reference as well as sacral and profane references meet and intersect. Frontage of Il Gesù evokes the frontage of Panna Marie Vítězná church in Prague, the place of Milada Součková’s christening on February 2, 1899, as well as the location of the Infant Jesus of Prague statue. Il Gesù and Jesulus Pragensis, Rome and Prague, memory and fiction, the concurrence of writing, cultural, art historical and aesthetically theological references in the poem combine, mirror and constitute its textual and metaphysical level. At the same time, the poem evokes the treatise of the Czech art historian and distinguished scholar of Vienna School of Art History, Max Dvořák’s “Die Kirche Gesù in Rom” from his academic lectures *Geschichte der italienischen Kunst im Zeitalter der Renaissance* (1918–1920). The tension between

“objective” and “spiritual” („zwischen Dinglichem und Geisthaftem“) in which Kurt Oppert sees one of the characteristic signs of the *Dinggedicht* type (especially in relation to C. F. Meyer’s poetry), is one of the main propositions of Dvořák’s study: according to him, the tension culminating in the de-materialisation of the architectonic mass („*Entmaterialisierung der architektonischen Massen*“) serves as an expression of early Baroque’s artistic and spiritual project, whose culture and art Součková explores at the end of her life, in her book *Baroque in Bohemia* (1980).

Julie Wittlichová

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Thing-poem in Visual poetry

My paper will discuss different ways by which a thing is represented in poems generally referred to as visual poetry, i.e. poems which represent things not only by means of language, but also by means of graphic elements. If the aim of modern thing-poem is the “direct treatment of the thing”, e.g. by illusion of unmediated presentation, what are the strategies of poetry which is already treating its object, at least at first glance, in a direct, visual way?

In visual poetry, there are three basic ways of the use of graphic form for the purpose of representation of the thing: 1) the visual element is constituted by letters and the layout of the words on a page (e.g. lettrism, spacial poetry); 2) the words of the poem form an independent visual figure (e.g. calligrams); 3) the poem is purely visual, words are present only in a form of commentary or a poem title (e.g. object poem).

In the first case, the poem is operating with visual aspects of language; in the second, there are two representations – verbal and visual – both would be able to represent the thing independently; in the third case, the text is absent, the visual composition is, however, referring to verse scheme, for instance. This development shows that a visual element does not come to the poem from the outside – it is, on the contrary, emerging from the text and gradually becomes independent.

The aim of visual poetry is not to create the illusion of unmediated presentation. Visual poetry is approaching the thing by mean of a reflexive structure. The presence of visual element changes the way the thing would have been represented in a classic text poem: the visual arrangement makes salient the insufficiency and incompleteness of the sense attributed to the thing by language representation only. However, the same applies to the visual representation – the text shows that it is not able to grasp the thing completely either. The gradual independence of the visual qualities of the text creates space inside the poem, which allows the two elements – verbal and visual – to enter to this relationship of mutual reflection. This reflection makes salient the impossibility of “the direct treatment of the thing”, however; it opens another way to the knowledge of this thing.

Františka Zezuláková Schormová

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All those Pretty Things: Women and Their Objects in Anglophone Poetry

“The flâneur is a poet is an agent free of purses, but a woman is not a woman without a strap over her shoulder or a clutch in her hand. (...) If a woman has no purse, we will imagine one for her,” writes the contemporary US poet Anne Boyer in her poem “A Woman Shopping”. In my paper, I look at the construction and performativity of femininity through material objects in her prose poems (from the 2015 collection *Garments Against Women*) in order to see what role these objects play in the poems and how they subvert, confirm, stress, or modify gender identities.

Feminist literary critique has looked at the objectification of women in various texts. Gendered objects have received less attention. From Belinda’s dressing table in “The Rape of the Lock” to girls gripping their handbags in Philip Larkin’s “The Whitsun Weddings”, material objects belonging to women perform specific function: they work as symbols, characterization etc. Building on literary anthropology and the reconsiderations of material culture, I read poems by Boyer to explore the various roles of feminine objects in her poems, the scripted femininity performed through objects and ritualized activities, and the possibilities of transformation these objects offer.