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Relevance of interdisciplinary approach in the humanities: “The Thing. Conceptual and Cultural Aspects” (2018)¹ as an example of cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural research

The purpose of this article is to discuss the merits of interdisciplinary research in the humanities. The discussion is conducted on the example of the volume entitled *The Thing. Conceptual and Cultural Aspects*, edited by Teresa Dobrzyńska and Raya Kuncheva (2018). The volume approaches the issues of perception and presence of material objects in the linguistic picture of the world, viewed from the perspective of various humanistic disciplines, such as philosophy, semiotics, linguistics and literature. This interdisciplinary research is also cross-cultural in character, being the result of the studies of Bulgarian, Polish and Slovenian scholars from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the New Bulgarian University, the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. This effective mode of research provides a common ground for discussion and opens the space for dialogue between respective scholars, the disciplines they represent and the readers, going beyond the limitations of specific research areas and producing an overall picture of the object.

Keywords: interdisciplinary research, humanities, thing, object, things in literature, things in language

Zalety interdyscyplinarności w badaniach humanistycznych: tom pt. „*The Thing. Conceptual and Cultural Aspects*” (2018) jako przykład interdyscyplinarnej i międzykulturowej współpracy badawczej

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest przedstawienie zalet podejścia interdyscyplinarnego w badaniach humanistycznych. Dyskusję przeprowadzono na przykładzie tomu pt. *The Thing. Conceptual and Cultural Aspects* pod redakcją Teresy Dobrzyńskiej i Rai Kunczewej (2018). Tom poświęcony jest zagadnieniom postrzegania i obecności przedmiotów materialnych w językowym obrazie świata ujmowanym z perspektywy różnych dyscyplin humanistycznych: filozofii, semiotyki, językoznawstwa i literatury. Badania mają charakter nie tylko interdyscyplinarny, ale również międzykulturowy,

¹ Dobrzyńska, Teresa and Kuncheva, Raya (eds.) (2018): *The Thing. Conceptual and Cultural Aspects*. Instytut Badań Literackich Polskiej Akademii Nauk [Institute of Literary Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences]; Институт За Литература. Българска академия на науките [Institute of Literature, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences]. Sofia: Boyan Penev.

będąc wynikiem studiów naukowców bułgarskich, polskich i słoweńskich – z Bułgarskiej Akademii Nauk i Nowego Uniwersytetu Bułgarskiego, Polskiej Akademii Nauk oraz Słoweńskiej Akademii Nauk i Sztuk. To efektywne podejście badawcze tworzy wspólny grunt do dyskusji i otwiera przestrzeń dialogu pomiędzy badaczami, reprezentowanymi przez nich dyscyplinami oraz czytelnikami, wykraczając poza ograniczenia poszczególnych obszarów badawczych i nakreślając całościowy obraz przedmiotu.

Słowa kluczowe: badania interdyscyplinarne, nauki humanistyczne, rzecz, przedmiot, rzeczy w literaturze, rzeczy w języku

Vorteile einer interdisziplinären Herangehensweise in geisteswissenschaftlicher Forschung: Der Band „The Thing. Conceptual and Cultural Aspects“ (2018) als Beispiel einer interdisziplinären und interkulturellen wissenschaftlichen Zusammenarbeit

Im vorliegenden Artikel setzen sich die Autoren zum Ziel, Vorteile einer interdisziplinären Herangehensweise in geisteswissenschaftlicher Forschung darzustellen. Diskutiert wurde sie am Beispiel von dem von Teresa Dobrzyńska und Raia Kunczewa herausgegebenen Band *The Thing. Conceptual and Cultural Aspects* (2018)..

In dem Band werden Fragen der Wahrnehmung und der Präsenz materieller Gegenstände im sprachlichen Weltbild erörtert und aus der Perspektive mehrerer geisteswissenschaftlicher Disziplinen erfasst, darunter aus Sicht der Philosophie, Semiotik, Sprachwissenschaft und Literatur.

Die genannten Untersuchungen weisen nicht nur einen interdisziplinären sondern auch einen interkulturellen Charakter auf. Sie stellen das Ergebnis der Forschung von bulgarischen, polnischen und slowenischen Wissenschaftlern der Polnischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, der Slowenischen Akademie der Wissenschaften und Künste, der Bulgarischen Akademie der Wissenschaften sowie der Neuen Bulgarischen Universität dar.

Die vorgestellte effiziente Herangehensweise soll den gemeinsamen Ausgangspunkt für wissenschaftliche Auseinandersetzungen bilden und einen Raum für den Dialog zwischen den Forschern und den von ihnen repräsentierten Disziplinen sowie den Lesern öffnen, um über die Einschränkungen der einzelnen Forschungsgebiete hinauszugehen und das ganzheitliche Bild des Forschungsgegenstandes zu schildern.

Schlüsselwörter: interdisziplinäre Forschung, geisteswissenschaftliche Forschung, Ding, Gegenstand, Gegenstände in der Literatur, Gegenstände in der Sprache

In the increasingly globalized modern world, the transfer of cultural knowledge (ideas, concepts, imaginative forms and techniques) is conducive not only to creative encounters, but also cross-cultural tensions or misunderstandings. In view of the current research in the humanities that fosters cross-cultural exchange of academic knowledge, there is a growing demand for interdisciplinary research that could cross the cultural gap between dissociated disciplines and fields of study. Therefore, it is a challenge for the scholar to breach the gap between respective disciplines and culture-based issues and penetrate the delicate matter of the cultural and terminological differences between respective disciplines and cultural areas.

This challenge seems to have been met by an international team of Polish, Bulgarian and Slovenian literary experts whose analyses resulted in the publication of an interdisciplinary volume *The Thing. Conceptual and Cultural Aspects*, edited by Teresa Dobrzyńska and Raya Kuncheva (2018). The volume presents the latest research into literature studies and language philosophy conducted by scholars at the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Art, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the New Bulgarian University. More precisely, this publication is the outcome of their work at two conferences: an international conference held in Sofia, Bulgaria, on 24th–25th September 2015 and a conference entitled *Study of Object. Poetry and Things*, which was held in Warsaw, Poland, on 9th–10th December 2014.

It is yet another publication in the series presenting the results of the co-operation between the Institute for Literature at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Literary Research at the Polish Academy of Sciences – a long-term project focused on intercultural dialogue between literary and academic traditions in the field of cultural studies. The volume in question provides a comprehensive and enlightening compendium of knowledge in the humanities by presenting a multidisciplinary perspective on material objects perceived from the point of view of various humanistic disciplines (i.e. philosophy, semiotics, linguistics, poetics, cultural history and art). Collected in five chapters, the articles in the volume provide a common ground for discussions on the insufficiency of the existent academic disciplines by showing the limitations they impose on the subject of studies and suggesting the ways these obstacles could be overcome. Such a multifarious approach to the topic opens the space for a dialogue between respective authors, the disciplines they represent and the readers, turning the reader into an active participant as well as interpreter and co-creator of meanings.

The purpose of this article is to face the challenge posed to the reader in an attempt to bridge the gap between the divergent approaches to things. The discussion aims to recreate the linguistic image of the world out of the multiplicity of the ways in which material objects are reflected in human perception. The articles in this present volume are devoted to the ambiguous – and by no means static – relation between things and human beings, pointing to the semiotic, cognitive and ontological status of things as signs, as well as mental objects, which finds its reflection in language and, in particular, in post-humanistic literary discourse. Material things, being a vital constituent element of the material world that surrounds us, push into and imprint themselves on the world of human thought. In this way, they may enter the anthroposphere, i.e. the reality perceived from a human perspective and translated into a linguistic image of the world, which manifests itself in the way humans think, in the language they use and, for

that matter, the literary texts they create, showing various dimensions of human experience and transforming it creatively (Dobrzyńska, Kuncheva 2018: 9).²

One of the major concerns of the mainly philosophical-linguistic part of the volume is the status of the thing perceived from a philosophical and semiotic point of view. To begin with, the opposition of *things* to *objects* is emphasized: “a thing exists without a relation to a mind, whereas an object has a being only as it is known; a thing is mind-independent and object is mind-dependent”, as discussed e.g. in Aleksandar Feodorov’s article (p. 49). These issues are approached from different philosophical angles.

In his discussion of the *ontological status* of the thing, Ivan Mladenov (pp. 21–46) goes back to the mediaeval philosophy of *nominalism*, which had rejected abstract objects, before John Locke and other empiricists assumed words to be signs of ideas – and reminds us that Locke, in fact, was believed to understand ideas “as a special kind of a ‘thing’, mental or material, but still a thing” (p. 21) – although it could be also claimed that Locke meant a mental image, a picture, rather than a “thing” (p. 22).³ In this way, the author asks the question of how to approach the thing: as matter, form, substance or a predicated object.

As is the frequent case with philosophical – and semantic – questions, the discussion of *the thing as substance and/or matter* often begins with Aristotle’s categories and postulates included in his *Metaphysics*. The thing is then considered from a semiotic point of view, as represented by Charles Peirce, according to whom a thing may be perceived as the object of the sign, the idea as the interpretant of the sign (mental object, effect), and the meaning as a process of transformation, “not a static element in an epistemic system, but a dynamic relation in a semiotic one”, as phrased by Feodorov (p. 66), who discusses Peirce’s postulates *in extenso*.

When it comes to the issue of the *thing objectified*, Mladenov compares Peirce’s views and those of Husserl – “a thing indicates properly if it serves to show something to some thinking being” (p. 30; cf. Husserl 2001: 103) – in juxtaposition with Kant’s:

Both systems are in the Aristotelian-Kantian current of object classification for a similar reason – to deny it. Peirce’s significations rely on the sign-net thrown onto a manifold of objects in order to reduce it to categorical unities, while Husserl’s distinctions show a scrupulous advance to the object’s essence by removing the ambiguities with which the presented phenomena grow over (p. 33).

² When a reference is made to the volume *The Thing. Conceptual and Cultural Aspects*, edited by Teresa Dobrzyńska and Raya Kuncheva (2018), only the page number will be given.

³ Which may be easily labelled with the Peircean term *qualia* – cf. Klóś (2015: 113–214).

Moving on to the *thing portrayed* (p. 39), from Peirce to yet another great name in the field of philosophy and linguistics, we are given a neat overview of the evolution of Ludwig Wittgenstein's thoughts on this issue, from the impossibility of *a priori* knowledge and the postulate of objects being *pseudo-concepts* (*TLP* 4.1272),⁴ through his claim that the world consists of facts, rather than things, and that one can know nothing about objects if they do not constitute a part of what he calls a fact (p. 43), to the later assertion that how you perceive things and speak of them is determined by your world-picture. The thing emerges here as "a slipping reality, lurking before the eyes embedded in the syntax of the picture of the world" (p. 44).

This predominantly philosophical, as well as linguistic, discussion on how to interpret the thing is continued in more detail – as mentioned above – by Aleksandar Feodorov (pp. 47–68), with further focus on Peirce's semiotics, with his views on sign and semiosis (*sign-action*) and, especially, his empiricist pragmatism, which makes it possible to assume that every single act of cognition of a singular object must involve its comparison to another object. Since pragmatism is concerned with the cognitive or physical effects produced by objects, rather than things – in the Kantian sense of *ding-an-sich-selbst*, i.e. 'thing in itself', which cannot be known as such directly, but merely through intuition (cf. Kant 1998: 115) – one must realise that "the totality of the possible phenomenal manifestations of the thing as an object comprise all our knowledge of it" (p. 50).

The maxim of pragmatism makes it possible to recognize the process of cognition as semiotic in character, which may be subdivided into three stages: sensations, perceptions and interpretation. *Sensations* are the impressions made on us – via the intermediary role of the senses, e.g. sight or hearing – by the physical qualities of what we see or hear, respectively. *Perception* necessitates becoming aware of the extralinguistic stimuli – in opposition to merely sensing. Both reach the cognitive culmination in *interpretation*, which attempts to relate the effects of a particular experience to our cognitive system of the beliefs mapping – in a structured and systematic way – the language-external world.

The alternative status of a material object, either as a *thing* or as an *object* (given so much consideration in the philosophical ponderings which open the volume) reoccurs – this time introduced by Heidegger's opposition between *das Ding* ('thing') and *das Gegenstand* ('object') – in the illustrative case study provided by Miryana Yanakieva (pp. 101–112). However, more important to her message is the emphasis on yet another dimension of the thing, namely its *poetic, metaphorical potential* (p. 103), rather than on intricate philosophical arguments.

⁴ *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* – cf. Wittgenstein, L. (2002 [1921]), p. 34.

In her engrossing illustration⁵ of the many faces of the musical instrument (if one may put it like that, in line with the anthropomorphic metaphor of a musical instrument as a body, which is one of the points she raises), she draws the reader's attention to the triple status of a musical instrument, with one of the three aspects brought to the cognitive fore: instrument as an *object* (which may be subject to technical and scientific analysis), a *thing* (when perceived from an aesthetical point of view, as a thing of beauty which produces beauty) and a *vehicle* for powerful metaphors. She observes that "the musical instrument as a poetic thing has always two sides: material and immaterial, visible and invisible" (p. 103), while its figurative symbolic and semantic potential is so enormous because of the abundance of various musical instruments and their cultural contexts, which is a point readily agreed to by any cognitive linguist researching figurative semantic development of culture-specific items (as in e.g. Kövecses, 2005).

A musical instrument may undergo a change in its interpretative status, as in the case of Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No. 5*, where, at some point, the harpsichord becomes (and continues to be, for a 65-measure-long solo) an occasion for not as much an artistic, as ontological event – with the instrument changing its status from an *object* (a tool used by an artist) into a *thing* that must be looked at with delight (pp. 106–107).

In a similar vein, the duality of the manifold significances of another tool used by people, namely a lamp, is expounded by Angel Angelov (pp. 169–211), but this time the focal point is the image of a tool depicted in a work of poetry, rather than a tool that we can watch (and sometimes – more importantly, as in the above-outlined case of a musical instrument – listen to) when it is actually being used in the extralinguistic world. However, in the case of the lamp in Eduard Mörike's frequently interpreted poem *Auf eine Lampe*, the lamp – laden with enormous symbolic and figurative semantic potential – shows its heterogeneity when considered from different cultural, as well as temporal, perspectives (Oriental vs. European; that of Antique vs. that of the 19th century AD).

Note that Yanakieva's and Angelov's articles are – not uncharacteristically for this volume – parts of two different chapters, which attests to the interdisciplinary approach taken up by the editors.

Returning to the overview of the major philosophical approaches to the thing addressed in this volume, another problem given extensive treatment (in the articles by Andraž Jež, Dimitar Bojkov, as well as Raya Kuncheva) is the phenomenon of *reification* or *objectification*, reappearing in the writings of Karl Marx and other Marxists philosophers, such as Walter Benjamin and György Lukács.

⁵ Which was inspired by a book by Bernard Sève, a recognized philosopher of music – cf. Sève, B. (2013).

Marx – accounting for the development of capitalist relations of production – points to the process of *alienation* (due to the separation of a worker from the fruit of his/her work), which leads to the ubiquitous attitude of *commodity fetishism* and the process of *reification* of a human being, which – through the fragmentation of the subject (p. 341) and objectification of consciousness – gradually reduces humans to things, as relations between people acquire the form of the relations between things (p. 332).

Subscribing to the Marxist idea of alienation, Lukács takes reification one step further, as he moves away from the reified individual action to a class action, i.e. the action of the whole oppressed proletariat, as Jež observes (p. 347). Moreover, concerned with the *reification of consciousness* (thus clarifying the concept of the reification of human relations and their transformation into relations between things), the philosopher expands its scope onto the whole spectrum of the relations within society (pp. 375–376).

The phenomenon of reification is also the preoccupation of Walter Benjamin, who believes that reification is the “Ur-Phenomenon, from out of which proceed all manifestations of life [...] in the nineteenth century”.⁶ Benjamin is attracted to things, which he considers to be “traces, as well as tools, of human experiences” (p. 354). Because of their dual essence, things acquire the status of *traces of the past*, becoming instrumental in recreation of human experience.

In appreciation of the interdisciplinary character of this volume, it is worth noting at this point that subtle shades of reification of a human being may be shown in a literary text by manipulating the viewpoint of the narrative discourse (p. 437), switching from a *narrative viewpoint* (placed beyond the characters or the plot) to a *personal viewpoint* (of the protagonist) – as indicated in Alexander Panov’s (pp. 425–445) discussion. He shows how a work of fiction (*Chamkoria* by Milen Ruskov), viewed as a *social mediator* (p. 428), can promote social attitudes and behaviours, showing the main character as an object in the hands of ideological manipulators.

Apart from broadly understood theoretical philosophical and linguistic analyses, the volume in question also offers more specific semantic discussions, focused on illustrating the development of figurative senses in the words originally denoting material things (Regina Koycheva’s article), as well as outlining the issue of the inter-lingual differences in the current meaning of homonymous words (not false cognates, though) referring to broadly understood things in different Slavic languages (Kalina Zahova’s article).

In this vein, the significance of material things has been studied on the linguistic material taken from Old Bulgarian religious chant poetry, otherwise

⁶ *The Arcades Project* 40 [N, 1a, 6] – cf. Benjamin, W. (2002[1927–1940]).

known as *hymnography* (p. 91), in the 9th and 10th centuries AD. In those sacred texts, references to material things convey figurative senses developing through various associations, not necessarily legible to a lay person with little knowledge about Christianity and the cultural context of a particular people in a particular period of time. A good illustration is the case of the word whose literal sense is ‘a ladder’. Coupled with the modifier ‘heavenly’ to produce the sense of ‘a heavenly ladder’, and thus given the obvious biblical association (Gen. 28: 12),⁷ the term for a ladder acquires a metaphorical sense of ‘the Mother of God’ (p. 95), based on the similarity of the role (the Mother of God is a ladder leading to heaven).

Another interesting touch here is the relevance of a religious (thus, culture-specific) taboo, which is one of the extralinguistic motivations of semantic change (as in e.g. Cymbalista and Kleparski, 2007), since “in the axiological system of the medieval Christian worldview, the thing is regarded as an instrument in favour of the body, but also a means of either the salvation, or condemnation of the soul” (p. 92). Consequently, the poets must have been fairly careful not to show excessive preoccupation with the material thing, rather than immaterial soul.

Kalina Zahova’s article addresses the issue of inter-linguistic and – as she calls it – inter-cultural (p. 449) homonymy. The author does not delve into various new figurative senses that may emerge in relation to the meaning of a given name of a thing. Rather than that, she scrutinizes different sections of language-external reality that contribute to the construal of the meaning (if we were to couch this in terms of cognitive semantics) of seemingly identical words in different Slavic languages. Thus, her article seems to be an exercise in proving the case for the arbitrariness of linguistic signs – and, in fact, the author does quote Ferdinand de Saussure in this respect (p. 453).

Regardless of the classic differences between homonyms, homophones and homographs, as well as the diachronic mechanisms at work here (e.g. historical polysemy), the emphasis of the discussion is placed on the semantic differences between the so-called *false friends*,⁸ approached with respect to the abundance of such problematic cases, not only in Slavic languages, but also cultures.

An example classified as inter-cultural in nature is Polish *obiad* vs. Bulgarian *обяд*, explained by pointing out that they are identical in that they both carry the same sense of ‘the second solid meal of the day’, but different from a cultural point of view, as *obiad* is usually had in the afternoon, while *обяд* around noon or 1 pm. at the latest (p. 454).

⁷ “[...] and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it” (*The Holy Bible, New King James Version*).

⁸ The author uses the term introduced by Koessler and Derocquigny (1928).

Proceeding to the sub-sections devoted to literary studies, it must be stated that whereas parts of this interdisciplinary volume boast vast philosophical discussions introducing the readers to various aspects of semiotics and philosophy of language, the leitmotif of its literature-oriented sections is the *things–humans* relation as a subject of post-humanistic discourse, with two divergent approaches to things: *anthropocentric* and *non-anthropocentric*.

Current theories of post-humanism have started to question the Western anthropocentric humanism, with the traditionally dominant position of a human being (especially a male) in the world and, consequently, to challenge the anthropological status of things, as seen from a human perspective. Whereas anthropocentrism assumes that humans are the very centre of the universe and, consequently, all other beings are perceived as inferior and treated in instrumental terms, non-anthropocentrism does not acknowledge the sovereignty of human beings over the rest of the world, and, rather than that, emphasizes the internal connection between all beings. Modern (i.e. non-anthropocentric) discourse places the man as a part of a continuum of biological life, on the one hand (alongside with animals and plants), and as an element of the technological chain of beings, on the other hand (alongside with inanimate objects, clones, robots and other forms of artificial intelligence). Thus, non-anthropocentrists aim to reinforce the status of marginalized groups of various, broadly speaking, non-human entities, which is known as the *non-human turn* – as in e.g. Domańska (2005) or Hoły-Łuczaj (2018: 170).

The relevant recent studies contributing to the *non-anthropocentric* approach include those by Bjørnal Olsen, Bruno Latour, Graham Harman and Ewa Domańska, as emphasised by Wojciech Kaliszewski (pp. 117–119), marked by the tendency at an objectification of a human being (manifest in environmental, social and political sciences), which admits equal status of all beings (animate and inanimate), placing the man as one of many objects of discourse, without granting any privilege to humans as masters of the world. This, consequently, reinforces the status of things by treating them on equal terms as autonomous objects of discourse.

Bjørnal Olsen (2010) is the author of *In Defence of Things: Archaeology and the Ontology of Objects*. The title's "archaeology of the object" [...] "stems from the experience of a professional seeker of objects hidden underground, ones he personally excavated, carefully cleaned, polished and displayed in a museum window with due care, not to let it become a dead "exhibit" but a testimony to its world and fate" (p. 118). This turns things into the witnesses of the past and *carriers of memory*, which is to be seen in the Holocaust writings or factographic poems included in this volume.

Bruno Latour (2005), the originator of the Actor-Network Theory, assumes a sociological approach (*sociology of the non-humans*), treating things as active participants in a network of the new means of communication (the Internet, mobile

phones, Facebook, GPS) – (p. 118). This grants things the status of companions, actors, active participants in discourse (as in *prop-narrative* or *paraphernalia*).

Graham Harman (*The Quadruple Object*, 2011) advances the so-called *object-oriented ontology*. He claims that “objects are autonomous in two ways: first, as something that emerges from their pieces, and second, as something withholding itself from relations with other entities” (Hoły-Łuczaj 2018: 172). This points to the metonymic and symbolic function of objects, which can help to reconstruct the image of the whole out of fragments, pieces and scraps – which may be seen in the poems by Zbigniew Herbert (Wojciech Kaliszewski’s article) and Andrzej Niewiadomski (Ewa Dunaj-Kozakow’s article).

Ewa Domańska (2005) proposes a non-anthropocentric theory of things in response to the so-called *turn towards things* trend in contemporary culture, which grants things a status of the “marginalized others” in discourse (p. 115). She attempts to treat things as distinct ontological entities with autonomous identity, beyond man’s control (transgressing the notion of the binary opposition of human vs. non-human). Following in the line of Bruno Latour, Domańska promotes the search for an object resistant to human cognition (cf. Tadeusz Kantor, technoscience, etc.), such as the LifeGem – a synthetic diamond made from human ashes (transcending the binary opposition between the organic and the inorganic) (cf. Domańska 2008: 13).

More detailed observations on the contents of the literary sub-sections may be introduced by referring to the ambiguous status of things in poetry as elements that cohabit the human sphere and co-create a linguistic picture of the world – discussed at length in Teresa Dobrzyńska’s article (pp. 69–90).

To her, poetry examines and records various spheres of human experience; poems often (re)confirm the permanent presence of certain objects in the life of every person. “In such a concept, object becomes a *sui generis* participant in the occurrences and companion to the human being. It becomes an integral part of the scenarios of the person’s actions, it co-creates the objective, or material background of their actions, and forms a permanent element of the situation” (p. 74). Transforming material objects into mental images in the reader’s imagination endows them with the personal qualities, brings life to them and fills the dead matter with spirit. “In poetic representation thing is no more an anonymously existing element of material reality. Instead, things form part of somebody’s personal experience and a component of the linguistic image of the world as produced within a culture” (p. 89).

The status of a poet as an archaeologist (cf. Olsen, 2010) is best confirmed in the factographic poems of András Mezei on the Shoah (Kinga Piotrowska-Junkert’s article). “The concept of factographic poem was based on creating small fragments, pieces, or even scraps of the new whole, a whole that carries the mark

of the difficult knowledge of what had been violated” (p. 280). The factographic poems are devoid of lyrical background, they also reject ambiguity, focusing on the presentation of mere facts, as in an encyclopaedic note. They combine talking about the living by means of looking at the remnants of the old world. The history of the Jews is told from the perspective of inanimate objects that recall the human world which is “transient, painful, dynamic and tragically unfolding in the midst of the merciless history” (p. 284). The poet combines two competences – of an archivist and an interpreter of the past. Poems thus become the “living chronicles of the Shoah, transcripts and records that serve to remember about those whose names were substituted by a series of numbers” (p. 287). They recall the details of the past, with names of individual people, victims of the Holocaust in order to save them from oblivion, from becoming mere numbers.

Things become active participants in discourse (as in Latour, 2005), which raises their status from objects to subjects of discourse – they have their own memory of the past and tell their own stories (*prop-narrative*), or become someone’s close companions (*paraphernalia*). As tokens of remembrance or affection (*keepsakes*), they “attest close relationships linking people, and thus have emotional value independent of their material value” (p. 74).

Things are granted a distinctive status in Polish 20th-century literature (as opposed to Western), grounded in Polish specific experience of poverty and lack, which situated material objects in the centre of attention. This is best visible in the unique status attributed to the so-called *paraphernalia* (in Aleksander’s Nawarecki’s article) – “woman’s personal belongings”, goods excluded from the marital register of the bride. The status of being in a way “outlawed”, freed and excluded from taxonomy, places such objects in the very intimate sphere of female personal things, such as jewellery, cosmetics or bibelots (p. 134). By putting an emphasis on an intimate relation between the object and the person and stressing their closeness to the body, things are acknowledged as having the status of one’s closest companions, witnesses of human activities.

On the other hand, turning things into speakers in the so-called *prop-centred narration* or *prop-centred tales* grants them a status of active story-tellers (Jerzy Kandziora’s article). In Jerzy Ficowski’s essays on Bruno Schulz, single objects (gravestones of Schulz’s parents, self-portrait, bookplates with portraits of friends) become the only witnesses of the past. Single objects salvaged from the war must suffice to recreate the writer’s whole biography, therefore they co-create reality, actively contributing to the process of reconstructing his life. Moreover, they acquire agency and partnership with human beings, which turns them into actors, “the most important characters and components of his poetics”. Thus they acquire an “extraordinary ability to mediate between our ‘today’ and the past, to which they lead” (p. 260).

The articles in the collection are arranged in such a way that space is opened for a dialogue. Things converse, which allows the reader to move from object to object and (re)construct the compositional frame of the whole text. They are arranged in a sequence of moving pictures that make the readers progress from page to page and fill the empty space with their own imagination. Therefore, reading the volume resembles a journey whose subsequent stages are marked with things recurring as metaphors in different contexts, which turns the act of reading into a dynamic process, animates the objects and gives a story its flow.

In the texts discussed in the volume, things that reappear in different contexts, forming new and novel associations, perform a similar function as the photographs in Wiesław Myśliwski's novel *Widnokrąg* [*Horizon*] (Magdalena Szczypiorska's article). The *photographs* in Myśliwski's novel are moving pictures, which animate the story. The first and the last photograph form a chronological sequence, the son from the first picture becomes the father in the last.

The first and the last picture is objects, things, whose status proves ambiguous, understated or unspecified, and paradoxical. On the one hand, the things are not completely real. On the other, the material aspect of these pictures, their tranquil objectivity are incontestable. From a different angle still, these things are dead but alive all the same; immovable, and yet motion-generating (p. 237).

They have the power to move forward the narrative (like in a film recording) and thus fill the past with a new life.

Certain motifs appear in different articles in different contexts, which triggers cognitive processes and exposes them to multiple interpretations. For instance, the motif of sailing, which is metonymically represented by a sailor uniform, (re) appears in Wiesław Myśliwski's prose (Magdalena Szczypiorska's article) and the poems by Andrzej Niewiadomski (Ewa Dunaj-Kozakow's article). In both literary texts, sailing is seen as a form of travelling in time, while the sailor-like suit points to the fleeting, illusory and evanescent nature of life. It is a symbol of boyish dreams, the past once-lost and never to return.

Things are granted autonomy as something that emerges from pieces and something withholding itself from relations with other entities (Harman, 2011), which points to their *metonymic* function. The attempt to reconstruct the image of the whole out of scattered fragments is best visible in the poetry by Zbigniew Herbert (Wojciech Kaliszewski's article) and Andrzej Niewiadomski (Ewa Dunaj-Kozakow's article). In Herbert's poem *Song of things dispensable*, "curls of the world is what matters most" (p. 149). Scraps, curls, feathers, pieces of broken glass are like pieces in a jigsaw puzzle out of which the reader reconstructs his own picture of reality. In a similar way, "the things no-one needs anymore"

(p. 218) in Niewiadomski's poem attract the reader's attention to inconspicuous and insignificant details, revealing the metonymic relation between the object and the experience they reflect. The readers examine them from many angles at the same time, like in a broken mirror. The image of the scattered world emerges gradually before the reader's eyes, reconstructed from the pieces of broken mirror glass. They put the pieces together in an attempt to recreate the image of a whole.

Niewiadomski uses the motif of a mirror for the title of his collection *Tremo* – a tall, multi-faceted mirror equipped with large, movable wings. The life is not as much present in the particular objects (closed in a freeze frame), as in their multiplied images the reader can see at once. The mirror becomes the subject and the object at the same time. "The mirror is not merely an object through which to recognize the reality, as it reflects an 'inner image' and shows not what 'is' but what the persona can see. In this sense, (the) *tremo* becomes the subject of the poem and the reflected image its message" (p. 229). What all the articles stress is different ways of looking, which points to our unique perception of things.

In the poems discussed, things gain a sign value based on their *metonymic* or *synecdochic* function by entering a variety of temporal and spatial relations with the surrounding world. They become dumb witnesses to traumatic events, like the buttons of the uniforms of the soldiers shot in Katyń, recalled in Herbert's thrilling poem *Guziki* [*Buttons*], discussed in the articles by Teresa Dobrzyńska (p. 78) and Wojciech Kaliszewski (p. 148).

Only buttons witnesses to the crime
 proved unyieldingly outlasted death
 and as sole memorial on the grave
 rise up from the depths of the earth (p. 148).

The buttons dug from the mass graves in Katyń are mute witnesses of genocide; now, uncovered and brought to daylight, they bridge a gap between the past and the present. They have the power to evoke and recall past experiences, as well as become indexical signs of the situations they witnessed, and thus testify to the past. Collecting the fragments and carefully putting them together by the poet enables the reader to recognise the image of the once-lost whole and reconstruct its meaning.

The image of the whole that emerges out of the struggle of opposites reflects personal experience, like in Tadeusz Różewicz's interpretation of van Gogh's paintings (Joanna Adamowska's article). Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* become an inspiration for Różewicz to search for the roots of his own creative process.

watching the sunflowers
 I think about the roots

buried inside the ground
 they push their way up to the sun
 knowing no
 light
 crown (p. 156).

Różewicz stresses the struggle through darkness to see the light to be a predominant feature of van Gogh's art. The poet uses van Gogh's paintings as a key to his own work: "Struggling for van Gogh, he struggles for his own vision of art" (p. 154).

Note that not only in poetic texts, but also in prose (diaries, memoirs), the things that used to be inherently related to the lives of particular people in a particular place in the past can offer metonymic – as argued above (as well as metaphorical, as seen in the passage quoted below) – access to their past tragedies. The case in point is the references to the wooden footbridge over Chłodna street (located in the Aryan part of Warsaw) connecting two parts of the Warsaw ghetto (Jacek Leociak's article). That bridge brings back the memories of the cruelty of war and the fate of the Jewish people during the Holocaust, with their lives torn out of normality and turned upside down: "A bridge that is a mockery, its own negation, a bridge that negates the elementary meanings associated with it, one that reverses them and switches their places" (p. 326). To the wretched ghetto residents, "the bridge became a proof of their living in some absurd spatial arrangement. The bridge ceased to symbolise hope. It was a dead end that changed nothing, gave nothing, and did not help in anything. All it did was hurt and remind of a loss" (p. 316) – the loss of dignity, humanity, their lives of old and their hope for a new future.

The articles in this present volume, by stressing the emotional relation between things and people, paradoxically, prove the status of things as independent agents, active participants in mental processes. Things become living inhabitants of the human sphere, partners and companions of human beings in creative processes. As Herbert puts it, "Paracelsus once said that the creation of the world by God has remained uncompleted and that man had been constituted in order to finish the creative effort. This is a most beautiful humanistic confession" (p. 147). God's act of creation was incomplete and it is man's duty to complete it. Things help men to complete the act of creation and (re)construct the mental image of the world. This image can be each time remodelled in literary texts as words enter new contexts, forming new "worlds behind words" (p. 89). What sets them in motion, endowing them with the quality of moving pictures is a thought, imagination, which opens the mind for associations and fills dead matter with life in a cognitive act. Consequently, things, which form the necessary part of the human sphere, acquire a mental status of autonomous beings, entering into a network of complex

connections with humans. In this way, things become active participants in the intricate web of relations between humans and non-humans.

By way of summary, it might be concluded that all the articles in this interdisciplinary volume seem to very effectively explore the phenomenon of the power of things to convey senses and meanings through the associations they evoke when perceived through the prism of human experience. Whether approached from a philosophical, semiotic, semantic, sociolinguistic or literary (especially post-humanistic) perspective, the more central or salient (as a cognitive linguist would say) such inanimate objects become to a given location and time, the more potent sources of meanings they evidently become.

This success in looking at diverse facets of the issues discussed is certainly the merit flowing from the interdisciplinary character of the studies undertaken. It is interdisciplinarity of the approach, going beyond the limitations of the individual specific areas, that produces a general picture, rather than a kaleidoscope of unrelated impressions. Moreover, such an approach opens the space for dialogue and thus helps the reader to (re)create his/her own image of reality out of the multiplicity of approaches. Thus, it is the readers' task and prerogative to (re)construct a coherent and comprehensive image of the whole out of a variety of the convergent perspectives and critical approaches made available to them. Therefore, here, an act of reading turns into a dynamic process of constructing or reconstructing meanings, which allows the readers to fill the blurred spaces in-between with their own interpretations and thus shed a new light on the topics discussed.

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Lingwistyka mediów a dyskurs telewizyjny

Media linguistics and television discourse

Iwona Loewe (2018): *Dyskurs telewizyjny w świetle lingwistyki mediów*. Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 191 ss.

Celem pracy Iwony Loewe jest całościowa lingwistyczna refleksja nad telewizją jako zjawiskiem kultury. Jak podaje sama Autorka, jej ambicją jest dyskusja nad tym, czym dla współczesnego człowieka jest telewizja na tle szeroko pojętej mediosfery, ujęta w perspektywie lingwistyki mediów i lingwistyki dyskursu.

Książka składa się sześciu rozdziałów, w których Iwona Loewe prezentuje stan badań nad językiem telewizji (rozdział 1), statusem dyskursu telewizyjnego (rozdział 2), telewizji programowej (rozdział 3) oraz telewizji strumieniowej (rozdział 4), aby w rozdziale 5 skupić się na specyfice tekstu multimodalnego oraz metodach jego analizy, a w ostatnim rozdziale zarysować autorski program badawczy, jakim jest lingwistyka obrazu.

Monografia katowickiej Badaczki jest dojrzałym, osadzonym w poststrukturalistycznym myśleniu o języku i językoznawstwie dziełem; dziełem metodologicznie odważnym i metodycznie inspirującym; dziełem, które z jednej strony syntetyzuje europejskie myślenie o dyskursie telewizyjnym, a z drugiej strony mocno osadza go w badaniach lingwistycznych. Tym samym Iwona Loewe poszerza perspektywy badawcze przede wszystkim lingwistyki mediów i lingwistyki dyskursu, dla wielu ciągle nowych paradygmatów badawczych, oraz udowadnia, że współczesna lingwistyka, by zachować swoją poznawczą atrakcyjność i społeczną przydatność, musi uwzględniać w swoich analizach społeczno-kulturowe formy aktywności ludzkiej związanej z telewizją publiczną.

Iwona Loewe definiuje kluczowe dla jej wywodu naukowego pojęcie *dyskursu telewizyjnego* przez pryzmat parametrów, takich jak parametr ideacyjny, normatywny, interakcyjny, podmiotowy, spacialny i chronemiczny, zakotwicząc

je w interdyscyplinarnym i postmodernistyczno-semiotycznym paradygmacie. W ten sposób uwypukla i niuansuje lingwistyczne spojrzenia na dyskurs telewizyjny, wskazując z jednej strony na liczne i odmienne perspektywy oglądu interesującego ją dyskursu, a z drugiej strony na konieczność jego ujęcia holistycznego, które w dalszej refleksji lingwistycznej umożliwi rozpoznanie, jakie praktyki dyskursywne i jakie teksty multimodalne oraz w jaki sposób ten dyskurs współtworzą. Posłużenie się kategorią centrum i peryferii jest kolejnym aspektem poststrukturalistycznego myślenia o sposobie projektowania lingwistycznego warsztatu badawczego. Poststrukturalistyczne podejście do analizy lingwistycznej oznacza w przypadku pracy Iwony Loewe stopniowe prowadzenie czytelnika od momentu szerokiego spojrzenia na swój przedmiot badań, przez etap wydzielenia konkretnych, specyficznych dla dyskursu telewizyjnego przestrzeni działań praktyk telewizji programowej i strumieniowej, aż po clou lingwistycznej refleksji. Autorka, opisując dyskurs telewizyjny, ani przez chwilę nie przestaje być badaczką-lingwistką i ani przez chwilę nie rozmywa lingwistycznego statusu swojego przedmiotu badań. Wychodząc od całościowego spojrzenia, w umiejętny i przekonujący sposób pokazuje, jaki jest teoretyczny i metodologiczny wkład mediolingwistyki i dyskursologii lingwistycznej w analizę dyskursu telewizyjnego oraz na ile istotne są dla mediolingwistyki kategorie z zakresu stylistyki, genologii lingwistycznej, lingwistyki tekstu czy etnolingwistyki. Kluczowa dla dalszego rozwoju mediolingwistyki jest refleksja nad istotą tekstu multimodalnego, którą katowicka Badaczka wyprowadza w znacznej mierze z wcześniejszej debaty na temat gatunków medialnych i ich hybrydowych postaci: telewizji programowej i strumieniowej. Zwraca przy tym uwagę na takie aspekty, jak audiowizualność i jej różne formy manifestowania się oraz migracje gatunkowe, a dyskutując kwestię multimodalności, uwzględnia najnowszą literaturę polsko-, niemiecko- i anglojęzyczną z zakresu analizy dyskursu, analizy semiologicznej i medialnych obrazów świata. Ta część pracy, w której Autorka rozprawia się z pojęciem tekstu multimodalnego, metodami jego analizy i dalszymi problemami badawczymi, stanowi mocny fundament do dalszego rozwoju mediolingwistyki, nie tylko polonistycznej. Kolejnym novum metodologicznym, jakie proponuje katowicka mediolingwistka, jest analiza kolorów w dyskursie telewizyjnym, osadzona w nowym paradygmacie, który nazywa – za Klemmem i Stöcklem – lingwistyką obrazu. Decydując się na ten krok, tzn. dyskutując o metodologicznych i teoretycznych podstawach lingwistyki obrazu, Autorka poszerza spektrum lingwistycznych penetracji o kolejny wymiar semiotyczny, który we współpracy z tekstem tworzy istotny element w dynamicznym, kulturowo uwarunkowanym i medialnie współkształtowanym procesie semiozy we współczesnej kulturze audiowizualnej.

Iwona Loewe zaprezentowała książkę, która syntetyzuje obecny dorobek mediolingwistyki, proponuje metody badawcze i projektuje nowe, kolejne pola

mediolingwistycznych penetracji, a jednocześnie pod wieloma względami przełamuje pewien stereotyp lingwistycznej analizy mediów. Jej autorska propozycja pokazuje, że współczesna lingwistyka mediów, co również postulował Bogusław Skowronek w swojej pionierskiej monografii *Mediolingwistyka. Wprowadzenie* (2013), nie powinna i wręcz nie może ograniczać się do analizy stylów mówienia (język w mediach czy język mediów) w określonej domenie, tutaj w telewizji, oraz że współczesna lingwistyka oferuje znacznie więcej metodycznych możliwości, których potencjał wydobyć można, patrząc na przedmiot badań holistycznie, a w projektowaniu procedury badawczej posługując się zasadą metodycznego eklektyzmu i triangulacji. W tym sensie praca Iwony Loewe jest godnym naśladowania wzorem.

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