

**Karolína Turynová**  
**“Everything is in the poems”: Frank O’Hara in Personism**  
**BA Thesis**  
**Opponent’s Report**

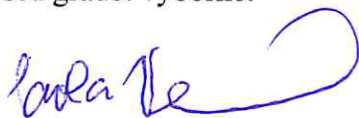
The thesis opens with a sketch of the post-WWII sociopolitical situation in the United States, with particular attention to the developments on the poetic scene. Although Karolína Turynová refers here to Robert Lowell’s distinction between “cooked” and “raw” poetry, she argues that those who critiqued “cooked” poetry advocated “freedom from the restrictive form and content of the past while simultaneously substituting them for different kinds of restrictions of the present” (2). Frank O’Hara’s “Personism: A Manifesto”—the main focus of her thesis—therefore “shares the paradoxical nature with similar post-war manifestos: it rejects their restrictive ideas on the use of literary techniques, it is in itself an anti-poetic manifesto, except it has its own poetics too” (3).

The second chapter elaborates on the poetics of “Personism,” which Turynová aims to analyse “as a prose poem, as opposed to a prose piece, to further the understanding of O’Hara’s stylistic tools and techniques used to write the poem and hence the techniques forming O’Hara’s poetics” (5). She juxtaposes O’Hara’s manifesto with Allen Ginsberg’s “Notes for ‘Howl’ and Other Poems,” identifies a range of O’Hara’s literary techniques, discusses the influence of modernism and post-modernism, and considers the characteristics of “Personism’s” form. The entire chapter is clear and supported with references to O’Hara’s work as well as selected criticism (by Marjorie Perloff, Redell Olsen and James Schuyler, among others).

Subsequently, in the third chapter, Turynová begins to trace the poetics outlined in O’Hara’s manifesto in his other works, for example the collection *Lunch Poems*. The text is again well researched, eloquent and for the most part carefully edited (it is only a shame that the submitted version includes several corrections done with the Track Changes function on). The last chapter, which considers the developments in O’Hara’s oeuvre, “contrasts O’Hara’s early experimentation (ending approximately in 1951-52) [...] with his later, more developed personal style” (37). There is, again, a range of poems mentioned, some of which are analyzed in detail (such as “Having a Coke with You,” which is described as “a perfect example of a Personist poem” [53]). Overall, both these chapters nicely link O’Hara’s “Personism” with his poetry.

My only question for the defense concerns “Personism” as a manifesto. In conclusion, it is argued that “O’Hara’s manifesto is not programmatic, nor does it aim to influence others in its favor” (55), that it is a mock manifesto or “not so much a manifesto as it is a campy, humorous, and light description of O’Hara’s own poetic stance” (56) and “if the manifesto argues for anything, it is for the freedom of being unserious and spontaneous in poetry and to reject the distance between the poet and the object of his poetry on one hand, and on the other to cross the distance between the poems and their readers via the use of the Techniques of Proximity” (56). Could this argument be developed on the background of any theoretical discussion of the manifesto as a genre? To my knowledge, the manifesto genre has been variously discussed by critics from Mary Ann Caws and Martin Puchner to Janet Lyon and Kathi Weeks. Could O’Hara’s “Personism” be considered through the lens of these theories?

Proposed grade: výborně.



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