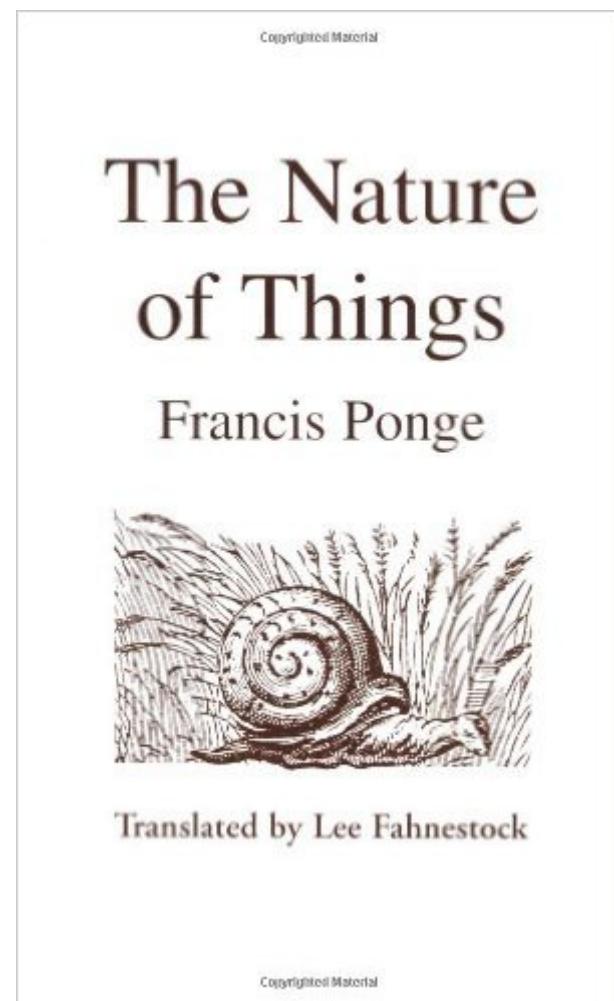


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The Nature Of Things



Synopsis

Poetry. Translated from the French by Lee Fahnestock. First published in 1942 and considered the keystone of Francis Ponge's work, *Le parti pris de choses* appears here in its entirety. It reveals his preoccupation with nature and its metaphoric transformation through the creative ambiguity of language. "My immediate reaction to Lee Fahnenstock's translation was: this must certainly be 'Ponge's voice in English'...[She] gives us his tones, rhythms, humor...[and] maneuvers his word play with respect and unostentatious discretion"--Barbara Wright, translator of Queneau, Pinget, Sarraute.

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Customer Reviews

The following is the text of a letter from award-winning translator Barbara Wright on Lee Fahnestock's translations of the poetry of Francis Ponge. I knew nothing of how Francis Ponge's poetry had been presented to Anglo-Saxon readers until I was unexpectedly given Lee Fahnestock's translations of his *The Nature of Things* and *Vegetation*. My immediate reaction was: Lee Fahnestock must certainly be "Ponge's voice in English". Several rereadings, and a comparison with the French originals, confirmed this opinion. Ponge was the first modern poet to be moved to imagine the inner nature of objects - "things". Things animal - vegetable - mineral. Snails - moss - pebbles. Ponge's imagination delves into the very being of the objects, he sees how even the most apparently insignificant of them is an integral part of the world we know, he shows us how the nature of inanimate things is intricately linked to all things animate, to all of us human beings. He made it his lifelong task to use his fastidious felling for words and language to make strange and

beautiful poetry out of his vision. To represent this unusual view in another language, it is evident that the translator must have a deep empathy with the original visionary, and it is clear that this empathy was what urged Lee Fahnestock to make these poems wider known. Ponge's poetic intentions may seem very serious - and they are - but he expresses seriousness in a joyous, often insouciant style, full of humor, lighthearted word play, puns, alliteration, allusions, imaginative contrasts. And I feel that this unique combination has been reproduced with love and understanding by Lee Fahnestock. She gives us Ponge's tones, rhythms, humor. She has maneuvered his word play with respect and unostentatious discretion; she knows how to read between the lines. Here, to my mind, is indeed Ponge in English.

This translation of Francis Ponge is melodic and gentle. The tenderness and beauty in these poems seem, through Lee Fahnestock's translation, to come straight from Ponge himself. The simple, inviting book design and the lucid translation of the prose poems bring Ponge directly from another time and another place to the modern English-speaking reader. The book as a whole is a treasure.

A unique genius. Cuts a doorway through the ordinary world and leads us into an extraordinary world that was always there.

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