

“I Like This Mishmash.”

Enumeration

in Julian Kornhauser’s Works

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I will start my reading of Julian Kornhauser’s poems with the following literary provocation “to understand his poetry, it would be enough to read only one poem:”

Jutro spuchnie twarz rytm i drwina
 Zwycięzą jutro powie most
 Przechodź młody człowieku napręż
 Muskuły sprzedaj nieufność jak
 Gorączkę dzień powoli
 Zdiera maskę przeciwgazową i alkohol
 Płynie przez ślepe ospałe miasto
 Przecina czoła i dłonie
 Nikt nie zostaje w domu
 Domy długimi pazurami kopią
 W ziemi w poszukiwaniu
 Skarbu studni mądrości i równowagi
 Filareci zapalają latarenki
 Które oświetlają zastawione stoły
 Kancelarie gładkie fotele
 Jutro moje oczy podważone
 Drzazgą wiatru
 Staną się zwykłą pochodnią
 Symbolicznym drobiazgiem
 Który ogrzewa
 Niewielką rodzinę¹

Tomorrow the face will swell rhythm and mockery
 will win tomorrow the bridge will say
 Go on, young man, flex your
 Muscles sell distrust like
 A fever the day slowly
 Rips off the gas mask and alcohol
 flows through a blind, sluggish town
 It cuts the foreheads and hands
 Nobody stays home
 Houses dig in the ground
 with long claws in search of
 The treasure of the well of wisdom and balance
 Filarets light lanterns
 Which illuminate the tables set
 Offices smooth armchairs
 Tomorrow my eyes pried open
 With a splinter of wind
 They will become just a torch
 A symbolic little thing
 Which keeps a small
 Family warm²

¹ Julian Kornhauser, “Parę symbolicznych drobiazgów” [Some symbolic little things], in: *Wiersze zebrane* [Selected poems], (Poznań: Wydawnictwo WBPiCAK, 2016), 99. Unless stated otherwise, all quotations from Julian Kornhauser’s poems come from this edition.

² This is a literal translation into English (translator’s note).

The poem is not particularly groundbreaking in terms of rhetoric, as it is based on (apparently) one of the simplest stylistic procedures that a literary scholar may imagine. We all know what enumeration is. Among all the other literary devices and tricks, it rarely receives a lot of attention, and the reader, usually almost instinctually, is able to point it out in the text. The poem in question is therefore an undetermined set (closed – in the form of a poem; open – as it may be supplemented/completed in the process of interpretation). A superficial reading renders it mundane – just *Parę symbolicznych drobiazgow* [Some symbolic little things].

As far as the stylistic device in question is concerned, the somewhat deceptive nature of poetics makes it not as simple as it may seem. Structuralist preliminary research makes us realize that enumeration may perform extremely complex functions:

enumeration raises a number of questions in the field of semantics, syntax, pragmatics, theory, and criticism: can we characterize enumerations on the basis of their semantic properties? What is the maximum possible number of enumerations and what does it depend on, i.e., what are the limits of enumeration? How are enumerations ordered? Which lexical units signal enumeration? What expressions can enumerations be combined with? Could we distinguish texts whose characteristic (constant or frequent) property is enumeration?³

In a word, in the face of such a structure, we always ask about an overriding principle, which is invisible in the text, and about the gesture and identity of the subject behind this gesture. Therefore, it is a mistake and a simplification to say that enumeration in literature is only associated with a simple enumeration of features or objects. Maciej Grochowski points out that the listed elements usually have at least one thing in common, but they are not necessarily connected in terms of semantics.⁴ Contrary to appearances, it does not make the task easier for the scholar; on the contrary, it makes one think about enumeration as an extremely capacious formula that includes all lists, catalogs, mantras, meditations – sets which are both useful and which carry additional, inconspicuous meanings. Indeed, the questions posed by Grochowski should be answered with the help of negation, as it is impossible to resolve these issues. "(Lists) direct attention to the reality beyond the text, naming, initial identification, while originally enumeration was a rhetorical – mnemonic – device."⁵ Therefore, enumeration combines in itself, firstly, an element, or rather a delusion, of literalness (organization, sequence, order), and secondly, metaphoricality (infinity, singularity, creativity); not only the list and its components but most of all the mechanism of production, the superior, invisible principle of selecting elements, may be analyzed.⁶ The list fulfills a variety of functions: it is a mnemonic exercise that captures ephemeral things; a set of arguments, pieces of advice, rules; ultimately, it is a form of saving the said or the heard; it also allows one to collect whatever lies outside the self to tell the self.⁷ Enumeration, as a rhetorical figure, is therefore internally contradictory, aporetic. It is both a multitude of elements and a lack – of specification, functionalization, embedding; it is also a visualized lack or impossibility

³ Maciej Grochowski, "Wprowadzenie do opisu wyliczenia jako zasady budowy tekstu" [Introduction to enumeration as the principle of text's structure], *Pamiętnik Literacki*, no. 3 (1978), 133.

⁴ Grochowski, 137.

⁵ Roma Sendyka, "Lista" [List], *Autobiografia. Literatura. Kultura. Media*, no. 1 (2014), 112.

⁶ Sendyka, 108-110.

⁷ Michel Foucault, "Self Writing" in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* (New York: The New Press, 1997), 215-216.

of completeness, because usually (and certainly always in Kornhauser's poetry) the enumerated elements function as a synecdoche, insofar as they are present instead of a whole.⁸

Therefore, in the case of enumeration, *signifiants* are both linguistic and non-linguistic, represented directly in the text and in the space beyond/above the text: in the overriding ordering principle, in the selection, arrangement or rhythmization of the enumerated elements. Indeed, only the analysis of the whole allows one to reach *significance*.⁹ But let us take a look at the texts. The poem *Parę symbolicznych drobiazgów* may lead us into the dreaded area of over-interpretation – the text prompts us to add to an almost infinite number of semantic supplements, which, considering that we live in the culture of exhaustion of the narrative, will not bring any interpretative benefits. So how does one avoid falling into this (hyper)textual trap? Although at first reading it may seem like an unnecessary effort and a rhetorical excess that does not bring solutions, it is worth taking a closer look at the specific semantic circles outlined in Kornhauser's poem.

Lexemes connected with the body – face, muscles, foreheads, hands, eyes – dominate in the text. The image of the young man's flexed muscles is not in itself disturbing. It is, however, a twentieth-century "body"¹⁰ – strongly connected with the subject, but also with experience; it is a body that has followed a certain path; it has evolved or been degraded (depending on the direction and nature of these changes). It is enough to look at the words in these enumeration sequences. We will then notice mutilation, a specific degeneration or brutalization, disease, intoxication, tension – swelling, long claws, blindness, lethargy, and flexed muscles.

However, no changes take place in the structure of the poem itself; the poem is in itself an enumeration. There are objects and terms that evoke the senses: sight (eyes, illuminate, blind); hearing (rhythm, will say); smell (gas, alcohol); touch (smooth, pried open), but the lyrical I does not end his mental list there; the text goes beyond somatic experiences towards the *p s y c h e*, naming such concepts as victory, distrust, tradition, wisdom, rebellion (Filarets), balance, family.

The above order, which suggests the primary role of the subject, is, however, disturbed as architectural *o b j e c t s* take on human features: houses dig in the ground with their long claws, the day slowly rips off the gas mask, the bridge speaks – human order has been incorporated into the unreal world of animate objects. By juxtaposing and mixing elements from separate systems, the boundaries between them are blurred, and individual features may be easily ascribed to both the *s u b j e c t* and the *o b j e c t*. Thus, the "innocence" and clarity of enumeration are disturbed. It could therefore be an example of a chaotic enumeration described by Umberto Eco (*inter alia* in

⁸ This is how Marta Baron-Milian described the nature of enumeration; it is impossible to disagree with her. Cf. Marta Baron-Milian, "Wylczenie/enumeracja" [List/enumeration], in *Ilustrowany słownik terminów literackich. Historia, anegdota, etymologia* [Illustrated Dictionary of Literary Terms. History, anecdote, etymology], ed. Zbigniew Kadłubek, Beata Mytych-Forajter, Aleksander Nawarecki, (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Słowo/Obraz Terytoria, 2017), 514-519.

⁹ In this context, Adam Dziadek's and Henri Meschonnic's works are very informative. Dziadek was in fact inspired by Meschonnic. Cf. Adam Dziadek, *Projekt krytyki somatycznej* [Somatic criticism project] (Warsaw, Wydawnictwo IBL, 2014), 19-22, Adam Dziadek, "Rytm i ciało. Henri Meschonnic krytyka rytmu" [Rhythm and body. Henri Meschonnic's critique of rhythm], in *Szybko i szybciej. Eseje o pośpiechu w kulturze* [Fast and faster. Essays on being in a hurry in culture], ed. Marek Bieńczyk, Aleksander Nawarecki, Dorota Siwicka, (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IBL, 1996); Adam Dziadek, *Rytm i podmiot w liryce Jarosława Iwaszkiewicza i Aleksandra Wata* [Rhythm and subject in Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz's and Aleksander Wat's poetry] (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 1999).

¹⁰Dziadek, *Projekt krytyki somatycznej*, 9.

the context of André Breton's poem) which "brings together heterogenous elements,"¹¹ or maybe even an example of Jorge Luis Borges's monstrous enumeration (list), thus described by Michel Foucault: "the common ground on which such meetings are possible has itself been destroyed. What is impossible is not the propinquity of the things listed, but the very site on which their propinquity would be possible."¹² It is both true and untrue; when we return to Kornhauser's poem, we do not really know whether he removes the lyrical I, family, or home out of their semantic context, or whether he creates a new correlation for them. Still, this enumeration gives rise to fear of those who might be victorious, uncertainty brought by the evening, as well as tension and mockery. The text primarily wishes to restore balance, silence stimuli, allow trust to triumph over threat, find a balance between the body and the intellect as well as the private and the public.

Apart from the massive semantic background activated by the text, *Parę symbolicznych drobi-azgów* [Some symbolic little things] functions like a map of Julian Kornhauser's poetry – the simplicity and the inconspicuousness of the enumerated elements reveal the themes and topics that may be found in the poet's *oeuvre* throughout his life (the tension between the private and the public, fear, rebellion, distrust, reversal of traditional orders, surreal elements, avant-garde writing techniques, memory, memories, turning away from subjectocentrism towards objects).

Such a recipe for a poem – a seemingly chaotic juxtaposition of elements/people¹³ and their features – is repeated in Kornhauser's other poetry collections. Indeed, it is also visible in his debut volume:

Daty, nazwiska, jedno po drugim.
 Śwad spalonych ryb, morze jak mięso
 zabitego konia. Chłodne piwnice kościołów,
 w nich matki wierzą w Ikarów, świeczki
 parzą w oczy. Teraz twoja kolej, zakrwawiony
 papier.¹⁴

Dates, names, one after another.
 The smell of burned fish, the sea like meat
 of a dead horse. Cool church cellars,
 in them mothers who believe in Icaruses, candles
 burn the eyes. Now it's your turn, bloody
 paper.¹⁵

The poem *Hiszpania* [Spain], which opens the cycle *Goya*¹⁶ in the collection *Nastanie święto i dla leniuchów* [There will be a holiday for lazy ones], is the best example of the correlation between

¹¹Umberto Eco, *The infinity of lists* (London: Random House), 324.

¹²Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Tavistock, 1970), xvii.

¹³Zbigniew Bieńkowski wrote about it in one of his essays, suggesting, however, that the accumulation of nouns in Kornhauser's poetry is rather claustrophobic and confined, and, as a result, none of the elements attract attention. The poet actually mitigates this effect in his subsequent collections, but this effect of accumulation does not seem to demonstrate a lack of the ability to "manage" the verbal space – it is rather a deliberate effect of condensation. Cf. Zbigniew Bieńkowski, "Rzeczownik" [Noun], *Kultura* (Warsaw), no. 26, 1973: 3.

¹⁴Kornhauser, "Hiszpania" [Spain], in *Wiersze zebrane*, 9.

¹⁵This is a literal translation into English (translator's note).

¹⁶It was already pointed out by Piotr Bogalecki: "One of the most important difficulties in interpreting *Nastanie święto dla leniuchów* seems to be the division into two parts, *Goya* and *Brueghel*, introduced by the poet. Both sections begin with poems referring to the works of both artists. As these references are by no means overt and precise (e.g., in the poem *Goya. Kto traci rozum, temu jawią się potwory* [Goya. The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters], you can find motifs from at least several works by the Spanish painter), one can spend a lot of time looking for afterimages of the Black Paintings, landscapes with falling Icarus and other masterpieces. Perhaps, however, Kornhauser's strategy is a bit more playful, and the initial focus on Goya, which influences the reading, is misleading – one should not look for hidden ekphrastic descriptions of paintings by the Spanish painter but rather focus on the texts and experiences openly and directly described in them." Piotr Bogalecki, "Pomarańcza dla Juliana Kornhausera" [An orange for Julian Kornhauser], *Teksty Drugie*, no. 4 (2019): 48.

enumeration and synecdoche. As the author himself points out, the poems inspired by the paintings of Francisco Goya are not ekphrastic. Most of them contain different “bits and pieces” from other works; they are a mosaic of distinctive fragments (in the case of the poem *Hiszpania*, the reader is bound to think of *The third of May 1808, Grande hazaña! con muertos!*, or *Doradas*); they refer to the style and the colors of Goya’s works and they are complemented by, like collages, riddles interjections, references to paintings by other artists (why do we find a burning giraffe in Goya’s painting?!), texts (Saša Vegri, Hölderlin), history (“Wojna, jako wojna, socjalizm/ jako socjalizm, Algeria jako Algeria...” [War, as war, socialism / as socialism, Algeria as Algeria ...] p. 15). This fragmentary and infinitive nature, however, does not signal a crisis or an absence of aesthetics (as Bożena Tokarz put it), but a conscious game with tradition, also with aesthetic tradition, and above all (and it is impossible to argue with Tokarz here), it renders the process of reading personal, individual – one may add one’s own interpretations and thus connect the listed elements – “it will not be the only truth, but many individual truths.”¹⁷

Indeed, all New Wave poets structure their poems, using parallelisms, repetitions, and enumerations. These formal solutions are also used to talk about similar problems; taken together, these two aspects constitute one of the (ultimately few) common denominators for New Wave poets. One should, for example, compare the poems of Julian Kornhauser, Stanisław Barańczak, Ryszard Krynicki and even Adam Zagajewski from the 1970s. As Dariusz Pawelec wrote: “I think that, in the case of the ’68 Generation, we can rather talk about a set of favorite tricks, the accumulation of which allows us to read a given poem as a new wave poem.”¹⁸

Many critics have analyzed political connotations in the works of New Wave poets, which means that I do not really have to repeat foregone conclusions; still, nothing tells the truth about the situation of an artist deprived of the right to freedom of speech better than words. The reality of being an artist in communist Poland, the truth about constant fear, lies and manipulations in the language of power are best reflected in Kornhauser’s collection of poems *W fabrykach udajemy smutnych rewolucjonistów* [In factories we pretend to be sad revolutionists]. The poem *Urząd poezji* [The Office of poetry] may be also found there:

¹⁷Cf. Bożena Tokarz, *Poetyka Nowej Fali* [Poetics of the New Wave] (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 1990), 83: “Kornhauser’s infinitive account is an artistic procedure that testifies to the lack of aesthetic awareness, characteristic of the entire New Wave. The impersonal form, and especially the use of the infinitive, is devoid of individual or personal semantic connections. If it is possible to define the structural connectivity of the infinitive within the limits of the existing linguistic system, then it is at best a space of individual possibilities. Assuming that the truth lies in authenticity and in an objectified relation, the infinitive does not deform or over-interpret the represented. If it is authentic, that is objective, then it is a true description, but it will not be the only truth, but many individual truths, produced by associations triggered by the infinitives; as we can see, the language cannot be completely neutralized. The consistent use of such a form undoubtedly results in the economy of words and the dehumanization of poetry. Kornhauser’s path, from expressionist pathos, through appellative style, to the infinitive, is one of the consequences of the analysis of tradition. The infinitive “play” is a reflection of an expressionist (but not only) and minimalistic style, and it is also an example of the cumulative activity of a word, which does not mean much without concretization.”

¹⁸Dariusz Pawelec, “Pokolenie 68. Wybrane zagadnienia języka artystycznego” [The ’68 Generation. Selected issues of the artistic language], *Cezury i przełomy. Studia o literaturze polskiej XX wieku* [Caesuras and breakthroughs. Essays on 20th-Century Polish Literature], ed. Krzysztof Krasuski (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 1994), 125.

Państwo zdejmie naród	The state will take down the nation
Państwo zdejmie ojczyznę	The state will take down the homeland
Państwo zdejmie barykadę	The state will take down the barricade
Państwo zdejmie wypadki grudniowe	The state will take down the December events
Państwo zdejmie niektóre nazwiska	The state will take down some names
Państwo zdejmie sztandary	The state will take down banners
Państwo zdejmie Żydów	The state will take down the Jews
Państwo zdejmie Wolną Europę	The state will take down Free Europe
Państwo zdejmie marzec	The state will take down March
Państwo zdejmie tytuły rangi i stopnie	The state will take down ranks
Państwo zdejmie tryb rozkazujący	The state will take down the imperative
(...)	(...)
Państwo jest najwybitniejszym poetą polskim	The state is the greatest Polish poet ¹⁹

Urząd poezji, p. 129

The parallel construction leaves no doubt as to the meaning of the lexeme "state." Repeated over and over again in anaphorical phrases which deconstruct the operation of the totalitarian regime, it becomes a synonym for semantic change. Change which involves manipulation, surveillance, and destruction – obliterating words and their meanings in the dictionary and memory. However, there is a duality at the end (of each line) – the point is not to see poetry as a hoax or manipulation, at least this is not the only point. Poetic idiomization creates a new reality; it is abused as a tool of disinformation. In this way, Kornhauser illustrates how dangerous language may be, how threatening seemingly minor semantic shifts may be. These linguistic permutations may seem harmless, but repeated, embedded in the reader's mind over time, they take the place of original phrases and events. Using the structure of repeated phrases, the poet exposes how Newspeak works.²⁰ However, he also further makes one more point: the ironic concept of the state as the greatest Polish poet, which in fact (when a poet makes such a claim) seems like a challenge.

The lyrical I's gesture restored by the reader²¹ ultimately produces the opposite of what was originally intended: in the process of reading (interpreting) the poem, one needs to recover the changed/substituted events and thus eliminate the "state" and reclaim the strikes in December 1970, March 1968, the Jews who were expelled from Poland or forced to hide their identity but also free oneself from the power of "linguistic magic" which conceals the truth. In order to do that, one needs to know the facts – the testimonies of eyewitnesses (who, for obvious reasons, could not describe what really happened) – or make sure that future generations know the

¹⁹This is a literal translation into English (translator's note).

²⁰Michał Głowiński wrote about the mechanisms of newspeak, verbal compositions, but also the psychological dimension of actions based on language (not only in communist Poland but also on the contemporary Polish political scene): *Nowomowa i ciągi dalsze. Szkice dawne i nowe* [Newspeak and the like. Old and new essays] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Universitas, 2009).

²¹Gesture and the lyrical I as described by Giorgio Agamben (after Foucault): "But this is precisely why the author also marks the limit beyond which no interpretation can proceed. (...) A subjectivity is produced where the living being, encountering language and putting itself into play in language without reserve, exhibits in a gesture the impossibility of its being reduced to this gesture." Giorgio Agamben, *Profanations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 72.

truth (which requires not only supplementing and fact-checking the historical narrative, but also taking into account people and events – their emotions, i.e., retroactive reading).

Such a philosophy of language points to the value of poetry thus described by Julian Przyboś and Jan Brzękowski:²²

Indeed, in modern poetry, a creative effort is made that could be likened to a chemical process called polycondensation. The poetic image is like a polycondensate which creates a new meaning from words and idioms (and in chemistry a macromolecule is formed from atoms, changing their chemical composition), a new meaning that cannot be reduced to the particles that make up this polycondensate. And just like water is a by-product of a chemical process ... we also have all those unimportant words and expressions, essential in uncondensed, fragmentary prose.²³

Kornhauser often creates this effect using repetition, enumeration, various forms of parallel juxtapositions. He used these devices at various stages of his creative life.

Years after he had made his New Wave debut, Kornhauser published the collection *Tyle rzeczy niezwykłych. Wiersze dla Agatki* [So many extraordinary things. Poems for little Agatha]. The title poem reads:

Moja skakanka, wężyk czterolistny.	My skipping rope, a four-leaf snake.
Moja piosenka, drgająca gałązka.	My song, a trembling twig.
Mój sweterek, mrużący niedźwiedź.	My sweater, a purring bear.
Moja szpulka i igła, iskierki w nocy.	My spool and needle, sparkles in the night.
Tyle moich rzeczy niepodobnych	So many of my things unlike
do zwykłego garnuszka i kratkowanej kartki.	an ordinary pot and a checked page. ²⁴

What makes these objects unusual is the child's perspective, and above all, the "relationship of belonging." The fact that the objects are "mine" seems to change their status – it generates their familiarity or allows one to tame their properties, shapes, names:

In Kornhauser's poem, this universe of things hidden in a child's chest is additionally endowed with at least two more characteristics. First of all, these are "my" objects and, consequently, certain space is also tamed as "mine." Secondly, in this world things turn out to be "extraordinary" and "unlike" anything else (...) "My" world is an alternative to the ordinary, but also to what is disturbing even in the name only.²⁵

²²Cf. Jan Brzękowski, *Wyobraźnia wyzwolona. Szkice i wspomnienia* [Imagination freed. Essays and memories] (Wydawnictwo Literackie: Kraków, 1976).

²³Julian Przyboś, "Sens poetycki" [The meaning of poetry], *Sens poetycki* [The meaning of poetry] vol 1 (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1967), 50.

²⁴This is a literal translation into English (translator's note).

²⁵Tomasz Cieślak-Sokołowski, "Zapomniany język Kornhausera. Głosy do wiersza *Tyle rzeczy niezwykłych*" [Kornhauser's forgotten language. Comments to the poem *Tyle rzeczy niezwykłych*], *Było nie minęło. Antologiatekstów krytycznych poświęconych twórczości Juliana Kornhausera* [Passed but not forgotten. An anthology of critical texts about the works of Julian Kornhauser], ed. Adrian Gleń (Opole: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego: 2011), 173.

Tomasz Cieślak-Sokołowski's reading, for whom the poem becomes a pretext for analyzing children's language in Kornhauser's poetry, should be supplemented with one more important conclusion, especially in the context of enumeration. This "checked page" is not only something found in the "adult" world – the world of letters, denunciations, and threats. First of all, it is an ordering device – because a checked page is used to concretize, functionalize, and organize (today, one would probably use tables in Excel). Checked notebooks are reserved for science subjects, and lined notebooks (which, contrary to appearances, also limit, insofar as they introduce a linear and horizontal sequence of thoughts) are used in the humanities (although research confirms that it is easier to learn letters when one writes in a checked notebook).²⁶ Children's imagination, unrestricted by requirements and limitations and conceptualizing the world in a somewhat fragmentary fashion, is shown in the poem in and through enumeration which obliterates the functions of individual elements (is a purring bear one of the objects or is it just a metaphorical association that further specifies a favorite sweater? I shall address this question at the end of this essay, as the interpretation of the entire text depends on the adopted perspective). Writing about the genology of lullabies, Dariusz Pawelec emphasizes that they were based on folk songs and originally were meant to calm one down: "Formal devices found in songs and chants (repetitions, refrains, parallelisms) evoke peace and gentleness, create an atmosphere of tranquility, allow one to leave the real world behind and enter the fairy-tale world."²⁷ In Kornhauser's poem, one indeed leaves the real world behind, but a sense of relief is illusory. Enumeration, which lies at the heart of this poem (contrary to the fact that the list is often seen as an ordering device), reflects the eclectic world, positioned (seemingly) in opposition to brutality (expressed here, apart from the checked page, also by means of the accumulation of sounds which are soft and rustling when it comes to the names of children's things and hard and sonorous at the end "do zwykłego garnuszka i kratkowanej kartki" [an ordinary pot and a checked page]) and the everyday life of an adult – ordinary, ordered, as if this order suppressed individuality. Still, through and in enumeration Kornhauser hides one more riddle – the world in a children's chest is mine, unusual, unlike any other – but also internally contradictory. Do only an ordinary pot and a checked page pose a threat? No, the danger is also hidden in the lexemes of the first order – the purring bear is neither a teddy bear nor a little bear (and the use of a diminutive would be perfectly justified). What is more, a snake, a trembling twig, sparkles in the night, a four-leaf amulet "for good luck" all come to life, transforming into objects which are not actually safe. Their status is ambiguous; it is an extraordinary world, but also an unpredictable one. Some of the things on the list fill one with horror. No wonder – horror is part and parcel of nursery rhymes, lullabies, or children's games.²⁸ Adults tend to be more afraid – for them, "horror" is usually specific, named, real, like something; contained in denunciations, reports, and acts of oppression.

Enumeration is an exceptionally simple and legible rhetorical procedure. Still, easy to functionalize in the process of analysis as it may be, it is not associated with any poet in particular – it

²⁶Other poems also functionalize the metaphor of a checkered notebook/piece of paper (Urszula Kozioł *Pochwała zeszytu w kratkę* [Let us praise a checked notebook], Krystyna Miłobędzka *** *[zagubiona i przywiązana...]*; [*** [lost and tied...]]; Jerzy Jarniewicz *Zeszyt do rachunków* [Math notebook]). Kamila Czaja interprets them in her monograph. Cf. Kamila Czaja, *(Nie)przygotowani. Metafora szkoły w polskiej poezji współczesnej* [(Un) prepared. The metaphor of school in Polish contemporary poetry] (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2018).

²⁷Dariusz Pawelec, *Od kołysanki do trenów. Z hermeneutyki form poetyckich* [From lullabies to laments. The hermeneutics of poetic forms] (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2006), 33.

²⁸Katarzyny Słany writes about it in her article: "Karnawalizacja grozy w folklorze dziecięcym" [Carnavalesque horror in children's folklore], *Literatura Ludowa* no. 1 (2017): 3-19.

is no one's trick or theoretical gimmick. Undeniably, however, we associate it with the works of Julian Tuwim, especially with unforgettable sequences in *Bal w operze* [A ball at the opera]:

I znów	And again
I znów	And again
I jeszcze raz,	And once more,
Za bilet, za nóż, za wodę, za gaz	For a ticket, for a knife, for water, for gas
Za armatę, musztardę, podkowę, protekcję,	For a cannon, mustard, horseshoe, protection,
Za ślub, za grób, za schab, za lekcję... ²⁹	For the wedding, for the grave, for the pork chop, for the lesson ... ³⁰

Piotr Michałowski thus writes about Tuwim's enumerations (mainly in connection with *Kwiaty polskie* [Polish Flowers]):

While the created fiction develops into bold sequences and arrangements, the documentary layer is embedded in crumbs, episodes, fragments, and is best realized not in and through "small narratives" but, one must say, grand enumerations.³¹

As such, enumeration is no longer just a simple organizing procedure but a response to the emerging fear of exhaustion and, ultimately, the collapse of meta-narratives. Additionally, Paweł Bukowiec points out: "It is in this poem (*Bal w operze* – M.P.-G.) that *enumeratio* begins to function as a specific (non-)sense-making gimmick."³² Respectively, Anna Węgrzyniak argues that Tuwim uses enumeration "to present an incoherent world, a world that is incomprehensible from the human point of view."³³ Enumeration in Kornhauser's poetry often activates similar mechanisms. Indeed, when employed by avant-garde artists, enumeration rarely tames disorder; instead, it becomes Tuwim's indefinite "everything for everything."

A question arises whether enumeration in Kornhauser's poetry is a response to the fear of deficit; an attempt to save, accumulate; or perhaps just a strategy used to control excess? Does only one of these opposing phenomena give rise to it? Can it arise from the implosive encounter between the threat of excess and deficit? Everything points to a combination of the two and the resulting, mutually complementary, threats. As Przemysław Czapliński writes:

"Excess" implies a limit, that is, the possibility of determining that something is "just right" – specific, graspable, understandable and organizable. If there is a "limit," then it is also possible to indicate what exceeds it, what threatens it, what goes beyond it, what breaks it.³⁴

²⁹Julian Tuwim, *Bal w operze* [A ball at the opera] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Universitas, 2006), 42.

³⁰This is a literal translation into English (translator's note).

³¹Piotr Michałowski, "Prywatne kolekcje w depozycie fikcji: *Kwiaty polskie* Juliana Tuwima" [Private collections in fiction: Julian Tuwim's Polish flowers], *Teksty Drugie* 62, no. 3 (2000): 19.

³²Paweł Bukowiec, *Metronom. O jednostkowości poezji „nazbyt” rytmicznej* [Metronome. The singularity of 'too' rhythmic poetry] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2015), 114.

³³Anna Węgrzyniak, *Ja głosów świata imitator. Studia o poezji Juliana Tuwima* [I imitate the voices of the world. Essays on Julian Tuwim's poetry] (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2005), 125.

³⁴Przemysław Czapliński, "Literatura i nadmiar" [Literature and excess] *Kultura Współczesna*, no. 1 (2013): 121.

Kornhauser does not set such a limit for us, so the impression of excess, an accumulation of the superfluous, may only be a subjective feeling of the reader. It is impossible to establish a limit, since the poet crosses borders (real life and dream, the world of children and adults, seriousness and humor), mixes sets and seemingly distant orders (culture and nature, the real and the imagined, the material and the abstract), without actually giving us a point of reference. Both categories will therefore be used interchangeably, in keeping with the laws of economic exchange³⁵ – enumeration is both a response to the chaos of excess, an attempt to control it, and an attempt to save the listed elements from a deficit (of oblivion, destruction, change). It is also escapist in nature – someone else must eliminate the unnecessary; not only the lyrical I is obliged to make choices (which, as I have already mentioned, both guarantees freedom and burdens one with overwhelming responsibility). Enumeration in this context is also an investigation, an exploration of *signifiant* and *signifié*, but the point here is not to name things properly, but rather not to omit anything, leave some space, some room for interpretation, consider different possibilities (even if they are confusing, and excess generates a threat of emptiness) and meanings which may be lost in the process. The drama and the seductive beauty found in the act of searching for the final word, the word “from which there is no escape,”³⁶ is obviously a poetic game, involving intense semantic condensation.

The analysis of the selected poems reveals just how important enumeration is for Kornhauser. Enumeration is inextricably linked with metonymy or *pars pro toto*:

Rośnie nasza sława jak krzywa produkcji stali	Our fame grows like the steel production curve
Rośnie nasz spokój jak hotel szwedzki	Our peace of mind grows like a Swedish hotel
Rośnie nasza poezja jak nienawiść której	Our poetry grows like hatred and
Zrywamy kartki	We tear off its pages
Zrywamy kartki	We tear off its pages
Kartki	Pages
Kartki	Pages
Kartki	Pages
Kartki	Pages

Teraz kiedy się obudziłem, p. 116

Now that I woke up, p. 116³⁷

The ending of the poem *Teraz kiedy się obudziłem* [Now that I woke up] requires the reader to reconstruct meanings, although at the same time they are doomed to fail in this process. The problem is not even the imposing and quite obvious metaphor of tearing off pages, but a constructional change that is brought about by the anaphorical enumeration in the poem's final narrative sequence. Chaos – a clash of everything that can be enumerated, listed (“przyjaciół, którzy

³⁵I refer to the concept of exchange as defined by Michał Paweł Markowski, who, in turn, drew on Lévi-Strauss. As such, exchange is a common denominator for many different social activities, an element which naturally influences the creation of a work of art, which, after all, also takes place when one reads Kornhauser's enumerations. They are undefined and decontextualized, but they were originally contextualized explicitly by the times in which they were written (especially as regards the early collections of poems). Cf. Michał Paweł Markowski, “Reprezentacja i ekonomia” [Representation and economy], *Teksty Drugie*, no. 4 (2004): 11-27.

³⁶Kornhauser, “Tyle słów” [So many words], in *Wiersze zebrane*, 239.

³⁷This is a literal translation into English (translator's note).

mówili...” [friends who said ...],” “grzechy” [sins], and thousands of ties which Andrzej Bursa was trying on in the closet) – dominates in the entire text, disrupting the repetitive rhythm that lulls one into a false sense of security: “Teraz kiedy się obudziłem | (...) | Zrozumiałem że | Wszystko łącznie z dniem o różowym wnętrzu | Było grą solidną wymyśloną przez nas samych grą” [Now that I woke up | (...) | I realized that | Everything including the day with a pink interior | was a solid game a game we invented ourselves]. One cannot simply cut oneself off from the world, creating unattainable happiness, because everything is constantly being deconstructed: “Szał wiosny okazał się tłustym nadrukiem na pierwszej | Stronie dziennika” [The scarf of spring turned out to be a headline on the first | page of a newspaper] (p. 115). Interestingly, anxiety comes when, apparently, the poem reaches the place where language is rendered more economical: “Zacząłem używać nowych słów które | Były bardzo wyszukane | Jak ty on ona ono my wy oni” [I started using new words that | Were very fancy | Such as you he she it we you they] (p. 115). Long phrases transform into single, yet meaningful, words. This “economic” aspect – recovering, restoring, making present – is indicated not only by the change of form, but also the selection of lexemes – counting, calculating, increasing production curve, self-examination, and finally weakening, decreased value: “W gazetach ciągle pisano o dewaluacji” [Devaluation was all over the newspapers]. However, how can we save what we cannot name (censorship is only one of the reasons), what we cannot name yet or what we do not even know is being lost (the press writes about devaluation, but what we can only discover is being devaluated in a reverse order – we can say that something was obliterated only once it is rescued from the abyss of oblivion.).

Adrian Gleń thus writes about Kornhauser’s enumerations as a rescue technique:

Kornhauser very often uses the classic *enumeratio* to express “the magma of the present.” Reality that cannot be merged *in statu nascendi et scribendi* – it is in the constant state of “potential imaging,” from which all implications are eliminated, where it is impossible to see the whole, the system of references and correlations between things and phenomena here and now – it is subject only to meticulous enumerations which is supposed to protect, at least for a moment, from the threat of oblivion.³⁸

Kornhauser seems to understand, however, that the poem cannot fulfill this task, but only delineate the process, reflect (on) the mechanics of forgetting (or the process of deliberately obliterating the traces of existence). This endless enumeration does not generate order, but the endless infinity of lists. We do not collect, but tear off the pages, drowning in excess.

In the spirit of avant-garde experiments, the minimalist form is not intended to be as communicative and clear as possible. Metonymic, or in the following case synecdochic ...,³⁹ sequence which may be endlessly developed may only end with the linguistic “violence” of a strong counterpoint, something that disturbs rhythm:

³⁸ Adrian Gleń: “Marzenie, które czyni poetą” ... *Autentyczność i empatia w dziele literackim Juliana Kornhausera* [“A dream that makes a poet” ... Authenticity and empathy in Julian Kornhauser’s works] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Universitas, 2013), 273.

³⁹ “And we know from Chomsky that any taxonomy becomes worthy of attention only as a component of some predictive theory. When it comes to rhetoric, and in particular when it comes to tropes, the main task of a predictive theory would therefore be to try to answer the following question: under what conditions does a given linguistic expression acquire figurative meaning?” Nicolas Ruwet, “Synecdoques et métonymies”, *Poétique* 23 (1975): 371.

Przyjaciele, rynek, miasto,
sklepy, sól, czas, idą,
jadą, czytać, oglądać, południe,
zdjęcia, Bourvil, szyba,
pieniądze, dziecko, jeszcze tylko
chwila i powiew wiatru.

*** [*Przyjaciele, rynek, miasto...*], p. 159

Friends, market, town,
shops, salt, time, go,
go, read, watch, noon,
photos, Bourvil, windshield,
money, baby, just one more
moment and a gust of wind.

*** [Friends, market, town ...], p. 159⁴⁰

The enumerated elements, in correlation with a multitude of others, constituting only a substitute, a part, placed next to each other, one after the other, come to a close with the enjambement "jeszcze tylko..." [just one more]. They do not form an organizing catalog. Indeed, they are rather overwhelming and exhausting. Only interrupting the list gives the reader a break – they can catch their breath. Although it is not explicitly stated, a metaphor of (catching) one's breath is coded at the end. Analyzing this metaphor in Barańczak's poetry, Dariusz Pawelec points out that:

For New Wave poets, the metaphor of (catching one's) "breath" was supposed to demonstrate: "the victory of the individual who craves freedom over the stuffy world of social systems." Being able to breathe is tantamount to being able to speak, expressing your views and even being able to argue in their defense.⁴¹

In the above-quoted Kornhauser poem, breath is preceded by a distraction,⁴² a gap in the everyday (problems, people, activities) – change must take place; something must provide a distraction; "a wind of change" must come.

I shall at this point return to the poem *Tyle rzeczy niezwykłych*. The reversed order seems to be the most interesting procedure in the poem. I started my deliberations with a microanalysis of *Parę symbolicznych drobiazgów*. The title "some symbolic little things" seems to suggest that the collection is trivial – it is only in the process of interpretative supplementation that it turns out that they contain significant symbolic potential, so we quickly conclude that they are described as "little things" ironically, and the list itself and its governing principle are also symbolic. Indeed, in its incompleteness, the poem opens for the reader an infinite number of possible supplementations, creating a unique universe of people, objects, and

⁴⁰This is a literal translation into English (translator's note).

⁴¹Dariusz Pawelec, *Poezja Stanisława Barańczaka. Reguły i konteksty* [Stanisław Barańczak's poetry. Rules and contexts] (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 1992), 123-124.

⁴²Jacek Gutorow pointed this out. However, did not provide an interpretation of this procedure: "Kornhauser quite early offered his readers poems which, in their minimalism and asceticism, constituted a counter-proposal to socially or politically engaged poems. (...) A few lines, simple enumeration, sudden conceptual suspense (...)." Of course, not all enumerations may be read in terms of disengagement, and a lot also depends on how we define them in the context of poetry. This suspense, disturbance of rhythm is quite distinctive for Kornhauser and repeated in almost all of his collections, even though his poetics evolved in other aspects. Cf. Jacek Gutorow, "Języki Kornhausera", *Było nie minęło. Antologia tekstów krytycznych poświęconych twórczości Juliana Kornhausera* [Passed but not forgotten. An anthology of critical texts about the works of Julian Kornhauser], ed. Gleń, 108.

emotions. Respectively, when it comes to “tyle rzeczy niezwykłych” [so many extraordinary things], actually few seem extraordinary. However, one should first of all look at the perspective. In *Tyle rzeczy niezwykłych*, we enter an almost surrealistic convention, an undefined world located on the border between the subject and the object. The secret of the above set, however, lies not in its elements, but in their status – they are “mine;” they are “unlike” anything else.

Enumeration, which inevitably generates metonymic sequences, plays many different roles in Kornhauser’s poetry. In a way, it “laminates” fragments of reality. However, primarily it is a way of seeing things anew, extracting them from the past, retrieving them retroactively, albeit in a different, incomplete form. It is definitely a kind of an avant-garde experiment, which also allows one to recover and recompose oneself, and, in turn, to recover and recompose what shapes the lyrical I of the poem.

For the writer, enumeration is not only a mechanism of repetition, but of capturing the unique manifested in the unpredictability of the sequence. The goal is not to capture one thing, to recover the past, or to shape the future. Kornhauser’s unique poetic constructions (which, as seen above, may also be used in prose) do not only record everyday life or document reality. By presenting the enumerated elements out of context, the poet seemingly creates a completely new reality, which situates itself on the border between the text and its reading, thus creating unique metaphors (or entire sets of metaphors). As such, Kornhauser brings to life his postulates of “non-naïve realism:”

The metaphor is created on the border between reality and the emerging word, and not in the language itself, as “linguistic” poets claim, for whom the spoken language constitutes the extralinguistic world. Metaphor precedes the division into sensual data and concepts; it is cognition itself. It is not a final concretization, an ultimate model of reality, but its expression, one of the possible interpretations that arise when we combine the intellectual and the sensual.⁴³

Of course, we should read this self-analysis with a critical eye. There are empirical constructions in Kornhauser’s poetry – they do not deconstruct but construct and consolidate certain mythical structures. The poet also employs linguistic metaphors, which he borrows from linguistic poets, although in fact, this is much more common in later collections.

Kornhauser’s enumerative-metonymic poetical structures also, to a certain extent, attempt to capture a moment. They also function as an ironic commentary, or even secular modern epiphany which Ryszard Nycz described thus:

In a word, modern epiphanies are – secular rather than sacred – revelations of what is not directly visible (and not of what manifests itself), individual (not general or uni-

⁴³Julian Kornhauser, “Realizm nienaiwny” [Non-naïve realism], in *Krytyka zebrana* [Collected critical essays]. Vol. II, ed. Adrian Gleń, Jakub Kornhauser (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Wojewódzkiej Biblioteki Publicznej i Centrum Animacji Kultury, 2019), 311.

versal), contingent (and not essential or necessary), instantaneous (and not eternal or unchanging) and embodied, actually existing (and not ideal or purely spiritual).⁴⁴

For Kornhauser, poetry does not only "illustrate the dominant universals."⁴⁵ However, to call enumeration a moment of epiphany would be (contrary to appearances) often a simplification, because enumeration also seems to capture a pre-epiphany moment – a moment of not so much creating but "seeking a new reality."⁴⁶

To sum up, although it is not the main interpretive *imperativum debitum*, we should remember that Kornhauser wished to expose certain linguistic mechanisms. However, this does not change the fact that for the poet language is also a tool – a tool of ordering, saving, capturing moments, not in pictures, photographs, elaborate descriptions, but in and through little things, glimpses, behind which there are empires of meanings and references:

(...)
nie wiedzieć czemu
wszystko się pomieszało
(...)

tam i tu tu i tam tam i tam
góry tęcze samba i otwarte drzwi
tam i tu tu i tam tam i tam
oczy jak księżycy słowa urywane
tam i tu tu i tam tam i tam
za siebie kamyk przed siebie ryż
rzucasz chwilo kosmiczna

Chwila, p. 486

(...)
I don't know why but
everything got mixed up
(...)

here and there and there and there
mountains rainbows samba and open doors
here and there and there and here and there
eyes like moons broken words
here and there and there and here and there
a cosmic moment throws
a pebble behind you rice in front of you

Moment, p. 486⁴⁷

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

⁴⁴Ryszard Nycz, "Poetyka epifanii a modernizm. Od Norwida do Leśmiana" [Modernism and the poetics of epiphany. From Norwid to Leśmian], *Teksty Drugie*, no. 4 (1996): 21.

⁴⁵Kornhauser, "Realizm nienaiwny", 311.

⁴⁶Kornhauser.

⁴⁷This is a literal translation into English (translator's note).

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KEYWORDS

list

JULIAN KORNHAUSER

enumeration

ABSTRACT:

In this article, I analyze how enumeration functions in Kornhauser's poetry, looking at the various stages of the poet's life. Enumeration plays a number of roles in Kornhauser's poetry. While, in a way, it "laminates" fragments of reality, it primarily attempts to extract things and memories from the past, retrieve them retroactively, albeit in an incomplete form. Inherently avant-garde and experimental, enumeration is meant to express the essence of the lyrical I. Drawing on Umberto Eco and Michel Foucault who (each in their own right) referred to the infinite possibilities of lists in their works, I analyze the different systems and functions of enumeration, and above all the ways in which Kornhauser uses enumeration in his works.

poetics

NEW WAVE

poetry

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