

Lists and Catalogues in Ancient Literature and Beyond

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Volume 107

Lists and Catalogues in Ancient Literature and Beyond



Towards a Poetics of Enumeration

Edited by

Rebecca Laemmle, Cédric Scheidegger Laemmle
and Katharina Wesselmann

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Preface

The present volume has had a long gestation period. It originates in a conference panel of the 2014 *Celtic Conference in Classics* at the University of Edinburgh. Several chapters of this book were originally contributions to that conference, others have been commissioned at a later stage. We very gratefully acknowledge the generous conference funding we received from Max Geldner-Stiftung, Freiwillige Akademische Gesellschaft, and Fonds zur Förderung der Studien auf dem Gebiete der ägyptologischen, orientalischen und klassischen Altertumskunde (all Basel). We thank Franco Montanari and Antonios Rengakos for including this title in Trends in Classics Supplementary Volumes. We also wish to thank the anonymous readers for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of the entire book, as well as the editorial team at DeGruyter, Serena Pirrotta, Marco Michele Acquafredda, Anne Hiller and Katerina Zianna, for all their generous and efficient help with its production, and the research assistants at Kiel, Jennifer Dickler and Delf Lützen, who assiduously helped with copy-editing. We resist the temptation to give a list of reasons for the long time it has taken to publish this book, but wish to thank all contributors for their patience.

R. Laemmle/C. Scheidegger Laemmle/K. Wesselmann
Cambridge/Kiel, July 2020

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Rebecca Laemmle, Cédric Scheidegger Laemmle, Katharina Wesselmann

Introduction: Lists, Catalogues *etc. pp.*

Lists and catalogues are ever-present. They are indispensable to a wide variety of cultural practices, and are a regular feature of texts and utterances of all kind. However we may define and distinguish various types of lists and catalogues, they are all instantiations of a wider practice of enumeration.¹ The seeming simplicity and rigidity of the form foreground the principles of selection and combination which govern any linguistic utterance: What is in a list, what is left out? and how is it arranged?

Lists and catalogues are open forms that may lead in diametrically opposed directions. Does a list aim at all-embracing, encyclopaedic comprehensiveness or rather at selectiveness and exclusion? Does a list impose order on a set of data or, on the contrary, render it discontinuous and fragmented? What, if any, taxonomies are at work in a list or a catalogue, and by what processes are they shaped and reshaped? What impact do specific writing and recording habits, as well as their media and material configuration, have on the shape of lists and catalogues? When, where and why do lists and catalogues gain currency as literary devices? Are there catalogues in purely oral discourse? If so, how are they performed? And what is their effect on the recipient, be it a solitary reader, or a mass audience of viewers and listeners?

Lists and catalogues are exceedingly difficult to define. As Francis Spufford notes in *The Chatto Book of Cabbages and Kings*, one of the great contributions to the study of lists and catalogues, it is versatility that characterises lists and catalogues above all else, and to anthologise a great number of lists may in fact be the best (or perhaps the only?) way of describing them.² Spufford's introduction

1 For a minimalist definition, see e.g. Belknap 2004, 15: "A list is a formally organized block of information that is composed of a set of members." A vast array of refinements and specifications have been proposed, not least to differentiate catalogues from lists and other forms of enumeration. Thus, e.g., Minchin 2001, 74–75 notes different degrees of elaborateness in the presentation of enumerations, while Mainberger 2003, 4–6 differentiates enumerations according to the representational logic of different media. In this volume 'list' and 'catalogue' are not firmly separated as the terms are conceptually interrelated and both mark variations and degrees of the fundamental practice of enumeration (cf. e.g. Asper 1998, 915 for a definition of the 'catalogue' that emphasises variability and gradual differences).

2 Spufford 1989.

cautions us that any attempt at classification and definition all too often generates another list:

Writers who list may be impresarios of matter, commanding spoons, haystacks and Italian scooters to dance together; they may be mock-collectors, importing the methodology of a museum to set together the imaginary, the real, and the parodic; they may be demiurges, summoning things up out of darkness and naming them; they may be chroniclers sure that a hundred splendid names or battles are a hundred times more valuable than one; they may be connoisseurs of the mixed, the mingled, and the confused; they may be Saint Sebastians, variously pierced by flights of sharp experiences; they may be melancholy brooders over fragmentation; they may be rhetorical thunderers, raining down (as Virginia Woolf said of Swift) ‘an iron pelt of words’; they may be observers of everyday life, convinced they are reporting a naturalistic absence of connectedness; they may be treasure-hunters, more eager for profusions of pearls than for stories or histories. They may be exhilaratingly arrogant in their dispensation with the usual ways of telling, or be witty so doing, or intriguingly mute and mysterious, or more expansive than connected narration can withstand, or open in their invitation to the reader to piece matters together in whatever way seems right.³

Lists and catalogues can, it would seem, do it all, and are accordingly protean in their elusiveness. This volume, too, will side-step the question of definition and follow Spufford’s lead in exploiting the potential of the anthologising impulse which informs, to various degrees, any collection of scholarly articles. The individual studies assembled here are directed towards different types of lists and catalogues, and differ widely (and at times wildly) in their approaches. Together, they cover such a broad range of enumerative practices that (we hope) the recurring themes and shared concerns which emerge will help to trace the contours of that general poetics of enumeration towards which recent scholarship has been feeling its way.

Lists and catalogues are indeed *en vogue* in literary studies — and well beyond. The notion that they were objects worth exploring was widely publicised and popularised when the *Musée du Louvre* elected none other than Umberto Eco as their ‘Grand Invité’ of 2009 to curate the exhibition *Vertige de la Liste* together with a series of events and associated talks.⁴ While his 2011 *Confessions of a Young Novelist* offers a facetiously autobiographical take on lists and catalogues,⁵ Eco

³ Spufford 1989, 6.

⁴ For information on the exhibition and programme of concomitant events, see https://www.louvre.fr/sites/default/files/medias/medias_fichiers/fichiers/pdf/louvre-louvre-invite-umberto-eco.pdf (last accessed 21.08.2020).

⁵ Cf. Eco 2011, 121–204 (ch. “My Lists”), here 121: “Perhaps, at the beginning of my career as a narrator of fiction, I did not realize how fond I was of lists. Now, after five novels and some other literary attempts, I am in a position to draw up a complete list of my lists. But such a venture

put his full weight as historian, art critic, semiotician, novelist and public intellectual behind the Louvre project. In the exhibition and the book published on the occasion (*Vertige de la liste*, Paris 2009 / *Vertigine della lista*, Milan 2009), Eco explored the ‘enumerative’ across time and media. Eco’s *tour de force* caps two extraordinarily productive decades in the academic study of lists and catalogues, a period which saw the publication of three major monographs in three different languages on the vertiginous variety of the enumerative in literature: Sabine Mainberger’s *Die Kunst des Aufzählens. Elemente zu einer Poetik des Enumerativen* (Berlin 2003), Robert E. Belknap’s *The List. The Uses and Pleasures of Cataloguing* (Yale 2004), and Bernard Sève’s *De haut en bas. Philosophie des listes* (Paris 2010).⁶

These critical assessments and theoretical explorations of enumerative modes have not yet had the impact on classical scholarship that they deserve. The engagement with lists and catalogues in modern literary studies and aesthetics routinely takes ancient models as a starting point, but there is no comparably comprehensive study focused on antiquity.⁷ Studies on lists and catalogues in classical antiquity remain almost exclusively limited to the epic catalogue, with the monumental Homeric Catalogue of Ships in *Iliad* 2 taking pride of place,⁸ and — with some notable exceptions —⁹ offer little in terms of explicit theorising.

The present volume is an attempt to close this gap and to foster dialogue between the re-appraisal of enumerative modes in literary and cultural theory and scholarship on ancient cultures. The volume does not of course exclude the epic catalogue — how could it? —, but it tries to recover a sense of the variety of other genres in which poets and writers used, and experimented with, enumerative forms.

The contributions juxtapose literary forms of enumeration with an abundance of ancient non-literary, sub-literary or para-literary practices of listing and

would take too much time, so I’ll limit myself to quoting some of my enumerations, and — as proof of my humility — comparing them with some of the greatest catalogues in the history of world literature.”

⁶ For further noteworthy interventions, see the contributions in Valette 2008, Milcent-Lawson/Lecolle/Michel 2013 and to the issue on lists of *Style* 50:3, 2016.

⁷ For medieval literature Jeay 2006 and the contributions in Mühlethaler/Paschoud 2009 offer important starting points.

⁸ Seminal works on the epic catalogue include Gaßner 1972, Kühlmann 1973, Basson 1975, Visser 1997, and the contributions in the following note. For an extensive overview see Reitz/Scheidegger Laemmle/Wesselmann 2019.

⁹ Esp. Minchin 2001, Perceau 2001, Kyriakidis 2007 and Sammons 2010. We eagerly await Athena Kirk’s forthcoming monograph *Ancient Greek Lists* (Cambridge University Press).

cataloguing from fields as heterogenous as lexicography, mythography, genealogy, and magic. In bringing together these different approaches to this sprawling and variegated corpus, we hope that the volume will offer a sense of the hermeneutic, epistemic and methodological challenges which the study of lists and catalogues must confront. What unifies these studies, above all, is a shared interest in and attention to the dynamics, versatility and mediating power of lists and catalogues; what we hope emerges is a sense of how the interdependence of pragmatics, materiality, performativity and aesthetics are mediated in lists and catalogues.

Part I. Theoretical Approaches to Lists and Catalogues confronts the often marginal and contested position that enumerative forms have long occupied in literary theory and criticism, and seeks to rehabilitate the project of a poetics of enumeration. The contributions in this section suggest that lists and catalogues in literature are not to be too easily dismissed as mere remnants of everyday practice or as elaborate but inert show-pieces. Rather, they must be recognised as versatile and dynamic structures that, more often than not, are inextricably intertwined with the narrative contexts in which they are embedded. For both contributors, lists and catalogues in literary texts are sites of negotiation where fundamental questions — of textuality, literariness and interpretation — can be put to the test.

This section opens with Sabine Mainberger's contribution which centres not on one of the canonical examples of literary catalogues but on that most mundane and unpretentious of lists: the table of contents to this volume. As she demonstrates in a veritable *tour de force* of reading, contextualising, re-reading and re-contextualising, very many ordering principles may be seen at work in the simple list of names, academic affiliations and chapter titles, some overlapping and complementary, others apparently conflicting and mutually exclusive. Mainberger's contribution thus raises the fundamental question of where the meaning of an enumeration resides — in the semantic properties of the listed entries, the syntactic properties of the list as a whole, or in the hermeneutic practice of the reader?

Eva von Contzen's chapter similarly starts from the observation that lists and catalogues resist straightforward description. Enumerative forms are ubiquitous in human culture, and a poetics of enumeration must take account of the paradox that list-making is both a highly specific practice and an anthropological constant. Accordingly, von Contzen proposes a 'listology' that does not consist in a unified theory, but, perhaps inevitably, in a list of heuristic criteria for the description of lists that integrates pragmatics, formal poetics and the aesthetics of

reception. Ultimately, such a multi-faceted approach reflects the fact that lists and catalogues prompt complex strategies of sense-making which belie the seeming straightforwardness and simplicity of their form.

The relation between lists and catalogues, on one hand, and narrative forms, on the other, is especially difficult to conceptualise. Lists are governed by a spatial logic of juxtaposing disparate and discontinuous elements, rather than a temporal logic of clear-cut sequences, and thus may seem at odds with the normal workings of narrative. As von Contzen argues, however, lists and catalogues often play a pivotal role in the reception of narratives. More than any other form, they amplify and foreground the basic hermeneutic procedures of supplementation and integration, and thus ultimately constitute “a narrative *fascinosum*, a literary form that startles and entertains, that attracts and repels” (51).

Part II. The Cultural Poetics of Enumeration: Contexts, Materiality, Organisation offers six chapters that confront lists and catalogues within a broad range of pre-, sub- and para-literary practices of enumeration. Covering phenomena from Ancient Mesopotamian inventories to the list-making machine that is today’s Wikipedia, from love poetry to curse tablets, from alphabetical hymns to ancient lexica, the section focuses on the complex relations between enumeration and textuality.

Nathan Wasserman opens the section with an overview of the types of lists that occur in the Mesopotamian literary tradition and discusses their relation to their non-literary counterparts in bureaucratic inventories and accounts as well as to the lexicographical lists of scholars and scribes. While lists and catalogues in literature have often been seen as the remnants of earlier oral poetry and formulaic composition-in-performance, Wasserman takes a sceptical view and suggests that they find an equally — if not more — important explanation in scribal culture. As Wasserman shows, scribal practice not only had one of its fundamental purposes in the production of lists, as it catered to a bureaucratic system in need of accurate records, but scribal knowledge itself crucially hinged on lists: lexicographical lists, above all else, served both as a repository and a teaching tool of scribal knowledge and skill.

For all their differences in outlook, lists and catalogues in literature not only display close structural similarities to the different types of non-literary lists, such as legal texts or lexica, but they are often informed by the same semantic régimes that have come to be associated with them: the definitional impulse of simple lists which strive towards the expression of totality and exhaustiveness ($A-B-C-...-N$ or $A_1-A_2-A_3-...-A_n$), or the dynamism and directionality of chain-

like enumerations (A, A–B, B–C, C–D, ..., –N or A₁–A₂, B₁– B₂, C₁–C₂, ...N₁–N₂) which imply authorial control and meaningful order.

Wasserman's set of case studies not only sheds light on the association of lists and catalogues with writing practices but also on the specific interplay of form and function that lies at their heart. A third set of questions arises in the last section of this chapter with comparatist readings of Jorge Borges and Ted Hughes, thus juxtaposing the earliest texts discussed in this volume with some of the latest. How are we to account for uncanny similarities between these decidedly modernist poets and the early Mesopotamian tradition? Are there transhistorical continuities of list-making, or do the archaic and arcane forms of the earliest tradition hold a special attraction for 20th century avant-garde aesthetics?

Charles Delattre's chapter on lists in ancient mythography similarly stresses the need of assessing lists in their relation to writing, reading, and, fundamentally, to 'using' texts. Departing from the notion of the text as a mere repository of meaning, Delattre embraces the idea of the text as, rather, a site of the production of meaning, and insists that this does not rest on a uniform practice but rather a variety of highly specific forms of interaction. Above all, Delattre emphasises the mutual influence of usability and material form. The specific practices of engaging with and making use of texts shape, and are in turn shaped by, the material presentation of these texts — their script, punctuation, paragraph divisions, and general *mise-en-page*. Lists, Delattre argues, constitute a particularly versatile form of text and, indeed, seem almost emblematic of post-modern views of the text as 'always already in use'. Lists do not simply contain and provide information, but they organise it in ways that permit different readings, invite further engagement and allow for interventions, additions, re-arrangement. Unsurprisingly, they loom large in the traditions of ancient mythography which collects and systematises a fundamental knowledge that permeated all aspects of everyday life — "a living material, halfway between archive and continuous use and performance" (92). Delattre illustrates these claims in a set of readings that compare the ever-expandable and fluid lists in Web environments with those in Greek and Roman mythographic manuscripts and papyri, and points out how interventions by authors, scribes, editors and readers intersect in these texts.

A similar pragmatics of listing lies at the heart of Richard Gordon's contribution on curse tablets which, by their very nature, are designed to 'do things with words'. Transposed to a written medium, the curses gain in durability but lack the immediacy of the original speech act and must rely on compensatory strategies to assert their illocutionary force. Lists and catalogues routinely feature as a means of bolstering the authority and efficacy of the curse texts. Gordon deliberately focuses on 'indigenous' curse-practice, that is the texts produced by 'the

man in the street' rather than by priests and religious experts, and thus presents a set of texts that rarely, if at all, employ sophisticated rhetorical strategies. While they represent highly specific responses to everyday problems — arguments in the workplace, rivalries of opposing fan groups in the Circus, the experience of petty crime, ill fortune, ill health *vel sim.* — they rarely offer much detail on either the back-stories or the motivations of their authors. They do, however, often feature lists of names that betray a concern with identifying the targeted evil-doers, at times evoking the language of magisterial decrees and legal documents. Indeed, the lists we encounter in 'indigenous' curse tablets — which also include more complex lists such as symptomologies detailing the hoped-for effects of a curse — are often rather haphazard adaptations of established enumerative régimes and represent, perhaps, the diffuse practical knowledge of listing that has trickled down to the lower strata of society and conditions their world view.

Oliver Thomas' chapter complements Gordon's exploration of religion and magic as it centres on the function of lists in hymnic poetry. Specifically, Thomas is interested in the lists of divine attributes that often feature in the hymnic address of a divinity. The accumulation of largely unconnected, often disparate *epitheta* has often been dismissed as an unsophisticated form — a sort of zero degree — of description. Thomas proposes a reading which takes the list form seriously as an attempt at conceptualising divinity. While many hymns feature relatively short and localised attribute lists, Thomas' sample of four hymns — the *Homeric Hymn to Ares*, an alphabetic hymn to Apollo (AP 9.525), a magical hymn to Selene (PGM IV.2786–2870), and an *Orphic Hymn to Athena* (32) — consist almost exclusively of divine epithets and allow him to explore in full the effects of such lists.

For all their specific differences, the four hymns share a tendency, Thomas suggests, of defying ordinary logic and flouting the need for coherence that dictates other forms of linguistic representation. The list form privileges the mere juxtaposition of divine attributes over their logical delineation, and allows for the co-presence of different ordering principles without committing to any one of them at the expense of others. Indeed, the anti-logic of juxtaposing does not privilege semantic relations between the epithets over those based on their materiality — rhythmical regularities, assonances, similarities in word formation etc. —, and it presents itself as both open-ended and finite, both as a random miscellany and as a meaningful selection. Thus, the alphabetical hymn to Apollo suggests encyclopaedic comprehensiveness as it offers a set of four epithets for each of the 24 letters of the Greek alphabet; at the same time, however, the hymn — just as its counterpart to Dionysus (AP 9.524) — somewhat inconsistently reaches its midpoint, with epithet 48 of 96, in the word μυριάμορφος — "of a *thousand*

forms” —, thereby undermining the zeal for total coverage. Ultimately, Thomas suggests that the list form – which has a presence in hymns well beyond strings of epithets – contributes to the triangulation of performer, human audience and divine addressee which is germane to all hymns. Lists and catalogues command the audience’s attention and advance a heightened form of engagement with the divine.

The openness and flexibility of the list form also stand at the centre of Olga Tribulato’s discussion of ancient lexicography which, Tribulato argues, confronts us with a set of quintessentially open and dynamic texts: far from offering a neutral or self-contained description of linguistic usage, the lexicographical texts from antiquity offer specific interventions in literary exegesis, grammatical scholarship and the wider politics of language. At the same time, they are themselves subject to interventions over time: lexica are used, expanded, augmented, revised, shortened or epitomised. With the advent of the so-called Atticist lexica in the second century AD, moreover, ancient lexicography adopts an increasingly prescriptive stance: these lexica take account of the linguistic past in order to shape the linguistic future. In their normative orientation towards the perceived purity of Classical Attic, they paradoxically both foster and restrict the production of new texts. As Tribulato argues, the list format which lexicographical texts often adopt is the ideal vehicle for this negotiation of openness and closure, textual productivity on the one hand and normative limitation on the other. Tribulato focuses on the so-called Antiatticist lexicon which, as she shows, does not so much negate as recalibrate the linguistic agenda of Atticist lexica. Rather than attempting to shape contemporary language in the image of classical Attic, it vindicates *koine* usage by tracing it back to venerable precedents in literary texts, both Attic and non-Attic. Thus, it suggests a continuity of literary and spoken language and promotes a broader understanding of *hellenismos*, which ultimately finds an appropriate expression in the form of the ever-expandable list.

Part III. The Poetics of the Epic Catalogue centres on the epic catalogue which, already in antiquity, was understood as the quintessential embodiment of literary enumeration and has been adduced as a dominant model ever since. As the contributions to the section show, however, the idea of *the* epic catalogue, monumental and monolithic, is a mirage. Ancient epic comprises a wide variety of enumerative and catalogic forms that permeate virtually all narrative contexts, and those catalogues which above all have become models – the Homeric Catalogue of Ships and the Virgilian troop catalogues – are notoriously complex and far removed from simple list formats. The contributions are united in their attempt not only to elucidate the origin and development of catalogues in epic but also to

illustrate the richness and multidimensionality that characterise both the form and literary uses of epic catalogues.

Edzard Visser opens the section by re-assessing the age-old discussion of the development of the epic catalogue in the early stages of Greek literacy. He distinguishes two fundamental types of epic catalogues — the grammatically uniform and highly condensed list, mostly of names (type A), and a more loosely structured form where all entries share a number of recurring characteristics but also allow for individual elaboration and narrative vignettes (type B). Visser notes that catalogues of the first type proliferate in the *Iliad* and Hesiodic poetry but become much rarer in the later epic tradition which, in turn, shows a preponderance of the second type. Drawing on parallels in Linear B tablets, he suggests that the prevalence of type A lists in the *Iliad* reflects Mycenaean influence, not just on the subject matters of early Greek epic but equally on its poetic form. Visser, however, cautions against any simplistic view of such lists as inert, fossilised relics of an earlier tradition and proposes a functional explanation instead. In his view, these early catalogues were the prime vehicle for the information about the past — historical, aetiological, genealogical — that was essential for the epic poets and their audience, as it underpinned their shared world view and sense of community.

Johannes Haubold focuses on the related question of the common ground between Early Greek and Akkadian Epic. While much scholarly effort has gone into attempts at establishing trajectories of influence between the two cultures, Haubold espouses a model of comparatism which resonates with the comparative framework of the entire volume. Thus side-stepping the fraught questions of sources and influence, Haubold addresses the experience of a reader who engages with both traditions, reads them alongside each other and adduces one as the resource for the study of the other. As he argues, epic catalogues offer an intriguing case study for such a reader-oriented approach. While they have emerged in radically different cultural milieus — with Akkadian epic's interaction with traditions of *Listenwissenschaft* standing in stark contrast to the oral poetics of Early Greece — the catalogues of both cultures play similar roles in their respective epic traditions: not only do they serve as repositories of knowledge or information, but they also offer subtle reflections on the poems and their world view. As Haubold demonstrates in a set of exemplary readings, comparison helps to give a more nuanced account of the catalogues' structures and to elucidate the specific functions they fulfil. What emerges is a clear view of the multi-layered nature and malleability of epic catalogues. Thus, Gilgamesh's catalogue of Ish-tar's former lovers (*SB Gilgamesh* VI.44–47 and 58–79) is not only a powerful rhetorical performance but also a meditation on divine order and justice, and as such, it is comparable to various catalogues in the speeches of the *Iliad*. Similarly,

the travelogues in the *Odyssey* and the *Gilgamesh Epic* both serve to map out the protagonists' travels but equally account for their intellectual and hermeneutic journeys. The catalogue of Zeus' offspring at the close of the *Theogony* (which then finds a continuation in the *Catalogue of Women*) and the catalogue of Marduk's fifty names at the end of *Enūma eliš* both reflect on the fraught question of where cosmology ends. While the Akkadian epic concludes its account with the assertion of the god-king's supremacy, Hesiod ultimately closes the gap between cosmogony and the dominant tradition of the Homeric epics about the heroic age. For all their differences, however, both catalogues serve as devices of closure.

Christiane Reitz's chapter surveys the Graeco-Roman epic tradition to consider the epic catalogue's role as repository of knowledge and information. While the epic catalogue is a persistent feature of ancient epics, Reitz notes, it is by no means a static set-piece. Rather, the catalogues in epic appear as privileged sites of poetic innovation and metapoetic deliberation where fundamental epistemological questions come to the fore. Thus Reitz introduces the epic catalogue as "one of the most reliable and foreseeable parts of epic narrative" and, "at the same time, one of the most unreliable" (229). The frequent invocation of the Muses, or other divinities, at the outset of catalogues is a case in point: while such invocations serve to explain the poet's access to privileged divine knowledge and thus to bolster his authority, they also serve as a reminder of the limitations of human knowledge and perception. Similarly, the rhetoric of ordering, numbering, or completeness is often adduced to bolster a description's claim to precision and exhaustiveness, which is then substantiated in a detailed catalogue. There are, however, numerous instances where the potential for a catalogic description is flagged up but never actualised. Thus, the *series longissima rerum* depicted in Dido's golden cups in *Aeneid* 1.641 opens the possibility of a catalogue without offering one. Conversely, Silius tells of the *longus rerum et spectabilis ordo* (*Pun.* 6.657) of images on the temple of Liternum which Hannibal surveys before he decides to destroy them; as Silius catalogues them in an extensive ekphrasis (6.653–697), however, they are now endowed with literary *memoria*, and the tale of Hannibal's iconoclasm ultimately accentuates the mnemonic feat of Silius' poem. In both cases, there is a disjunction between the fictional world of epic and its representation in the medium of literature, and the catalogue emerges as a site where the powers and limitations of literary representation are reflected. Reitz concludes her contribution with a perspective on further research on the (meta)poetics of the epic catalogue.

The relation between catalogues and authority is also at issue in Stratis Kyriakidis' contribution on heroic genealogies in Graeco-Roman epic. Genealogical catalogues are a mainstay of the epic tradition, as they reflect broader concerns

with ancestry, filiation and one's relation to the past. As Kyriakidis shows in his comparative analysis of the Homeric poems, Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the form and rhetorical use of such catalogues varies according to the exigencies of the narrative context and indeed of the ideological outlook of the respective poems. Kyriakidis shows that these differences are reflected in the particular structure of these catalogues and in fact argues that "the structure of a catalogue is never exclusively an instance of mere poetic technique isolated from the context and content of the passage" (246). In the *Iliad*, most genealogical accounts are delivered by the descendant who validates himself by invoking his lineage, and the prevalent emphasis on the male line of descent (at the exclusion of women) is mirrored by the rigorous parataxis and the descending mode in which the genealogy is presented. While the *Odyssey* occasionally follows the *Iliadic* precedent — Telemachus' account of his ancestry at *Od.* 16.117–120 is a case in point — it generally eschews the model of heroic self-assertion. As Kyriakidis shows, genealogical catalogues in the *Odyssey* are generally highly variable: not only do they follow a looser and more versatile structure, but they increasingly focus on the female line of descent and are typically voiced by a third party and not the descendants of the line themselves.

Kyriakidis' sample of Latin epics similarly offers two markedly different conceptions of genealogy. In the *Aeneid*, Kyriakidis argues, genealogy serves to legitimise and stabilise ideas of political progress. Thus, the genealogy of the central hero crucially contributes to the historical teleology and mediation of Roman identity that lie at the heart of the poem. But equally within the logic of the narrative, genealogical catalogues are increasingly politicised. They serve less to amplify the honour of the hero than the glory and prosperity of his people. In contrast, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* repeatedly upset inherited ideas of legitimacy through descent and indeed question the value of genealogical accounts altogether. As Kyriakidis argues, the account of Julius Caesar in *Metamorphoses* 15.852–860 who sees his achievements surpassed by his descendant Augustus, is emblematic of this scepticism. In a world of continuous metamorphosis, genealogy can no longer serve as a stable referent but is only ever provisional, skewed, and always already in need of revision.

The subversive potential of catalogues also lies at the heart of Katharina Wesselmann's chapter which leads back to Early Greek Epic. Wesselmann argues that there are numerous catalogues in the Homeric epics which cannot easily be explained in functional terms, but appear self-defying or curiously out of place. Such catalogues can have comical or parodic effects, which, in turn, contribute to the characterisation of the respective speaker. Her main example is a short list of accomplishments which Hector gives to Aias before engaging in a duel with

him (*Il.* 7.237–241). In and of itself, his speech does not significantly differ from other boastful battle speeches, but the wider narrative context gives a less than flattering portrait of Hector. In an over-confident manner, he had challenged the Greeks to nominate somebody to fight him in a duel; when he learns, however, that they have chosen Aias with his gigantic shield, his courage quickly turns into panic. In light of this build-up of the scene, Hector's list can be seen to express his fear and agitation; not only does the rushed staccato of the list betray Hector's haste, but he also enumerates battle skills that are irrelevant in a duel and puts much weight on his small shield and the agility it allows — thus obviously confronting his fear of Aias' signature weapon. The sudden switch from boastfulness to panic has a comical effect — probably not just to the modern reader. Indeed, Wesselmann argues, there are several other examples of parodic or comical catalogues in Homer, such as Agamemnon's extraordinary catalogue of gifts in *Il.* 9.120–157: the very long list of disproportionate gifts reveals that the speaker is both desperate and completely lacks understanding of the situation (as Achilles is quick to point out, when Agamemnon's offers are recounted to him). Agamemnon's list finds an echo in his younger brother's similarly hapless enumeration of inappropriate presents to Telemachus in the *Odyssey* (4.589–592). Further examples serve to illustrate how speakers are characterized by the catalogues they include in their speeches. For Wesselmann, the most prominent case of a potentially comical catalogue, the outrageously inappropriate record of past lovers that Zeus declaims to his ever-jealous wife Hera in *Iliad* 14, not only illustrates the god's remarkable erotic appetite and susceptibility to female charm, but equally portrays a comical, hasty or panicked manner of speaking. Returning to the character of Hector, Wesselmann concludes with a reflection on the question of how the presence of such comical instances relates to the tragic world view that underpins the *Iliad*.

Part IV. Beyond the Epic Catalogue. Literary Appropriations of Lists and Catalogues rounds the volume off with studies of lists and catalogues in a wide range of ancient literary texts, from classical Athenian drama to late Imperial epigram. What unites these texts is their engagement with the tradition of the epic catalogue, which they adopt, challenge and re-purpose while at the same time affirming it as their defining model. The contributions in this section bear eloquent testimony to the rich literary and meta-literary potential of lists and catalogues.

In the first chapter of this section, Ben Sammons investigates the dynamics of tradition that underpin ancient catalogues, as he focuses on five catalogues of

the ‘Seven against Thebes’ from four surviving tragedies (Aeschylus’ *Septem*, Euripides’ *Phoenissae* and *Supplices*, and Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus*). These catalogues of the Seven are not only united by their shared engagement with the catalogues of epic, but they constitute a small-scale tradition of their own, with each catalogue variously supplementing, correcting, or indeed commenting on its precedents. In this, Sammons insists, the tragic catalogues do not offer radical departures from the model of the epic catalogue, but rather acknowledge and exploit the versatility, continuing vitality and creative potential that defines the catalogic forms of epic themselves. The messenger’s account of the seven leaders in Aeschylus’ *Seven* (375–652) is a case in point. As it is repeatedly interrupted by Eteocles’ and the chorus’ interventions and questions, the messenger’s narration is dramatized. At the same time, however, this adaptation of epic diegesis to the dialogic framework of drama looks back to precedents in the Homeric epics, namely the Iliadic *teichoskopia*, which similarly blends the catalogic form with dialogue and description, and thus adumbrates the hermeneutic issues which take centre stage in Aeschylus, where the catalogue of the Seven emerges as precarious and unstable: while it purports to offer matter-of-fact description, it is open to (mis)interpretation and aggressive readings. Perhaps in reaction to Aeschylus’ loose adaptation of the *teichoskopia*, the catalogue of Euripides’ *Phoenissae* evokes the Homeric model rather more directly, even if it is the old servant who identifies the warriors for young Antigone, while in the *Iliad* Helen furnishes explanations for the old men of Troy (103–192). As in Aeschylus’ play, the *Phoenissae* thus explores the emotionalised response that the descriptive catalogue elicits from the internal audience. As Sammons argues, the reception of catalogues is also at issue in a second catalogue of the Seven in *Phoenissae*, which occurs in the messenger speech (1104–1140). Widely considered a later interpolation, it may in fact be seen as evidence for the continuing appeal of the catalogic form; the passage was possibly inserted to give an actor the opportunity to showcase his performative skill. Indeed, it is noteworthy that the idea of public performance is not absent from the catalogues in Euripides’ *Supplices* and Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus* which explore the rhetorical effects of the catalogue form, not least in relation to ideas of civic cohesion in Athens which were tied up in specific practices of non-literary listing, such as the casualty lists and the *epitaphioi logoi* in times of war.

Isabel Ruffell’s contribution on Old Comedy demonstrates the sheer abundance of lists and catalogues and related forms of verbal accumulation in tragedy’s ruder sister; Ruffell also subsumes other phenomena, such as frequently dissonant tricola or extravagant compound coinages, in her survey of the comic poets. While Ruffell takes formal considerations as her starting point, she pushes

back against a formalist reading which dismisses such a display of rhetorical exuberance as mere playfulness. Ruffell advocates the close study of the generative principles behind comic lists and list-like phenomena — the suspension of conversational norms, the defamiliarisation of central concepts, by way of displacement, inordinate condensation or expansion — and shows that they are a crucial part of the associative framework within which Old Comedy reflects on and criticises basic notions and concepts of Athenian culture and politics, be it the ‘citizen’, the ‘politician’, ‘peace’ *vel sim*. As Ruffell demonstrates in a detailed reading of the *Acharnians*, lists, catalogues and related phenomena of enumeration and accumulation do contribute to Comedy’s humorous effects in their blatant violation of the rules that govern everyday communication (a diagnosis which leads back to Wesselmann’s discussion of mis-placed or seemingly out-of-place catalogues in epic), but they are also deeply implicated in the conceptual work of the comic dramas.

Scheidegger Laemmle’s contribution explores the uses of catalogues in shaping ideas of literary history, and centres on Ovid’s elegy *Ex Ponto* 4.16, the poem that has come down to us as Ovid’s very last, positioned at the close of the (purportedly) posthumous collection of exilic poems. The elegy sets a remarkable end point to Ovid’s poetic career, as it departs from the self-centred poetics of Ovidian exile to turn attention to the literary scene in Rome, offering a catalogue of no less than thirty-one younger contemporaries. The catalogue form itself gestures towards a specific set of enumerative practices which had emerged in earlier literary criticism and literary history — victor lists, *pinakes*, library inventories etc. —, and were the object of renewed interest in the cultural revolution under Augustus. Yet, Ovid’s poem puts a new and decisive spin on this tradition as it displaces its mechanisms from historical authors to contemporaries. Ovid’s poem probes the limits of the notions that commonly underpin the idea of literary history — authority, fame, canonicity —, and confronts literary history with a provocative account of the contemporary: transient and provisional, the contemporary resists any exhaustive or authoritative treatment. The paradoxical quality which Scheidegger Laemmle attributes to the catalogue of *Ex Ponto* 4.16 — of both providing and withholding information — makes it an ideal articulation of the contemporary, and proves particularly apt to mediate the poet’s attitude towards, and place within, the whole field of literature.

In the last contribution to the volume, Regina Höschle studies Christodoros’ Ekphrasis of the Baths of Zeuxippos (transmitted as book 2 of the *Anthologia Palatina*), where the question of the relation between the literary and the real, which haunts so many lists and catalogues, comes to the fore. Christodoros’ poem offers

ekphraseis of 80 bronze statues displayed in the Zeuxippos Baths at Constantinople, which variously represent thinkers, poets, orators and statesmen, as well as divinities and mythological figures, both Greek and Roman. Scholarship on the poem has been vexed by the question of the catalogue's referential quality; the historical record offers tantalising evidence for the construction and decoration of the Baths under Constantine and for their complete destruction in the sixth century AD, and various attempts to reconstruct the statuary, or make inferences about the curatorial design of the collection, from Christodoros' text have unsurprisingly proliferated. Höschele argues, however, that the poetic text derives much of its power from this specific relation to extra-literary reality and in fact repeatedly thematises it by pitching poetic speech and the eloquence of literature against the silence and immobility of the mute bronze statues, and by grouping and sequencing the descriptions in such a way that the statues are incorporated into a genuinely literary order. Thus, Christodoros' poem is structured, first and foremost, by *ekphraseis* of statues from the Trojan myth and Greco-Roman history which enact the framework of *translatio imperii* from Troy to Rome and, ultimately, to Constantinople. This is mirrored by an idea of poetic succession which connects the Homer of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* with the Homer of Byzantium, with Virgil and, ultimately, with Christodoros himself, who are all heirs to the Homeric tradition. It is only fitting, then, that the Homeric epics also seem to provide the generative nucleus from which Christodoros develops his programme: it is the unimposing group of the four Trojan Elders, Panthoos, Thymoites, Lampon and Klytios (246–255), which holds the interpretative key to Christodoros' enumeration. They were among the Elders who once listened in thrall to Helen when she named the Greek warriors from the walls of Troy. The Homeric *teichoskopia* thus not only provides a model for the catalogic organisation of the poem but also offers, embodied in the four old men — spectators par excellence —, a paradigm of visuality, description and interpretation.

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Part I: **Theoretical Approaches to Lists and Catalogues**

Sabine Mainberger

Musing about a Table of Contents. Some Theoretical Questions Concerning Lists and Catalogues

“Lists and Catalogues in Ancient Literature and Beyond: Towards a Poetics of Enumeration” — we do not have any doubt that there are many lists and catalogues in ancient literature (and beyond) — but is there also a poetics? Does ancient literature present a poetics of the epic catalogue, the genealogies, the lists of names, events, things, words?

In the strict sense of the term, a poetics is a theory of poetry. Yet lists and catalogues do not only belong to epic, drama, and poetry more generally, they belong to other textual genres and disciplines as well: to natural history, philosophy, historiography, didactic writing, magic and more. Therefore, one has to think of “poetics” in the broader sense of the term, of a theory which relates to all kinds of textual forms and genres. Here, however, we encounter a further question. Are lists and catalogues — or, more generally, enumerations — texts? Or are they not, and perhaps even the very opposite of texts?

In the history of writing, lists are older than written literature — assuming that literature means written continuous text. In its earliest uses, writing does not transcribe or attempt to fix the spoken word. As a computing tool, it serves accounting; it is a notational system that — like numbers — is independent from phonetisation. Nevertheless, of course, lists and speaking are not without any connection. In oral communication and oral poetry, we also find enumerations; to what extent oral poetry refers to written lists and evolves with the diffusion of writing is a complex question. For the moment let me just say: when we look for a poetics of lists and catalogues, we must take into consideration that an enumeration is not a text in the proper sense. Instead, it is perhaps a special kind of text and related in a particular way to what we normally call a text: something fluid and continuous, regardless of whether it is spoken or written. Obviously, we find enumerations “within” a continuous text. We also find them “prior to” texts, for texts are generated from lists of words; at least the virtual list of our vocabulary is always prior to the text we speak or write. We likewise find lists and catalogues “posterior to” a text when they are extracted from texts *post festum*; take an index of names or concepts. And sometimes, lists are themselves texts and we cannot avoid reading or listening to them in their entirety. This is a feature of modern experimental literature, but, to give just one example, an evocation of a god by calling upon his many names functions similarly. In short: enumerations occur

in, prior to, posterior to and *as* texts. And, of course, the majority of lists do not maintain an explicit relation to continuous text. Think of a timetable, a directory, dictionaries, library catalogues. We refer to them and extract information from them. We do not read them, we browse through them or search them for something particular, which, with some luck, we find. To do so, we must be able to read — illiterate people cannot use them —, but our reading does not follow the flow of any spoken utterance. Instead we read in the etymological sense of *legein*: like birds, we pick and pick out.

On any of these occasions we generally know what kind of practice the respective list or catalogue belongs to: to the cultural activity of shopping, for example, or to travelling by public transport. Because we are acculturated to these practices, we use the lists and catalogues properly, that is in a way such that our ability to extract information from them allows us to achieve our aims, e.g. to buy something or to get somewhere. Literature may use lists and catalogues in another manner. For example: a public lecture may consist of reading aloud a commercial catalogue, thus transforming the list of goods into a litany. We find the same phenomenon not only in comic performances but just as well in very serious or solemn contexts: think of the act of presenting the long list of victims of a catastrophe, reading aloud, one by one, each of their names. A mere list without any additional words is read out, but it is much less a jumble of information concerning the event than a reverential speech act, honouring the dead. When read out as part of public commemoration, the registered facts or names — the passenger list of an aircraft or a list of victims of persecution, for example — acquire new meaning and significance. It is the *practice* that determines what a list or catalogue is and is not. Taken on its own, it is undetermined and, although laden with facts, it is unable to reveal its significance. It depends on the user's initiative; only his or her proper or improper practice produces its meaning. Thus, a poetics of lists and catalogues must analyse their forms and corresponding practices or, more precisely, their forms in function.

In doing so, however, we must consider something very peculiar, a fact we cannot ignore: when we analyse lists and catalogues, they feature on the side of the object as well as on the side of the observer. Philological, sociological, ethnological, linguistic etc. studies of enumerative practices bring the analytical activity itself into focus.

This book does not promise “A Poetics of Enumeration” but a movement “towards” it; does this preposition indicate the preliminary nature of the publication or is it a sign of modesty or of scepticism? I take the subtitle as a signpost: authors and readers are travelling to a country with many attractive places. The capital is a widely known and highly appreciated metropolis: Homer, but, surely, other

highlights such as Hesiod, Herodotus, Quintilian or Ovid are absolutely not to be missed! And much more is to be detected, too, as readers may arrive from many different directions.

Nonetheless, their journey through more than four hundred pages requires preparation and guidance. They need a map. To be sure, there are some older as well as more recent maps, viz. bibliographies of publications on lists and catalogues. Every such bibliographical list helps readers to explore the topic, but it remains incomplete, as its purpose is to augment the existing list of titles with further titles. The bibliographies at the end of each essay in this book have augmented it remarkably — and the title of this book itself is a new item in future bibliographical lists and catalogues on lists and catalogues.

The audience of a conference are given a programme including names of speakers, titles, time schedule, and, occasionally, even numbers indicating the rooms in which the papers will be delivered; thus, conference-goers are able to select talks they wish to attend in accordance with their interests. The readers of a book are in an even more comfortable situation: they may follow everyone, when, where, how often and as fast or as slowly as they wish. There is no timetable, but only a list of names and titles combined with a list of numbers that guide the reader through the daunting pile of several hundred pages. Between two of those numbers lies a promise to satisfy their curiosity about a certain topic.

It is this list that shall be the object of my attention in the following pages. I will discuss theoretical aspects of lists and catalogues using the example of the Table of Contents of the present book. It is just as suitable for this purpose as many other lists or catalogues, and, after all, it has the advantage of being accessible in full length to everyone; even those with restricted online access to the book may still be able to find the Table of Contents.

1 Lists as a Visual Phenomenon

The two pages of the Table of Contents display a series of paragraphs, left-aligned, and separated by larger white spaces. In each paragraph, two or three lines are grouped together (never less and never more): the listed items are thus not single words or lines but couplets or triplets of lines. This is not the simplest form of a list — that of a sequence of single elements separated from one another at equidistance — but it is the more complex form that combines the horizontal row with the vertical column; it is a table, even though there is no visible grid and the two vertical columns are visually not clearly distinguished as they might be

in a different (more common) layout: the first very broad, consisting of the authors' names and the titles of the papers, the second in a narrow, meandering form, consisting only of the page numbers, its verticality maintained by hyphens. But the tabular form gives us what matters to us when we use or create lists, namely an overview and the possibility to present a great deal of information in a small amount of space.

Large quantities of data in minimal quantities of time, a quick search — that is the *raison d'être* of a written list or catalogue. Both needs are fulfilled by strategies that allow us to perceive writing as an image: as a spatial arrangement of signs on a surface. Of course, there is no writing without notational iconicity (*Schriftbildlichkeit*). Every type of writing, including alphabetic, is a spatial visual phenomenon. The same applies in the case of recorded speech where writing fixes language in its temporal extension. Alphabetic writing arranges its signs in horizontal series. The line is altered according to the available space or the chosen format of the text as it appears on the page. A list, however, results from breaking and changing the line. Indeed, this is what a list, in spite of its practical function, has in common with a poem. The *alinea*s lend the graphical appearance of the writing a light, even airy character. Pages with lists are “whiter” than pages with continuous text. The appearance of a list as a column is customary for all types of enumeration that we skim for the purpose of extracting information but do not read as texts. In alphabetic writing, this vertical appearance of the text is the most severe alteration to the normal direction of reading. It signals that the elements should not be read successively, as related entities.¹

The graphic appearance does not change the content of the list. Nonetheless, the spatial arrangement is crucial — see the Table of Contents as a running text:

Contents *Rebecca Laemmle, Cédric Scheidegger Laemmle, Katharina Wesselmann* Introduction: Lists, Catalogues *etc.* pp. 5 **Part I. Theoretical Approaches to Lists and Catalogues** *Sabine Mainberger* Musing about a Table of Contents. On Some Theoretical Questions Concerning Lists and Catalogues 25 *Eva von Contzen* Theorising Lists in Literature: Towards a Listology 27 **Part II. The Cultural Poetics of Enumeration: Contexts, Materiality, Organisation** *Nathan Wasserman* Lists and Chains: Enumeration in Akkadian Literary Texts (with an appendix on this device in Borges and Hughes) 49 *Charles Delattre* Textual Webs: How to Read Mythographic Lists 73 *Richard Gordon* The Performativity of Lists in ‘Vernacular’

¹ This is not always the case in literary texts: a list that is presented as a column can be adapted to be read successively. For example, the modern *Odyssey*, Joyce's *Ulysses*, abounds in enumerations, and most of them are arranged horizontally as part of the normal, running text. Many of them derive from the Dublin directory, from manuals or from Joyce's own lists — themselves arranged in columns — which he himself had produced as an instrument for his writing process; from these lists he crossed out items once he had inserted them into his text.

Curse-Practice under the Roman Empire 101 *Oliver Thomas* Powers of Suggestion of Powers: Attribute-Lists in Greek Hymns 141 *Olga Tribulato* (En)listing the Good Authors. The Defence of Greek Linguistic Variety in the Antiatticist Lexicon 165 **Part III. The Poetics of the Epic Catalogue** *Edzard Visser* The Catalogue in Early Greek Epic 195 *Johannes Haubold* Catalogues in Greek and Akkadian Epic: A Comparative Approach 211 *Christiane Reitz* Reliability and Evasiveness in Epic Catalogues 231 *Stratis Kyriakidis* Looking Backwards to Posterity: Catalogues of Ancestry from Homer to Ovid 247 *Katharina Wesselmann* Homeric Heroes Speaking in Lists: Comical Characterisation through Catalogues 283 **Part IV. Beyond the Epic Catalogue. Literary Appropriations of Lists and Catalogues** *Benjamin Sammons* Five Times Seven: Cataloguing the ‘Seven against Thebes’ in Four Greek Tragedies 307 *Isabel A. Ruffell* The Aesthetics of the Comic List 329 *Cédric Scheidegger Laemmle* Cataloguing Contemporaries: Ovid *Ex Ponto* 4.16 in Context 365 *Regina Hörschele* Cataloguing Statues: Christodoros’ *Ekphrasis of the Baths of Zeuxippos* 409

Bold print does not give sufficient structure to the page, and adding different font sizes would only create more confusion. Normally, we are unaware of it, but we gain essential information from the mere spatial organisation of writing. The lists and catalogues we encounter in our daily lives would be ineffective if they were not displayed or formatted as columns or tables.

The information concerning the contents, as we find it on page VII–IX, is organised in four lists: one (zigzagging) made of numbers, two made of verbal writing only and one made of verbal writing and roman numbers. The list or set “Contents” has seventeen items; it contains a list or set of four items (the parts) each of which contains at least two items (the essays). Logically, they form sets, nested into each other. The introduction ranks on a higher level than the parts and these on a higher level than the individual essays, but the page layout puts all texts, introduction included, on the same level. This is crucial: sequence from a “first” to a “last” item is unavoidable, hierarchy, however, is not.

By looking alone, i.e. without reading, we can, furthermore, notice that a relatively small number of essays — sixteen contributions — are grouped in four categories of unequal size. The field is, indeed, very structured!

2 Delineating Borders

Lists include and exclude; therefore, they create borders. The Table of Contents, the catalogue of heroes and heroines of this book, is neither a catalogue of men nor a catalogue of women, as gender is not a criterion for in- or exclusion. We count seven female and ten male Christian names: ca. 40% female to 60% male.

Looking at the names of the authors of the Introduction, we find another proportion: two female, one male. We might be tempted to think that the editors are from a younger generation than the majority of the contributors.

Where do women stand in the list? Do we find — as in Virgil — the woman behind Turnus? 100% of the first section is female-authored, while the remaining female names are dispersed throughout the other sections; it seems that there are no exclusively male or female domains of research. Even though women are still a minority, this gender ratio demonstrates that the relation between lists and women has changed. Usually, from Hesiod to Leporello, and on to social media, women appear more frequently on lists (not counting the shortlists for academic positions) than they themselves engage with lists.

Virginia Woolf, who uses a variety of list-types in her novels, assigns different types of lists to the two sexes: the rigid controlling pedantic enumeration to men — who are often scholars — and the expanding variable enumeration, the improvised list that is already lost the moment it is written, to women. Of course, she had Victorian society with its repressive gender politics in mind, and she herself seems to conform to gender stereotypes. Yet very often, she makes fun of them, for example in the fictional biography *Orlando*. The protagonist of this novel, which contains more lists than any other of Woolf's books, is born a man in the Shakespearean era, and is, at the end of the novel, set in the 1920s, a thirty-six year old woman. What type of list do we need in order to register a person who changed their sex?

Enumerations equalize the enumerated elements. Equalising is a precondition of enumerating and, even more, an implication of the act itself. Otherwise, the items cannot be enumerated, catalogued or listed, they are not even items. The equalising aspect may be whatever, it need not be thematic or formal, the act itself is doing it; that is what makes lists so comfortable — anything can be listed — and, occasionally, so cynical. In the table of contents, the different participants are equalized by being given the same format of presentation — name, title of paper, page number — as well as being registered in the same language. Lists classify and impose order on the world; in the context of this book, the diverse contributors are equal enough to build a class.

But do all the elements fit in? Find the odd one out! It is the first of the first section: the only item that does not reference literature or the ancient world. Therefore, the border between the specialists and the others is not absolute; it has an opening: the community takes an outsider in. The editors follow a liberal agenda; they are not afraid of intruders, rather, they are open-minded hosts. The number of the odd ones, however, is modest: a one to sixteen ratio could hardly be considered a threat.

The Table of Contents does not indicate academic titles and affiliations. All the contributors are projected onto the same level; neither age nor grade nor position at their respective universities — in the hierarchy of status, income and privileges — are visible; name or place of the university, indicating international standing, is absent, too. Generously, the list overlooks factual asymmetries and imbalances. This equality in rank is the gala dress of the academic world. It appears as a domination-free space: as the better world in which nothing counts but the sound argument. The table of contents — a utopia!

Are there further exclusions? Among the personal names, for example, Asian or Arab names are missing. The publication is international in character, but not global. Is the argument itself an issue of an exclusively European-Western culture? Perhaps a later volume on this topic will present many Chinese speakers — and titles referring to Chinese texts. Lists can be found in all ancient literatures, and certainly “beyond”. Perhaps what is absent from this list is suggestive of a possible list of the future.

3 How Many Items Make a List?

This question has often been asked.² Are two items already a list or must there be at least three? An anthology of English enumerative texts, *The Chatto Book of Cabbages and Kings* (1989),³ opted for the last answer, but did so admittedly without good reason (or renouncing any theory): according to the editor Francis Spufford, a list is something with at minimum three items. On this count, section I of this book, does not contain a list. One could say that the triad is something like the minimum of plurality. At the same time, this plurality is easily manageable, for it is combined with order, with rules, or possibly, on the contrary, with an instantly visible breaking of the rules and disturbance of the expected order. The title of the just mentioned anthology cites the well-known semantically heterogeneous *enumeratio* in Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking-Glass*: “‘The time has come’, the Walrus said, / ‘To talk of many things: / Of shoes — and ships — and sealing-wax — / Of cabbages — and kings —’”.⁴ The renown of this rhyme enables the mentioning of just two items to evoke the complete list of five.

² Also Nathan Wasserman asks it and gives an original answer, cf. p. 60, in this volume.

³ Cf. above, p. 1–2 (introduction).

⁴ Carroll 1970, 235.

However, there are definitions of lists that permit less than three elements: in set theory, there are lists or classes with only one element or even with zero elements. Or take, for example, voting in a departmental meeting: there can be a majority for a motion and only one against it with no abstentions. Here, we have one class with some members, one with a single member and one with zero members; the last is a zero-set or a list with zero items, but nonetheless it is a class or list.⁵ It seems that “Section V. Tell me, Google: Epic Catalogues of the Present” has remained empty, and, in order to avoid a list with zero items, it has been cancelled. I would like to suggest it for the Second Volume.

The subtitle of Section II is itself an enumeration: “Contexts, Materiality, Organisation”. None of the essays uses this suggestive and versatile device in their titles, and the authors of the only example seem very concerned not to exceed the usual number of concepts. Three items are often considered the minimum of plurality, but they are often considered its maximum as well. In standardized academic rhetoric in particular, binary and ternary expressions prevail — and writers are deeply afraid of multiplicity. Having diagnosed this anxiety, Nietzsche did his best to make philosophical language ‘explode’ and he revealed the infinite variety and exuberance that lies hidden underneath a few poor simplifying terms. In order to unearth the richness and diversity of things, he wrote excessively long enumerations.⁶ Nevertheless, the three concepts in the subtitle of Section II are a list in a list. They show the structure of the list *mise en abyme*. And, as the Table of Contents itself, they confirm the assertion that enumerations are both the object and part of the analysing activity in this book.

4 Classifying — but how?

When focussing on semantics, we cannot identify a single term that is shared between all the listed titles. The authors do not stick to a single, strictly thematic word, but use variations and words belonging to the broader semantic field of the topic: “list(s)” and “catalogue(s)”, of course, prevail, with a notable and decisive preference for the plural, but the verbs “(en)listing” and “cataloguing” feature as

⁵ This fact is excluded from Eva von Contzen’s minimalist definition — “a set of items assembled under some principle in a formally distinctive unit. [...] the list is immediately recognisable due to the enumerative style it relies on” (cf. below, p. 36–37); her definition is based on the *rhetorical* device of enumeration (which remains itself presupposed and unexplicated) and cannot tackle the logical problem mentioned above.

⁶ Cf. Mainberger 2010 and Mainberger 2003, 74–87.

well. “Enumeration” is mentioned twice, and in addition to these words, we find “lexicon”, “chain”, “web”, “*ekphrasis*”, that is terms designating things that share certain aspects of structure or function with lists and catalogues; while the word “number” itself (varying “enumeration”), is absent, three numbers (five, seven, four) occur within a title.

We do not, then, have here a case of the typical classificatory order, which requires one or several characteristics to be common to all members of the class; instead, the key words of the titles form together a class in the sense of what cognitive science calls “experiential realism”.⁷ According to this theory, in language and in everyday communication, i.e. outside artificial, scientific or academic discourse, we do not build classes from elements with the same characteristics, as is required by the so-called *Merkmal* definition. Instead, the classes or divisions that we naturally and inevitably employ are in themselves structured. They contain central elements or prototypes of a certain concept, and around these elements others are grouped. The elements of the class are thus not homogeneous (in relation to a chosen aspect); instead, they are linked together in several different ways. They are not united by a core of identical qualities, but connected through a web of family likenesses.

Recall the list of titles: some use directly one of the three terms of the general heading, i.e., the terms “list” and “catalogue” and “enumeration”, while in some others the key words are more distant from the central terms, but nevertheless belong to the topic just as much as the former do. For example, “chain” is linked to “list” by metaphor: like the list, it contains several distinct elements, but it differs from it by something connecting the elements and fixing their sequence. A lexicon is a specific type of list or catalogue, containing only words; thus, it is linked to the key concepts via metonymy. The same goes for the seemingly most distant example, the rhetorical device and literary genre of *ekphrasis*: as it proceeds by enumeration, describing thus artfully and methodically a person or a thing, it is a special case of verbal enumeration. However, unlike the Catalogue of Ships that is known to everyone and therefore, in the sense of a non-scientific classification, is a prototype of ancient catalogues, even the best known *ekphrasis*, Homer’s description of Achilles’ shield in book 18 of the *Iliad*, does not jump immediately to mind in the same way as the Catalogue from book 2. The less obvious, more distant example is nevertheless linked to the central element via intermediaries. The act of classifying may, in line with the arguments of the cognitive scientist George Lakoff, follow propositional, metaphoric, metonymic or

7 Cf. Lakoff 1990, and Mainberger 2003, 54–58.

image-schematic cognitive models. In short: the subject of the book is a field consisting of a structured plurality and lacking sharp boundaries. Essentialist — Aristotelian — definitions like “a list (or a catalogue) is x specified by y” may look alluring but would obscure rather than clarify the problems implied in the topic.

5 Shaping Time

Lists and catalogues impose order on time as well and (re)figure it. The arrangement of the Table of Contents is, roughly, chronological: the topics run from Akkadian to Greek and on to Roman or Latin. The idea of a temporal succession is presupposed, i.e., a series of epochs or phases that, to a certain degree, can be fitted to the succession of years. We divide the inconceivable stretch of time into more or less equal parts, we transform it into the sequence of numbers, thereby making it controllable and manageable. The succession, however, is almost inevitably linked to the idea of development: the “one after the other” tends to be read as the “one because of the other” and sometimes even the “one higher than the other” or, contrarily, “lower”. This is the trap of categorical confusion, the menace for historiography that must go beyond the mere list of facts, the chronological succession of events, and construct relations between them. But what links *are* there: causal, teleological, ascending, descending ...? The chronological sequence tends to create meaning, but it could just as well be an attempt to renounce such a suggestion. The mere list of events in time avoids statements about relations. Yet if it does not seek to narrate, but instead to document the facts as a discontinuous series, as an elliptical text, it leaves all the more opportunity to fill in the gaps with interpretation.

At a closer look, the topics in the Table of Contents do not only follow a chronological order. They are grouped thematically, and within every section (apart from the first) a roughly chronological order prevails. Thus, historical and other aspects have been carefully put into balance, without even excluding a startling jump from early Mesopotamian literature to Borges and Hughes. The relation between lists, history, and historiography is no simple matter. This fact is also well indicated here: in order to come to terms with the past, not only the ancients must “look backwards to posterity”.

6 Logic: “and” — “or”

The table of contents is a complete list of all the texts written for this book. The implicit logic is “and ... and ... and”. Few readers – apart from the editors –, however, will work through this list faithfully; most will use it as a list of options. They will choose some texts to read and skip the others. They are unlikely to take the menu of introduction and essays as a presentation of one course after the other but as a menu to select from; they will read *à la carte*. For this use, the implicit logic of the list is not “and” but “or”. Luckily, the alternative of “either – or” goes only for a certain moment of reading; while at a conference, one has to choose the talks to listen to from the programme, a book, by contrast, provides the user with the opportunity to come back to anything which has been skipped in an earlier reading. Anyway, the “or” is only an issue of the user’s practice and not of the script or the written text itself. What would we think of a table of contents indicating “Richard Gordon or Olga Tribulato”, “Cataloguing Contemporaries or Cataloguing Statues”? Such an uncertain or vague list would present the book as a surprise menu.

In 2000, the Canadian writer Darren Wershler-Henry published a book entitled *the tapeworm foundry, andor, the dangerous prevalence of imagination*. It consists of a single sentence running over fifty pages and containing items that are connected by the conjunction *andor*, thus combining the logic of addition and the logic of option. The *tapeworm* enumerates ideas of real (past) and possible (future) as well as a majority of impossible artistic actions; it is a vast collection of short scripts for performance and a reservoir to choose from (eventually, at least one artist did so). Readers may also invent further actions, but there is the zeal for completeness, too: the long enumeration forms a circle quoting the structure and the first and last words of *Finnegans Wake*. The circle suggests totality and at the same time infinity; items may be added, others taken away, yet others changed: “and” does not exclude “or” and vice versa. If they go together so well, why not talk about “Lists andor Catalogues andor Enumerations andor ...”?

7 Different Meanings of “etc.”

The list of contents is long. Could it be shortened, summarized? Perhaps in this way: “fifteen experts in Ancient Studies analyse bizarre lexica, epigraphic lists,

pinakes, catalogues of women, suitors, unhappy lovers, etc. pp.”⁸ This list whets our appetite for the book — see the potential story in the last three items! In addition, it promises even more than it explicitly says, namely “etc. pp.” Could this be an alternative to a lengthy table? We would know more or less what is at stake. It would be a list with permeable boundaries, a flexible and variable list. The “etc. pp.” contains a list of wishes, indeed, several lists of wishes; everyone may write his or her own. A collective volume to your individual liking.

We know this kind of publication: when we search for “lists”, “ancient”, and “literature” on-line, we get lists of titles, and, much to our pleasure or our annoyance, every time we search, we get another list: other titles, other names, other links. Even though our key words remain the same, the results vary. No stable content exists “behind” the lists, we do not get an inventory. And the selection we find does not depend upon the inserted key words alone; other criteria interfere, especially algorithms remaining hidden and perhaps completely unknown to those who enter the search terms. Thus, a book (and equally an e-book) is still a fixed whole, in which a certain moment of knowing or stage of knowledge is petrified, and the contents are not only displayed for information but monumentalised in the table (rhyming with “stable”). Future academic publications may be as dynamic as the regularly updated databases: their contents will be fluid, generated *ad hoc* every time someone is searching for the topic.

Sticking to the traditional book, however, could we economise on the Table of Contents, for example, by presenting only the first five items, and then writing “etc.”? The editors alone, however, would know what the “etc.” means. Or could we add “etc.” at the end of the table? In this case not even the editors would know what the “etc.” means. To the reader, it would be a menace.

The Table of Contents is an inventory: an exhaustive register of a definite content. Every single item counts, none can be subordinated to another; the list cannot be synthesized into a concept. This is a feature that an inventory shares with a melody and a poem. What follows after the first five authors cannot be predicted or generated; no formula enables the reader to continue the series. There is no algorithm to calculate who the other contributors are (nor what their titles and their respective positions in the sequence are). If such a procedure to establish the next item existed, the list would be as infinite as the series of numbers and could thus not be written down in its entirety.⁹ But the index is a finite,

⁸ Translating part of an e-mail by Rebecca Laemmle from 12.09.2013.

⁹ For another possibility cf. below p. 31. For the difference between finite lists where “etc.” stands for a finite number of items that could possibly be written down (for example, in “Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, etc.”, “etc.” stands for “Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday”)

exhaustively documentable list, moreover, it is not only a finite list, but also an inventory and therefore it must be exhaustively written down. Whereas other finite lists can be shortened, an inventory does not allow for the “etc.”

Nevertheless, someone could shorten this list. Imagine a former classicist, who has given up his academic career to become a journalist and is now writing a book review. He could write: “After a general introduction and a lengthy *raisonnement* that has little to do with ancient texts, the reader will find essays by L, X, D, A, etc.” The “etc.” would signal to the average reader that there is nothing unusual about what follows and therefore nothing else to report on, and the insider of the discipline would understand: the authors are the usual suspects. The shortening of the list of names would indicate that it is not an inventory but a set that everybody knows by heart, like the seven days of the week or – for classicists – the nine Muses. The “etc.” would not only contain little information; first and foremost, it would be malicious. The enumerative act would be a polemic against the colleagues or the entire discipline.

8 Lists in the Making

An inventory is an unalterable list – at least for a certain moment of time. An alterable list is accepted by us at a preliminary stage, for example in the process of planning a book. Lists, too, have their genesis; normally we do not know it, but if we do, it can provide interesting insights. We can see, for example, what is considered to be the centre or the prototype of the classificatory unit, and what is considered more peripheral; likewise, we learn that some exclusions are operating from the very beginning, whereas others are adopted later. But can lists reveal their own genesis in themselves? Are they capable of doing so, or is it an absolutely necessary feature of lists to appear as if carved in stone or at least printed black on white? Is an enumeration capable of displaying its own temporality? Someone could say “The authors of the essays are L, X, D, plus, of course, A, there is N, as well, and – maybe, although I am not sure – B or, R, and, let me think, yes ..., of course, C.” We frequently encounter lists of this kind in oral communication or in our re-oralised written correspondence, in e-mails, text messages, in unofficial or only partially official communication as well as in literature, when

and infinite series where an end is not even thinkable, cf. Mainberger 2003, 10–11, and Mainberger 2017, 95–96. The argument refers to Wittgenstein but while the philosopher deals with two cases in which the use of “etc.” is legitimate, even if in each case “etc.” has a wholly different meaning, I am dealing here with a case where the use of “etc.” is not legitimate.

it is imitating oral speech or ironizing conventions of writing. It is a list in the making or, more precisely, an ongoing act of enumeration.

Is there also the contrary, a disappearing list? A list that in the act of enumeration melts or fades away? In addition to the cases in which a printer runs out of ink or an inscription disintegrates over centuries, the wording of a list may dissolve like this: “There are essays by L, X, D, who else? A, N, wait a moment, M, yes, and ... and ..., hm ...”. Again, this is a possibility of speaking or an assimilation of writing to oral speech – or a particular literary practice.

An official, published list, however, does not allow for features that suggest it is in the making or in a process of dissolution; it is ready and, however incomplete it may happen to be, it looks finished and fixed: it hides its own temporal nature. On the other hand, nothing could be more temporal than a quickly written column of words; think of a shopping list. The list is both the most monumental and the most improvised form of writing. Lists on the internet, on the other hand, do not fit this polarity. For example, those in Wikipedia are remarkably loose, even though it serves as an encyclopaedia, normally a reservoir of sound knowledge;¹⁰ it is, however, less bookish and, as other writings in the new media, re-oralised. A sophisticated user may welcome the fluid character of entries in this site, but the innocent are deceived by the format – the list, the catalogue – which is associated with authoritative and valid information.

A study of the genesis of the contents of this book would be possible, as the former version of the Table is the programme of the Edinburgh conference in 2014 on which the book is based. The differences are remarkable. There were titles with enumerations using more than three items (*Lists, chains, gradations and enumerations*), questions with inflected verbs (*How did ancient readers actually “read” ...?*), more variants of “list” (*listed himself, de-listed*), even more words from the broader semantic field (*tabulating, agenda*), and words laden with pathos (*the fallen, infinity, magical, multiple personality order, reincarnation*). The definitive titles in the book are less multifarious in structure and lexically less colourful. While the fact of change itself does not really come as a surprise, its degree is nevertheless noticeable: from planning to publication or from program to table of contents, we note academic writing undergoing a process of standardisation. But for all that, normalisation is not the last word about this list.

¹⁰ Cf. Tribulato in this volume, p. 170–171.