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Robbe-Grillet and Hesiod: Catalogue as anti-epic

In contemporary literary research, the anti-epic is often associated with texts written against the ideology of heroic or political epics, such as Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz* that contains not only parodies of the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*[1], but also a very ironic glance at what other nations tried to find, forge or fabricate during the 1830s as their own national epics, such as the Czech Hanka, (later) the Finn Lönnrot, the Russian Karamzin or the Scotsman McPherson and the Germans with their *Nibelungenlied*. This is why Czeslaw Milosz, for instance, considers the Polish national epic, written by Mickiewicz, an anti-epic[2]. We can find something similar already in the antiquity. Already the *Odyssey* attacks its own rival, the iambus. Iambus, from this perspective, is not a poetic meter but the invectives that the chieftains of young unmarried warrior societies used to entertain their men, people like the suitors whose murder the *Odyssey* tries to justify. I have written a book on that subject, but in the following I would like to reflect on the «anti-epic» in a rather morphological sense of the word[3].

In modern Slavonic, Romance, Germanic and Anglo-Saxon philology, the epic is the name Romantic genre-theory (we could especially think of a Hölderlin fragment[4]) has given to narrative discourse. Again - this is not an ancient conception. If we looked for the lowest common denominator of what ancient theory considered an epic, we would be reduced to taking into account only two characteristics: first, epics are composed in what we call the hexameter and, second, that there are many of them. Now, within this definition that holds until the 6th century AD, we can find not only narrative discourse; the other half of the texts are what was then called the catalogue or *aparithmesis*. Regardless of whether it is an archaic definition of one by two opposite discourses (as Pietro Pucci described them and as, for instance, Hesiod defined a situation by two opposite points of views in a fable[5]), I think that the catalogue can be labelled anti-epic in the Romantic sense of the word. This is what I would like to demonstrate and, to do so, I will detour through Robbe-Grillet to Hesiod and back again.

When I was preparing this paper, I only supposed that, given the fact that Robbe-Grillet had studied agronomy, he would have been interested in Hesiod's catalogue on

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[1] Mickiewicz 1834. Cf. e.g. *P.T.* III 79ff. and *Od.* VI 127ff. For Homer and Mickiewicz in general cf. Stępniewska 00.

[2] Cf. Milosz 1953.

[3] Cf. Steinrück 2008.

[4] Groddeck-Sattler 1979, 369-372.

[5] Pucci 1977, and Steinrück-Laurent 2009.

farming. However, the French writer chanced to visit my university and confirmed my assumption by acknowledging his debt to ancient Greek literature. In the present paper, I am not concerned with the direct intertext but will, instead, focus on more general features they have in common.

According to Roland Barthes and some articles by Robbe-Grillet himself[6], Robbe-Grillet set out to destroy the accepted story patterns in literature and film because life did not bend to the often very simple syntax of narratives. In saying so I rely on Greimas' notion of the circular syntax of stories according to which stories lack something important at the beginning, a gap that will be filled in the last stage. Between these two stages, the beginning and the end, the hero, firstly, learns how to acquire the missing object and then applies his lessons in the very act of retrieving the object from the enemy. Although many detours are possible, this circular ABBA pattern is well-known from television series such as *MacGyver* and most readers are probably so tired of it that they have already become followers of the rather catalogically structured forensic crime series such as *CSI* or *NCIS*.

However, how did Robbe-Grillet destroy story patterns? The title of his book *La jalousie* might give us a hint[7]. We can translate *La jalousie* both as «jealousy» and «venetian blinds». Both meanings are important in the book that depicts the jealous gaze of a character who we can take to be the husband observing another character, perhaps his wife, with her lover. In the light of what we are going to discuss in the following, it is interesting to note that Robbe-Grillet often hid ancient drama in his novels such as the Oedipus-detective story in *Les Gommes*[8]. In *La jalousie* the name of the wife A… might be an abbreviation for Alcmene, the husband could be Amphitryon and the lover Zeus himself. The boy who shall be born out of this affair would be Heracles. Hesiod used a chapter in the ancient catalogue of women dedicated to Alcmene's story to compose a small epic known under the title of the *Shield* (*Scutum* in Latin or *Aspis* in Greek).

Let us return for now to the second meaning of *la jalousie*. The only thing we learn about the observer is his gaze. He glimpses through every slit of the blinds and every time the perspective (on the same events) changes almost imperceptibly: another adjective here, a different declension there. Every looking produces a new chapter of the book and thus we read a catalogue of looks that reassemble a scene, in a cubist mode, similarly to what Picasso does with his portraits of women[9].

The history of this breaking up of the tight story pattern goes back, in Greek literature, to the 15th century BC, when in the Mycenaean palace of Pylos, on the west coast of the Peloponnese, inventories of tripods, jars and horses were written on clay tablets with the same vocabulary as eight centuries later in the ninth book of Homer's *Iliad*. There the Greek king Agamemnon describes the gifts he is prepared to yield to Achilles with the same expressions. In order to define this speech act, Homer uses a particular verb, *katalegein* that corresponds with the substantive *katalogos*, the catalogue. This is the word the Greeks employed to name Hesiod's works, the *Works and Days* or the *Theogony*.

In a long introduction to the latter catalogue, a genealogy of the gods recently

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[6] Robbe-Grillet 1977, 4, or *Barthes 1954*.

[7] Robbe-Grillet 1957.

[8] Robbe-Grillet 1953.

[9] We could see this dissemination procedure reenacted in the Cohen brothers' film *No Country for Old Men*, the old man being the narrator.

commented on by Pietro Pucci[10], Hesiod not only narrates how the Muses made the small herding boy he had been into a poet, but also how the text he produces differs from narratives such as Homer's *Odyssey*. After all, the *Theogony* starts with young arrogant girls, the Muses, coming from the Helicon, a mountain above the oracle of Delphi. Some scholars thus maintain that their name, Muses, has to be explained as a derivation from the Indo-European word for mountain, *mons*[11]. Yet the situation itself points us in the direction of another etymology. The snappy Muses behave like typical upper-class girls of the big city would with a dumb shepherd, young Hesiod, because his interests arise from his belly and not from fine arts. The theme of town versus village is very important at the end of the 7th century BC. Since the teachings of the Muses are introduced here, the other etymology of the name of the Muses, a derivation of the verb *manthano*, to learn, seems to be invoked. The girls give Hesiod a stick as the sign of a speaker and a choice. «We can», they say, «tell many lies so similar to reality you cannot tell the difference» or:

ἴσμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὅμοια

This first choice might have reminded the audience of an almost identical verse in the *Odyssey* where Ulysses tells lies to his wife. The Muses are Homer's teachers and sources as well and we can assume, as other scholars have[12], that the first choice, telling lies, represents the making of stories. Then, however, the divine girls propose another matter and another form for that:

ἴσμεν δ᾽ ηὖτ᾽ ἐθέλωμεν ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι[13].

If stories are lies, we might infer that the truth is what Hesiod will sing, in the catalogues of the *Theogony*, the *Works and Days* and even in the tradition of what was called the *katalogos gunaikon*, the catalogue of or for women. Catalogues would then appear to aim at telling the truth.

We can confirm this hypothesis by a simple etymology of the word for truth, *alethea*. Heidegger and his school gave a very widespread explanation of the word. It is derived from the *alpha privativum*, a negation at the beginning and the root *leth*, which sometimes means to be hidden. The Greek truth would then be the unhidden. But already in the 1930s, Luther, a classical scholar, pointed out that archaic Greek truth seems to be connected, rather, with the concept of *completeness* and words like *all* or *every* than with the image of what lies behind the surface[14]. This concept of the whole truth, without forgetting a single element, fits the morphology of the word *alethea* even better: the root *leth* can also mean to forget and the word *a-lethea* then means: the complete list without forgetting a single item, a meaning that would explain why a catalogue but not a story would help to tell the truth.

This seems to make sense, but there are other interpretations. Sylvie Perceau, for

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[10] Pucci 2007.
[11] Cf. Chantraine 1999 (Pucci prefers *mons*, West recently *men-*, «recall»).
[12] Cf. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1927, 49.
[13] «We are able, if we want to, to sing the truth».
[14] Luther 1935.

instance, reminds us in her book on small Homeric catalogues that sometimes the word *katalogos* could also mean preparing a speech for a very specific audience[15]. Paul Schubert has told me that in the documentary papyri the same word seems to have been accepted as an list, not «down-numbering» the items, but classified according to specific items, such as donkeys, soldiers, weapons etc. But I think we are better off with the definition of a list without omissions provided by Luther, a concept that the first book on catalogues, Kühlmann's doctoral thesis, used in the 1970s[16]. This choice is preferable not only because members of the scientific community might understand the seriousness of a list but also because this would be in tune with the opposition presented in the text between the city and the shepherd, the urban fancies of Homer and the rural no-nonsense ideology of Hesiod, which we detected in the beginning of our reading.

Up to now we can argue that Hesiod's catalogue aims at destroying Homer's story-pattern. This was also Robbe-Grillet's goal and he did it by cutting the story down to a catalogue of the slices of a look. We look at one of those slices at the moment where Robbe-Grillet introduces what might well be his auto-referential metaphor of the text: a centipede, for instance a caterpillar (*La jalousie,* 1957, 61).

> Un mille-pattes ! /dit-elle à voix plus contenue
> dans le silence / qui vient de s'établir.
> Franck relève les yeux.
>
> Se réglant ensuite sur la direction indiquée
> Par ceux – immobiles de sa voisine.
> Il tourne la tête de l'autre côté, vers sa droite.
>
> Sur la peinture claire de la cloison, en face de A…,
> une <u>scutigère</u> de taille moyenne (longue à peu près comme le <u>doigt</u>) est apparue,
> bien visible malgré la douceur de l'éclairage.
>
> Elle ne se déplace pas, pour le moment,
> mais l'orientation de son corps indique un chemin qui coupe le panneau en diagonale :
> venant de la plinthe, côté couloir, et se dirigeant vers l'angle du plafond.
>
> La bête est facile à identifier
> grâce au grand développement des pattes,
> à la partie postérieure surtout.
>
> En l'observant avec plus d'attention,
> on distingue, à l'autre bout,
> le mouvement de bascule des antennes.

It is the wife's lover, Frank, who shall smash the centipede, an image William S. Burroughs might have borrowed from Robbe-Grillet for his *Naked Lunch*[17], where the author composed another story-killing procedure he himself called a cut-up routine. Some might remember David Cronenberg's movie version of the book where caterpillars follow poets or journalists. Suddenly the centipedes open their mouths or lie on their backs, their legs up like puppies and turn into typewriters.

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[15] Perceau 2002.

[16] Kühlmann 1973.

[17] Burroughs 1959.

From this point of view the animal is an allusion to the text's making, but the centipede is also a good image for the text's pattern, the catalogue. There is of course the repetitive shape of centipedes, but we should take into account their size as well. Centipedes are approximately the size of "a finger" or in French *un doigt*, in Latin a *digitus*, from which the modern version of older shaping types derives its name: the digit, the cutting up of a musical sound, of a painter's stroke into very small units, and their re-composition in the pointillism or photorealism of digital TV[18]. Ancient catalogues or cutting-up systems provide the archaeology of our digital aesthetics and it is a curious coincidence that ancient Greek digital form uses the same finger metaphor.

In the late 6th century BC, the epic verse rhythm of two half verses, or two cola, undergoes a dramatic re-rhythmization not by two slightly different parts but by even measures similar to the measure in our song-tradition[19]. The music teacher pointed this measure out by raising his finger and this is probably why from the 5th century on these measures were called fingers or the *daktyloi* in Greek. We are dealing with the concurrence of two types of aesthetics, since classical Athens had two options for pronouncing the same epic verse. Damon, Socrates' teacher, said he could read the same verse with the two halves or with the six daktyloi, i.e. as a hexameter[20]. This breaking up into even parts on the rhythmic, microstructural level echoes the difference they knew very well on the macrostructural level from the opposition between the epic story and the epic catalogue.

There are other words in *La jalousie* that remind us of the catalogic tradition and of Hesiod in particular. For instance, the centipede is called *une scutigère,* an animal that wears its shield. *Scutum,* the shield, still is the title classicists give to the small catalogue section Hesiod dedicated to Alcmene's story, especially to the struggle of her son Heracles with the hero Cycnus. In this text, the shield that Heracles holds is the object of a long description, a catalogue in itself. The learned epithet *scutigère* might, thus, be a winking reference, even a *mise en abyme* of the catalogic form in Robbe-Grillet's text.

But let us go back to what a catalogue is[21]. We have considered it a sober and earnest speech, proud, maybe too proud of its simplicity, a forefather of our own academic discourse. Its aesthetics seem very similar to our digital recording or to the postmodern cutting up of story patterns of Borroughs, Robbe-Grillet or the Cohen brothers. In antiquity, we find catalogues especially in the Hellenistic times. Nicandrus, the descendant of a long line of priests for Apollo in Clarus, for instance, takes a prose handbook on snakes and reshapes it into a catalogue of hexameters on snakebites and how to avoid them[22]. This is why, especially in Italy, Nicandrus' poem is classified within a genre modern scholars call *la poesia didascalica* or, with a slightly different meaning, didactic poetry or *Lehrgedicht*.

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[18]   An intresting variant of modern « digitalism » can be found in Theweleit's analysis of some 20th-century poets' relationships (or affairs) with female « dactylos », stenotypists (who had replaced the male counterpart, the handwriting secretary). The analysis is based on Kittler 1989, 93.

[19]   For this «Katametronisierung» Berg 1978. A sometimes too far going application of the later principle of even measures on Greek metrics in Barris J 2011.

[20]   Aristoph. *Nub*. 638ff. and Pl. *Resp*. 400b1

[21]   Beyond Perceau and Kühlmann, there is an impressive new bibliography on the ancient catalogue: on the catalogue cf. also Steinrück 2006 and Steinrück 2004b; Minchin 1996; Sammons 2010 ; Szelest 1973; cf. also Krischer 1971; Gaertner 2001.

[22]   Gow-Scholfield 1953.

But there is a problem with this category: the books written on the *Lehrgedicht* are seemingly unable to control the borders of this so-called genre: there are very different sub-genres such as anthologies of wisdom-sentences, fables or epics. The second problem is that the teaching is but an assumed attitude: if you had to rely on Nicandrus' poem on snakebites in order to avoid real ones, you would be dead and the sailor taking Aratus's epic on astronomy for steering seriously would be hopelessly lost. The seriousness is only a scent, a flavour of this discourse, which aims, in fact, at poetic goals. We are better off letting go of the notion of genre and using the word *katalogos* as the definition of a form that can be found in different genres such as the tragedy (the *Seven against Thebes* of Aeschylus), iambus (the catalogue of bad wives of Semonides), epic (Hesiod, Nicandrus, Aratus), elegy (Callimachus), or prose-style (of Lysias).

Yet, another characteristic emerges which we should add. The serious discourse is an impression created by its form only, whereas its pragmatic use is different, either a poetic or even real deception. We can, for instance, find catalogues of cities and women in the 7th and the 6th centuries that seem to have the same function as our political conventions. The catalogues state which city already was around in the heroic times and on what territory, as well as which family owned it through which woman. Texts that assure the ancient rights of one party are not unlike today's hidden agendas against another party. Ancient historians claim that Athens was not in the catalogue of ships listing every Greek city that participated at the Trojan War and thus had more ancient rights on their territory than others. This is probably true since Athens was a small village when the catalogue was created. But in the 6th century the Athenian tyrant Pisistratus had one of his scholars invent hexameters on Athenian participation. We find them today in our editions of the *Iliad*. The *Catalogue of women* excludes all males from aristocratic lines going back to divine origins. Divine origin means aristocracy and aristocracy means power in the 6th century. The earnest flavour of the open, simple, catalogic form invites its use in political contexts and this, in turn, also means that catalogues lie. It is not the same open lie like that of the muses in epic stories, but a lie hidden behind serious, simple, easy surface. This is why we can find a tendency to tell a story only by the order of the items enumerated in all catalogues.

This truthful literary form can be found in different eras. In archaic and classical times (between the 7th and 4th centuries) we find political texts trying to link two registers always by the same verb: in the genealogy of gods with the state of affairs in the *Theogony* or the genealogy of heroines and the actual establishment in the *Catalogue of women* the verb is 'giving birth'. Cities are linked to the Trojan War in the Homeric catalogue of ships, but we can also find small killing catalogues in the *Iliad*, or argumentation catalogues in Parmenides' poem *On Nature* or season catalogues in Thucydides, always with the same parallelistic figure BCD BCD in the centre of one initial and final repetition A … A. This figure seems to be opposed to the structures we find in stories, the repetition pattern organized like onion skin, ABCCBA, the form classicists have called ring composition since the 1920s[23]. This parallelism is the form in which the catalogic prose style develops.

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[23]   From the vast literature (cf. Steinrück 1997), Otterlo 1948 and Schmid 1961, 15. The correct translation of Aristotle's definition of the period is probably to be found in Chiron 2007, 463 n. 3 «quant à l'excès de longueur, il laisse l'auditeur à la traîne, comme les coureurs qui prennent le virage trop loin de la

Aristotle in his *Rhetoric (*1209a) calls the catalogic prose style serial style or style in a row (*eiromene*), the easy, floating style of Herodotus, Lysias or Hypereides as opposed to the periodic style of Demosthenes or Isocrates. In this first period, the catalogic side seems to represent a rather marginal form.

There is a radical change in Hellenistic poetry, if not yet prose style in the period from Demosthenes' death to Cicero's death or from the 3rd to the 1st centuries BC. Catalogic features become the overall form of Callimachean poetry. We could mention his catalogue of rites, the *aitia* or the invention of a merely catalogic genre, the arrangement and edition of small texts such as lyric songs. But above all it is Aratus' catalogue of celestial signs or Nicandros' ways to prevent snakebites, the catalogues of males, a late reaction to the *Catalogue of women*, that are considered important poetic events.

Aratus, for instance, starts with a presentation of the stars in small groups whose closeness in the heaven (Andromeda, Perseus: *Phainomena* 246) corresponds to their closeness in the stories on earth. But then he cuts them up into small bits – arms, shoulders, heads and legs – only in order to put them together in another way. In the second part Aratus proudly links these pieces according to the part we can see in the nocturnal sky in different seasons of the year (cf. *Phainomena* 693ff.). This is a Hellenistic catalogue: a new poetic feeling of the cut parts rearranged in a new order. This is the time when editors start to break up the lyric verses of Sappho or Pindar, this far represented in a row as if they were prose, and write every part or colon on a new line. For the first time in Greek history of verse, the blanks between those parts made the readers feel something like a pause or a caesura.

Imperial aesthetics, from the 1st century to the 3rd century AD, focus on prose style. The catalogic form, already introduced into poetry, begins its victory march in prose through the political victory of Caesar against Cicero. This struggle of the senate against Caesar's party has an important stylistic level too[24]. Cicero fought Caesar by writing on the superiority of the senatorial style, that is Homer's story style or what Aristotle called the rounded or the periodic style in prose, coming from Demosthenes and Isocrates.

When Caesar crossed the Alps in order to take power in Rome, he wrote a little book on analogy, drawing on Alexandrian grammatical theory, the first break-through of a stylistic normative system[25]. His problem was that his tradition, the traditionally catalogic style of the tribunician charges, was associated with youngsters, whereas Cicero's senatorial style was the form of the elders and, in traditional cultures, the old ways were (and are) always right. Caesar had to invert the signs or their value. He did so by calling his own lean catalogic style that of the Attic ancestors and the fat, elaborate style of Cicero's period the Asian style because it was taught in the schools of Asia Minor and Asianness also implied a puerile, student style. Thus one morning, Cicero woke up and had become a puerile writer, whereas Caesars party, people like Macer, Atticus, Antonius and Caesar himself were the elders. With Augustus, the catalogic style became official and therefore the norm.

borne [Car eux aussi laissent en arrière leurs concurrents]», against Zehetmeier 1930.
   [24]   This was the thesis of Leeman 1986.
   [25]   Another concept in Gelzer 1979.

We live in normative systems and not in the praecaesarean opposition system[26]. We know that the first rule of a norm is not to be visible in order to expose whatever goes against it as a failure, fault. This is why the first rule of Atticism or catalogic style, as the atticist Pseudo-Longinus has it, is to hide the *techne*, the form. If we are accustomed today to contrast literary form with the norm of simple, academic and invisible discourse that is defined as the absence of any literary style, then we are the heirs of this holy/unholy conjunction of a political victory and the over-emphasis on one side in a stylistic opposition.

Similarly to the Soviet period, an official, normative style encouraged orators to adopt new features. Before that and in official Atticist theory until the Renaissance, you did not think about or had no right to use a second voice in your text. However, already Seneca used parodic procedures against the official style, and the next generation[27], Plinius and Tacitus, increased the intensity of the polyphonic double discourse by creating a simple surface of official niceties that do not mean much but hint at a hidden sense. The probably most important ancient analyst of Greek rhetoric, Ps.-Hermogenes of Tharsos (*Id*. 306 Raabe), insightfully states that the style of Lysias, that is the ancestor of the Atticist catalogic style, is basically sly.

Once the imperial form of the metaphor-oriented double-shifted text was established, Roman writers like Aulus Gellius but also Greek writers like Plutarch in his *Greek Questions* or Philostratos in his biographies of great orators which he himself calls a *katalogos*, or the catalogue of paintings, tend to create the catalogic form not only on the microstructural level, but they also re-establish the catalogue as a form in the second century so that even in poetry catalogues of fish or animals suitable for hunting (by two authors, both called Oppianos) are *en vogue* in Greece and Ovid shows how to to write catalogues of transformations (the *Metamorphoses*) or of Roman rites. All of them have a hidden agenda: the fish-catalogue simply re-creates a second world beneath the surface of water, a world of creatures different from the ones in the upper world, but one that shares names with it and, curiously, a lot more.

In the so-called «late» antiquity the imperial twofold prose structure is developed by people like Libanius or Themistius into what we at the University of Fribourg call a «*mille-feuille*»-structure. The audience of a writer or an orator has become a multi-cultural blend of Romans, Greeks, Christians, educated and simple people in the churches as well as in the senate of Constantinople. A good prose writer not only takes into account all of the layers and can then be called an octopus like Libanius, for instance, but he also avoids being burned or imprisoned by giving his prose a seemingly clear, harmlessly flowing, Atticist surface, with secondary meanings merely suggested below the surface of the text. On the basis of what has been said above, it should be clear that no other literary form was better suited for this purpose than the catalogue. Eunapius of Sardes, a typical example of what we call the third sophistic, says that he does not want to write a catalogue of women of the fourth century, but a catalogue of the best orators, philosophers and doctors. The *Catalogue of women* of the Hesiodic tradition announces at its end the return of the heroes and Eunapius considers at least some professors of rhetoric but especially neoplatonic

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[26] This is the gist of the evidence collected in Steinrück-Laurent 2009.
[27] Steinrück 2004a.

philosophers to be these heroes, reborn in the platonistic way to defend the Greek way of life against the reign of darkness, Christianity. Eunapios can use his catalogic mode to explain why they will fail[28].

Eunapius starts his catalogue according to the rules he found, as he says, in Hesiod, Herodotus or Philostratos, describing every item of the list according to the same criteria. Thus at first he gives a stern catalogue with Plotinus and Porphyrius[29]. But the farther we go into the catalogue, already with Iamblichus, this rule crumbles and Eunapius begins to mark some items with a special criterion and, in doing so, creates pairs of philosophers similarly to his model Plutarchus in his parallel biographies. For instance Julian, the emperor, and Sosipatra, the only woman in the catalogue (chapt. 6 and 7), are both marked with a very similar description of their youth. Repetition persists and very slowly, stories emerge behind the sober list and, from the stories, a history of the decline of neoplatonic philosophy and its reasons. And yet, he never says explicitly what he thinks but, as he promises in the introduction, leaves it to the reader to guess the truth.

I think that our comparison with Robbe-Grillet and the brief survey of the origins and history of catalogues enables us to say that nowhere else does the function of catalogues manifest itself so clearly as in late antiquity, the function to suggest a story or, in the words of Hesiod's muses, a lie, within a literary form that gives us the impression of truth. To return to Robbe-Grillet and postmodernism as an anti-narrative and thus anti-epic movement, I would not say that Borrough's cut-up routine or Robbe-Grillet's dysnarration is just a comeback of a historical dialectic in Adorno's sense of the word[30]. Rather, we have seen that in the antiquity the anti-epic was not only a formal destruction of the story-pattern, but it also enabled the hiddenness of story in a sober account, a *pia fraus*. If we want, we can detect similar reflexes in the postmodern text as a reading process. For example, the more recent post-colonial readings of *La jalousie* or the recreation of Borrough's story-elements by Cronenberg show very clearly that postmodernist reading and perhaps writing have the same problem as ancient catalogic style. Let us not forget that our own languages, above all the Germanic languages, borrowed their words for narration or diegesis from the catalogue-style numerations: words like the tale, the *Erzählung*, similarly to the *aparithmesis* or *katalogos*, all share a root that refers to counting. In turn, this means that, if we work today on the anti-epic, we are simply the children of our postmodern times.

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[28] Cf. Steinrück 2004b.

[29] The text is still the edition of Giangrande 1956 with the historical commentary of Penella 1990 and some stylistic remarks of Steinrück 2006.

[30] Adorno-Horkheimer 1969 with their idea that eras of enlightenment and anti-enlightenment come in alternating waves.

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