

Lea Sawicki

## EXPRESSION OF INALIENABILITY IN POLISH

It is a widely recognized fact that in various languages some substantives may be characterized as entering into a relation of inalienable possession<sup>1</sup>. In languages in which such possession can be discerned, it is conceived of as permanent and inherent, not acquirable by purchase and not transferable. Most typically such a relation is demonstrable by substantives denoting parts of the body or family relationships. This class of substantives may be more accurately and fruitfully defined by establishing the syntactical behaviour of its members.

Expressions marked for inalienability can be found in sources of different kinds or genres and in various contexts. They may involve the occurrence of possessive elements, noun-composition, particular object-forms and others. The phenomena associated with 'inalienable possession', although in part well known in themselves, are usually taken as non-related and described individually, each as some kind of semantically conditioned peculiarity. Assembling these varieties of expression can lead to the singling out of a distinct semanto-syntactical class of nouns capable of denoting the special relation of an object inherently connected to a 'possessor'.

In Polish the most extensively used expression of inalienability is the dative of the 'possessor'<sup>2</sup> that replaces the genitive or the possessive adjective in the unmarked expression.<sup>3</sup> The nouns occurring in the construction with a dative are mostly those denoting parts of the body, the mind, thoughts, but also garments, family members and some others, e.g.:

spojrzała *mi* ... prosto w oczy W<sup>4</sup> "she looked me straight in the eyes"

przysiąść *kapiącemu się* na głowie K "to sit down on the head to (= of) the bathing person"

jeszcze *mu* przeporna podskakuje K "to him (= his) diaphragm is still jumping"  
oczy nabiegły *mu* krwią W "to him (= his) eyes filled with blood"

jak to *mu* umysł pracuje K "how to him (= his) the mind works"

rzucił *mu* na twarz bukiet ... goździków W "he threw him on the face (= on his face) a bunch ... of carnations"

pokaleczył *mi* ręce K "he hurt me (= my) the hands"

baronowa M. zabrała *mi* żonę W "the baroness M. took me (= my) the wife away"

francuskie nazwisko uleciało *mi* z pamięci W "the French name slipped me (= my) the memory"

Aż *jej*<sup>5</sup> od tego spódnice ... uniosło K "Even the skirt was thus ... lifted to her" (= "her skirt was thus lifted").

In these instances the dative is to be analyzed as adnominal and thus possessive, since the verbs involved do not require dative complements. Otherwise the dative may be ambiguous, e.g.:

*nie chowam się mamie pod fartuszek* K "I am not hiding under mother's apron" or: "I am not hiding from mother under the apron"<sup>6</sup>

In some cases, nouns that primarily do not denote inalienable possession acquire this property by entering possessive constructions with a dative, e.g.:

krzyczał, że *mu* na nic popsujemy studnię K "He shouted that we would completely ruin him (= his) the well"

konie *mu* się spłoszyły K "to him (= his) horses shied"

nasz koń podeptał *im* skrzypce W "our horse trampled them (= their) the violin".

Conversely, a substantive belonging to the class of inalienables, e.g. denoting a part of the body, can be employed in a construction with a possessive genitive or a pronominal adjective, thus creating a stylistically marked expression emphasizing the separateness between the body and the part, e.g.:

brała *moją* dłoń i rozmazywała nią tusz K "she used to take the palm of my hand and smear with it the mascara"

Kat uniesie ... głowę świętego K "The hangman will lift ... the head of the beheaded".

The possessive dative of pronouns of the first (and sometimes second) person has to be kept apart from the so-called free, i.e. syntactically unconnected dative, as e.g. in: *co mi tu krzyczysz?* "what are you shouting here?" (literally: "shouting me"). In the following sentence, the dative must be considered free (bordering on the notion of 'ethicus') since the possessivity is expressed elsewhere by a possessive adjective:

znów *mi* pani te swoje brudne pończochy do *mojej* przegródki K "again you have (put) me these dirty stockings of yours into my compartment".

Likewise, the dative of inalienable possession comes very close in some instances to that expressing the beneficiary (dative *commodi*, or *incommodi*), e.g.:

stukli *mu* okulary K may be understood either as "they broke his glasses" or: "they broke the glasses for him"

popycha dziewczynę ... zadzierając jej po drodze kieckę K "he is pushing the girl ... pulling up her (or: for her) the skirt".

However in most cases such interpretation is not plausible, e.g.:

widzi, jak się dziewczynie kołyszą ...ciężkie piersi K "he sees how the girl's breasts swing" (definitely not: "the breasts swing for the girl").

Another current construction expressing inalienability, evident almost exclusively in parts of the body, comprises a transitive verb with an accusative of the animate and a prepositional phrase denoting the part of the body<sup>7</sup>, e.g.:

próbuje wziąć mnie za rękę K "he tries to take me by the hand"

bije je z pasją po tydkach K "he strikes them with rage on the hips"

Gustek gładzi kłacz po wilgotnym pysku K "G. strokes the mare on the wet muffle"

kopnąłbym go w tyłek K "I would have kicked him on the backside".

These constructions, usually treated in Polish grammars as consisting of two objects, a direct and an indirect one,<sup>8</sup> should be regarded as containing one complex object that involves both the "whole" and the "part". This is demonstrable on semantic grounds as well as on grounds of substitutability: the prepositional phrase denotes exclusively a part of what is expressed by the accusative, and the two constituents of the object cannot be substituted by another term independently of one another. Expressions like:

+Gustek gładzi kłacz po wózku "G. strokes the mare on the wagon" or:

+próbuje wziąć mnie za twoją ręką "he tries to take me by your hand" are impossible.

A similar relation of a "part" to a "whole" is found in constructions with reflexive verbs where the "whole" is incorporated in the verb and the "part" is expressed in various case forms or prepositional phrases, e.g.:

Uderzyłeś się nią po cholewach K "You stroke yourself with it in the shoe-tops"

chwyciła się odruchowo dwoma palcami za grdykę K "he seizes himself instinctively by the Adam's apple with two fingers"

kłuje się w palec K "he pricks himself on the finger".

In Polish certain verbs denoting movements are complemented by an instrumental.<sup>9</sup> Many of these verbs describe bodily gestures executed as a rule with the help of the part of the body occurring as object (in the instrumental), e.g.:

skiniałem mu przyjaźnie dlonią W "I beckoned to him in a friendly manner with (my) hand"

Zamrugał powiekami K "He blinked with (his) eyelids"

Kiwiał głową niewiele rozumiejąc W "I nodded with (my) head understanding little"

Kłaniał się ojcu ... szurając nogami K "He greeted (his) father ... shuffling (his) feet {instr.}"

zaczynał ... trzepotać<sup>10</sup> skrzydłami jak indor K "he was starting ... to flutter the wings {instr.} like a turkey".

The substantives participating in this construction are mostly designations of parts of the body ("head", "hand", "finger", etc.), but sporadically other nouns occur in them as objects, and then usually as an "extension" of a part of the body, e.g.: *pomachać komuś chusteczką* "to wave to somebody with a handkerchief", *szurać butami* "to shuffle with shoes".

To some verbs, however, this restriction does not apply. In such cases an opposition may exist between an inalienable object in the instrumental and an unmarked one in the accusative, e.g.:

Olek wzrusza *ramionami* K "O. shrugs (his) shoulders" vs. *wzruszać glebę* "to loosen the soil"

*przewracać oczami* "to turn up the whites of one's eyes" vs. *przewracać szklankę* "to turn over a glass"

*konie przebierały nogami* "horses stumped (their) feet" vs. *przebierać paciorki różańca* "to count the beads of the rosary".

The inalienability of parts of the body and mind manifests itself, as in many other languages, also in several constructions denoting properties of such parts. One of them is the adjectival compound of the bahuvrihi type: the first constituent of the compound is formed by an adjective attributive to that consisting of a substantive denoting the part of the body, with no adjectival derivational suffix present. The compound adjective is usually employed as an attribute to the substantive denoting the 'possessor', e.g.:

wszyscy Pelagończycy są wysocy ..., przeważnie ciemnowłosi W "all the inhabitants of P. are tall ..., usually dark-haired"

Przy stole siedział jednoręki esauł ..., czarnobrody mulla W "At the table sat the one-handed officer ..., the black-bearded mulla"

nagle wydał mi się bliski ... ten żółtooki rudzielec W "suddenly this ... yellow-eyed red-head seemed close to me"

stłoczyły się okrągłe głowy, czarnobrody Tryb ..., wielkooka Trybowa ..., wszyscy szerokonosi W "round heads pressed together, black-bearded Tryb ..., big-eyed Trybowa ..., all wide-nosed".

This type of compounds usually describes the size and shape or colour of parts of the body; a few other characteristics, however, are sometimes found, e.g.: *sztybkonogi* "swift-footed", *pięknooki* "pretty-eyed". Epithets of this kind are especially often used in poetry<sup>11</sup> and in high-register prose. Unlike adjectives containing derivational suffixes (such as *-ny*, *-ty*, *-wy*, *-ski*, *-czy*, etc.), the

bahuvihi-type adjectives cannot be freely formed and are consequently rather rare in contemporary narrative of unmarked style.

Some compounds may be substantivized, e.g.: *lekkodusz* "the light-minded one", *górował* "the naked moustached one (= young)", *czworonóg* "the four-legged one", *bialogłówka* "white-head (= woman)", *pięknodusza* "pretty-souled one (= aesthete)", *stonoga* "hundred-legged one (= centipede)". The substantivization, stemming from a state of language with substantival adjective-declension, is nowadays unproductive.

Descriptions of features characteristic of a person or (very rarely) an object may be expressed by an adjective in concord with the 'possessor', with the specific part to which this description refers in the shape of a prepositional phrase *w* + locative,<sup>12</sup> e.g.:

Oficer ścisły w pasie jak osa W "An officer laced in the waist like a wasp"  
Likewise:

portret czysty w rysunku "a portrait clear in line (= having a clear line)"  
wąski w pasie "thin in the waist (= having a small waist)"  
szeroki w barach "broad in the shoulders (= having broad shoulders)"  
wcięty w talii "narrow in the waist (= having a narrow waist)"  
szybki w nogach "fast in the legs (= having fast legs)"  
chłodny w sądach "cool in judgements (= having cool judgements)".

Another construction typical for expressing features of inalienable parts is an adnominal prepositional phrase *o* + locative. It is employed exclusively as an attribute; in contemporary language it is not capable of functioning as a predicate,<sup>13</sup> e.g.:

felczer o kościstej żółtej twarzy W "a surgeon with a bony yellow face"  
dla tego ... oficera o brzydkiej twarzy i rozumnych szarych oczach W "for this  
... officer with an ugly face and clever grey eyes"  
lokaj o bezczelnej twarzy W "a lackey with an insolent face"  
jesteś jednak człowiekiem o czystych rękach W "you are, however, a man with  
clean hands"  
żyd o przezroczystej suchej skórze W "a Jew with transparent dry skin"  
para starszawych kobiet o miejskim wyglądzie W "a couple of oldish women  
with city looks".

This construction can be employed not only for describing parts of the body, characteristics of the mind, etc., but also parts of inanimate objects, e.g.:

Oddziały artylerii o ciągu konnym W "Artillery ... squads with horse-pull"  
Walczylem w przestrzeni o wielu wymiarach W "I was fighting in the space  
of many dimensions"  
Podszedłem do okna o zachlapanych wapnem szybach W "I approach the  
window with panes bespattered with lime".

We have endeavoured to establish the semantic class of inalienables by surveying the syntactic constructions in which they occur. This class cannot be directly defined on the grounds of its semantic properties, since various substantives may acquire the feature of inalienability precisely by entering some of the marked constructions.

As we have seen, the substantive most frequently occurring in constructions marked for inalienability are those denoting parts of the body. They are also the only ones occurring in all such constructions. Substantives denoting parts of a whole (other than parts of the body) are relatively frequent, but do not normally occur in the constructions with adjective of the "whole" and prepositional phrase of the "part", or in bahuvrihi-type compounds. Substantives denoting family relationships rarely enter expressions of inalienability. When they do, they occur mostly in constructions with the dative of possession and even there an alternative interpretation of the construction (as e.g. that of the "beneficiary") is sometimes possible. A dative of possession in existential or purely possessive sentences, still used in the XVIIth century, is no longer employed in contemporary language.

Other means of expression characteristic of "inalienable" substantives, less current and probably mostly restricted to the realm of certain lexical items, may be uncovered by further investigations.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See: Ch. Bally, L'expression des idées de sphère personnelle et de solidarité dans les langues indo-européennes, in: *Festschrift Louis Gauchat*, p. 68-78, and H.B. Rosén, Die Ausdrucksform für 'veräußerlichen' und 'unveräußerlichen' Besitz im Frühgriechischen: Das Funktionsfeld von homerischen φίλος, *Lingua* 8, 1959, p. 268-270 (= *East and West*, München 1982, p. 328-331).

<sup>2</sup> The dative of inalienable possession occurs already in Old Polish, e.g. (in modern spelling): *rękę swą dziecięci na głowę włożył* "he put his hand to the child (dat.) on the head". Żywot Sw. Błażeja, end of XIVth century. Until the end of XVIIIth century it was also widely used in existential sentences, e.g.: *szyja mu krótką* "the neck to him (=his) is short", see K. Pisarkowa, *Historia składni języka polskiego*, Wrocław 1984, p. 129.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. expressions of ordinary possessions: *Byłbym ... gościem w jej* {gen.} *domu* K "I would have been ... a guest in her house"; *usiłując zaciągnąć mnie do swego* (adj.) *stolika* K "trying to pull me to his table".

<sup>4</sup> Data gathered from: Piotr Wojciechowski, *Czaszka w czaszce*, Warszawa 1974 - W; Andrzej Kuśniewicz, *Strefy*, Warszawa 1971 - K.

<sup>5</sup> The form of the dative *jej* is homophonous to the genitive, but the possessive genitive of a pronoun has to precede the substantive immediately, e.g.: *jej spódnice*.

<sup>6</sup> The verb *chować się* does admit a dative complement; however, the dative here is in fact definitely adnominal, as is proven by the existence of a phrase such as "somebody's apron" that denotes a woman's influence, domination, etc.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. E.A. Hahn, Partitive apposition, in: *Proceedings of the 9th International Congress of Linguists, Cambridge, Mass., August 27-31, 1962*. The Hague 1964, p. 784-794.

<sup>8</sup> See e.g. St. Jodłowski, *Podstawy polskiej składni*, Warszawa 1976, p. 99.

<sup>9</sup> Such object is sometimes regarded as an inherent instrument contained in the semantic structure of the verb, cf. K. Pisarkowa, *o.c.*, p. 99.

<sup>10</sup> When not connected with a part of the body the verb is intransitive, e.g.: *sztandar trzepocze na wietrze* "a flag is fluttering in the wind".

<sup>11</sup> Bahuvrihi-type compounds are extremely frequent in XVIIth century poetry, especially in descriptions of animals, e.g.: *koń ... białonogi* "white-legged horse", Szymon Szymonowicz, "Sielanki" (1614); *białopióre żurawie* "white-feathered cranes", Samuel Twardowski, "Przeważna legacyja" (1633); *tury szerokonogie* "wide-legged aurochs", *feniksy bystrookie* "quick-eyed phoenixes", *kosy żółtonose* "yellow-nosed blackbirds", *szczygiel czerwonogłowy* "red-headed goldfinch", Hieronim Morsztyn, "Antypasty małżeńskie" (1650), etc.

<sup>12</sup> In Old Polish other prepositional phrases too are attested in this function, e.g. in "Kazania Jana z Szamotuł Paterka" (beginning of XVIth century): *Maria była najszlachetniejsza na duszy ... rumiana na płci ... Jagody jej ... białe i rumiane w barwie* "Maria was most noble in soul ... ruddy in complexion ... Her cheeks ... white and rosy in colour".

<sup>13</sup> In the XVIIth century it still occurred as a predicate, as mentioned by K. Pisarkowa, *o.c.*, p. 51, e.g.: *zwierzeta o jednym są żołądku* "animals are with one stomach". Today only few predicative expressions survived, e.g.: *jestem o suchym pysku* "I am with a dry mouth = I am without food (or drink), on an empty stomach".