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## THE HOMERIC APOSTROPHE.—AN EXPLANATION.

THE undesirable expedient of a rejoinder to a rejoinder would not have forced itself upon me had not Mr. R. M. Henry (*Class. Rev.* xx. p. 3) given me credit for an 'attempt to base the origin of the use of apostrophe on metrical considerations.' This is not an accurate statement of the purpose of my article (*Class. Rev.* xix. 383 ff.), which touches very lightly upon the question of origins, at least so far as constructive criticism is concerned. What little I had to suggest as to the first use of the figure is to be found on p. 385, where I speak of the apostrophe as 'a rhetorical device that suggested itself to Homer or earlier narrative poets in the course of the development of the epic,' the poet heightening the interest of the story at critical points by addressing his characters. But the article is chiefly concerned with Homer's use of the figure, not with its origin; and I would still maintain that in many instances where the apostrophe has little or no rhetorical value metrical convenience was a determining factor in its use.

Mr. Henry's criticism of my treatment of individual cases does indeed show that I should have done well to lay less stress upon the idea of absolute necessity as applied to the use of apostrophe. But I think that he attaches too little importance to the influence of the often recurring formula τὸν δ' ἀπαμβόμενος προσέφη, which certainly invites completion by means of a name and epithet—and accordingly, if need be, the verb is second person, and the name and epithet vocative, with the slight excuse of a rhetorical apostrophe. Besides, given a situation, either in a formula of address or in one of our other examples, where the needed case of

a name cannot readily be worked in, has anybody the right to affirm that a circumlocution or a descriptive phrase is an acceptable way out of the metrical difficulty, while we must seek another and higher reason for the use of the apostrophe? The periphrasis Πριάμοιο βίην is an admired and much-imitated figure; but an impartial examination of all such periphrases will show that they also served a metrical purpose at times. Why should we hold the apostrophe above such uses? Surely it would be venturesome to maintain that, if in the heat of composition there occurred a metrical difficulty in the use of a certain case of a name, the poet would always recast the passage so as to use the expected case, or else would resort to a circumlocution, rather than adopt a device which would bring the name itself into the verse and at the same time have the advantage of a rhetorical disguise.

As for the complaint that I have failed to proceed chronologically, the examples from the *Odyssey* were mentioned first only because the conclusion drawn from them seemed likely to be of service in the study of the more difficult cases in the *Iliad*. And when one believes that the apostrophe may have existed as a mere rhetorical ornament in narrative poetry before Homer, careful discrimination between the earlier and the later books of the *Iliad* does not seem so important—especially since the number of cases is comparatively small—as it seems when one is advocating a theory about the origin of the figure based on its more frequent occurrence in an early book.

CAMPBELL BONNER.

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE,  
March 27, 1906.

## HOMER, ODYSSEY XI. 423–426.

αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ προτὶ γαίῃ χεῖρας αἶρων  
βάλλον ἀποθνήσκων περὶ φασγάνῳ.

First a word about the various accepted renderings of this difficult passage. They fall into two classes:

(1) those that take περὶ φασγάνῳ with χεῖρας αἶρων βάλλον, not with ἀποθνήσκων, and translate thus:

'But I, on the ground, raising my hands, tried to throw them round my sword-hilt, as I was dying.'

This translation obviously, as Merry points out (Merry, *loc. cit.*), leaves προτὶ γαίῃ in the lurch: ἀποθνήσκων προτὶ γαίῃ for 'as I lay dying on the ground' is not Homeric diction. Ameis-Hentze (*Anhang Od.* 11. 423 says: 'In den angeführten Worten nun erklären manche