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**Vol. I.**

## Lecture XVI. Hyperbole - Personification - Apostrophe

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## LECTURE XVI.

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### HYPERBOLE — PERSONIFICATION — APOSTROPHE.

LECT.  
XVI.

**T**HE next figure concerning which I am to treat, is called Hyperbole, or Exaggeration. It consists in magnifying an object beyond its natural bounds. It may be considered sometimes as a trope, and sometimes as a figure of thought: and here indeed the distinction between these two classes begins not to be clear, nor is it of any importance that we should have recourse to metaphysical subtilties, in order to keep them distinct. Whether we call it trope or figure, it is plain that it is a mode of speech which hath some foundation in nature. For in all languages, even in common conversation, hyperbolical expressions very frequently occur; as swift as the wind; as white as the snow, and the like; and our common forms of compliment are almost all of them extravagant Hyperboles. If any thing be remarkably good or great in its kind, we are instantly ready to add to it some exaggerating epithet; and to make it the greatest or best we ever saw. The imagination has always



a tendency to gratify itself, by magnifying its present object, and carrying it to excess. More or less of this hyperbolical turn will prevail in language, according to the liveliness of imagination among the people who speak it. Hence young people deal always much in Hyperboles. Hence the language of the Orientals was far more hyperbolical than that of the Europeans, who are of more phlegmatic, or, if you please, of more correct imagination. Hence, among all writers in early times, and in the rude periods of society, we may expect this figure to abound. Greater experience, and more cultivated society, abate the warmth of imagination, and chasten the manner of expression.

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THE exaggerated expressions to which our ears are accustomed in conversation, scarcely strike us as Hyperboles. In an instant we make the proper abatement, and understand them according to their just value. But when there is something striking and unusual in the form of a hyperbolical expression, it then rises into a figure of speech which draws our attention: and here it is necessary to observe, that unless the reader's imagination be in such a state as disposes it to rise and swell along with the hyperbolical expression, he is always hurt and offended by it. For a sort of disagreeable force is put upon him; he is required to strain and exert his fancy, when he feels no inclination to make any such effort. Hence the Hyperbole is a figure of difficult management; and ought neither to be frequently



L E C T. used, nor long dwelt upon. On some occasions,  
XVI. it is undoubtedly proper; being, as was before observed, the natural style of a sprightly and heated imagination; but when Hyperboles are unseasonable, or too frequent, they render a composition frigid and unaffecting. They are the resource of an author of feeble imagination; of one, describing objects which either want native dignity in themselves; or whose dignity he cannot show by describing them simply, and in their just proportions, and is therefore obliged to rest upon tumid and exaggerated expressions.

HYPERBOLES are of two kinds; either such as are employed in description, or such as are suggested by the warmth of passion. The best by far, are those which are the effect of passion; for if the imagination has a tendency to magnify its objects beyond their natural proportion, passion possesses this tendency in a vastly stronger degree; and therefore not only excuses the most daring figures, but very often renders them natural and just. All passions, without exception, love, terror, amazement, indignation, anger, and even grief, throw the mind into confusion, aggravate their objects, and of course prompt a hyperbolical style. Hence the following sentiments of Satan in Milton, as strongly as they are described, contain nothing but what is natural and proper; exhibiting the picture of a mind agitated with rage and despair:

Me miserable ! which way shall I fly  
Infinite wrath, and infinite despair ?



Which way I fly is Hell, myself am Hell;  
 And in the lowest deep, a lower deep  
 Still threat'ning to devour me, opens wide,  
 To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heaven.

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B. iv. v. 73.

In simple description, though Hyperboles are not excluded, yet they must be used with more caution, and require more preparation, in order to make the mind relish them. Either the object described must be of that kind, which of itself seizes the fancy strongly, and disposes it to run beyond the bounds; something vast, surprising, and new; or the writer's art must be exerted in heating the fancy gradually, and preparing it to think highly of the object which he intends to exaggerate. When a Poet is describing an earthquake or a storm, or when he has brought us into the midst of a battle, we can bear strong Hyperboles without displeasure. But when he is describing only a woman in grief, it is impossible not to be disgusted with such wild exaggeration as the following, in one of our dramatic Poets:

———— I found her on the floor  
 In all the storm of grief, yet beautiful;  
 Pouring forth tears at such a lavish rate,  
 That were the world on fire, they might have drown'd  
 The wrath of Heaven, and quench'd the mighty ruin

LEE.

THIS is mere bombast. The person herself who was under the distracting agitations of grief,

LECT. might be permitted to hyperbolize strongly; but  
 XVI. the spectator describing her, cannot be allowed an equal liberty: for this plain reason, that the one is supposed to utter the sentiments of passion, the other speaks only the language of description, which is always, according to the dictates of nature, on a lower tone: a distinction, which however obvious, has not been attended to by many writers.

How far a Hyperbole, supposing it properly introduced, may be safely carried without overstretching it; what is the proper measure and boundary of this figure, cannot, as far as I know, be ascertained by any precise rule. Good sense and just taste must determine the point, beyond which, if we pass, we become extravagant. Lucan may be pointed out as an author apt to be excessive in his Hyperboles. Among the compliments paid by the Roman Poets to their Emperors, it had become fashionable to ask them, what part of the heavens they would chuse for their habitation, after they should have become Gods? Virgil had already carried this sufficiently far in his address to Augustus:

“———Tibi brachia contrahit ingens

Scorpius, et Cœli justâ plus parte relinquit \*.”

Georg. I.

\* “ The Scorpion ready to receive thy laws,  
 “ Yields half his region, and contracts his paws.”

DRYDEN.



But this did not suffice Lucan. Resolved to out- L E C T.  
to all his predecessors, in a like address to Nero, XVI.  
he very gravely beseeches him not to chuse his  
place near either of the poles, but to be sure to  
occupy just the middle of the heavens, lest, by  
going either to one side or other, his weight  
should overset the universe:

Sed neque in Arctoo sedem tibi legeris orbe  
Nec polus adversi calidus qua mergitur austri;  
Ætheris immensi partem si prefferis unam  
Sentiet axis onus. Librati pondera Cœli  
Orbe tene medio †. —

PHARS. I. 53.

Such thoughts as these, are what the French call  
*outrés*, and always proceed from a false fire of  
genius. The Spanish and African writers, as Ter-  
tullian, Cyprian, Augustin, are remarked for  
being fond of them. As in that epitaph on Char-  
les V. by a Spanish writer:

Pro tumultu ponas orbem, pro tegmine cœlum,  
Sidera pro facibus, pro lacrymis maria.

† But, oh! whatever be thy Godhead great,  
Fix not in regions too remote thy seat;  
Nor deign thou near the frozen Bear to shine  
Nor where the frosty southern stars decline.  
Press not too much on any part the sphere,  
Hard were the task thy weight divine to bear;  
Soon would the axis feel the unusual load,  
And, groaning, bend beneath th'incumbent God;  
O'er the mid orb more equal shalt thou rise,  
And with a juster balance fix the skies. ROWE.



LECT. Sometimes they dazzle and impose by their bold-  
 XVI. ness; but wherever reason and good sense are so much violated, there can be no true beauty. Epigrammatic writers are frequently guilty in this respect; resting the whole merit of their epigrams on some extravagant hyperbolical turn; such as the following of Dr. Pitcairn's, upon Holland's being gained from the ocean:

Tellurem fecere Dii; sua littora Belgæ;  
 Immensæque molis opus utrumque fuit;  
 Dii vacuo sparsas glomerarunt æthere terras,  
 Nil ibi quod operi possit obesse fuit.  
 At Belgis, maria & cœli natura rerum  
 Obstitit; obstantes hi domuere Deos.

So much for the Hyperbole. We proceed now to those figures which lie altogether in the thought; where the words are taken in their common and literal sense.

Among these, the first place is unquestionably due to Personification, or that figure by which we attribute life and action to inanimate objects. The technical term for this is *Prosopopœia*; but as Personification is of the same import, and more allied to our own language, it will be better to use this word.

It is a figure, the use of which is very extensive, and its foundation laid deep in human nature. At first view, and when considered abstractly, it would appear to be a figure of the utmost boldness, and to border on the extravagant



and ridiculous. For what can seem more remote from the tract of reasonable thought, than to speak of stones and trees, and fields and rivers, as if they were living creatures, and to attribute to them thought and sensation, affections and actions? One might imagine this to be no more than childish conceit, which no person of taste could relish. In fact, however, the case is very different. No such ridiculous effect is produced by personification, when properly employed; on the contrary, it is found to be natural and agreeable; nor is any very uncommon degree of passion required, in order to make us relish it. All poetry, even in its most gentle and humble forms, abounds with it. From prose, it is far from being excluded; nay, in common conversation, very frequent approaches are made to it. When we say, the ground *thirsts* for rain, or the earth *smiles* with plenty; when we speak of ambition being *restless*, or a disease being *deceitful*, such expressions show the facility with which the mind can accommodate the properties of living creatures to things that are inanimate, or to abstract conceptions of its own forming.

INDEED, it is very remarkable, that there is a wonderful proneness in human nature to animate all objects. Whether this arises from a sort of assimilating principle, from a propension to spread a resemblance of ourselves over all other things, or from whatever other cause it arises, so it is, that almost every emotion, which in the least agitates the mind, bestows upon its object a mo-



LECT. mentary idea of life. Let a man, by an unwary  
XVI. step, sprain his ankle, or hurt his foot upon a stone, and, in the ruffled discomposed moment, he will, sometimes, feel himself disposed to break the stone in pieces, or to utter passionate expressions against it, as if it had done him an injury. If one has been long accustomed to a certain set of objects, which have made a strong impression on his imagination; as to a house, where he has passed many agreeable years; or to fields, and trees, and mountains, among which he has often walked with the greatest delight; when he is obliged to part with them, especially if he has no prospect of ever seeing them again, he can scarce avoid having somewhat of the same feeling as when he is leaving old friends. They seem endowed with life. They become objects of his affection; and, in the moment of his parting, it scarce seems absurd to him, to give vent to his feeling in words, and to take a formal adieu.

So strong is that impression of life which is made upon us, by the more magnificent and striking objects of nature especially, that I doubt not, in the least, of this having been one cause of the multiplication of divinities in the Heathen world. Dryads and Naiads, the Genius of the wood, and the God of the river, were, in men of lively imaginations, in the early ages of the world, easily grafted upon this turn of mind. When their favourite rural objects had often been animated in their fancy, it was an easy transition to attribute to them some real divinity, some  
unseen



unseen power or genius which inhabited them, or in some peculiar manner belonged to them. Imagination was highly gratified, by thus gaining somewhat to rest upon with more stability; and when belief coincided so much with imagination, very slight causes would be sufficient to establish it.

FROM this deduction, may be easily seen how it comes to pass, that personification makes so great a figure in all compositions, where imagination or passion have any concern. On innumerable occasions, it is the very Language of imagination and passion, and, therefore, deserves to be attended to, and examined with peculiar care. There are three different degrees of this figure; which it is necessary to remark and distinguish, in order to determine the propriety of its use. The first is, when some of the properties or qualities of living creatures are ascribed to inanimate objects; the second, when those inanimate objects are introduced as acting like such as have life; and the third, when they are represented, either as speaking to us, or as listening to what we say to them.

THE first, and lowest degree of this figure, consists in ascribing to inanimate objects some of the qualities of living creatures. Where this is done, as is most commonly the case, in a word, or two, and by way of an epithet added to the object, as, "a raging storm, a deceitful disease, a cruel disaster," &c. it raises the style so little, that the humblest discourse will admit it without any force. This, indeed, is such an obscure



LECT. XVI. degree of Personification, that one may doubt whether it deserves the name, and might not be classed with simple Metaphors, which escape in a manner unnoticed. Happily employed, however, it sometimes adds beauty and sprightliness to an expression; as in this line of Virgil :

Aut conjurato descendens Dacus ab Istro.

Geor. II. 474.

Where the personal epithet, *conjurato*, applied to the river *Istro*, is infinitely more poetical than if it had been applied to the person, thus :

Aut conjuratus descendens Dacus ab Istro.

A very little taste will make any one feel the difference between these two lines.

THE next degree of this figure is, when we introduce inanimate objects acting like those that have life. Here we rise a step higher, and the Personification becomes sensible. According to the nature of the action, which we attribute to those inanimate objects, and the particularity with which we describe it, such is the strength of the figure. When pursued to any length, it belongs only to studied harangues, to highly figured and eloquent discourse; when slightly touched, it may be admitted into subjects of less elevation. Cicero, for instance, speaking of the cases where killing another is lawful in self-defence, uses the following words: "Aliquando nobis gladius ad occidendum hominem ab ipsis porrigitur legibus." (Orat. pro Milone.) The expression is happy. The laws are personified, as reaching forth their



hand to give us a sword for putting one to death. LECT.  
Such short personifications as these may be ad- XVI.  
mitted, even into moral treatises, or works of  
cool reasoning; and, provided they be easy and  
not strained, and that we be not cloyed with  
too frequent returns of them, they have a good  
effect on style, and render it both strong and  
lively.

THE genius of our Language gives us an  
advantage in the use of this figure. As, with us,  
no substantive nouns have gender, or are masculine  
and feminine, except the proper names of male  
and female creatures; by giving a gender to any  
inanimate object, or abstract idea, that is, in  
place of the pronoun *it*, using the personal pro-  
nouns, *he* or *she*, we presently raise the style,  
and begin personification. In solemn discourse,  
this can often be done to good purpose, when  
speaking of religion, or virtue, or our country,  
or any such object of dignity. I shall give a remark-  
ably fine example, from a sermon of Bishop  
Sherlock's, where we shall see natural religion  
beautifully personified, and be able to judge from  
it, of the spirit and grace which this figure,  
when well conducted, bestows on a discourse.  
I must take notice, at the same time, that it is  
an instance of this figure, carried as far as prose,  
even in its highest elevation, will admit; and,  
therefore, suited only to compositions where the  
great efforts of eloquence are allowed. The Author  
is comparing together our Saviour and Mahomet:  
"Go," says he, "to your natural Religion; lay



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“ before her Mahomet, and his disciples, arrayed  
“ in armour and blood, riding in triumph  
“ over the spoils of thousands who fell by  
“ his victorious sword. Show her the cities  
“ which he set in flames, the countries which he  
“ ravaged and destroyed, and the miserable  
“ distress of all the inhabitants of the earth.  
“ When she has viewed him in this scene, carry  
“ her into his retirement; show her the Prophet’s  
“ chamber; his concubines and his wives; and  
“ let her hear him allege revelation, and a divine  
“ commission, to justify his adultery and lust.  
“ When she is tired with this prospect, then show  
“ her the blessed Jesus, humble and meek, doing  
“ good to all the sons of men. Let her see him in  
“ his most retired privacies; let her follow him to  
“ the mount, and hear his devotions and supplications to God. Carry her to his table, to  
“ view his poor fare; and hear his heavenly  
“ discourse. Let her attend him to the tribunal,  
“ and consider the patience with which he endured  
“ the scoffs and reproaches of his enemies. Lead  
“ her to his cross; let her view him in the agony  
“ of death, and hear his last prayer for his persecutors; *Father, forgive them, for they know not*  
“ *what they do!* — When Natural Religion has  
“ thus viewed both, ask her, Which is the Prophet of God? But her answer we have already  
“ had, when she saw part of this scene, through  
“ the eyes of the Centurion, who attended at  
“ the cross. By him she spoke, and said, *Truly,*



"*this man was the Son of God*" \* This is more LECT. XVI.  
 than elegant ; it is truly sublime. The whole  
 passage is animated ; and the figure rises at the  
 conclusion, when Natural Religion, who, before  
 was only a spectator, is introduced as speaking  
 by the Centurion's voice. It has the better effect  
 too, that it occurs at the conclusion of a discourse,  
 where we naturally look for most warmth and  
 dignity. Did Bishop Sherlock's sermons, or,  
 indeed, any English sermons whatever, afford us  
 many passages equal to this, we should oftner  
 have recourse to them for instances of the beauty  
 of Composition.

HITHERTO we have spoken of prose ; in  
 poetry, Personifications of this kind are extremely  
 frequent, and are, indeed, the life and soul of  
 it. We expect to find every thing animated in  
 the descriptions of a poet who has a lively fancy.  
 Accordingly Homer, the father and prince of  
 poets, is remarkable for the use of this figure.  
 War, peace, darts, spears, towns, rivers, every  
 thing, in short, is alive in his writings. The  
 same is the case with Milton and Shakespeare.  
 No Personification, in any author, is more strik-  
 ing, or introduced on a more proper occasion,  
 than the following of Milton's, on occasion of  
 Eve's eating the forbidden fruit :

So saying, her rash hand, in evil hour

Forth reaching to the fruit, she pluck'd, she eat ;

\* Bishop Sherlocks' Sermons, Vol. I. Disc. ix.



LECT. Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat,  
 XVI. Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe,  
 That all was lost. —————

B. ix. 780.

All the circumstances and ages of men, poverty, riches, youth, old age, all the dispositions and passions, melancholy, love, grief, contentment, are capable of being personified in poetry, with great propriety. Of this, we meet with frequent examples in Milton's *Allegro* and *Penferoso*, Parnell's *Hymn to Contentment*, Thomson's *Seasons*, and all the good poets: nor, indeed, is it easy to set any bounds to Personifications of this kind, in poetry.

ONE of the greatest pleasures we receive from poetry, is, to find ourselves always in the midst of our fellows, and to see every thing thinking, feeling, and acting, as we ourselves do. This is, perhaps, the principal charm of this sort of figured style, that it introduces us into society with all nature, and interests us, even in inanimate objects, by forming a connection between them and us, through that sensibility which it ascribes to them. This is exemplified in the following beautiful passage of Thomson's *Summer*, wherein the life which he bestows upon all nature, when describing the effects of the rising sun, renders the scenery uncommonly gay and interesting:

But yonder comes the powerful king of day  
 Rejoicing in the east. The lessening cloud,  
 The kindling azure and the mountain's brim



Tipt with æthereal gold, his near approach  
Betoken glad. —————

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—————By thee refined,  
In brisker measures, the relucient stream  
Frisks o'er the mead. The precipice abrupt,  
Projecting horror on the blacken'd flood,  
Softens at thy return. The desert joys  
Wildly, through all his melancholy bounds.  
Rude ruins glitter; and the briny deep,  
Seen from some pointed promontory's top,  
Reflects from every fluctuating wave,  
A glance extensive as the day. —————

The same effect is remarkable in that fine passage  
of Milton:

—————To the nuptial bower  
I led her blushing like the morn: all heaven  
And happy constellations on that hour,  
Shed their selectest influence; the earth  
Gave signs of gratulation, and each hill;  
Joyous the birds; fresh gales and gentle airs  
Whispered it to the woods, and from their wings  
Flung rose, flung odours from the spicy shrub,  
Disporting, —————

B. VIII. v. 510.

THE third and highest degree of this figure  
remains to be mentioned, when inanimate objects  
are introduced, not only as feeling and acting,  
but as speaking to us, or hearing and listening  
when we address ourselves to them. This, though

B b 4

LECT. on several occasions far from being unnatural  
XVI. is, however, more difficult in the execution, than the other kinds of Personification. For this is plainly the boldest of all rhetorical figures; it is the style of a strong passion only; and, therefore never to be attempted, unless when the mind is considerably heated and agitated. A slight Personification of some inanimate thing, acting as if it had life, can be relished by the mind, in the midst of cool description, and when its ideas are going on in the ordinary train. But it must be in a state of violent emotion, and have departed considerably from its common tract of thought, before it can so far realise the Personification of an insensible object, as to conceive it listening to what we say, or making any return to us. All strong passions, however, have a tendency to use this figure; not only love, anger, and indignation, but even those which are seemingly more dispiriting, such as, grief, remorse, and melancholy. For all passions struggle for vent, and if they can find no other object, will, rather than be silent, pour themselves forth to woods, and rocks, and the most insensible things; especially, if these be any how connected with the causes and objects that have thrown the mind into this agitation. Hence, in poetry, where the greatest liberty is allowed to the Language of passion, it is easy to produce many beautiful examples of this figure. Milton affords us an extremely fine one, in that moving and tender address which Eve makes to Paradise, just before she is compelled to leave it.



Oh! unexpected stroke, worse than of death!  
 Must I thus leave thee, Paradise? thus leave  
 Thee, native soil, these happy walks, and shades,  
 Fit haunt of Gods! where I had hope to spend  
 Quiet, though sad, the respite of that day  
 That must be mortal to us both. O flowers!  
 That never will in other climate grow,  
 My early visitation, and my last  
 At ev'n, which I bred up with tender hand  
 From the first opening bud, and gave you names!  
 Who now shall rear you to the sun, or rank  
 Your tribes, and water from the ambrosial fount?

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B. XI. v. 268.

This is altogether the language of nature, and of female passion. It is observable, that all plaintive passions are peculiarly prone to the use of this figure. The complaints which Philoctetes, in Sophocles, pours out to the rocks and caves of Lemnos, amidst the excess of his grief and despair, are remarkably fine examples of it \*.

\* ὦ λιμένες, ὦ προβλήτες, ὦ ξυνουσίαι  
 ὄφρων ὄρειον, ὦ καταρράγες πέτραι  
 Τῆν ταῦδ'· ἐγὼ γὰρ ἄλλον εἰδὼ ἔτι λεγῶ  
 Ἀνακλιμμαι παρθεσι τοῖς ἰώδοσι, &c.

"O mountains, rivers, rocks, and savage herds,

"To you I speak! to you alone, I now

"Must breathe my sorrows! you are wont to hear

"My sad complaints, and I will tell you all

"That I have suffered from Achilles' son!"

FRANKLIN.

LECT. XVI. And there are frequent examples, not in poetry only, but in real life, of persons, when just about to suffer death, taking a passionate farewell of the sun, moon, and stars, or other sensible objects around them.

THERE are two great rules for the management of this sort of Personification. The first rule is, never to attempt it, unless when prompted by strong passion, and never to continue it when the passion begins to flag. It is one of those high ornaments, which can only find place in the most warm and spirited parts of composition; and there, too, must be employed with moderation.

THE second rule is never to personify any object in this way, but such as has some dignity in itself, and can make a proper figure in this elevation to which we raise it. The observance of this rule is required, even in the lower degrees of Personification; but still more, when an address is made to the personified object. To address the corpse of a deceased friend, is natural; but to address the clothes which he wore, introduces mean and degrading ideas. So also, addressing the several parts of one's body, as if they were animated, is not congruous to the dignity of passion. For this reason, I must condemn the following passage, in a very beautiful Poem of Mr. Pope's, *Eloisa to Abelard*.

Dear fatal name! rest ever unreveal'd,  
Nor pass these lips in holy silence sealed.



Hide it, my heart, within that close disguise,  
 Where, mixed with Gods, his lov'd idea lies:  
 Oh! write it not, my hand! — his name appears  
 Already written — Blot it out, my tears!

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Here are several different objects and parts of the body personified; and each of them are addressed or spoken to; let us consider with what propriety. The first is, the name of Abelard: "Dear fatal name! rest ever," &c. To this, no reasonable objection can be made. For, as the name of a person often stands for the person himself, and suggests the same ideas, it can bear this Personification with sufficient dignity. Next, Eloisa speaks to herself; and personifies her heart for this purpose: "Hide it, my heart, within that close," &c. As the heart is a dignified part of the human frame, and is often put for the mind, or affections, this also may pass without blame. But, when from her heart she passes to her hand, and tells her hand not to write his name, this is forced and unnatural; a personified hand is low, and not in the style of true passion: and the figure becomes still worse, when, in the last place, she exhorts her tears to blot out what her hand had written: "Oh! write it not," &c. There is, in these two lines, an air of epigrammatic conceit, which native passion never suggests; and which is altogether unsuitable to the tenderness which breathes through the rest of that excellent Poem.

In prose compositions, this figure requires to be used with still greater moderation and deli-



LECT. XVI. cacy. The same liberty is not allowed to the imagination there, as in poetry. The same assistances cannot be obtained for raising passion to its proper height by the force of numbers, and the glow of style. However, addresses to inanimate objects are not excluded from prose; but have their place only in the higher species of oratory. A public Speaker may on some occasions very properly address religion or virtue; or his native country, or some city or province, which has suffered perhaps great calamities, or been the scene of some memorable action. But we must remember, that, as such addresses are among the highest efforts of eloquence, they should never be attempted, unless by persons of more than ordinary genius. For if the orator fails in his design of moving our passions by them, he is sure of being laughed at. Of all frigid things, the most frigid are, the awkward and unseasonable attempts sometimes made towards such kinds of Personification, especially if they be long continued. We see the writer or speaker toiling and labouring, to express the language of some passion, which he neither feels himself, nor can make us feel. We remain not only cold, but frozen; and are at full leisure to criticise on the ridiculous figure which the personified object makes, when we ought to have been transported with a glow of enthusiasm. Some of the French writers, particularly Bossuet and Flechier, in their sermons and funeral orations, have attempted and executed this figure, not without warmth and dignity. Their works are



exceedingly worthy of being consulted, for instances of this, and of several other ornaments of style. Indeed the vivacity and ardour of the French genius is more suited to this animated kind of oratory, than the more correct but more phlegmatic genius of the British, who in their prose-works very rarely attempt any of the high figures of eloquence\*. So much for Personifications or Prosopopœia, in all its different forms.

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\* In the "Oraisons funèbres de M. Bossuet," which I consider as one of the master-pieces of modern eloquence, Apostrophes and addresses, to personified objects, frequently occur, and are supported with much spirit. Thus, for instance, in the funeral oration of Mary of Austria, Queen of France, the author addresses Algiers, in the prospect of the advantage which the arms of Louis XIV. were to gain over it: "Avant lui la France, presque sans vaisseaux, tenait en vain aux deux mers. Maintenant, "on les voit couvertes depuis le Levant jusqu'au couchant de nos flottes victorieuses; et la hardiesse Française porte par-tout la terreur avec le nom de Louis. "Tu céderas, tu tomberas sous ce vainqueur, Alger! "riche des dépouilles de la Chrétienté. Tu disois en "ton cœur avare, je tiens la mer sous ma loi, et les "nations sont ma proie. La légèreté de tes vaisseaux te "donnait de la confiance. Mais tu te verras attaqué dans "tes murailles, comme un oiseau ravissant qu'on irait "chercher parmi ses rochers, et dans son nid, où il "partage son butin à ses petits. Tu rends déjà tes esclaves. "Louis a brisé les fers, dont tu accablais ses sujets, " &c." In another passage of the same oration, he thus apostrophizes the Isle of Pheasants, which had been rendered famous by being the scene of those conferences, in which the treaty of the Pyrenees between France and Spain, and the marriage of this Princess with the King of France, were concluded. "Ile pacifique où se doivent



LECT. APOSTROPHE is a figure so much of the same  
 XVI. kind, that it will not require many words. It is an address to a real person; but one who is either absent or dead, as if he were present, and listening to us. It is so much allied to an address to inanimate objects personified, that both these figures are sometimes called apostrophes. However, the proper Apostrophe is in boldness one degree lower than the address to personified objects; for it certainly requires a less effort of imagination to suppose persons present who are dead or absent, than to animate insensible beings, and direct our discourse to them. Both figures are subject to the

“ terminer les différends de deux grands empires à qui tu  
 “ fers de limites: isle éternellement mémorable par les con-  
 “ férences de deux grands ministres. --- Auguste journée où  
 “ deux fières nations, long-tems ennemies, et alors reconci-  
 “ liées par Marie-Thérèse, s'avancent sur leurs confins, leurs  
 “ rois à leur tête, non plus pour se combattre, mais  
 “ pour s'embrasser. --- “ Fêtes sacrées, mariage fortuné,  
 “ voile nuptial, bénédiction, sacrifice, puis-je mêler  
 “ aujourd'hui vos cérémonies, et vos pompes, avec ces  
 “ pompes funèbres, et le comble des grandeurs avec leurs  
 “ ruines!” In the funeral oration of Henrietta, Queen  
 of England (which is perhaps the noblest of all his com-  
 positions), after recounting all she had done to support  
 her unfortunate husband, he concludes with this beauti-  
 ful Apostrophe: “ O mère! O femme! O reine admirable  
 “ et digne d'une meilleure fortune, si les fortunes de la  
 “ terre étaient quelque chose! Enfin il faut céder à votre  
 “ sort. Vous avez assez soutenu l'état, qui est attaqué,  
 “ par une force invincible et divine. Il ne reste plus  
 “ désormais, sinon que vous teniez ferme parmi ses  
 “ ruines.”



same rule of being prompted by passion, in order to render them natural; for both are the language of passion or strong emotions only. Among the poets Apostrophe is frequent; as in Virgil: L E C T. XVI.

———— Pereunt Hypanisque Dymasque

Confixi a sociis; nec te, tua plurima, Pantheu

Labentem pietas, nec Apollinis infula texit \*!

The poems of Ossian are full of the most beautiful instances of this figure: “Weep on the rocks  
“ of roaring winds. O maid of Inistore; bend thy  
“ fair head over the waves, thou fairer than the  
“ ghost of the hills, when it moves in a sunbeam  
“ at noon over the silence of Morven! He is  
“ fallen! Thy youth is low; pale beneath the  
“ sword of Cuchullin! \*” Quintilian affords us a very fine example in prose; when in the beginning of his sixth book, deploring the untimely death of his son, which had happened during the course of the work, he makes a very moving and tender Apostrophe to him. “Nam quo ille animo,  
“ qua medicorum admiratione, mensum octo  
“ valetudinem tulit? ut me in supremis consolatus  
“ est? quam etiam jam deficiens, jamque non  
“ noster, ipsum illum alienatæ mentis errorem  
“ circa solas literas habuit? Tuosne ergo, O meæ  
“ spes inanes! labentes oculos, tuum fugientem

\* Nor Pantheus! thee, thy mitre, nor the bands  
Of awful Phœbus sav'd from impious hands. DRYDEN.

Fingal. B. I.



- LECT. " spiritum vidi? Tuum corpus frigidum, exangue  
 XVI. " complexus, animam recipere, auramque com-  
 " munem haurire amplius potui? Tene, consulari  
 " nuper adoptione ad omnium spes honorum  
 " patris admotum, te, avunculo prætori generum  
 " destinatum; te, omnium spe Atticæ eloquentiæ  
 " candidatum, parens superstes tantum ad pœnas  
 " amisi † ". In this passage, Quintilian shows  
 the true genius of an orator, as much as he does  
 elsewhere that of the critic.

FOR such bold figures of discourse as strong  
 Personifications, addresses to personified objects,  
 and Apostrophes, the glowing imagination of  
 the ancient Oriental nations was particularly fitted.  
 Hence, in the sacred scriptures, we find some very

† " With what spirit, and how much to the admira-  
 " tion of the physicians did he bear throughout eight months  
 " his lingering distress? With what tender attention did  
 " he study, even in the last extremity, to comfort me?  
 " And, when no longer himself, how affecting was it to  
 " behold the disordered efforts of his wandering mind,  
 " wholly employed on subjects of literature? Ah! my  
 " frustrated and fallen hopes! Have I then beheld your  
 " closing eyes, and heard the last groan issue from your  
 " lips? After having embraced your cold and breathless  
 " body, how was it in my power to draw the vital air,  
 " or continue to drag a miserable life? When I had just  
 " beheld you raised by consular adoption to the prospect  
 " of all your father's honours, destined to be son-in-law  
 " to your uncle the Prætor, pointed out by general expect-  
 " ation as the successful candidate for the prize of Attic  
 " eloquence, in this moment of your opening honours,  
 " must I lose you for ever, and remain an unhappy  
 " parent, surviving only to suffer woe? "

remarkable



remarkable instances: "O thou sword of the Lord! how long will it be ere thou be quiet? put thyself up into thy scabbard, rest and be still! How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea-shore? there hath he appointed it.\*"

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There is one passage in particular, which I must not omit to mention, because it contains a greater assemblage of sublime ideas, of bold and daring figures, than is perhaps any where to be met with. It is in the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah, where the prophet thus describes the fall of the Assyrian empire: "Thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, how hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased! The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers. He who smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke: he that ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted, and none hindereth. The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they break forth into singing. Yea, the fir-trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us. Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth: it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak, and say unto thee, art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought

\* Jer. xlvii 6, 7.



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“ down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols:  
“ the worm is spread under thee, and the worms  
“ cover thee. How art thou fallen from Heaven,  
“ O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou  
“ cut down to the ground, which didst weaken  
“ the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart,  
“ I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my throne  
“ above the stars of God: I will sit also upon  
“ the mount of the congregation, in the sides  
“ of the north. I will ascend above the heights  
“ of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.  
“ Yet thou shalt be brought down to Hell, to  
“ the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall  
“ narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee,  
“ saying: Is this the man that made the earth to  
“ tremble, that did shake kingdoms? That made  
“ the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the  
“ cities thereof? that opened not the house of  
“ his prisoners? All the Kings of the nations,  
“ even all of them lie in glory, every one in his  
“ own house. But thou art cast out of thy grave,  
“ like an abominable branch: and as the raiment  
“ of those that are slain, thrust through with a  
“ sword, that go down to the stones of the pit,  
“ as a carcase trodden under feet.” This whole  
passage is full of sublimity. Every object is animat-  
ed; a variety of personages are introduced: we  
hear the Jews, the fir-trees, and cedars of Leban-  
on, the ghosts of departed Kings, the King of  
Babylon himself, and those who look upon his  
body, all speaking in their order, and acting their  
different parts without confusion.