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Apostrofe

(_litterær_praksis) Fra gresk for “vende bort”: Skriveren/taleren vender seg bort fra den faktiske situasjonen som hun eller han er i, og henvender seg til noe(n) som reelt er fraværende. Må ikke blandes sammen med apostrof (skrives uten e og er det følgende grammatiske tegnet: ’). En variant av apostrofe er invokasjon, som er påkallelse av en guddom, f.eks. i begynnelsen av Homers epos *Iliaden* og *Odysseen*. En apostrofe kan gjelde en av de greske Musene, dvs. en inspirasjons-gudinne (Beugnot 1994 s. 61).

Apostrofe er en retorisk strategi der en person/stemme henvender seg på en høytidelig måte til noe som er fysisk fraværende, f.eks. når en eksilforfatter henvender seg til sitt fedreland. Det er ofte en henvendelse fra et subjekt til et objekt (en gjenstand, et landskap), og er dermed egentlig uttrykk for en umulig tilnærming, fordi objektet ikke kan svare tilbake.

“In poetry, an apostrophe is a figure of speech in which the poet addresses an absent person, an abstract idea, or a thing. Apostrophes are found throughout poetry, but they’re less common since the early 20th century. Poets may apostrophize a beloved, the Muse, God, love, time, or any other entity that can’t respond in reality. The word O is often used to signal such an invocation.” (<http://grammarist.com/literature/apostrophe-poetry/>; lesedato 25.08.15)

“Apostrofe betegner en henvendelse til noe ikke-menneskelig eller til ikke-tilstedeværende personer.” (Claudi 2010 s. 34) Det er en retorisk tiltale til noe eller noen, en tiltale som samtidig er en påkallelse. Vanligvis fungerer påkallelsen som en måte å ære noen/noe på, f.eks. et guddommelig eller hellig-heroisk vesen (Asmuth 1981 s. 109). Det som taleren eller skriveren henvender seg til, kan være tapt for alltid, f.eks. barndommen, eller ennå ikke realisert fordi det ligger i framtiden.

“An apostrophe is a speech directed at an object or being which cannot respond to or even hear the speech. It fits our general definition of “figure” in that it creates an unreal speech situation, so that the very act of speech is twisted, taken out of its “proper” function. Apostrophe is a form of personification. It assumes for the imaginative moment that the object shares our human ability to respond to speech.” (Lentricchia og McLaughlin 1990 s. 83)

“Imagine a man standing on a corner in the rain cursing buses: ‘Come on, damn you! It’s been ten minutes!’ If he continues apostrophically when other travellers join him on the corner, he makes a spectacle of himself; his apostrophes work less to establish an *I-Thou* relation between him and the absent bus than to dramatize or constitute an image of self. We might posit, then, a third level of reading where the vocative [= kasus brukt ved tiltale/anrop] of apostrophe is a device which the poetic voice uses to establish with an object a relationship which helps to constitute him.” (Culler 1983 s. 141-142)

Apostrofe “makes its point by troping not on the meaning of a word but on the circuit or situation of communication itself.” (Culler 1983 s. 135) “To read apostrophe as sign of a fiction which knows its own fictive nature is to stress its optative character, its impossible imperatives: commands which in their explicit impossibility figure events in and of fiction.” (Culler 1983 s. 146)

“[W]e ask why rhetoricians should claim that passion spontaneously seeks apostrophe. The answer would seem to be that to apostrophize is to will a state of affairs, to attempt to call it into being by asking inanimate objects to bend themselves to your desire. In these terms the function of apostrophe would be to make the objects of the universe potentially responsive forces: forces which can be asked to act or refrain from acting, or even to continue behaving as they usually behave.” (Culler 1983 s. 139)

“Mennesker, vær humane!” ropte den franske 1700-tallsforfatteren Jean-Jacques Rousseau mens han rettet seg til de intellektuelle i Paris i sin egen samtid. Henvendelsen til “menneskene” eller “mennesket” er en apostrofe (Reboul 2009 s. 101). Den franske forfatteren Voltaire begynte sitt epos *Henriaden* (1728) med å påkalle sannheten: “Stig ned fra himmelens høyder du opphøyde Sannhet”.

En “apostroferende bønn” (Auerbach 1988 s. 106) er en bønn som henvender seg til en fraværende instans, f.eks. til Gud, eller til våren slik som i Henrik Wergelands dikt “Til Foraaret” (1845).

“[A]postrophe used in literature is an arrangement of words addressing a non-existent person or an abstract idea in such a way as if it were present and capable of understanding feelings. [...] William Shakespeare makes use of an apostrophe in his play “Macbeth”:

“Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand?
Come, let me clutch thee!
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.”

In his mental conflict before murdering King Duncan, Macbeth has a strange vision of a dagger and talks to it as if it were another person. [...]

Jane Taylor uses apostrophe in the well-known nursery rhyme “The Star”:

“Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are.
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.”

In the above nursery rhyme, a child addresses a star (an imaginary idea). Hence, this is a classic example of apostrophe. [...]

Look at how Mary Shelly uses apostrophe in her novel “Frankenstein”:

“Oh! Stars and clouds and winds, ye are all about to mock me; if ye really pity me, crush sensation and memory; let me become as nought; but if not, depart, depart, and leave me in darkness.” Talking to stars, clouds and winds is an apostrophe. [...]

John Donne comes up with the use of an apostrophe in his poem “Death Be Not Proud”:

“Death be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for, thou art not so,
For, those, whom thou think’st, thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poor death, nor yet canst thou kill me.”

The poet talks to death, an abstract idea, as if it were a person capable of comprehending his feelings.” (<http://literarydevices.net/apostrophe/>; lesedato 03.09.15)

I *King Lear* i Shakespeares tragedie taler kongen til stormen (3. akt, 2. scene):

“Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
Till you have drench’d our steeples, drown’d the cocks!”

Den skotske dikteren Robert Burns skrev i 1785 diktet “To a Mouse”. “The poet is doing his utmost to assure this terrified little creature that he has no intention of causing it any harm. [...] He then goes on to apologise to the mouse for the behaviour of mankind [...] Here he tells the mouse that he realizes its need to steal the odd ear of corn, and he does not really mind. [...] It seems probable that here the poet is really comparing his own hard times with that of the mouse – a life of harsh struggle, with little or no reward at the end.” (<http://www.electricscotland.com/burns/mouse.html>; lesedato 24.09.15)

“On numerous occasions [den engelske romantiske poeten] Wordsworth uses the figure of apostrophe. The narrative or discursive flow pauses, as the poet addresses a person or a single aspect of his subject matter.” (Gill 1991 s. 26) Henrik Wergeland bruker apostrofe f.eks. i diktet “Til min Gyldenlak”.

“Whatever sort of pantheism the poems embody, when they address natural objects they formally will that these particular objects function as subjects; they perform the radical act of Keat’s charioteer:

The charioteer with wondrous gesture talks
To the trees and mountains; and there soon appear
Shapes of delight, of mystery, and fear

This Keatsian claim makes apparent the connection between apostrophe and embarrassment. Readers temper this embarrassment by treating apostrophe as a poetic convention and the calling of spirits as a relic of archaic beliefs. What is really in question, however, is the power of poetry to make something happen. [...] The vocative posits a relationship between two subjects even if the sentence denies the animicity of what is addressed” (Culler 1983 s. 140-141).

Lord Byrons lange episke dikt *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* (1812; publisert i sin helhet i 1818) inneholder en lang apostrofe på til sammen seks strofer, der dikteren henvender seg til havet, til oseanet som leker med skipene og utsletter alle spor etter mennesket.

Den amerikanske dikteren Walt Whitmans dikt “To a Locomotive in Winter” (1876) tiltaler lokomotivet direkte i mange av versene. “The locomotive is hailed as the object of the poet’s declamatory song: “Thee for my recitative.” Its “black cylindrical body” with the “head-light fix’d in front” contains its “fierce-throated beauty.” It is presented as the epitome “of the modern.” It is an emblem of motion and power, and the poet calls upon it to “serve the Muse” and “roll through my chant.” [...] He asks the locomotive to “merge in verse,” which indicates his attitude to the issue of science and poetry; Whitman does not think there is any real conflict between them.” (<http://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/l/leaves-of-grass/summary-and-analysis-calamus/to-a-locomotive-in-winter>; lesedato 27.08.15)

“Ludvig Daae Zwiilmeyer (1886-1969) var sokneprest i Porsgrunn da tyskerne invaderte Norge i 1940. Han var vennlig innstilt til tyskerne og medlem av Nasjonal Samling, og dermed ikke spesielt vel ansett av menigheten og kollegaer. [...] Han ga ut én diktsamling under krigen, *Under livets tre: Salmer og dikt: Fjerde samling*, som altså var den fjerde samlingen Daae Zwiilmeyer ga ut av denne typen. Det er en kombinert salme- og diktsamling [...] Dette er i all hovedsak dikt som på en eller annen måte henvender seg til Gud (invokasjon, apostrofe), handler om Guds gjerninger, eller hyller Guds skaperverk og/eller

storhet/godhet. Et representativt utvalg av titlene er f.eks.: “O Gud, bevar”, “Jeg lever i ditt solskinn”, “Her i kirkerum” og “Engang i Paradiset.” (Kristian Aurebakk Andersen i <https://bora.uib.no/bitstream/handle/1956/3388/56491771.pdf>; lesedato 05.06.15)

Den amerikanske krimforfatteren Mickey Spillane skapte etterforskeren Mike Hammer. “Hammer defines his responsibility in his apostrophe to Jack’s corpse [i *I, The Jury*, 1947]. “Jack, you’re dead now. You can’t hear me any more. Maybe you can. I hope so. I want you to hear what I’m about to say. You’ve known me a long time, Jack. My word is good just as long as I live. I’m going to get the louse that killed you. He won’t sit in the chair. He won’t hang. He will die exactly as you died, with a .45 slug in the gut, just a little below the belly button. No matter who it is, Jack. I’ll get the one. Remember, no matter who it is, I promise.” ” (Van Dover 1984 s. 97)

“What role do apostrophes play in poems? Most obviously they serve as intensifiers, as images of invested passion. This is a matter on which rhetoricians seem to agree, and in so agreeing they invoke a rudimentary psychology to naturalize the figure: to explain its meaning by treating it as the natural effect of an unexceptionable cause. Thus Fontanier in his *Figures du discours*: ‘But what can give rise to apostrophe? It can only be feeling, and only the feeling stirred up within the heart until it breaks out and spreads itself about on the outside, as if acting on its own ... [as if it were] the spontaneous impulse of a powerfully moved soul!’ Apostrophe, by this tale, is a figure spontaneously adopted by passion, and it signifies, metonymically, the passion that caused it. If one were to accept Fontanier’s claim, repressing one’s suspicion that few things are more artificial than apostrophic addresses to inanimate objects, one might conclude that apostrophes indicate intense involvement in the situation described. ‘O Rose, thou art sick’ differs from ‘The rose is sick’ in that the former marks a powerful outburst of concern.” (Culler 1983 s. 138)

Jonathan Cullers essay “On Apostrophe” (i boka *The Pursuit of Signs*, 1981) handler om “those utterances in which poets address someone other than the reader: “O wild west wind!” and “O rose, thou art sick!” As Culler’s examples suggest, apostrophes often begin with the vocative “O,” and they also frequently end in exclamation points. As these examples also suggest, apostrophes are faintly embarrassing. They seem excessively emotional and frigidly conventional at the same time. Before Culler, most critics writing on Romantic poetry ignored the apostrophes or dismissed them as purely conventional. Culler suggests, though, that we are uncomfortable with apostrophe for precisely the opposite reason: in their apostrophes, poets make grand claims concerning the powers of poetry. Apostrophe “emphasizes that voice calls in order to be calling, to dramatize its calling, to summon images of its power so as to establish its identity as poetical and prophetic voice.” The scandal of apostrophe is that it admits that the things it addresses are fictions; the voice alone is real. Utterances like “O wild west wind!” are “the pure

embodiment of poetic pretention: of the subject's claim that in his verse he is not merely an empirical poet, a writer of verse, but the embodiment of poetic tradition and of the spirit of poesy. Apostrophe is perhaps always an indirect invocation of the muse. Devoid of semantic reference, the O of apostrophe refers to other apostrophes and thus to the lineage and conventions of sublime poetry.” ” (Matt Greenfield i http://www.thevalve.org/go/valve/article/a_note_on_poetics/; lesedato 25.11.14)

“One may be tempted to think of apostrophe as an outmoded strategy, something poetry has moved beyond. No one now uses the vocative “O” in poetry except in parody: what was once the territory of the ode now belongs to Kenneth Koch and John Ashbery. Culler suggests, though, that the apostrophes of Shelley and Blake felt awkward even to their contemporaries. Apostrophes are designed to provoke discomfort. Making the reader squirm is an accomplishment of a sort, and distracting the reader away from the narrative and discursive elements of a poem may in fact be pretty close to the central function of lyric. [...] Louise Glück, for example, already relies pretty heavily on apostrophe, particularly in [diktet] *The Wild Iris*. [...] Paul Fry wrote a book called *The Poet's Calling in the English Ode* that relies heavily on Culler.” (Matt Greenfield i http://www.thevalve.org/go/valve/article/a_note_on_poetics/; lesedato 25.11.14)

“[L]iterature, as fiction, does not presume a reality already given and to be represented but posits its own truth, it inscribes its own context, institutes its own scene, and gives us to experience that instituting. The opening of [Herman Melvilles roman] *Moby Dick*, “Call me Ishmael,” is only a dramatic version of that performative instituting, whereby readers simultaneously participate in and observe the instituting of the literary scene. What is said is the saying itself. This crucial aspect of literature is succinctly instantiated in apostrophic lyrics – “O wild west wind, thou breath of autumn's being ...” – which in addressing something attempt to bring it into being as potentially responsive agent and thus above all display that saying as something gratuitous and hyperbolic, a testing of poetic power. (Baudelaire wrote that apostrophe and hyperbole are the forms of language that are not only the most agreeable but also the most necessary to the modern lyric – literature as hyperbolic event [...].) Not only are literary characters and events brought into being by language, but this performative instituting is foregrounded, as event – an event dependent upon fiction and thus a performance of linguistic power. Whereas we treat much language instrumentally and may experience it as an event, with effects and causes, in literary reading we experience not just the event itself but its happening as linguistic event, in a show of linguistic power.” (Jonathan Culler i <http://www.romancestudies.cornell.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/diacritics-38.1-2.culler.pdf>; lesedato 04.06.15)

I romanen *Bleak House* (1853) Charles Dickens “moves naturally from description to rhetorical apostrophe; only the imperative will sufficiently express his anger. Here, as they bury Nemo, it is invoked against London pauper graveyards: “Come

night, come darkness, for you cannot come too soon, or stay too long, by such a place as this! Come, straggling lights into the windows of the ugly houses; and you who do iniquity therein, do it at least with this dread scene shut out! Come, flame of gas, burning so sullenly above the iron gate, on which the poisoned air deposits its witch-ointment slimy to the touch! It is well that you should call to every passer-by, 'Look here!' ” (ch. 11) The macabre detail at the end, the 'witch-ointment slimy to the touch', adds authentic physical horror. But the power of the passage is rhetorical: the repeated imperative 'Come!' – to night, to darkness, to straggling lights, to flame of gas – dramatically indicates Dickens's urgency. [...] best-known apostrophes in the novel – those that follow the deaths of Krook and Jo [...]” (Storey 1987 s. 44-45).

Det er ulike konvensjoner for “apostrophic poetry against narrative. If one brings together in a poem a boy, some birds, a few blessed creatures, and some mountains, meadows, hills and groves, one tends to place them in a narrative where one thing leads to another; the events which form ask to be temporally located; [...] But if one puts into a poem *thou shepherd boy, ye blessed creatures, ye birds*, they are immediately associated with what might be called a timeless present but is better seen as a temporality of writing. Even if the birds were only glimpsed once in the past, to apostrophize them as 'ye birds' is to locate them in the time of the apostrophe – a special temporality which is the set of all moments at which writing can say 'now.' This is a time of discourse rather than story. So located by apostrophes, birds, creatures, boys, etc., resist being organized into events that can be narrated, for they are inserted in the poem as elements of the event which the poem is attempting to be. Such considerations suggest that one distinguish two forces in poetry, the narrative and the apostrophic, and that the lyric is characteristically the triumph of the apostrophic. A poem can recount a sequence of events, which acquires the significance lyric requires when read synecdochically or allegorically. [...] a poem may invoke objects, people a detemporalized space with forms and forces which have pasts and futures but which are addressed as potential presences. Nothing need happen in an apostrophic poem, as the great Romantic odes amply demonstrate. Nothing need happen because the poem itself is to be the happening.” (Culler 1983 s. 149)

“Apostrophe resists narrative because its *now* is not a moment in a temporal sequence but a *now* of discourse, of writing. This temporality of writing is scarcely understood, difficult to think, but it seems to be that toward which the lyric strives. [...] However, the very brazenness with which apostrophe declares its strangeness is crucial, as indication that what is at issue is not a predictable relation between a signifier and a signified, a form and its meaning, but the uncalculable force of an event. Apostrophe is not the representation of an event; if it works, it produces a fictive, discursive event.” (Culler 1983 s. 152-153)

“Hvordan ville det hele se ud, hvis vi begyndte at tage omverdenens handlekraft alvorligt? Hvis vi indtog en mere anerkendende position i forhold til tingene og

begyndte at tilgodese dem i vores beslutningsprocesser? Det indebærer, at vi udvikler et mindset, hvor vi tager højde for omgivelsernes vitalitet og vores forbindelser til dem. I bund og grund handler økologi om at tænke i omsiggribende relationer. Det er et godt sted at starte med at udforske nogle af disse relationer, hvis man vil tænke mere økologisk. Det hele er et spørgsmål om *sameksistens*. Forhåbentlig bliver vi så snart klar over, at vi selv er en del af den "natur", som vi så ofte taler om. At vi er viklet ind i det ikke-menneskelige. [...] For digtere er det her imidlertid ikke noget nyt. Lige så længe som der har eksisteret digte, er de blevet adresseret til alle mulige ting og sager. Den latinske digter Horats skrev blandt mange andre ting et digt til et træ på sin ejendom. Pablo Nerudas henvendelser strækker sig til alt fra sørgmodigheden til algerne i oceanet. Og iblandt Kenneth Kochs digte kan man finde digte henvendt til psykoanalyse, livet i tyverne og det at sige "ja". Digte kan altså henvende sig til hvem som helst og *hvad* som helst. Den sproglige figur, som i digte bruges til at adressere en given modtager, kaldes for en *apostrofe*. Termen bruges ofte til at beskrive de traditionelle henvendelsesfigurer "Åh!" og "O!", men kan også dække over den digteriske henvendelse i det hele taget. Faktisk kan man sige, at digtgenren i sin natur er *apostrofisk*, da der altid ligger en form for tiltale, eksplicit eller implicit, til grund for digte.

Lad os bruge Frank O'Haras ret så fantastiske digt, *Les Étiquettes Jaunes* som eksempel:

Jeg samlede et blad
op fra fortovet i dag.
Det virker barnligt.

Blad! Du er så stort!
Hvordan kan du skifte
farve, og så bare falde!

Som om der ikke var noget
der hed hæderlighed!

Du er alt for rolig
til at svare mig. Jeg er alt for
skræmt til at insistere.

Blad! Vær ikke neurotisk
som den lille kamæleon.

Digtet her et glimrende eksempel på, hvordan apostrofen automatisk *besjæler* sin modtager. Igennem hele digtet henvender jeget sig direkte til bladet. Henvendelserne giver udtryk for en idé om bladet som en lydhør genstand, en ting, som man rent faktisk kan tillade sig at tale til. Bladet beskrives som alt for roligt til

at svare tilbage, og samtidig er jeget for “skræmt” til at insistere på et svar. Hvad er det egentlig, jeget er skræmt over? Er det af ærefrygt overfor bladet? Måske har det noget at gøre med en af de første sætninger: “Det virker barnligt.” Apostrofer kan af og til være forbundet med en form for pinlighed over at adressere ting, der ikke anses for at være levende. Pinligheden understreger den sondring mellem menneske og ting, kultur og natur, som vi ofte insisterer på, men som apostrofen overskrider. Det ville uden tvivl være lettere at sætte sig i tingenes sted, hvis vi lærte af de digtere, som op igennem tiden har set stort på pinligheden ved at gå i dialog med omgivelserne. Hvis vi vil tænke økologisk, må vi turde at være pinlige!” (Hans Lind i <http://atlas-mag.dk/kultur/bøger/forbindelsen-mellem-chips-klimakrisen-og-poesi>; lesedato 03.08.18)

“Apostrofen er ikke helt så almindelig i andre diskurser end den digteriske. Det er først og fremmest en poetisk figur. Jeg vil dog gerne slå et slag for, at vi lige så vel kan betragte *det apostrofiske* som en tænkemåde, der antager et betydningsfuldt “du” i alle ting og sætter os i øjenhøjde med verden omkring os. Set på den måde er apostrofen et økologisk instrument, der skaber kanaler til den ikke-menneskelige verden. Apostrofen udtrykker et forsøg på at nærme sig tingene omkring os. Det er en slags økologisk interesse. Og sådan en interesse baner vejen for en mere anerkendende og sensibel omgang med omgivelserne. Det er ikke usandsynligt, at der i fremtiden vil blive skrevet apostrofer til superstorme og tørke. Eller til indlandsisen, isbjørnen og koralrevet, som er truet på livet af menneskeskabte klimaforandringer. Eller til den globale opvarmning. Det håber jeg i hvert fald. På den måde kan vi få hjælp til at relatere til disse anderledes kroppe.” (Hans Lind i <http://atlas-mag.dk/kultur/bøger/forbindelsen-mellem-chips-klimakrisen-og-poesi>; lesedato 03.08.18)

Menneskene “er nødt til at gentænke vores plads i verden, hvis vi vil overleve. Det første skridt er at komme af med antropocentrismen, og det er her, digte kommer ind i billedet: Apostrofen trækker tingene tættere på og betoner, at vores materielle omgivelser er betydningsfulde. Den hjælper os med at nedbryde den tænkte barriere, som er mellem os og det ikke-menneskelige, og giver os dermed mulighed for at relatere til den ikke-menneskelige verdens mærkelige kroppe. Den lærer os at besjæle. Og som [den amerikanske filosofen Jane] Bennett også pointerer, er besjælinger en måde at modarbejde antropocentrismen på. Så selvom de ikke direkte kan nedsætte dit *carbon-footprint*, nytter det faktisk noget at læse digte. Hvis vi skal bygge bro mellem os og omverdenen, har vi brug for besjælinger og mange af dem. Sagt på en anden måde: Vi har brug for digte! Apostrofen er en genvej til at tænke økologisk. Også selvom det er pinligt.” (Hans Lind i <http://atlas-mag.dk/kultur/bøger/forbindelsen-mellem-chips-klimakrisen-og-poesi>; lesedato 03.08.18)

“Italienske Gianluigi Buffon har flere steder blitt kåret til årets beste keeper. I den anledning trykker vi et dikt Buffon har skrevet, henvendt til, nettopp, målet: “Jeg var 12 da jeg snudde ryggen til deg, fornektet min fortid for å garantere deg en

sikker fremtid / Jeg fulgte hjertet / Jeg fulgte instinktet / Men dagen da jeg sluttet å se deg i ansiktet, var også dagen jeg begynte å elske deg / Beskytte deg / Være den første og siste til å forsvare deg / [...]” ” (*Morgenbladet* 23. desember–5. januar 2017 s. 58).

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