

**STUDIES IN  
STICHOMYTHIA;  
A DISSERTATION**

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Studies in Stichomythia; A Dissertation by John Leonard Hancock

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**JOHN LEONARD HANCOCK**

**STUDIES IN  
STICHOMYTHIA;  
A DISSERTATION**



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The University of Chicago

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# STUDIES IN STICHOMYTHIA

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS  
AND LITERATURE IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE  
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
(DEPARTMENT OF GREEK)

BY

JOHN LEONARD HANCOCK

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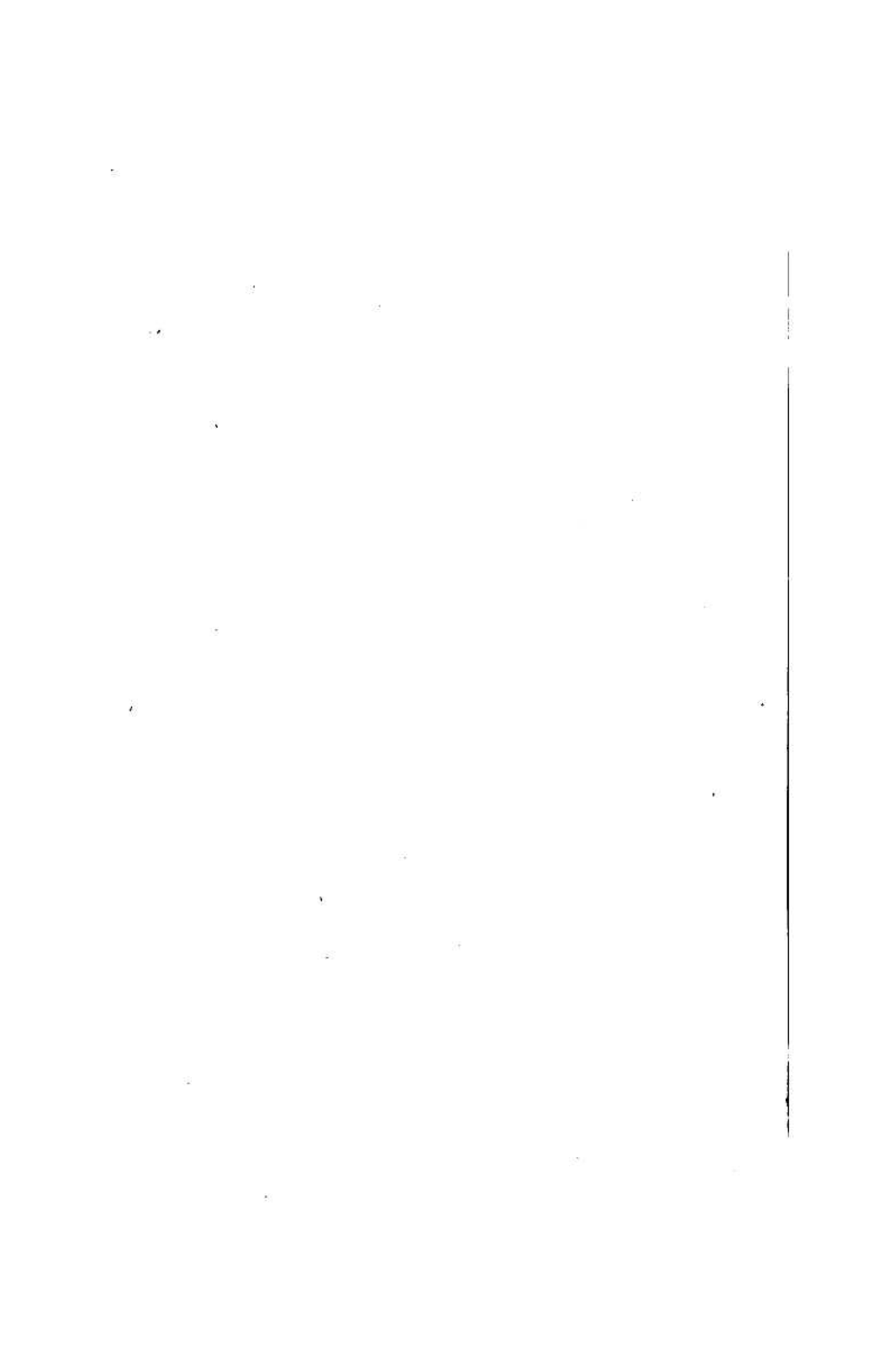
## PREFACE

The following dissertation aims to be a grouping of facts, not new to humanist scholars in the several fields, into a comprehensive treatment, a non-technical presentation of a literary subject concerning which, too often, knowledge is taken for granted. Problems of philology and text criticism are only incidental to its main purpose. The chapters on drama subsequent to the Greek and Latin are admittedly from the layman's point of view. The chapter on particles and stylistic devices is distinct in treatment from the rest. The dissertation differs, in this avoidance of technicalities and in the extent of literature considered, from the only notable work on the subject known to me, *Die Stichomythie in der griechischen Tragödie und Komödie, ihre Anwendung und ihr Ursprung*, by Adolf Gross (Berlin, 1905). His treatment is more objective than subjective, and reference lists add to the value of his book. In the many places where our discussions overlap, note has been made of the fact in footnotes. I must differ from him in his thesis that stichomythia developed from choral response, while admitting the considerable part such musical symmetry must have played. Maccari, in a little pamphlet, *Stichomythica* (Urbini, 1911), has touched (rather gropingly) on the place of stichomythia in comedy, an interesting topic but outside the limits of this dissertation. The few earlier papers and monographs on the whole subject are either attempts to restore absolute symmetry in line-dialogue by text revisions, or are too vaguely general as compared with the modern treatment of Gross.

The subject was suggested to me by Professor Paul Shorey, and has been carried on at all stages under his guidance, my appreciation of which I wish here to record.

J. LEONARD HANCOCK

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS  
September, 1916





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## INTRODUCTION

In its perfected and unbroken form Greek stichomythia is a growth which could never have been achieved elsewhere. Oriental subtlety of expression combines with occidental conciseness of phrase in a symmetry which owes its inspiration to Greek love of balance and formal beauty.<sup>1</sup> This symmetry reaches its climax in stichomythia but is not unique here, for we see it evident<sup>2</sup> in choral responsion in the drama,<sup>3</sup> in the primitive songs and children's rhymes (though this is true in all lands), in the balanced clauses invented and delighted in by the Greek rhetoricians, in amoeban verse—though this may be only an echo of dramatic line-dialogue. So, too, the love of subtlety is apparent—and from the earliest times expressed in the concise phrase—in the early γνῶμαι of the sages,<sup>4</sup> the traditional and characteristic responses of oracles, the quibbles of the Sophists, the artifices of professional law-court speeches, and even in language forms and inflections, and the large use of particles and idioms. Just so in English, slang adopts the subtlest, most metaphorical, yet most concise phraseology.

But all this brevity and cleverness is really only a weapon for the agonistic spirit which motivates most of the stichomythia and pervades all Greek literature. The earliest and greatest epic poem centered about a quarrel. The first book of the *Iliad* is a very agonistic dramatic extract, lacking only stichomythic parts to give it the general form of a scene from an Attic play. The traditional contest between Hesiod and Homer<sup>5</sup> is a curious addition to the list of agonistic literature. It is mentioned—and usually with entire confidence—by a dozen writers, including Varro (*ap. Gellius*), Dio Chrysostom, Plutarch, and Lucian. According to Kirchoff<sup>6</sup> this odd literary forgery dates back to Alcidas of Elea, the opponent of Isocrates, in a fragment of whose *Μουσικῶν*

<sup>1</sup> Gross, pp. 95 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps also in the dithyramb; cf. *Bacchyl.* 18, a lyric dialogue.

<sup>3</sup> More or less true of the proverbs of all nations.

<sup>4</sup> Müller and Donaldson, *History of the Literature of Ancient Greece*, I, 418: "The arrangement of the dialogue is remarkable for that studious attention to regularity and symmetry which distinguishes Greek art."

<sup>5</sup> Rzach, *Wiener Studien*, XIV, 139-44.

<sup>6</sup> *Sitzungsberichte d. Berl. Akad.*, XCII, 865-91.