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Lyric epiphany

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ABSTRACT

The study of lyric epiphany, essential to any coordination of sociolinguistics and literature, is defined in terms of five considerations (e.g., its role in political rhetoric), and linguistic criteria such as phonic compression. One track in the argument deals with lyric epiphany in ordinary language (e.g., M.L. King's speeches), in prose (e.g., Cather and Tolstoy), and in the long poem. The second, intermittently intersecting track consists of intense analyses of four cases of linguistic epiphany in *The Odyssey* that involve (1) semantically ramifying root symbols such as the olive in Greece, (2) simile concentration, as in the reverse similes that commute antithetical subcategories, (3) phonic texturing (e.g., alliteration, phonaesthesia), and as a limiting case, (4) epiphany through chiasmus. The conclusions suggest the universal, cross-language and cross-cultural reality of lyric epiphany (e.g., not just classic Russian and Homeric Greek, but Quechua, Eskimo, and Sanskrit and Hebrew religious texts). Lyric epiphany is a subtype of generic epiphany: an intuition or revelation of truth values beyond language and empirical experience. Lyric epiphany, while a component of classical poetics – both Western and Eastern – and a subcategory of ideologies of Primitivism and, within that, of Modernism, is also, like the human body, part of the human experience that can and should be studied as part of cultural linguistics and sociolinguistics. (poetics, lyric, epiphany, *Odyssey*)*

"... a long poem does not exist."

E. A. Poe

This essay contends and illustrates that the experience of epiphany – here, lyric epiphany – is terribly important. It is crucial for an anthropology and sociolinguistics of literature, as it is for a literary sociolinguistics and anthropology. Five criss-crossing considerations are involved: criteria for lyric (e.g., political); levels of poetic language (e.g., phonic texture); tropes and their orchestration (e.g., the syntax of similes); and some relations among verbal art, poetic creativity, and social symbolism (e.g., the color red and Chechen rebels). The essay draws, in particular, on Homer and Tolstoy (Friedrich 1997:307), but includes a larger

sample. Criteria for lyric epiphany, notably parallelism and compression, are defined and exemplified many times within the framework of a more general model that draws eclectically on a wide range of theory in order to fuse what have long been called the expressive and the structural approaches. Far from being antithetical, each can enhance the other: structure enables and empowers expression, just as expressivity (e.g., of individual emotion) gives flesh and blood to structure. This argument is eventually expanded in two universalizing and essentializing directions: first, that lyric epiphany is a cross-cultural universal (note its role in East Indian and Native American poetry), and second, that lyric epiphany is but one variant of more universal phenomena in art, science, and in religious experience.

The idea of epiphany in the Judeo-Christian tradition begins in the Bible – for instance, with Moses on the mountain or the apparition of Christ after his death to Mary Magdalene and to some of his disciples (John 20:11–31, 21). It breaks out in many passages in Homer as well. In recent literary studies and, at least potentially, in anthropological ones, the idea has expanded to include many sudden, dramatic turns when an image, event, or even an abstract idea becomes vivid and transcendently real (Bidney 1997).

Perhaps the most telling criterion for such pivotings out of, for example, the narrative line or descriptive sequencing, is that time seems to stop and one contemplates a "snapshot." There may be movement in it – recall Walt Whitman's "Cavalry crossing a ford," where "the guidon flags flutter gaily in the wind" – but one sees see it all at once. These are verbal pictures, poems that paint pictures and so exemplify Horace's dictum *ut pictura poesis*. An illusion has been created of a synchronic, monocular vision of an absolute aesthetic truth – usually with a radical closure. Nevertheless, many cases of such verbal picturing or EKPHRASIS do not make epiphanies, and many kinds of epiphany are decidedly not ekphrasis: the religious abstractions of Emily Dickinson, for example, or those of St. John of the Cross.

Although this essay stresses sudden turns into the visual, there are surely equal epiphanies in music – the change of modulation in Ravel's *Bolero*, to name one of thousands of examples – that are, analogously, monaural harmonic instants of what I would call an absolute aesthetic truth. Such aesthetic truths can, in fact, be catalyzed by any sense: by the taste of a large baked crab for a hungry American in Avignon, or by the tactile, reciprocated revelation of two lovers in their first embrace. Yet of these epiphanies, the verbal is the most complex, profound, and powerful, partly because it so often also invokes the sense of vision, which I take to be the primary one – partly, as I hope to show, because it condenses and synthesizes the infinitely ramifying meanings of language with the music of language at universal and specific (e.g., Greek) levels.

From the formal linguistic angle, the shift into epiphany is like a shift from a durative, progressive, or habitual and customary sequence into a more momentary or instantaneous one: "I used to sin" versus "I have committed a sin," a shift

from what linguists call the "imperfect or completive aspect" into the "perfective or completive." Of course, such switching of categories as a tactical, formal trope at the verbal level – although the two obviously connect and overlap – should not be confused with the ontologically profound breakout that concerns us here.

More fundamental, or "dominant," than either the linguistic or the ocular-visionary angles is epiphany that comes through a heightening of emotion in the reader or hearer, be it empathy, sympathy, compassion, or other kinds of involvement; vague features, in other words, of intensity and density that may resonate at any linguistic, emotional, or cultural level. The synergism between density/intensity, the shift into the instantaneous aspect, and the illusion of a monocular visionary instant contribute to the greatness of the "great pages" (and great arias) and the corresponding experiences that are the subject of this essay. There is much that fascinates, incidentally, in how epiphanies come to pass and are made into a product by the writer, but in what follows, little will be said (at least explicitly) about authors' intentions, motivation, or even creative process.

DEFINING "LYRIC"

What would the "lyric" in lyric epiphany mean? The genre of lyric has been defined in ways that, at best, overlap marginally, from the early Greek and Chinese aesthetes down to contemporary (post) post-modernists. In the precise discourse of structuralism, for example, lyric poetry is primarily or "dominantly" cast in the first person, seen as a purely grammatical category but also as a related, ontological one: whether or not the poet is actually saying "I," he or she is expressing his or her own personal feelings, rather than referring to something "out there." That this partly grammatical definition can take account of deeper psychological levels has been shown, for example, by a renowned structuralist analysis (Jakobson & Jones 1987) of Shakespeare's Sonnet 129, "The expense of spirit." [1]

By yet another criterion, lyric poetry has been characterized by thicker sound texture, by greater word-by-word depth of implication of specific gravity (Brodsky 1986), and, like the category of epiphany with which it overlaps, by greater density and intensity of nuance, allusions, and feelings of all sorts at all levels of language – intertextual and intratextual, phonic, grammatical, and lexical. In other words, the expression of the poet's feelings through lines is primary, or, in structuralist terms, "dominant" (Jakobson 1935). Put with appropriate vagueness by the poet Stella Radulescu (p.c., 1996), "Lyric poetry is the magic that connects the soul of the poet to language." All these factors clarify or at least adumbrate the surfacing, emergence, and breakout of a discourse that could be called "lyric" and of this subtype of lyric epiphany. The phenomenon, because of what could be called "genre dazzle," has largely been ignored by students of language, including that of early Indo-European texts, such as epic ones like the *Odyssey* and the *Mahābhārata*, which, with archeology, are one of our main sources for early culture. When will lyric epiphany be seen as a source for anthropology?

Two other criteria, though not directly part of the present argument, do clarify "lyric" through larger context. First, lyric plays roles in politics that differ diagnostically from those of epic or drama. Lyric poems or lines often shade off into or become political slogans or songs that can arouse people; need one do more than refer to Vladimir Mayakovsky in the Russian Revolution? Political slogans themselves, though not created with that intent, are often highly poetic, as was shown memorably in one structuralist's analysis of "I like Ike," (Jakobson 1960:357) or as was recently and amusingly illustrated with the slogan "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too" in the film "Wag the Dog" (the election campaign slogan of 1840 sticks in memory long after candidates William Henry Harrison and John Tyler, and the embattled Shawnee Indians, have been forgotten). By a second political criterion, since in lyric poetry ego expression dominates, it often works powerfully to define the emotional identity of an individual, whether the poet or an appreciator of poetry, and whether in terms of individual eccentricities or of the positioning of the individual in the conflicts and complementarities of differing dialects, cultures, or social strata. The political functions of the lyric – for instance, in defining ethnicity or in campaign slogans and rhetoric – can work together within one poem, as in Frost's "The vanishing red," where a Yankee miller murders a Native American by pushing him down between his churning millstones. But this is comparatively rare.

The variously catalyzing functions of lyric lines and poems vary enormously from culture to culture, of course, with modern Iceland (Koester 1990), Tamilnadu (Bate 1999), and ancient Greece on the alpha point, or positive extreme. In the United States, the political functions of the lyric voice had a long history even before Thoreau's "A Plea for Captain John Brown" and reached an apogee in two of Jesse Jackson's speeches where, as Tannen has brilliantly demonstrated, repetition, parallelism, chiasmus, (phonic) anaphora, (end) rhyme, metaphor, recursive formulas, and even anadiplosis and yet other figures join in an alloy of lyricism and political rhetoric that had an epiphanic impact on many of his audiences (Tannen 1989:174–94).

By a fifth and final criterion, lyric poetry and what I will call the lyric mind condense image, thought, and emotion into distillate and often enigmatic, even riddle-like forms that give the kernel of a philosophy – be it the originating seed or an eventual, summarizing gist of an ideology or even of a political culture (strikingly illustrated in pre-revolutionary Russia and the Modernist China of the 1930s; see Crespi 2000, chap. 3). This is the sort of philosophical distillation that Aristotle had in mind when he defined the way poets precede and pioneer the more discursive discourses of the philosophers. It is such philosophical distillation, also, that helps defend the poet and the lover of poetry from the violence that strikes from without or surges up from within. But, again, when it comes to the breakout of lyric epiphany, the abstraction of gist, the mobilization of power, and

sundry linguistic features, first person expressiveness, and other factors are all subordinate, and complementary to the conjoined factors that we began with: immediate, instantaneous presentness and synoptic unity, the temporal switch into an illusion of unity, and the master qualities of density and intensity.

DISCOURSE (1): LYRICISM IN ORDINARY LANGUAGE

As an introductory note, let us turn to the potential lyric in so-called ordinary language, which inheres in words and phrases: a ride southward through eastern West Virginia on I-220, for example, leads from Warm Springs to Hot Springs to the cascading beauties of Spring Water Falls. A ride southward through western Indiana on I-65 takes one past Sugar Creek, Stony Creek, Little Potato Creek, Big Blue River, and Driftwood River. Such simple lists, as Walt Whitman recognized, are often found poems. Even ordinary conversation with its formulas and prefabs always has a lyrical subtext, if only because of the poetry of all ambiguity: a recipe for Irish stew or a yarn of how a Mississippi catfish got away . . . any stretch of discourse is at some level, like a list of words, a found poem.

Going further, the direct address of a political speech often reaches the emotional involvement and shift into lyricism that was defined above, marked by familiar figures such as the alliteration on *k* sounds in Martin Luther King's best-known speech:

> I have a dream
> that my four little children
> will one day live in a nation
> where they will not be judged
> by the color of their skin
> but by the content of their character.
> I have a dream today.

This speech synthesizes the repetition of ordinary discourse and of the African American sermon (Tannen 1989: 82–5).

Direct or indirect discourse in traumatic, unforgettable conversation and what has been called "life-changing dialogue" often shifts into the lyric, be this the sensitive and flirtatious gropings of two persons falling in love, or what transpires between murderer and victim (Attinasi & Friedrich 1995). All ordinary language, in fact, is at least potentially and implicitly figurative, seething or at least simmering gently with poetry – as has been argued by a long line that runs from Coleridge to Frost (Friedrich 1989). Ultimately, no language is ordinary, just as no person is ordinary. In lyric breakout, the potential extraordinariness becomes actual, and the constituent words hang there, strung out in precarious balance or disintegrating in lexical and syntactic fission.

GENRE

Lyric gets us into issues of genre, problematically, because they often become shallow, or formalist and Alexandrine in the pejorative sense. This is one meaning of Tolstoy's (1996) outburst, "We Russians don't care about genre! Look at Gogol's *Dead Souls* (subtitled 'a poem'), and Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* (entitled 'a novel in verse'." Yet it is a fact that questions of genre are often psychologically profound when the genres constitute deep templates in the poet's mind. Verbal artists usually think of their work in terms of genres, among which some are acutely structuring, notably the sonnet, the realistic novel, and the classic trichotomy of lyric, dramatic, and epic. However we choose to define the last term in the trichotomy – by extended narrative, or the heroism of the protagonists, or formulaic, high-art language – and no matter how much we qualify a specific instance of it as revenge saga, folktale synthesis, mock epic, or even comic opera, it remains true that Homer's *Odyssey*, which has been called all these things, still stands as one of the main, paradigmatic, canonical epics in world literature (which does not exclude it from exemplifying other genres). Its epic frame, though probably dominant, also contains many elements from its drama counterpart: over half of the text consists of dialogue, for example, and the text itself falls into hundreds of scenes and episodes that are suitable for the theater and have indeed been a direct source for much dramatic poetry of the Western world down to the present day.

If the *Odyssey* is the stuff of drama – or, to turn it around, since much drama stems from the themes and language of Homer – what might be the connections between this (and other epics) and the more intimate and personal, first-person template of lyric poetry? The relation is not one of broad-scale borrowing and recycling, but of the uneven distribution of a lyric potential as a pervading subtext; not so much clichéd tips of the iceberg as the flashes of ecstasy and anger in a marriage. My focus on this breakout into lyric epiphany or epiphanic lyricism raises issues that have been neglected, in part, because of the critics' taxonomic rigidity about genre (here, epic), which so riled Leo Tolstoy. A similar rigidity, incidentally, made the genre of "myth" or "folklore" in Native American literature obscure the fact that, by a number of intersecting criteria, many of the texts pattern out into passages with demarcated lines and are, in other words, poems (Hymes 1981, Tedlock 1985).

In this discussion, lyric epiphany is explicated along two tracks that crisscross and head toward the same point. The first track is three kinds of discourse – ordinary language, literary prose, and the long poem – and the role of lyric potential in each. The second track is close looks at four cases of breakout: one in Tolstoy's *Hadji Murad*, and three in the ethnographically priceless text of Homer's *Odyssey* with its main players, Penelope and Odysseus. The main function of these intersecting twin tracks is to enlarge the idea of "lyric" through contextualization and comparison of its role in diverse discourse – even while deepening its meaning through intensive analysis of specific texts.

DISCOURSE (2): LYRIC WITHIN PROSE

Let us push deeper on the issue of genre. Epiphanic breakout occurs in literary prose such as the novel, often at the very outset: the mythological turtle surviving its crossing of Interstate 40 in the first pages of Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. It may also grace the final page, as in Thoreau's *Walden*:

> The life in us is like the water in the river. It may rise this year higher than man has ever known it, and flood the parched uplands; even this may be the eventful year, which will drown out all our muskrats. It was not always dry land where we dwell. I see far inland the banks which the stream anciently washed, before science began to record its freshets. Every one has heard the story which has gone the rounds of New England, of a strong and beautiful bug which came out of the dry leaf of an old table of apple-tree wood, which had stood in a farmer's kitchen for sixty years, first in Connecticut, and afterward in Massachusetts, – from an egg deposited in the living tree many years earlier still, as appeared by counting the annual layers beyond it; which was heard gnawing out for several weeks, hatched perchance by the heat of an urn. Who does not feel his faith in resurrection and immortality strengthened by hearing of this? Who knows what beautiful and winged life, whose egg has been buried for ages under many concentric layers of woodenness in the dead dry life of society, deposited at first in the alburnum of the green and living tree, which has been gradually converted into the semblance of its well-seasoned tomb, – heard perchance gnawing out now for years by the astonished family of man, as they sat round the festive board, – may unexpectedly come forth from amidst society's most trivial and handselled furniture, to enjoy its perfect summer life at last!
>
> I do not say that John or Jonathan will realize all this; but such is the character of that morrow which mere lapse of time can never make to dawn. The light which puts out our eyes is darkness to us. Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star. (1937:465)

The majority of lyric breakouts occur intermittently and irregularly when the author's technical sixth sense and emotional engagement motivate a shift into higher gears: the many "great pages" in Thomas Hardy, or Willa Cather's visions of the sunset wheat fields of "The Great Divide" near Red Cloud, Nebraska, or of her Czech-American heroine Ántonia:

> Ántonia had always been one to leave images in the mind that did not fade – that grew stronger with time. In my memory there was a succession of such pictures, fixed there like the old woodcuts of one's first primer: Ántonia kicking her bare legs against the sides of my pony when we came home in triumph with our snake; Ántonia in her black shawl and fur cap, as she stood by her father's grave in the snowstorm; Ántonia coming in with her work-team along the evening sky-line. She lent herself to immemorial human attitudes which we

> recognize by instinct as universal and true. I had not been mistaken. She was a battered woman now, not a lovely girl; but she still had that something which fires the imagination, could still stop one's breath for a moment by a look or gesture that somehow revealed the meaning in common things. She had only to stand in the orchard, to put her hand on a little crab tree and look up at the apples, to make you feel the goodness of planting and tending and harvesting at last. All the strong things of her heart came out in her body, that had been so tireless in serving generous emotions.
>
> It was no wonder that her sons stood tall and straight. She was a rich mine of life, like the founders of early races. (1977:352–3)

Sometimes, finally, the breakouts may bracket a novel, as in the hallucinatory sightings of the sand hills of western Kansas in Mari Sandoz's *Old Jules* (1985). First page: "But west of there the monotonous yellow sandhills unobtrusively soaked up the soggy patches of April snow. Fringes of yellow-green crept down the south slopes or ran brilliant emerald over the long blackened strips left by the late prairie fires that burned unchallenged until the wind drove the flames upon their own ashes, or the snow fell" (1985: 3). Last page: "Outside the late fall wind swept over the hard-land country of the upper Running Water, tearing at the low sandy knolls that were the knees of the hills, shifting, but not changing, the unalterable sameness of the somnolent land spreading away toward the East" (p. 424). One of the most striking brackets is the unforgettable symbolism of the red thistle that opens and closes Tolstoy's *Hadji Murad*, to which I return below.

Breakouts into epiphany, often lyrical, are in fact notably frequent and memorable in the work of Leo Tolstoy, as has been masterfully demonstrated by David Sloane in his "The poetry of *War and Peace*" (1996). Far from forefronting "ordinariness and unsystematicity," Tolstoy, Sloane argues, often transmutes "the ordinary into something exceptional and remarkable" (1996:65), and the work as a whole is – like Homer, I would interject – "serenely and divinely ordered" (p. 80). Many sections shift from the mainly linear and syntagmatic structures of an epic (novel) into "harmonic" and "paradigmatic" orders that are "stylistically different from the surrounding text" (p. 68), marked by poetic musicality, "rhyming situations," phonic and lexical anaphora, poetic syntax, rhythmical organization, and "phonological cohesion" – and more: *War and Peace* is "an acoustically sensuous text … that continually asks to be read aloud" (p. 69). Tolstoy, the promethean prosaist, so often achieves lyricism that his work partly intersects with that of one of his models, Alexander Pushkin, who, in his turn, could achieve a prosaic realism within the constraints of, for example, the iambic tetrameter of the *Onegin* sonnet form.

In *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, epiphanies include the wolf hunt and fowling scenes, the mowing scene and that of the naked soldiers bathing, the troika ride and the mummers scene, Prince Andrew's hour of death and his vision of the blueness of the sky over Austerlitz, his feelings of Christian love and com-

passion while watching Anatole's amputation, and Karenin's similar feelings at Anna's bedside when she is sick with puerperal fever. There is an extraordinary degree of consensus among critics and nonspecialist readers on just what the "great pages" are. I hasten to add that, despite the number of such pages we would call epiphanic, many others are not, but are decidedly prosaic; epiphany is largely a matter of degree.

Breakouts into often lyrical epiphany, then, mark the work of Leo Tolstoy – one reason Dostoevsky called him "the God of art." Moving from his major long novels, one of the best examples of epiphany occurs at the outset of *Hadji Murad*. In order to illuminate it, I discuss it below with a twofold allusion to one critic's take on it and some comparison with the work of Tolstoy's American contemporary and soul-mate, Thoreau. The opening pages of *Hadji Murad* illustrate the claim that Tolstoy's epiphanies "take on a life of their own and attain a surreal emotional strength, they lend unity to the mixture of poetry and polemic" (Bidney 1997:156).

Hadji Murad

I

> I was returning home by the fields. It was midsummer, the hay harvest was over and they were just beginning to reap the rye. At that season of the year there is a delightful variety of flowers – red, white, and pink scented tufty clover; milk-white ox-eye daisies with their bright yellow centres and pleasant spicy smell; yellow honey-scented rape blossoms; tall campanulas with white and lilac bells, tulip-shaped; creeping vetch; yellow, red and pink scabious; faintly scented, neatly arranged purple plantains with blossoms slightly tinged with pink; cornflowers, the newly opened blossoms bright blue in the sunshine but growing paler and redder towards evening or when growing old; and delicate almond-scented dodder flowers that withered quickly. I gathered myself a large nosegay and was going home when I noticed in a ditch, in full bloom, a beautiful thistle plant of the crimson variety, which in our neighborhood they call "Tatar" and carefully avoid when mowing – or, if they do happen to cut it down, throw out from among the grass for fear of pricking their hands. Thinking to pick this thistle and put it in the centre of my nosegay, I climbed down into the ditch, and after driving away a velvety bumble-bee that had penetrated deep into one of the flowers and had there fallen sweetly asleep, I set to work to pluck the flower. But this proved a very difficult task. Not only did the stalk prick on every side – even through the handkerchief I wrapped around my hand – but it was so tough that I had to struggle with it for nearly five minutes, breaking the fibres one by one; and when I had at last plucked it, the stalk was all frayed and the flower itself no longer seemed so fresh and beautiful. Moreover, owing to its coarseness and stiffness, it did not seem in place among the

delicate blossoms of my nosegay. I threw it away feeling sorry to have vainly destroyed a flower that looked beautiful in its proper place.

'But what energy and tenacity! With what determination it defended itself, and how dearly it sold its life!' thought I, remembering the effort it had cost me to pluck the flower. The way home led across black-earth fields that had just been ploughed up. I ascended the dusty path. The ploughed field belonged to a landed proprietor and was so large that on both sides and before me to the top of the hill nothing was visible but evenly furrowed and moist earth. The land was well tilled and nowhere was there a blade of grass or any kind of plant to be seen, it was all black. 'Ah, what a destructive creature is man . . . How many different plant-lives he destroys to support his own existence!' thought I, involuntarily looking around for some living thing in this lifeless black field. In front of me to the right of the road I saw some kind of little clump, and drawing nearer I found it was the same kind of thistle as that which I had vainly plucked and thrown away. This 'Tartar' plant had three branches. One was broken and stuck out like the stump of a mutilated arm. Each of the other two bore a flower, once red but now blackened. One stalk was broken, and half of it hung down with a soiled flower at its tip. The other, though also soiled with black mud, still stood erect. Evidently a cartwheel had passed over the plant but it had risen again, and that was why, though erect, it stood twisted to one side, as if a piece of its body had been torn from it, its bowels drawn out, an arm torn off, and one of its eyes plucked out. Yet it stood firm and did not surrender to man who had destroyed all its brothers around it . . .

'What vitality!' I thought. 'Man has conquered everything and destroyed millions of plants, yet this one won't submit.' And I remembered a Caucasian episode of years ago, which I had partly seen myself, partly heard from eyewitnesses, and in part imagined.

The episode, as it has taken shape in my memory and imagination, was as follows.

What are we to make of the (lyric) poetry of this extraordinary first page? We find no latent, skillfully concealed rhyme or meter (as often in Melville or Thoreau). We do find that the red thistle onset together with the red thistle coda brackets the story of Hadji Murad, of whom Harold Bloom, in an exaggerated but appealing way, says that "no other hero of epic or saga, ancient or modern, is quite equal to him" (1994:325).

Beyond the formal function of bracketing, the initial list of flowers includes several varieties (e.g., generally unknown plants such as the dodder) that force the great majority of Russian and English readers to scramble in their minds for identification. There are also no fewer than seven color words, four of them (red, pink, blue, white) repeated three times each. All of this, granted the demonstrated psychologically catalytic role of colors and flowers, triggers diverse emotional

associations in the mind of the reader. The onset or overture with its many colored flowers, though unique in the Western prose canon, also exemplifies the use of lists of things like flowers (or of trees, or body parts) as an introductory, organizing trope in many poetic works, notably Ovid and some other Latins, and Spenser and others of the English Renaissance (Ferry 1988). Going deeper, diachronically, the ingredients of Tolstoy's nosegay may reflect the critical role of the list in the Orthodox Christianity in which he had been steeped (Izmirlieva 1999). Going yet deeper, psychologically, the ingredients may reflect the trope so common in Tolstoy, and also oral literature, of the catalogue, not a catalogue in the simple sense of a list or inventory but of a particular kind of linearity that gets commuted and telescoped into one aesthetical point (David 2000). And going wider, synchronically, such a list is formally a kind of metonym and thus a trope based on contiguity of space, time, or other context.

The metonymically functioning nosegay list stands in radical opposition to the single red thistle. Its redness is in part an image trope that exploits the physiological and optical fact that red is the most advancing color, coming at us, as it were, in contrast to the retracting blues; we "see red all the way down" (Friedrich 1991:27–29; Sahlins 2000). Yet the sheer redness of the red thistle is not primarily or dominantly a figure of image, like the scarlet of the scarlet oak in Thoreau, or the red of his red maples (1937:694, 703). The red of Tolstoy's thistle, on the contrary, is primarily a complex metaphor – that is, a kind of analogical figure that alludes to the eponymous rebel, Hadji Murad, whose personality and dauntless leadership during an unsuccessful uprising of Caucasian mountaineers against Tsarist colonialism in the 1860s constitute the main content of the work in question: eventually struck down, like Thoreau's John Brown, he lived on in spirit.

The contrast between the metonymical nosegay flowers and the metaphorical red thistle is intensified by a correlative and likewise radical contrast: both sets are natural, but the members of the first grow tamely in the man-ploughed black-earth fields and are included with crops at harvest time – or in a nosegay for use by aristocratic ladies to block out obnoxious odors – whereas the isolated, prickly and explicitly masculine red thistle is an intruder into and an outcast from the hay and cultivated grains and defies all attempts at eradication.

The contrast between metaphor and metonym is also intensified by the cultural values of the colors: the seven (or twelve, if we count repetitions) color words for the ingredients of the nosegay are so numerous and chromatically diffuse that they actually dissipate our concentration. They stand opposed to the insistent redness of the thistle in a culture, that of Russia, where red is the primary color, the color of colors. This Russian red is also strangely and inextricably interconnected with the culturally specific idea of beauty. There are two words for beautiful in the language: *krasivyy* and *prekrasnyy* (the latter is etymologically 'very red'), which the poet Marina Tsvetaeva accurately dichotomized as "external" and "internal" in meaning: music can only be internal, but a woman or a landscape can be either (Friedrich 1998: 222). In some medieval texts and some

passages as late as Pushkin or Blok, the same word can be used for either meaning, 'beautiful' or 'red'. This Russian-specific nuance or feeling for red is also tied to the universal symbolism that puts red and other xanthic colors in a triangle with light (e.g., white) and dark (e.g., black) (Berlin & Kay 1969), and to the equally universal association of red with the blood of war and hunting – the relevant nuances in the context of *Hadji Murad* (Turner 1966).

To summarize, first, the modal trope – the mood – of this extraordinary page is the peculiar mix of horn-eyed objectivity and emotionally thick symbolism that we find, above all, in the author whom Tolstoy most admired and tried hardest to emulate or even to surpass: Homer. Second, the tropologically dense analogy between the red thistle and Hadji Murad, between flower and man, is bonded by the onomastic serendipity that this variety of thistle is, in Russian, actually called "Tatar," the ethnic label for the Turkic and other peoples of the Caucasus and for the lingua franca (also "Turko-Tatar") of the area; as an additional irony, this ultra-Russian color is a property of an ultimately anti-Russian hero. The first page illustrates the density and intensity, the monocular vision and instantaneous or near-instantaneous time of lyric epiphany. After the heroic death of Hadji Murad, the magisterial author recurs to the master symbol as his final note:

> . . . the militiamen gathered together – like sportsmen round a slaughtered animal – near the bodies of Hadji Murad and his men . . . and amid the powder-smoke which hung over the bushes they triumphed in their victory.
>
> The nightingales, that had hushed their songs while the firing lasted, now started their trills once more; first one quite close, then others in the distance.
>
> * * * *
>
> It was of this death that I was reminded by the crushed thistle in the midst of the ploughed field.

This brings us back, if but briefly, to Harold Bloom, arguably the foremost and surely the most influential and prolific critic of our day. Bloom 1994 ranks *Hadji Murad* with Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* and Whitman's *Song of Myself* as "truly Homeric," the three greatest works of "the Democratic Era" (a conventional taxon for this period). Bloom is also a leading critic of Wallace Stevens, of Romantic poetry, and of lyric poetry in general. His extreme ranking of *Hadji Murad*, which surprised and irritated many, reflects his visceral or subliminal response to the frequent lyricism of this masterpiece, particularly its lyric epiphanies – of the red thistle, above all – a lyricism which he was blocked from recognizing himself, at least in part, because he used not Tolstoy's Russian original but Louise and Arthur Maudes' translation (and John Bayley's prose-oriented comments).[2]

From our *Hadji Murad* example, let us return to lyric epiphany in general. The case for the breakout into lyric epiphany in prose is perhaps strengthened by the fact that almost all the writers cited above – notably Cather and Thoreau – also

wrote lyric poetry, and such writing was absolutely crucial to their definitions of themselves; Thomas Hardy, indeed, was one of the creators of the Modern poetic idiom. But it is also Leo Tolstoy who provides what may be the most fascinating biographical example (Sloane 1996:70–71): during his life he wrote "about forty" poems, including two long ones; his first novel, *The Cossacks*, strove to combine lyrical subjectivity with the objectivity of realistic prose; he often corresponded in verse during the personally poetic years of writing *War and Peace* with all its conscious striving for lyricism and musicality; the book is obsessed with sounds, particularly of the human voice; Tolstoy was an avid reader, memorizer, and reciter of lyric poetry and a close friend (in conversation and bear-hunting) of the major lyric poets, Afanasy Fet and Nikolay Nekrasov; he was highly dependent on Pushkin for plots, themes, and images, and, in spirit, on the lyric master Fyodor Tyutchev ("I can't live without my Tyutchev"); and last, to a major degree, as noted above, Tolstoy saw himself as competing with (and, in one statement about the *Iliad*, matching) Homer, and thus as an original imitator of the latter's frequent breakouts into lyric (a comparable statement could probably be made about the relation of *Anna Karenina* to *Madame Bovary*, and hence of the intermittent lyricism of the latter). From Leo Tolstoy to Willa Cather, then, we find a wide range of past, present, possible, failed, or potential lyric poets who shift into their primary (or is it primal) language for a wide spectrum of heuristic, technical, or deeply emotional and personally expressive reasons.

DISCOURSE (3): LYRIC WITHIN THE LONG POEM, AND DRAMA

Perhaps the most striking and mysterious breakouts occur within quasi-lyric genres such as rings and cycles, and in the long poem. In Robert Frost's "The death of the hired man," about migrant agricultural workers in rural ante-bellum New England, the loose blank verse of the bulk of the poem is climaxed by the intense lyricism of the final lines; all but one of the words are spoken by the farmer's wife after her return from the hired man:

> 'I'll sit and see if that small sailing cloud
> Will hit or miss the moon.'
> It hit the moon.
> Then there were three there, making a dim row,
> The moon, the little silver cloud, and she.
> Warren returned – too soon, it seemed to her –
> Slipped to her side, caught up her hand and waited.
> 'Warren?' She questioned.
> 'Dead,' was all he answered.

The similarly dialogic poem, "Frost, Red Nose," by Russia's realist lyric poet Nikolay Nekrasov, represents the gradual freezing to death of a peasant woman, a fate all too common in the great forests and treeless steppes, especially during bliz-

zards, and dealt with by Pushkin, Tolstoy and many others. This poem is similarly climaxed by several quatrains which soar into a lyricism far above the preceding pages of amphibrachs, masterful though many of them may be (Friedrich 1997).[3] In Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, many of the constituent sonnets of "Onegin stanzas," notably those about winter, the death of a poet in a duel, and the dream of the heroine, Tatyana – stanzas often selected for anthologies – shift from the Ovidian glitter of the work as a whole into the lyric intensity of the world's great sonnets, including Petrarch, one of Pushkin's primary models. All these examples are cast in conventional poetic meters – blank verse, amphibrachic trimeter, iambic pentameter – which are being used as the formal vehicle for a protracted exposition. The shift into heightened lyricism takes one out of the narrative flow into the timelessness and instantaneity, the immediate and holistic visual, musical, or other apperception that distinguish lyric from epic or dramatic poetry. Moreover, analysis of plays, notably by Shakespeare, Racine, and the Classical Greek triumvirate, would yield a similar if not greater harvest of breakouts into lyric – particularly in the shifts between (1) the relatively formalized, ritualized choruses, (2) the descriptive, narrative line, and (3) the intense passages, often in the first person (Jocasta, Medea). Lyric intensity often covaries with social and political import. Attic tragedy was said to reunite the epic Apollonian and the lyric-dithyrambic Dionysian (Nietzsche 1967); the argument here is not to put the Bacchic back into epic, but to recognize its occasional and potential role. The neglect of breakout, be it in epic or dramatic, reflects that there is a certain danger or madness or demonic seizure in most lyric that differentiates it from all other kinds of discourse.

ODYSSEY EXAMPLE (1): LIFE SYMBOLS

While the idea of literary epiphany has played a role in studies of Homer, its scope is far wider than has been imagined and includes many passages about which readers whether Homer experts or not, evince an amazing degree of consensus (as noted above for Tolstoy): for example, the scenes of Odysseus blinding the Cyclops, or hanging onto a fig tree above the whirlpools of Charybdis, or trying to embrace his mother. Examples from the first half of the *Odyssey* could readily be doubled or tripled by considering the second half, and perhaps quadrupled by including the *Iliad*.

These epiphanies, whether one line, or several dozen, or even more, are complexly reticulated with larger contexts and interacting levels to yield subtextual, intertextual, and intratextual densities that rival those of a Baudelaire sonnet or a late T'ang eight-liner (the "Chinese sonnet;" Cheng 1982). Lyric force grows from such textual cross-referencing and reticulation.

The reticulation may involve the lexical and etymological meanings of a so-called life symbol. The olive, for example, appears early in the *Odyssey* in a tool for building a raft, a "most beautiful handle of olive-wood, well-fitted to the socketed head of the ax." Shortly thereafter, when Odysseus makes it ashore in

Scheria, "he came upon two bushes growing from the spot, one of wild olive, the other a graft of true olive" (Lawrence 1956; scholia 83). The two branches of the olive, incidentally, metaphorize Odysseus's move from wild nature (the sea) to the relatively tamer, inhabited island (culture). The dense thicket the bushes form, impenetrable alike to the watery rage of the winds and the rays of the brilliant sun, is clearly analogous to the dense thicket that, earlier in his life, had hidden the wild boar before it sprang out at the youthful Odysseus and inflicted the telltale scar on his thigh (the identical lines are used to describe the lair in Book 19:440–2). After reaching yet another shore, that of his native Ithaca, Odysseus keeps on sleeping where he has been put down by the trunk of an olive tree – subsequently the venue of his remarkable dialogue with Athena (13:122, 200–351). And finally, it is out of an olive that Odysseus, over twenty years earlier, had fashioned the complex bed that eventually figures so critically in the protracted recognition process with Penelope. All these beds, lairs, and rafts metaphorize and illuminate one another amid criss-crossing, complementary symbols of swimming and landing, nudity and dressing, awakening and recognition, leading to the great semantic specific gravity of the olive.

The olive gets additional meaning by its contrasts with a sacred oak (visited by the fictive Odysseus), with a young palm (visited by another fictive Odysseus), and the fig tree to which yet another fiction of the yarn-stretching Odysseus is said to have clung desperately to stay clear of Charybdis's whirlpool. The olive, given to humans by Athena, the guileful patroness of Odysseus, not only yields a staff of life that has been basic to Greeks ever since, but, botanically speaking, is akin to the ash with its hard wood, so ideal for stakes and ax handles. The olivaceous strands in Book 5 and this epic in general speak to Greeks and Homer-lovers everywhere as part of an underlying symbolic import. In a dendrological reading of the *Odyssey*, the olive – rather than the oak of other early Indo-European (IE) texts – emerges as the tree of trees and the heartwood of some of its deepest meanings. The activation of such deep meanings, even of botanical ones, contributes to the breakout of lyric epiphany. The interaction of such deep meanings provides a subconscious or subliminal input at any point in the overall text because the overwhelmingly general situation for an adult reader or hearer is that of a non-first reading or hearing: the olivaceous symbolism of the olive-tree bed in Book 23 sensitizes and enriches one's appreciation of the olivaceousness of the olive stake in the blinding scene of Book 9. Yet the life-symbolic olive, with all its ramifying syntagmatic and paradigmatic connections, is but one of the supercharged symbols at play during the scene where the Cyclops is blinded with a stake made of this wood.

ODYSSEY (2): SIMILE CONCENTRATION

Let us return to Homer for a second kind of lyricism. A simple index is not just the sheer frequency of metaphor and simile, or even their originality, but the degree

to which they are juxtaposed. Such tropological bunching is optimally illustrated by the image just mentioned – the first to appear in surviving Greek graphic art – that has fascinated and horrified the Western world for three thousand years: the blinding of the Cyclops. On this one page, as the olive stake is being driven into the single eye, Odysseus becomes a shipbuilding man boring an oaken beam with a drill that his trusty mates below in the pit keep whirling with a thong; it runs without stopping (9:384–6). Just four lines later, the crackling of the roots of the eye becomes a smith dipping a large ax or adze into cold water with great hissing, to temper it. "Therein is the strength of steel" (9:390–93). Such juxtaposition of analogies can create a rich and violent symbolism. It resembles the mixing of metaphors, habitually mocked by the *New Yorker* but practiced by Homer, Shakespeare, and others (Pesmen 1991). It is not, actually, a simple matter of some quantitative or qualitative or even exponential increase, but of a rough approximation toward a lyric intensity that is ultimately unattainable. The poet, struggling to amplify and convey the import of an event or of a feeling, reaches out for a plurality of analogies that can complement one another, that can adumbrate truths that cannot be pinpointed. The power of bunching is often magnified when, in a formulaic idiom such as those of Homer or of T'ang poetry, the images and analogical tropes are (as in this case) without known precedent, utterly original.

Here is a "literal" translation by A. T. Murray, followed by a poetic one by Richmond Lattimore of the passage IX, 382–94:

> They took the stake of olive-wood, sharp at the point, and thrust it into his eye, while I, throwing my weight upon it from above, whirled it round, as when a man bores a ship's timber with a drill, while those below keep it spinning with the thong, which they lay hold of by either end, and the drill runs around unceasingly. Even so we took the fiery-pointed stake and whirled it around in his eye, and the blood flowed around the heated thing. And his eyelids wholly and his brows round about did the flame singe as the eyeball burned, and its roots crackled in the fire. And as when a smith dips a great axe or an adze in cold water amid loud hissing to temper it – for therefrom comes the strength of iron – even so did his eye hiss round the stake of olive-wood. (Murray 1995)

> They seized the beam of olive, sharp at the end, and leaned on it into the eye, while I from above leaning my weight on it twirled it, like a man with a brace-and-bit who bores into a ship timber, and his men from underneath, grasping the strap on either side whirl it, and it bites resolutely deeper. So seizing the fire-point-hardened timber we twirled it in his eye, and the blood boiled around the hot point, so that the blast and scorch of the burning ball singed all his eyebrows and eyelids, and the fire made the roots of his eye crackle. As when a man who works as a blacksmith plunges a screaming great ax blade or plane into cold water, treating it for temper, since this is the way steel is made strong, even so Cyclops' eye sizzled about the beam of the olive. (Lattimore 1991)

And here is the Greek original:

Ἦ καὶ ἀνακλινθεὶς πέσεν ὕπτιος, αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα
κεῖτ' ἀποδοχμώσας παχὺν αὐχένα, κὰδ δέ μιν ὕπνος
ᾕρει πανδαμάτωρ· φάρυγος δ' ἐξέσσυτο οἶνος
ψωμοί τ' ἀνδρόμεοι· ὁ δ' ἐρεύγετο οἰνοβαρείων.
καὶ τότ' ἐγὼ τὸν μοχλὸν ὑπὸ σποδοῦ ἤλασα πολλῆς,
ἦος θερμαίνοιτο· ἔπεσσί τε πάντας ἑταίρους
θάρσυνον, μή τίς μοι ὑποδείσας ἀναδύῃ.
ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ τάχ' ὁ μοχλὸς ἐλάϊνος ἐν πυρὶ μέλλεν
ἅψεσθαι, χλωρός περ ἐών, διεφαίνετο δ' αἰνῶς,
καὶ τότ' ἐγὼν ἆσσον φέρον ἐκ πυρός, ἀμφὶ δ' ἑταῖροι
ἵσταντ'· αὐτὰρ θάρσος ἐνέπνευσεν μέγα δαίμων.
οἱ μὲν μοχλὸν ἑλόντες ἐλάϊνον, ὀξὺν ἐπ' ἄκρῳ,
ὀφθαλμῷ ἐνέρεισαν· ἐγὼ δ' ἐφύπερθεν ἐρεισθεὶς
δίνεον, ὡς ὅτε τις τρυπῷ δόρυ νηΐϊον ἀνὴρ
τρυπάνῳ, οἱ δέ τ' ἔνερθεν ὑποσσείουσιν ἱμάντι
ἀψάμενοι ἑκάτερθε, τὸ δὲ τρέχει ἐμμενὲς αἰεί·
ὣς τοῦ ἐν ὀφθαλμῷ πυριήκεα μοχλὸν ἑλόντες
δινέομεν, τὸν δ' αἷμα περίρρεε θερμὸν ἐόντα.
πάντα δέ οἱ βλέφαρ' ἀμφὶ καὶ ὀφρύας εὖσεν ἀϋτμὴ
γλήνης καιομένης· σφαραγεῦντο δέ οἱ πυρὶ ῥίζαι.
ὡς δ' ὅτ' ἀνὴρ χαλκεὺς πέλεκυν μέγαν ἠὲ σκέπαρνον
εἰν ὕδατι ψυχρῷ βάπτῃ μεγάλα ἰάχοντα
φαρμάσσων· τὸ γὰρ αὖτε σιδήρου γε κράτος ἐστίν·
ὣς τοῦ σίζ' ὀφθαλμὸς ἐλαϊνέῳ περὶ μοχλῷ.

This lyric poem is bracketed by the word "olivewood" in the eighth and last lines.

A second example of coupled similes occurs at the start of Book 20 when Odysseus, lying in the forehall of his own manor, is brooding on the destruction of the faithless serving women. First, "his heart within him barked (or 'growled') like a bitch over her tender pups growls at an unknown man, minded to fight, just so his heart growled, enraged at their evil deeds." Just nine lines later: "As when a man turns a paunch full of fat and blood this way and that and is eager to have it roasted quickly, so he twisted this way and that, brooding on how he might lay

hands on the shameless suitors – being one against many" (20:25–30). A comprehensive study of bunched similes would probably reveal interesting frequencies and patterns of association (but that is the material for another study).

The brilliance of these nonformulaic similes and other analogies that reinforce each other is often surpassed by that of a second type which, in brief, identify or commute opposites – typically of gender, but also, in principle, of other categories. Take this example: early in Book 8, Odysseus, one of whose main epithets is "sacker of cities," responds to a bard's song of the sack of Troy by weeping like a woman who has flung herself around her dying husband and shrieks while enemy men strike her on the back and lead her away into shameful captivity (8:523–33). In a second, equally vivid example, Odysseus, after 20 years of separation, is at last united with his son, who, after some questioning and doubt, recognizes and acknowledges him. The two fling themselves into each other's arms, weeping not just at the reunion after 20 years, but – as is made explicit later during the recognition with Penelope – at the consciousness, implicit here, of all that each has lost. They weep shrilly, more terribly than birds – sea eagles or vultures with crooked talons, whose chicks far below have been stolen by country folk before they could fly (16:186–221).

These so-called reverse similes were identified and defined by Foley 1978 as transcending not only culturally defined antinomies but, often enough, pancultural or universal ones, here of man versus woman, human versus avian, victim versus victimizer. Reverse similes can also involve the specifics of plot and character in Greek epic: Odysseus the sometime rapist weeping like a woman about to be raped, Odysseus weeping over a son regained like a vulture over an offspring lost (vultures, incidentally, are strongly parental both in ancient perception and ornithologically; Friedrich 1997:312). The intensity of these instances of the epic poet breaking out make these lines as lyrical in form and feel as poems conventionally classified as such; they can stand alone as lyric poems.

> At that
> Odysseus sat down again, and Telemachus threw his arms
> around his great father, sobbing uncontrollably
> as the deep desire for tears welled up in both.
> They cried out, shrilling cries, pulsing sharper
> than birds of prey – eagles, vultures with hooked claws –
> when farmers plunder their nest of young too young to fly.
> Both men so filled with compassion, eyes streaming tears,
> that now the sunlight would have set upon their cries
> if Telemachus had not asked his father, all at once,
> "What sort of ship, dear father, brought you here? –
> Ithaca, at last. Who did the sailors say they are?
> I hardly think you came back home on foot!"
>
> (Fagles 1996:345)

What has been written about simile rarely recognizes the lyricism of these little windows into a metaphorized other world. Yet we must consider that they are often formally bracketed ("just as . . . just so" – as in the blinding and the recognition scenes); that the phonic rhythm or integration often differs from what surrounds it (through anaphora, internal rhyme, or phonic texture, as in the strong case of Penelope's tears discussed below); that there is always a semantic shift from epic narrative structured in terms of linearity and syntagmatics, to an image or a picture with a relatively great emphasis on the paradigmatic relations between components – whether actually present or just implied; and, finally, that the simile can and often does "stand alone" as in many of the selections in the Steiner & Dykman anthology (1996).

These features, many of them formal and objective (Fenik 1974) have to be considered in terms of a more comprehensive notion of simile itself that would take account of many factors that can only be adumbrated here. One of these factors is the relation between simile and metaphor. While conventionally and superficially defined by the presence or absence of a comparative particle such as "as" or "like," the difference between the two (e.g., the obligatory status of the particle) varies greatly from one language to another. It is often more realistic, as with Homeric art, to think in terms of types of analogy in the underlying structure. A second factor is the number of components involved, with the range from a simple and straightforward similarity between Odysseus and a lion (strong, virile) to the more developed reverse similes, as in the father-and-son recognition scene, that may balance a half-dozen or more components. A third factor is the degree of iconicity between the images and their referents in the analogical trope, be it metaphor or simile. In the elaborated simile or analogical conceit that compares the city with a beehive in Virgil's *Aeneid* and Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, a large number of components in one half of the equation match up iconically and dynamically with their analogs in the second.

The fourth and most important factor is the difference between similes that transport one out to vast and universal dimensions and those that depend on the specifics of a culture and society, here Greek: local versus global similes and the networks they form. Actually, features of local and global similes, such as "bunching," may intersect with or become identical with those of "lyric," just as the latter do with those of epiphany. All three phenomena involve what I have called "pivoting out" into different times, places, and universes of experience. In addition, a given simile, as suggested above, usually reverberates with others: the nearly naked, leonine Odysseus approaches an adolescent girl on the beach in Book 6, but in Book 4 (335–39) the lion, like Odysseus, returns to his lair that has been occupied by a doe and her fawns. This subtextual network of interdependent, interacting similes is, like the chthonic network of "life symbols" such as the olive, an integral component in the energeia of lyricism in question (Humboldt 1988:49).[5]

ODYSSEY (3): PHONIC/LEXICAL TEXTURING

This brings us to a third index of lyric density and intensity: greater sound texture through, for example, internal rhyme, alliteration, anaphora, onomatopoiesis and phonic chiasmus within the line (Cooper 1998). Such texturation, of a brilliance never to be surpassed, pervades Homer but varies greatly in scope and depth. There are near minima, as in Odysseus' report of his odyssey to Penelope on their first night together again. There are vast expanses of uneven distribution when, for instance, texturation may foreground a line, or part of one. There are short passages of sustained phonic density and intensity such as the above. Phonic texturation is a usual but not indispensable and certainly not sufficient condition for lyric epiphany. Although hardly studied as such, it is probably as essential a mnemonic aid to the rhapsode as the so-called formulae (Parry 1971; Lord 1960), in which it plays a key role. Phonic texturation obviously implies greater bonding between sound and meaning, both lexical and syntactic.

In Book 23: 310–343, Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, has just been recounting how he, a Cretan prince in this tall tale, allegedly gave gifts of hospitality to a fictive Odysseus. This is the fourth such yarn he has spun since arriving in Ithaca, and it is the second place in which he describes his fictional self – here a Cretan – as having met and talked with a fictive version of his real self, Odysseus (Crete, even then, was seen as a country of liars). Penelope responds to the beggar's tale with a psychosomatic violence that correlates with the highly – perhaps violently – marked language of the poet's text. Note that the roman transliteration that follows focuses on the key sounds *k* and *kh* but, incidentally, includes other salient parts of the phonic texture.

Here is the text (XIX, 203–9) in an English translation by one of the best translators of the *Odyssey*, T. E. Lawrence, known to most as "Lawrence of Arabia."

> As he spun them, his lies took on the hue of truth; and as she listened, her tears rained down till her being utterly dissolved, as the snow laid upon the lofty peaks by the west wind melts before the breath of the south-easter and streams down to fill the water-brooks. So did her fair cheeks stream with grief for the husband who was sitting beside her in the flesh. (Lawrence 1956)

And here is the original Greek text:

> Ἴσκε ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγων ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα·
> τῆς δ' ἄρ' ἀκουούσης ῥέε δάκρυα, τήκετο δὲ χρώς·
> ὡς δὲ χιὼν κατατήκετ' ἐν ἀκροπόλοισιν ὄρεσσιν,
> ἣν τ' Εὖρος κατέτηξεν, ἐπὴν Ζέφυρος καταχεύῃ·
> τηκομένης δ' ἄρα τῆς ποταμοὶ πλήθουσι ῥέοντες·
> ὣς τῆς τήκετο καλὰ παρήϊα δάκρυ χεούσης,
> κλαιούσης ἑὸν ἄνδρα παρήμενον.

And here, to thicken our appreciation, are four competing translations:

> Now all these lies he made appear so truthful
> she wept as she sat listening. The skin
> of her pale face grew moist the way pure snow
> softens and glistens on the mountains, thawed
> by Southwind after powdering from the West,
> and, as the snow melts, mountain streams run full:
> so her white cheeks were wetted by these tears
> shed for her lord – and he close by her side. (Fitzgerald, 1963)

> So, telling many lies, he mimed the truth.
> She, hearing him, shed tears that bathed her cheeks.
> Just as snows melt upon the steepest peaks –
> the snows the west wind heaped and south wind frees –
> and with the melting snows, the rivers swell;
> so did her lovely cheeks melt as she wept,
> lamenting for her husband – he who sat
> beside her. (Mandelbaum 1991)

> He knew how to say many false things that were like true sayings.
> As she listened her tears ran and her body was melted,
> as the snow melts along the high places of the mountains
> when the West Wind has piled it there, but the South Wind melts it,
> and as it melts the rivers run full flood. It was even
> so that her beautiful cheeks were streaming tears, as Penelope
> wept for her man, who was sitting there by her side. (Lattimore 1991)

> He spoke, and made the many falsehoods of his tale seem like the truth, and as she listened her tears flowed and her face melted as the snow melts on the lofty mountains, the snow which the East Wind thaws when the West Wind has strewn it, and as it melts the streams of the rivers flow full: so her fair cheeks melted as she wept and mourned for her husband, who even then was sitting by her side. (Murray 1995)

And here is a transliteration of words that are keys to the phonic structure, in the context of the whole passage:

203 He spoke (*iske*)
204 Her tears (*dakrua*) flowed, listening (*akousē̄s*), her flesh (*khrō̄s*) melted (*tē̄keto*)
205 when snow (*khiō̄n*) melts (*katatē̄ket'*) high-peaked (*akropoloisin*)
206 East wind thaws (*katetē̄ksan*) West has strewn it (*katakheue*)
207 melting (*tē̄komenos*)
208 fair (*kala*) melted (*tē̄keto*) tears (*dakrua*) flowing (*kheousē̄s*)
209 weeping (*klaiousē̄s*)

In just ten lines, the key roots 'melt' (*tē̄k-*), 'tears' (*dakrua*), and 'pour' (*kheue-*) are repeated five, four, and two times, respectively.[4] The core symbol *tē̄k-*, 'melt',

is linked semantically and phonically to its partners *kheue-* and *dakrua*, since all three involve the image of a liquid moving downward, a confluence of shape categories that is reminiscent of the inter-line parallelism in "regulated" T'ang Chinese poetry (Liu 1974). Some idea of the subconscious roles of *tē̄k-* is indicated, with a different nuance, by an earlier usage (19:136): "I waste my heart away" (*katatē̄komay*). Moreover, the way the *k* and *kh* phonemes in these roots are distributed throughout provides a phonic thread in a passage that is extraordinarily textured in other ways. To this we have to add the possible workings of a culturally specific onomatopoetic sound symbolism: the "guttural" (i.e., dorsovelar) stops are mimetic of sobbing, at least to some ears. The chances that this specific symbolism is working here are increased by the emergence, toward the end, of the correlative VOICED guttural *g*, both in 'woman' (*gunaika*) and in the strong root for 'weep, grieve, lament' (*goo͞o͞san*, *gooio*). The shift from the more generic verb *klaiein* to the stronger *goaein* here is, as Marilyn Katz has shown, an index of the shift, on the part of Odysseus and Penelope, into a more deeply felt sense of loss and exclusion (Katz 1991:141).

The extraordinary texture noted above is illustrated by the graph that follows – a fuller charting and context for the guttural stops discussed above. Although there is no exact rime, we do find a great deal of partial or slant rime (e.g., *hreontes/oressin*, *gunaika/dakrua*, *katakheue/kheousē̄s*). Similarly, there is a great deal of initial anaphora (*is-*, *hoos*, *heen*, *he*). Above all, we find a great deal of internal sound texture linking scores of identical or palpably similar sounds to make the passage stand out from what precedes and follows.

203 *iske pseudea polla legō̄n etumoisin homoia*
204 *tē̄s d'ar' akouousē̄s hrē̄ dakrua, tē̄keto de khrō̄s*
205 *hō̄s de khīō̄n katatē̄ket' en akropoloisin oressin*
206 *hē̄n t' euros katatē̄ksen, epē̄n Zdepuros katakheuē̄*
207 *tē̄komenē̄s d' ara tē̄s potamoi plē̄thousi hreontes*
208 *hō̄s tē̄s tē̄keto kala parē̄ia dakru kheousē̄s*
209 *klaiousē̄s heon andra parē̄menon.*

Incidentally, though space is lacking for this sort of negative proof, close analysis of, for example, the ten lines that precede or follow this passage in Homer – or most of what follows the passage cited above from *Hadji Murad* (after the red thistle onset) – would show, in the context of Homer, a lower density and intensity of the sort being argued for here.

Many levels and chords of sound and meaning thus collaborate, as they do in Romantic, Symbolist, and recent "language" poetry, and even T'ang Chinese poetry, in a text that can stand as a lyric poem (although no translator so far has worked it this way). As a lyric poem, the above expresses the sensitive and haunted woman of Homer's art. When such a lyric voice erupts – or whispers to us softly – from the epic continuum, it reflects a rotation or a pivoting, or better, a metamorphosis of the poet from being a bard telling ABOUT epic protagonists, to being the

otherwise latently or underlyingly lyric poet who is now expressing himself or herself THROUGH the eyes or voice or gestures of one of the epic protagonists. Such lyric interludes deepen the oral nature of Homer and other poets and poetries. Far from being knocked together from prefabricated formulae during recitals before drunken barons, these lyric epiphanies more resemble a short poem precision-crafted by a European Modern or, indeed, an Inuit or Yupik poetic virtuoso (Lowenstein 1973). Subsequently, they were worked into the epic narrative and memorized and recited as blocks by performers known as *rhapsodes*. Such lyric units work in a performance like the long formulas for sacrifice, feasting, or battle – with which, however, they should not be confused.

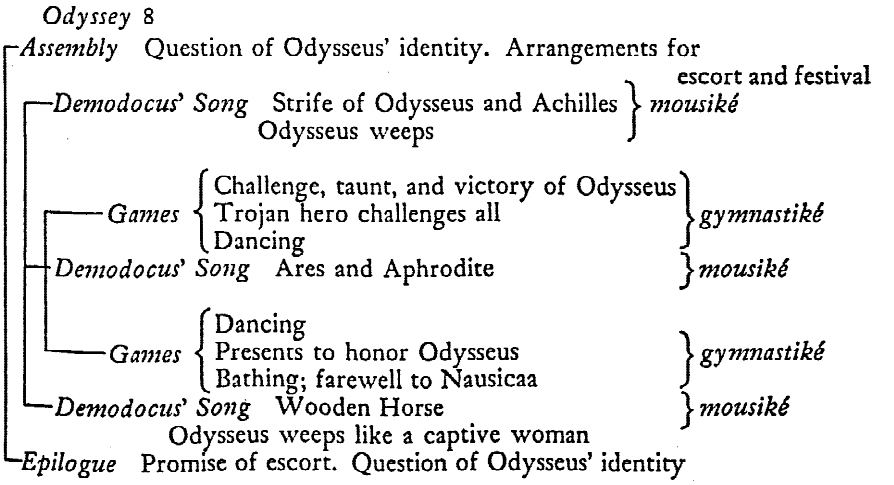
What I am positing, in other words, is the presence of a third or fourth kind of component in the oral poetry of Homer and the quasi-oral poetic prose of Tolstoy, and, indeed, much other verbal art. To begin, we have the ten thousand or so Homeric formulae as originally collected by Schmidt. A special case of these are the extended formulae, often running to many lines, that describe rituals of hospitality, sacrifice, and war. Then we have many nonformulaic, or at least less formulaic, components. Some are apparently original one-time figures and lines. Otherwise, there is a huge remainder class that is, so to speak, minimally formulaic. What I am proposing is that, in addition to these three sets, there are hundreds of lyric epiphanies that occur only once; that were probably created at one time by Homer or some other (earlier) bard; that have the properties of lyric density and intensity defined at many points in this essay; and that were probably treated as mnemonic blocks by the *rhapsodes*, just as they did the extended formulae for sacrificing a sheep or a heifer. There is some overlap, then, between extended formulae and lyric epiphanic texts; in fact, many of the formulae seem originally to have been epiphanies and may still be felt as such today (for example, opening sections of many cantos in the *Odyssey*). But that does not argue against positing the special status of the intermittent, liminal, and occasional short texts that are the subject of the present analysis.

A final note: the present essay has focused on paragraph- and page-length texts that correspond in an at least subliminal sense to a lyric poem, but the fact is that many of the supreme examples of breakout are one- or two-liners – or, if you will, one-sentence lyrics. They range from Thoreau's "We look to windward for fair weather" and myriad other sentences in his ostensibly prose *Journals*, to even less enumerable examples in Sophocles and other playwrights, to texts of epic dimension from Homer and the book of Job, to *Moby-Dick* and, in Joyce's *Ulysses*, from "the fine tang of faintly scented urine" to death as the "gray sunken cunt of the world" (4) to "Time's livid final flame leaps and, in the following darkness, ruins of all space, shattered glass and toppling memory" (15), to phrases, clauses, and sentences or even – some feel – the entirety of Molly Bloom's soliloquy (including the role of flowers in ways reminiscent of the red thistle and the polychrome nosegay in *Hadji Murad* that were meditated on above).

THE LIMITS OF EPIPHANY: CHIASMUS AND *ODYSSEY* EXAMPLE 4

Chiasmus, one of the basic formal tropes in art, is conventionally defined by the cross-over principle, using its eponymous letter χ. By a more practical and intelligible definition, chiasmus means that you leave a series by the same route that you entered by: abccba. The language names Mam and Malayalam, for example, are chiasmic.

Chiasmus is one of the fundamental, orchestrating principles in Homeric art. It may be horizontal in the sense of binding two or more books, or the entire epic. In the case of books 17 through 20 of the *Odyssey*, we find the thematic sequence of the perfidious goatherd Melanthius in 17, then the equally perfidious serving girl Melantho in 18, then Melantho again in 19, and Melanthius in 20. Chiasmus also may operate vertically within one book – very symmetrically in book 8, as elegantly graphed by Whitman (1958:289):



The most powerful chiasmus works both vertically and horizontally. In the *Iliad*, books 1 through 7 are related to 17 through 24 in that the internal structure of 1 matches that of 24, 2 that of 23, and so forth. Chiasmus may be highly symmetrical, but it may also be skewed or truncated. Chiasmus may work between the verbal text and a musical setting, a choreography, or even a ceramic representation. Chiasmus was sufficiently pervasive in Archaic Greece to warrant our speaking of a chiasmic mind, or mental set, or even worldview – with the proviso that comparable phenomena have emerged at other times, such as the European Baroque. What is the relation between chiasmus and lyric epiphany? One answer is that a small or brief mini-chiasmus may create a subtle epiphany, as will be shown below. Another is that, as some would exclaim if not argue seriously, the entire *Iliad* and the entire *Odyssey* are chiasmic macro-epiphanies.

Within the overall chiasmus of book 16, we find a mini-chiasmus structuring the recognition scene between father and son that we analyzed intensively above under "bunched" and reversed similes. The mini-chiasmus looks like this:

Bracket:	*Son says*:	*Father says*	*Bracket*
Father and son kiss, father sheds tears	(1) "You are not Odysseus my father, but some god is enchanting me so that, grieving, I may groan yet more" (194–5)	(1) "Athena can make me as she wishes – a beggar or a young man in fine raiment; it's easy for the gods to glorify or debase a man" (211–12)	Father and son kiss, father sheds tears
	(2) "for in no way could a mortal man contrive this with his wits" (196–7)	(2) "no other [i.e., mortal] Odysseus will ever come here but I, suffering evil and wandering far (204–5)	
	(3) "for in truth you were/are old just now whereas now you resemble the gods who hold up heaven" (199–200)	(3) "Telemachus, it is not proper for you either to wonder or to be amazed that thy father is within the house" (202–3)	

Such chiasmic sets within a book are usually bracketed, either by a chiasmic commutation, or by the first element in the first set being repeated or somehow echoed by the last element in the second, or by yet other marking (Bartscherer 1997). At a vague thematic level, the idea of chiasmus informs and governs the *Odyssey*, be it the internal structure of books, of the structures that relate books, or specific entries and exits, even the phonology of individual lines.

Given the pervasiveness of chiasmus in Homer, then, one should address the fact that its role in epiphany is weak, occasional, and at best insidious. Chiasmus, like the sestina form, tightens and closes; there is an element of inevitability as exit replays introitus. Epiphany, on the contrary, breaks out of structure, whether verbal or temporal, into a more open, dynamic, vivid, and audible universe. Epiphany by means of chiasmus, when it does occur, is more cognitive than phenomenological: as the deeper levels of the mind recur through a structural series, there is a sense of realization with reinforcement that both locks the images in place and creates an experience of rebirth or awakening that may be more profound than the sorts of epiphany dealt with here. The internal organization of a chiasmic epiphany such as was sketched above is thus more of a breaking-into than a breaking-out-of. The mini-chiasmus works against the grain of the usual epiphany but is also consistent with the chiasmic orchestration of the *Odyssey* as a whole. In contrast to this, lyric epiphanies that are linear – such as the blinding, recognition, and raft-building or landing scenes (in book 5) – break explosively out of the Homeric chiasmic framework.

CONCLUSIONS

Lyric epiphany gets us into wider problems of genre and is consistent with Edgar Allan Poe's (1848) insistence that "a long poem is impossible," by which he meant that beyond a relatively short timespan, the requisite heat of lyric, like that of sexual orgasm (even artfully protracted and/or multiple), cannot be maintained or maintain itself. Much great poetry, and some of the greatest, serves as a vehicle of realistic, objective description cast in the third person – much like epic – but beneath this there seethes the potential for lyric expressiveness and epiphanic breakout.[6]

The foregoing, concretely, has demonstrated how short stretches of lyric discourse break out in an epic, and that this is realized through such tropes as increased sound texture (Cooper 1998), increased lexical density, the bunching of similes and reverse similes, and, psychologically, through increased expression and projection of the individual poet. Other patterns not explored here in detail, but surely worth a probing scrutiny, include greater density of binding between words, more marked (e.g., unusual) constructions, greater richness of repetition (including formulaic repetition), more obvious parallelism at all levels, a tighter fit between sound and theme, and more acute and emphatic counterposings of oppositions.

These and other criteria of sound texture, (mainly syntactic) parallelism, and the ramifications of lexical symbolism (and other more or less formal approaches) are not, as has often been polemicized, mutually exclusive with the emotive and expressive theories of language, saliently poetic language, that were cited above. As far as conflict between the two positions goes, some of the finest formalism veers into expressive analysis, as has been noted above for Jakobson & Jones on Shakespeare's Sonnet 129, and a persevering search for the emotional meanings of a text can lead to formal statements of admirable rigor. Both kinds of veering – formalism toward the emotive-expressive, or the emotive-expressive toward formalism – are copiously exemplified by much recent research that ranges across the map: metonymy in Tamil rhetoric, including feminist oratory (Bate 2000); verbal dueling in Yemeni politics and war (Caton 1990); how Jesse Jackson involved his audience at a national convention (Tannen 1989: 174–94, 1994); the deep ties between a seventeenth-century hymn in Sapphic meter and the "axes of symmetry and superimposed reversals" in a Modern Quechua folksong, and reversal and nesting in a woven textile and the history of a drawn and quartered rebel (Mannheim 1998)! As this suggests, the political and the emotional-expressive are not synonyms, but politics is always emotional and all emotional relations are political. Much of the best work lies outside "anthropology" and "sociolinguistics" as conventionally and sometimes, I fear, parochially defined. Take Christanne Miller's (1987) brilliant conjunction of a rigorous classical-cum-"modern" syntax with an equally rigorous psychological and cultural-historical analysis of Emily Dickinson's po-

etry. Analyses, in any case, that draw on and synthesize the expressive and the formal bring out complementary wellsprings of a text and contribute to understanding its deeper qualities. Lyric epiphany fits into this because it is an experience of singular intensity of feeling and form that calls for a correspondingly intense and multi-angled inspection.

What of the comparative perspective that is so neglected today? Anthropology, linguistics, and literary study should combine the richness of micro-systemic insight with the richness of areal and global comparison, and with the search for universals of the human psyche and the human condition that come from both angles. The case for breakout into lyric is probably just as strong in the *Iliad*, although scarce or absent in minor and mediocre Greek epics. Breakout into lyric voice is not infrequent in other early epics. It may emerge from a tradition such as that of the *Rig Veda* or the *Mahābhārata*; note especially the Vedic song to Savitr (iii. 62. 10), the morning song to Hindus for three thousand years. Many passages in the *Bhagavad Gītā* are not only set off formally but also suggest a shift in genre, in spirit and form (e.g., to a triṣṭubh meter). This is reflected in the translations: for example, in Christopher Isherwood's (1961) shift out of prose into lyric passages of varying degrees of intensity, and, even more, by Edwin Arnold's (1952) numerous changes in poetic form (line length, meter, rhyme) to reflect the changing feelings and philosophical levels of the original. Such alternation is also called for in texts that have been crafted by a known individual. In Virgil's *Aeneid*, though it is saliently a reworking of Homeric (and hence early Indo-European) phrasings and formulae, many passages exemplify lyric breakout, notably that describing the mutilated body of Deiphobus in II, and Dido's lament in IV. Both imply a deepening identification of the poet with his epic protagonists.

We should search further for insight into the aesthetics of lyric – also looking beyond to other early masters and their audiences outside the Indo-European zone, to the *Gilgamesh* epic and the Old Testament, and to New World classics such as the *Popol Vuh* (Tedlock 1985) and the vision of Black Elk of the Sioux tribe (Neihardt 1961). The search also should carry to major novels; note particularly Derek Walcott's *Omeros* and James Joyce's *Ulysses*, each of which is complexly calibrated with its model, Homer's *Odyssey*, and, like it, often breaks into lyric form. *Ulysses*, in fact, breaks out so many times into lyric, be it isolated sentences, paragraphs, or entire sections such as Molly Bloom's soliloquy, that one could argue that its main purpose and achievement was precisely this virtuoso ranging between the alpha of the maximally prosaic and the omega of the totally lyric. We are, in any case, talking about the century's most influential novel, and Walcott's 1993 Nobel Prize-winning poem. Thus has a poesis of early Indo-European origins, including its lyric epiphany, thrived among us to this day.

To conclude, lyric epiphany is but one instance in literature of other, related experiences. It is, to begin, paralleled by experiences in all the other arts, from "suddenly seeing," in a corner of a museum, Rembrandt's *Knight in the Golden Helmet*, or a bas-relief horse emerging from a cave wall in southern France, to any

number of comparable experiences in music: a certain Chopin *Etude*, or Bach's first cello sonata played by Casals. The generic phenomenon of aesthetic epiphany merits further insight and sharing among artists, critics, philosophers, and anthropologists of art.

Lyric epiphany has many analogues in science. It is phenomenologically similar to the legendary *eureka* eruptions that were instanced by Archimedes and many before him, and so on down to Watson and Crick's *The Double Helix* and, very recently, the pioneers of chaos theory (Gleick 1987). I am reminded of the brilliant Polish film called *Illuminations* that depicted the experience of breakthrough in physics. In these and myriad other cases, the scientist and mathematician, deeply involved in a long series of experiments and probes, experiences a revelation or illumination, sometimes very sudden, and for a while, is transported into the "density and intensity" which he or she would probably agree is like to the poet's.

Let us go further. Most adults have known moments of aesthetic truth at some time yet "can't put it into words" beyond a simple, undifferentiated reference ("I freaked out"). By contrast, the poet and the creative reader of poetry experience epiphanic catalysis. Sometimes it draws on autobiography; some think all art is autobiographical. But often it creates something that has not been lived through literally: the presence of death in Tolstoy. The transcendent power of epiphany also derives from the infinite power of language – which it taps. In lyric epiphany, as defined above by Radulescu, language itself and a specific language such as Russian or Greek become the object of marvel and wonderment. Yet lyric epiphany is itself an implicit simile or analogy. Perhaps the deepest of these similarities and identities are created by the reverse similes, such as those in Homer mentioned above. In Mitova's (2000) words, "One has to touch both sides of the coin to really know it." Because of this totalizing analogy, lyric epiphany enters into and exemplifies deep reaches of originality and the generic creative process, and so of inspiration and madness and the freshness of early childhood, when words and things are new and constantly metaphorizing.

Let us maximize epiphany. It may be the experience of a mental patient who recovers because of the moment when an idealistic insane asylum attendant reached out a helping hand; or two persons side by side in a great French cathedral, or swimming a great expanse off Poipu beach and so realizing a new depth to their love; or natural childbirth, or the hour of death of a mother or a sister, or all the other blacks and whites of experience – particularly religious experience: in a French cathedral, yes, and on the road to Damascus, or in a Siberian prison. All of them share in the density and intensity and compression that have been explored in this brief meditation.

At the more abstract level hinted at near the outset and alluded to throughout, lyric processes ranging from the bunching of monosyllabic nouns to the bunching of similes are the means of achieving what was called "instantaneous immediacy" and "synoptic visual unity." But these profound end results are in turn the

means to a breakout from time and space into a heightened consciousness of such things as compassion, jealousy, hunger, and ambivalent reunion, or an olive tree, or drowning on the high seas (or anywhere), or a red thistle–mountain rebel, or other universal or culturally and historically specific experiences.

NOTES

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[1] Sonnet 129, incidentally, seems perfectly designed by Will Shakespeare (about 1601) for Bill Clinton 398 years later. It is curious that not only the exceptional linguist, Roman Jakobson but also the exceptional poet, Wallace Stevens, selected this particular sonnet out of 156 for intensive focus (the latter in "The necessary angel").

[2] The usual Russian word for thistle is *chertnopolokh* (from *chort-* "devil"). Tolstoy's plant, the *repey* (usually called the *repeynik*) is "a weedy growth with red tufts/flowerheads (*golovka*)" (Ushakov 1940); the *repeynik* is related to and sometimes equated with the burdock (*lopukh*); Tolstoy's plant, possibly some kind of *Cirsium*, which has a solitary inflorescence, is hard to nail down given the degree of dialectal variation and botanical *nomina confusa*.

Partly for the sake of symmetry, I have looked long and hard at the *Hadji Murad* passage for a sound texture that would in some measure parallel what we find in the Homeric epiphanies – and, indeed, if less intensively, in all of Homer; as Ezra Pound said, there is not a page in Homer that does not teach us of the poet's craft. But in vain. It is almost as though Tolstoy, sticking to his unique style (Christian 1968), were avoiding phonic effects that might smack of Pushkin and the lyric poets who so inspired him.

[3] The amphibrach ("bilaterally armed") is a ternary (three-syllable) foot consisting, in a stress language like Russian or English, of a stressed syllable bounded by two unstressed ones (x–x); in a language governed by quantitative prosody, such as Latin, the foot consists of a long syllable bounded by two shorts. The amphibrach is fairly important in Classical (Latin and Greek) poetry. One of the six basic feet in Russian, it is the metrical vehicle for important poems by many major poets, notably Lermontov, Nekrasov, Blok, and Pasternak. The amphibrach is not, in general, part of the poetic consciousness of Anglophone poets and poeticians; when it occurs, it is for other reasons (e.g., in William Carlos Williams's *Kermes* as an attempt to reproduce a dance beat).

[4] Interestingly, these are roots not only in Greek but also in Proto-Indo-European: *dakrua* 'tear' comes from **dakru-* (e.g., Old Latin *dakrima*, Latin *lakrima*, English *lachrymose*); *tē̆k-* 'melt' comes from **taa-* (e.g., English *thaw* and Russian *tayat'*); and *kheu-* comes from **gheu-* (e.g., German *giessen* 'pour', Indic *hotar* 'sacrificial priest'). Not just the vocabulary but the passage as a whole has a rooted, archaic ring to it, which works powerfully with the feeling of lyrical composition by one unique author.

[5] Humboldt (1988:49) put it: "language proper lies in the act of real production. It alone must in general always be thought of as true and primary," and, earlier on, "language is no product (*Ergon*) but an activity (*Energeia*). The ideas of lyric epiphany, as of catalysis etc., only make sense in the context of language as activity, production, creativity.

[6] The idea of "breakout" or "breakthrough" has a curious history. Apparently originating in World War II, it became generalized in the 1950s. I used it sociolinguistically in my Russian pronouns paper, presented at the founding session of American sociolinguistics (May 1964), and then in the published article (1966), and, much later in the "Synthesis and catalysis" essay (Attinasi & Friedrich, 1995).

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