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Signposts in Oral Epic: Metapragmatic and Metasemantic Signals

NANCY FELSON-RUBIN

This paper attempts to describe a dynamic aspect of the communication between the performing epic poet (Homer[1]) and his listeners in the audience.[2] It focuses on the phenomenon from the oral poet which suggest how his listeners might take the events and figures of the fictional world he presents. *Metasemantic signals* tell audiences about the fiction they are experiencing and *metapragmatic signals* suggest how they might respond.[3] These two signal types, though quite distinct as categories of analysis, are usually intertwined in practice. For example, internal audiences behaving either gullibly or sceptically could alert Homer's audiences to listening strategies that are both descriptive (metasemantic) and prescriptive (metapragmatic). Such scenes, then, exemplify the two types of signposts that the oral poet sends his listeners.

Of the several theoretical works that have helped me formulate the problems set forth in this paper, I mention in particular the studies of possible-worlds semantics by Lubomír Doležel (1976; 1980), Thomas Pavel (1980; 1986), and Marie-Laure Ryan (1985), and an essay by Vincent Crapanzano in which he distinguishes metasemantic from metapragmatic signals (1989). Henceforth, whenever I refer to content, I am in the metasemantic realm, and whenever I refer to reaction or response or behaviour, I am in the metapragmatic.

Homer's *Odyssey* includes a variety of embedded structures – in particular bardic scenes and spectacles – mirroring its own oral performance. Such scenes would have invited live audiences, in archaic times, to reflect on their ongoing experience and perhaps to alter their own behaviour as listeners. As modern readers, we can also feel the metasemantic and metapragmatic impact of these embedded structures.

According to a principle that Odysseus articulates among the Phaeacians, inhabitants of the island of Scheria, the best narration is told by one who has experienced it firsthand or has heard it from one who was there (8.492–3).

Thus, first-person diegesis, with the character as narrator and actor, outstrips narration by a third person, especially one who is outside the narrative world. Using Genette's terminology, we could recast Odysseus's valuative statement as follows: the best narrator is intra-diegetic (on the same narrative level as the characters in the story he tells) and homo-diegetic (a participant in that story), especially if he is also auto-diegetic (the subject of his own story).[4]

Odysseus himself exhibits all these attributes when he tells his challengers at the games in Scheria of his own excellence (*aretê*) at athletics. His narration (8.214–33) is intra-homo-auto-diegetic: without naming himself, he hints at his importance as a war hero just back from Troy and as a skilled bowman. Moreover, by the very standards he has just set forth, his elaborate tale of his own 'Adventures' (spanning Books 9–12) is of the highest order, even overtaking Homer's own narration.

It is through such extended first-person character narration that Homer enlivens his own diegesis. Otherwise, his position outside the character world, as an extra-diegetic narrator, might make his story bland. He uses dialogue to animate his epic tale. So does the Phaeacian bard Demodocus in his second song, 'Adultery on Olympus,' sung at the games on Scheria to the all-male competitors. Demodocus alone of the internal bards (and only in the second of his three songs) dramatizes the events he narrates, like Homer, by representing the various divinities speaking.

The literal bards (*aoidoi*) in the text, Phemius of Ithaca and Demodocus of Scheria, are extra- and, hence, hetero-diegetic like Homer.[5] That is, they are at a different narrative level from the characters whose stories they tell and they do not participate in these stories. The unexpected presence in Demodocus's audience of a character celebrated in his first and third tales (at 8.75–82 and 8.500-20), namely Odysseus, breaks the frame separating singer and characters, almost in the manner of an apostrophe or an aside at a dramatic performance. This rupture may suggest to Homer's audience a potential identity between fictional characters and themselves. Moreover, when Odysseus responds to the first and third tales by weeping profusely (cf. 8.83–9 and 521–2), his behaviour opens up the possibility of weeping for Homer's listeners, sending the metapragmatic signal: 'You can weep profusely too.' In the case of the third story, the 'Trojan Horse,' Odysseus's weeping is compared to that of a woman bemoaning her husband who has fallen before the city and his people, while fending off the pitiless day for his city and parents (523–30). This reverse-gender simile, elaborating Odysseus's response, might suggest to men in Homer's audience that to weep like a woman is a legitimate response to powerful song and further, perhaps, that the boundary between male and female, husband and wife, is not so impermeable as they might have thought.

In another bardic scene, an unnamed bard in Argos, assigned by Agamemnon to protect Clytemnestra and keep an eye on her, is banished to an island to die.[6] This unfortunate bard becomes a victim in an exposure tale that he does not live to tell. Nestor incorporates the bard's story within his narrative (at 3.265–72) to his young visitors, Telemachus and Pisistratus. Thus, not only does he appropriate the role normally belonging to a bard, but he even takes the bard's sad fate as his theme. This appropriation might signal to Homer's listeners that the poet is human and vulnerable, like themselves, that he might even become a character in a tale, rather than always remaining safely above and outside it. This suggests, as a metasemantic message, that the boundary separating the singer from his audience may sometimes be crossed, that a member of the community, like Menelaus, might make the singer his topic in song.

No bard in the *Odyssey* rivals Homer, though Demodocus comes the closest in his 'Adultery on Olympus.' Put differently, Homer nearly always summarizes bardic songs without relinquishing centre stage: this is true of Demodocus's first and third songs, 'The Quarrel' (8.75–82) and 'The Wooden Horse' (8.500–20), as well as of the 'Returns' which Phemios sings to the suitors (at 1.326–7). The song that Phemius resumes, much later, as Odysseus approaches the palace with Eumaeus (17.262–3) has no reported theme. Later, when Odysseus spares Phemius and bids him lead the festive wedding dance to deceive the villagers (23.133–6), the Ithacan bard becomes the one who executes Odysseus's scheme, just as Odysseus in Books 9–12 is Homer's instrument. The metasemantic message of these hierarchies might simply be that Homer, as oral poet, 'gives orders to' all his characters (including bards), as Odysseus does to Phemius.

The theme of poetic reciprocity in Homer's presentation of bardic performances sends a metapragmatic signal to his listeners that they treat him well. Thus, when after hearing two songs ('Quarrel' and 'Adultery'), Odysseus deliberately gives Demodocus a choice portion of meat and affirms the honour due to the race of bards (8.477–81), Homer uses a subtle tactic (known to occur at song breaks in many contemporary oral performances) perhaps to request his meal and honour. In this scene, when Odysseus asks the bard to change his theme and to sing of the device of the wooden horse, again a metapragmatic signal goes to Homer's audience: 'You can affect my selection of theme.'

In the same scene, Odysseus establishes poetic reciprocity between himself and the Phaeacian bard. What they have to exchange is complicated by Odysseus's bardic talents. Odysseus pledges: 'If you can tell me the course of all these things as they happened, I will speak of you before all mankind, and tell them how freely the goddess gave you the magical gift of singing' (8.496–8).

On the one hand, Odysseus has accomplished the very deeds that Demodocus celebrates. Yet the one deed he specifically asks Demodocus to sing – the ruse of the wooden horse – is an artistic achievement, emphasized by the word for 'device' (*kosmos*). Since carpentry and poetics are parallel semantic domains,[7] Demodocus's song of the wooden horse celebrates Odysseus's artistic excellence (*aretê*) in language suggesting craftsmanship; thus Homer implants the idea that, if Odysseus praises Demodocus in song for his song, that praise will be of the highest order. Odysseus will match Demodocus's excellence with excellent song.

In fact, Homer fulfils Odysseus's promise to celebrate Demodocus's poetic deeds by honouring the bard in his *Odyssey* as 'Odysseus' entertainer in Scheria.' By celebrating Demodocus, particularly his ability, through the Muse's divine gift, to recount accurately what he has not seen, Homer authenticates his own poetic voice and communicates to his listeners his on worthiness of renown.

As a wayfarer on Scheria, Odysseus enjoys reciprocity with his hosts. They provide food, shelter, gifts, and escort home. In return, they hear his 'Adventures' and gain 'unquenchable glory' – *asbeston kleos* – in his song.[8] This glory might compensate for the suffering that Poseidon will exact from them for escorting one too many wayfarers over the seas. The Phaeacians will suffer and win renown, in a single move, through the intervention of bardlike Odysseus, the hero whose own identity is bound up with both causing and enduring trouble.[9]

Odysseus, as a bardic figure, uses poetic ploys to strengthen his position vis-à-vis his hosts and audiences, no matter where he is or what his disguise. His behaviour illuminates the ploys of the performing poet Homer, for whom the dynamic of performance likewise depends on an equilibrium between himself and those for whom he sings A formulaic line at the intermission of Odysseus's 'Adventures' (11.333–4), repeated at the completion of his tale (13.1–2), expresses the enchantment Odysseus is perpetrating on the Phaeacian listeners. During the first break, just after this formulaic description, Alcinous explicitly likens Odysseus to a singer: 'Odysseus, as we look upon you, we do not imagine that you are a deceptive or thievish man, the sort that the black earth breeds in great numbers, people who wander widely, making up lying stories, from which no one could learn anything. You have a shape (*morphê*) upon your words, and there is sound sense (*phrenes agathai*) within them, and expertly, as a singer would do, you have told the story of the dismal sorrows that befell you yourself and all the Argives' (11.363–9).

Alcinous's compliment to Odysseus for the shape of his words and the sound sense within them, and for his expertise in singing, as a bard would, the story of his troubles, introduces (and delineates) an aesthetic dimension of oral poetry. Certainly, to Homer's audiences the compliment is primarily

ironic, since Odysseus does descend from the thief and social outcast, Autolycus (19.395–8), and is an arch-trickster.[10] Amidst all the irony, however, Alcinous's emphasis on the shape of words, on noble thoughts and on poetic skill, invites Homer's listeners to infer that the greater an epic's aesthetic power, the more it will enchant. This constitutes a metapragmatic warning to them not to be readily taken in.[11] At the same time, it is, in a sense, self-promoting, since it subtly recommends criteria for evaluating Homer's *Odyssey* and for judging it superb.

In Ithaca, too, Odysseus is commended for his poetic talents. The swineherd Eumaeus tells Penelope how the beggar enchanted him (*ethelge*) in the halls as he sat beside him and how he would also charm (*thelgoito*) her heart with what he tells, if the Achaeans would be silent (17.514). He compares the stranger to a singer 'who has been given from the gods the skill with which he sings for delight of mortals, and they are impassioned and strain to hear it when he sings to them' (17.518–21).

Just before this, to deflect the suitors' blame from him for leading the beggar to the palace, the swineherd distinguished the beggar from the class of *dêmiourgoi*, 'those who do public works' – like the bard, the seer, the healer, and the carpenter (17.382–7). According to Eumaeus, the *dêmiourgos* has a reciprocal relationship to his constituency: he performs a service and receives recompense. The bard, for example, sings for hire and food, and in turn uses his gift of song to enchant and delight his listeners and put them again in his debt. His poetic skills and poetic ploys offset the political and social powers of his constituency; thus bards, who literally depend on their listeners for sustenance, transcend their subordinate roles as *dêmiourgoi* through poetic devices, manipulating their listeners, exploiting their hunger for song.[12] In Eumaeus's social hierarchy, the beggar occupies the lowest rung, but Odysseus, as a consummate liar, songster, and entertainer, has a loftier status, and wins more sympathy, than his clothing and role usually admit. His transcendence of his disguise as beggar may suggest (metasemantically) to Homer's listeners that, even though he is dependent on them for sustenance, he is by no means their inferior.

While the Phaeacians recognize Odysseus's worth even though he is a wayfarer and treat him accordingly; the suitors pay him no such high regard. One of their offences, seldom noticed, is their insusceptibility to the stranger's power to enchant. In their presence, Odysseus exercises a dramaturgic role, of sorts. He stages his combat with Iros – an event which Antinous calls an 'entertainment' or 'delight' (*terpôlê*) – and thereby offers the suitors the possibility of reciprocity, which they decline. They are not his ideal audience, since they are impervious to his charms.

Besides straight bardic scenes and scenes in which Odysseus manipulates his audiences for a variety of ends, internal spectacles vividly unfold before the eyes of internal spectators, providing additional signposts to Homer's audiences. These stagings – sometimes contrived ahead of time by a character, or arising spontaneously – contain elements pertinent to dramatic enactment, such as intonation, disguises, and costumes.[13] Some appear in the narrator's diegesis, others within a character's speech or tale or in a bard's song.

In Menelaus's account of Helen's attempt at allurement, told as a corrective to Helen's self-promoting tale, Odysseus is an exemplary, discriminating listener.[14] He resisted Helen's beguiling words at Troy, when she was 'likening her voice to the voices of the wives of all the Argives' (4.279), whereas other sons of the Achaeans nearly succumbed to her enchantment. Addressing Helen (in Sparta), Menelaus recalls how he and Diomedes and great Odysseus sitting inside the wooden horse 'heard you crying aloud, and Diomedes and I started up, both minded to go outside, or else to answer your voice from inside, but Odysseus pulled us back and held us, for all our eagerness.' After that, only one Achaean was ready to answer, Nestor's son Anticlus, but 'Odysseus brutally squeezing his mouth in the clutch of his powerful hands, held him, and so saved the lives of all the Achaeans ...' (4.280–9).

The heroes whom Menelaus names as susceptible to Helen's alluring words (and Menelaus includes himself) are all 'gullible auditors,' taken in by illusion. The young Anticlus even had to be brutally restrained from responding, since he lacked self-restraint. The message designated especially for young listeners is clear: 'Beware of dangerous female allure!' and 'Do not act impetuously!'

In his song 'Adultery on Olympus' (8.266-366), Demodocus depicts a spectacle wherein Hephaestus both contrives the drama and constructs the 'stage-set' in which it is enacted. For Hephaestus as dramaturge, Demodocus uses epithets elsewhere reserved for Odysseus, *polumêtis* 'much-devising' (355) and *poluphrôn* 'of much intelligence' (367); the lame god, like Odysseus on numerous occasions, 'fashioned a deceit' (286). 'Famed for his art' (286) and 'much famed' (287), Hephaestus triumphs by his devices in a competition in which the slow, through cleverness and art, overtake the swift. The male gods standing around as spectators respond with unquenchable laughter as they look upon the devices of very intelligent *poluphronos* Hephaestus (327). Their laughter expresses their solidarity as males, enjoying a joke at the expense Aphrodite and the cuckolded Ares. Out of that laughter comes a second joke: Hermes acknowledges his desire to be in Ares's place. He alone of all the gods watching is lenient and light-hearted towards the betrayal. When Apollo asks him, 'Would you be willing, pressed tight in mighty bonds, to sleep in bed beside golden Aphrodite?' he replies: 'Lord who strike from afar, Apollo, I wish

it could only be, and there could be thrice this number of endless fastenings, and all you gods could be looking on and all the goddesses, and still I would sleep by the side of Aphrodite the golden' (8.339–42). Hermes the voyeur wishes to enter centre stage at any cost. His attitude is anti-heroic, since to be the object of laughter is the worst fear of a hero. His words, 'and all you gods could be looking on and all the goddesses,' have implications for the possible inclusion of women in Homer's audience. In Demodocus's song, the goddesses did not watch the act of adultery but stayed away out of embarrassment (*aidôs*). Moreover, Demodocus sings his bawdy song, it seems, in the midst of a contest attended by males alone, just before the dancing and acrobatics; Arete is back at the palace (cf. 8.368–9 and 419–20) and Nausicaa is clearly not present. In Hermes's fantasy, however, goddesses may watch. This raises the question of what is proper for women in Homer's audience to hear and see. If present, they will overhear Demodocus's Hermes include women as voyeurs of his hypothetical prolonged sexual union with Aphrodite. Moreover, Odysseus is soon to outstrip Demodocus – and perhaps even Ares and Hermes – by telling of his love exploits in front of Arete; 'I mounted the surpassingly beautiful bed of Circe,' (10.347) is a virtual leitmotif in the 'Adventures.' Though Arete is a single female auditor in a primarily male audience, she is included as addressee. This inclusion sends a message to Homer's auditors about the appropriateness of certain topics for mixed company.[15]

A third spectacle is the adventure with the Sirens, first delineated in Circe's speech to Odysseus:

> You will come first of all to the Sirens, who are enchanters of all mankind and whoever comes their way; and that man who unsuspecting approaches them, and listens to the Sirens singing, has no prospect of coming home and delighting his wife and little children ... but the Sirens by the clarity of their singing enchant him. They sit in their meadow; the beach in front is piled with boneheaps of men now rotted away, and the skins shrivel upon them. You must drive straight past, but melt down sweet wax of honey and with it stop your companions' ears, so none can listen – the rest, that is; but if you yourself desire to hear them, then have them tie you hand and foot on the fast ship, standing upright against the mast with the ropes' ends lashed around it, so that you can have joy in hearing the song of the Sirens; but if you supplicate your men and implore them to set you free, then they must tie you fast with even more lashings. (12.39–54)

The forewarned Odysseus repeats Circe's instructions to his crew (12.158–64) but changes 'if you yourself are wanting to hear them' to 'but only I, she said, was to listen to them' (160). By this substitution, he passes responsibility for

his privilege onto her. The Sirens, seeing the ship approach, direct their sweet song towards Odysseus:

Come this way, honored Odysseus, great glory of the Akhaians, and stay your ship, so that you can listen here to our singing; for no one else has ever sailed past this place in his black ship until he has listened to the honey-sweet voice that issues from our lips; then he goes on, well pleased, knowing more than ever he did; for we know everything that the Argives and Trojans did and suffered in wide Troy through the gods' despite. Over all the generous earth we know everything that happens. (12.184–91)

'So they sang,' Odysseus recalls, 'in sweet utterance, and the heart within me desired to listen, and I signalled my companions to set me free, ... but they fastened me with even more lashings and squeezed me tighter' (192–200). Here his men use force on him as he used force on Anticlus, but in this instance he has orchestrated their behaviour ahead of time. After they sailed past, Odysseus tells the Phaeacians, and could no longer hear the Sirens' voice and song, his companions released him from bonds, obeying his instructions.

Thus, at Circe's bidding, Odysseus shields his men from dangerous enchantment as he had earlier protected the sons of the Achaeans within the Trojan Horse from Helen's beguiling words. Yet he himself indulges his desire to hear the dangerous song. Curiously, Homer only includes the song's prelude, as if to tantalize both the Phaeacians and his own listeners through aposiopesis. Odysseus alone among his (or any) men survives after hearing the Sirens sing a song too awesome, and too dangerous, for any other ears.

The tale of the Sirens underscores the pitfalls of *thelxis* 'enchantment.' Odysseus covertly warns the Phaeacians of this danger as Homer, rather playfully, signals his live audiences to beware. Or the message is, perhaps: 'Listen and be enchanted, but exercise caution, and know what dangers lie ahead.'

One spectacle described by the Homeric narrator, the combat between Odysseus and Iros before the crowd of suitors, sends a warning to listeners not to root for the wrong side. The suitor Antinous credits a god for bringing on this entertainment (*terpôlê* [18.37]), and the suitors all watch the two beggars battling with their hands and wits. Iros, the authentic beggar, says that the roguish wink of the suitors (18.11) stirred him to combat in the first place, but really it is Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, who stages the combat and determines which turn events will take. During the contest, the raucous suitors interrupt to rebuke or embolden Iros, providing a negative (metapragmatic) model for Homer's audiences. After he defeats Iros, Odysseus dramatically drags the loser to the front of the courtyard and dresses him up as a scarecrow

to ward off boars and dogs. This use of costume contributes to our sense of the whole event as a spectacle. While the suitors do not enjoy Odysseus's gesture of setting the loser up for ridicule, Homer's audience may: the scene may prod them to disparage Iros, as a scapegoat, and to applaud Odysseus, who not only wins the contest that he has staged but even metes out to the vanquished a just public reward.

These and other spectacles in the *Odyssey* display diverse responses by internal audiences – Achaean warriors in the wooden horse, Odysseus and his crew aboard ship, Olympian gods (especially Hermes), and the band of suitors. Two spectators (Hermes in the 'Adultery on Olympus' and the suitors in the 'Beggar's Combat') actively participate in the unfolding event and express their individual attitudes towards the participants. On two occasions, in the 'Wooden Horse' and the 'Sirens,' Odysseus is an ideal auditor: he resists the enchantment of beguiling words and survives. In 'Adultery on Olympus,' the internal spectators delight in the use of a contraption (called a *dolos* 'deceit') to heighten the drama. Two protagonists (Hephaestus as a craftsman of beds and Odysseus as an inventor of the Horse) use devices to gain an end, enhancing the status of an artist. Thematically, the spectacle scenes tend to promote or discourage possible external audience responses.

In addition to bardic scenes and spectacles, characters hearing and imagining events, using their ears and eyes to apprehend, supply models for Homer's listeners. For example, Athena alights at the palace in Ithaca just as Telemachus is envisioning his father's return (1.115). He fantasizes along a syntagmatic axis, imagining his father returning, then scattering the suitors, and ultimately reclaiming his honour and being lord over his possessions. Here Telemachus literally envisions a narrative sequence; the 'return' plot of the *Odyssey*, as Homer expects his audience to do.

The weaving metaphor so prevalent in the *Odyssey* (especially for crafting epic poetry) also suggests a visualization of the actions, characters, and places of which Homer sings. The poet weaves events into strands of plot and images into descriptions; the audience 'sees' the final product, a variegated tapestry. The weaving gesture and the woven product entrap, like a spider's web, like lies and disguises.[16] Weaving diction locates poetry within the female domestic domain, since the poet as weaver resembles the Moirae spinning destiny. As the three sisters spin, so the poet weaves, inspired by the Muse. Moreover, several dangerous female characters in Odysseus's 'Adventures' weave as they sing, notably Calypso (at 5.61–2) and Circe (at 10.220–3); conjoined, these two activities (singing and weaving) herald danger for Odysseus. Oral poetics and mythological metaphysics alike embrace the image of women weaving and singing destinies that are fraught with danger; when Homer aligns

himself metaphorically with these weaving singers, or singer weavers, he sends metasemantic and especially metapragmatic signals to his listeners to beware of the power of his song. The metapragmatic message might be: 'Remain cautious!' and 'Don't believe everything I say!'

From my examples of internal bardic scenes and spectacles, it becomes clear that Homer uses a specialized vocabulary for oral poetics, and each time he uses such a word he alerts his audience to think about his epic performance and react appropriately. Some key words and phrases are *thelxis* 'enchantment', *terpsis* 'delight' and its opposite *penthos* 'grief', *euphrosunê* 'merriment', *morphê epeôn* 'the shape of words', *epeessi + meilikhoisi* 'with gentle words'; also, by metaphoric extension, *pharmaka* 'drugs', *huphainô* 'weave'; *teukhô* 'fashion, construct', *tekhnê* 'craft, art', *polumêchanos* 'much devising', *polumêtis* 'of many plans'. *Euphrosunê* arises from a successful interaction between poet and audience, which has a reciprocal quality, a give and take.[17] The singer – as a *dêmiourgos* – depends on communal acceptance, yet he also manipulates his community through poetic ruses of all sorts, offering them pleasure (*terpsis*) in return. For *euphrosunê* to occur, power between poet and audience must be in equilibrium; all the listeners must experience pleasure and no one can be begrudging, disgruntled, or discontent. Begrudging listeners have no share in communal festivities and would detract from the final harmonic effect. If dissension arises, enchantment (*thelxis*) resulting in persuasion (*peithô*) may soften the rift in time.

Homer's listeners must have ranged from gullible to sceptical, like the audiences he portrays within his epic. They also probably were diverse in age and gender. The metasemantic and metapragmatic signals in his performance poem may have targeted particular segments of his audiences, sending special messages to turbulent youths, now to staid elders. The method I have proposed and illustrated should help modern readers of the *Odyssey* 'hear' these often covert messages and appreciate more fully the dynamic between Homer and his listeners.

NOTES

1 By Homer, I mean the flesh-and-blood poet in his role as singer of tales and as narrator of the *Odyssey*. Because he is present at performance, the narratological distinction between author and speaker is less distinct than for written texts. That is, the physical presence of the poet standing before his audience takes on some importance in the case of performance texts.

2 The arguments presented here are further developed in *Regarding Penelope: From Character to Poetics* (1994). The Greek text I use is that of Stanford, and the translations are from Lattimore, but I generally use Romanized transliterations, like Telemachus and Nausicaa, where he uses Hellenized ones.

3 On the distinction between metapragmatic and metasemantic signals, see Felson-Rubin 1990 (121–38), with citations.

4 For these particular discriminations, see Genette 1980.

5 On bards, storytellers, and liars in the *Odyssey* see especially Thalmann 1984, 113–84; see also Scully 1981, 67–83, Scott 1989, 382–412, and Trahman 1952, 31–43.

6 The Argive bard and Phemius both operate in conditions of political disarray, and the social disorder impinges upon their safety.

7 This parallel between poetry as a craft and carpentry goes as far back as Indo-European 'poetics'; on the Indo-European use of **tek(s)* – in the semantic realms of poetics and carpentry, see Schmitt 1967, 296–301, and Nagy 1979, 298–300, 311. Nagy quotes a simile from *Rig-Veda* 1.130.6ab, which he translates: 'the sons of Ayu, wishing for good things, fitted together this utterance, just as the skilled artisan (fits together) a chariot.'

8 The glory (*kleos*) that Odysseus offers to the Phaeacians when he tells them his 'Adventures' he later bestows upon them by recounting their deeds to Penelope (23.338–41). The Phaeacians' interest in being remembered by Odysseus once he is home is expressed repeatedly by King Alcinous, particularly at the athletic event (e.g., 8.101–3, 241–5). Moreover, Odysseus mentions *kleos* in his first speech to Alcinous, a prayer that the king may accomplish everything of which he spoke (namely, conveyance of Odysseus), and so may have imperishable or unquenchable glory (*asbeston kleos* [7.333]). In this remarkable prayer, Odysseus intimates that, in return for their hospitality and gifts, he can offer not only entertainment in Scheria but also a permanent place in epic song.

9 Odysseus suffers trouble and brings trouble to those he encounters; on this double aspect (active and passive) in relation to the etymology of Odysseus's name, see Dimock 1956; 1989 and Peradotto 1990.

10 Indeed back in Ithaca, Athena will praise him for the very qualities of which Alcinous absolves him: his profiteering and his thievery (cf. 13.291–5). Odysseus's 'Adventures' are not innocent in intent, as the king imagines, but aimed at profit. He wants safe escort home and plenty of gifts; he pitches his stories so as to entice already willing hosts and auditors to comply and, once they have promised escort, to keep that promise.

11 Earlier, Odysseus had used a similar expression to criticize the rude Euryalus on whose words the gods place no shapeliness (*morphên* [8.170]). Euryalus, who did

not speak fittingly (*kata moiran* or *kata kosmon*) and had no shape on his words, had to make amends to Odysseus to restore balance.

12 Svenbro (1976) makes much of the subservient position of the *aoidos*, whereas I see the relation between singer and society as more reciprocal, more dynamic, and less stable. At one moment, the bard serves his audience, at another, he manipulates and thus dominates them.

13 Costumes, though not thought to belong to Homer's repertoire of activities as he composed in performance, certainly agree with the spirit of epos, which can be imagined to include every sort of impersonation short of actual disguise.

14 Menelaus's motivations in telling this tale are complex. First, he wants to correct Helen's self-depiction in her matching and preceding tale. Secondly, he wants to praise Odysseus, before Telemachus, as a model not only of self-restraint but of leadership: not only did he resist Helen's enticement, presumably in Penelope's voice, but he also restrained the hearts of his companions and saved the Achaeans from disaster. Thirdly, he provides Anticlus as a negative exemplum for Telemachus, who is in the same age group: 'Though young, do not succumb to female wiles.' As Homer's listeners, especially the unmarried youths, visualize Helen acting out her impersonations, they might be prodded to reflect on mimesis and its dangers, as well as on the dangers of female inconstancy. On the pair of speeches by Helen and Menelaus, see Olson 1989, 387–94.

15 On gender-specified audiences, see Doherty 1992; note how Penelope's lone presence at the Contest of the Bow intrudes in the 'men's club' atmosphere of the event.

16 Hephaestus's contraption resembles the web of a spider; Telemachus connects spiders' webs on his parents' marriage bed with his mother's betrayal.

17 The words *thelxis* and *thelktêria* and *kêleuthmos* occurs fifteen times in the *Odyssey*, mainly in the contexts of song and eros. Odysseus states that in 9.6 that the noblest thing is when a bard achieves *euphrosunên kata dêmon* 'communal merriment'; this is achieved through *thelxis* as well as *terpsis*.

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Of Worlds and Nutshells: On Casanova's *Icosameron*

DIDIER COSTE

'Possible' is the fine line that tantalizingly separates and unites a single inexorable 'real' from other worlds that, for all their high risk, would provide the subject[1] with relief and release, time to breathe as well as space to entangle its limbs.

How does one, then, treat and tread this line, how does one trip and trade over it? The question is all the more delicate and poignant when the line in question is no longer a horizon (impalpable, ever displaced) but the very earth we stand on. What happens when we drill the foundation of the real? Is a dark continent going to well up to our mouths, or are we going to be driven into a bottomless pit of speechless desire? How initiatory can be a voyage to the origins? How original can be a trip into 'otherland'? How relativistic can the 'history' of here and then become?

Casanova's *Icosameron* could be an ideal test case, insofar as its text lay undiscovered – ignored – under our feet for some two hundred years, buried in an eighteenth-century Prague edition and a 1928 Italian edition. Even in its current 1988 Paris form, it is a 'complete-but-for' text. Ever since Casanova's *Histoire de ma vie* was eventually published in a decent – almost complete, but not critical – edition in the 1960s, we have been waiting for some literary and cultural reassessment, but biography remains master of the field. Will the publication of *Icosameron* change this state of affairs? It is too early to conclude that the resistance of our ignorance is coming to an end, but we can be sure that we are dealing with one of the very major productions of the European Enlightenment, that is, one that encourages a thorough revision of some widespread ideas on this cultural set.

The location of the telling 'vers le bord du canal de Saint-George du côté de Monmouth, dans la belle maison du comte de Bridgend'(Casanova 1988, 7) is not indifferent. Saint George is paired with the Dragon; Monmouth stands for 'my mouth' in Frenglish; and the end of a bridge is definitely the appropriate

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Editors:
Linda Hutcheon, Gary Leonard, Jill Matus,
Janet Paterson, and Paul Perron

EDITED BY CALIN-ANDREI MIHAILESCU
AND WALID HAMARNEH

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