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## Human cognition and narrative closure

### The *Odyssey's* open-end<sup>1</sup>

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Although there has been much work on the psychological relevance of Homeric language and on cognitive aspects of memory and identity in Homer (e.g. Minchin 2001 and 2007),<sup>2</sup> literary approaches informed by cognitive science may still help us see both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in new ways. In particular, the application of cognitive science to Homeric poetry promises to help modern readers appreciate how deeply—even if only implicitly—ancient Greeks understood human mental functions, thus providing another perspective on interactions between poem and audience during repeated performances. Collective narratives which developed over time—like those represented by orally derived epic—reflect the ways in which storytelling emerges from and reinforces patterns inscribed in previous narratives and social roles. A range of modern cognitive theories support the centrality of storytelling to shared culture: intersubjectivity, for example, emphasizes how our collective everyday life is built from worlds shared with others through common narratives (see especially in Zlatev et al. 2008).<sup>3</sup> The theory of extended mind, too, helps us to understand how complex mental functions may rely in part on our environment and engagement with others (see Clark and Chalmers 1998). And, as David Hutto (2007) argues, such narrative engagement channels 'folk psychology', echoing the process whereby children develop the ability to attribute mental states to others by hearing and telling stories.<sup>4</sup>

The broad cognitive frameworks for narrative I have just mentioned should encourage us to reconsider representations of minds in Homeric epic and potential interactions between such representations and the minds of epic's audiences. As a step in this direction, this chapter explores some ways in which modern cognitive frameworks help us understand both the problematic ending of the *Odyssey* and, through an exegesis of this end, aspects of literary closure in general. I will start by describing a range of cognitive and literary frameworks for human responses to closure. Then, I will survey signs of closure in the *Odyssey*, some interpretive difficulties of effecting closure in the tale, and the epic's economy of pleasure. I will close by focusing on three representations of problematic closure deployed in *Odyssey* 24 to argue both that the epic anticipates its audiences' responses to complete and incomplete knowledge and that a cognitive-literary approach facilitates a useful reinterpretation of the poem. The epic depicts pleasure coming from narratives that resolve and grief issuing from incomplete endings. In doing so, it provides an anticipative framework for its own ending: inexplicable or problematic endings, rather than being mere causes of grief, present opportunities for agency and redefinition.

### Storytelling, human cognition, and closure

As I will discuss below, the Homeric *Odyssey* has a complex end with a history of fraught interpretations. I assume that the strangeness of the epic's end is purposeful and that it derives in part from a basic understanding of the relationship between the human mind and narrative closure. Before adumbrating the basic outlines of the epic's ends and its interpretive difficulties, it will be useful to survey some cognitive theories about the importance and function of storytelling.

There are a range of approaches which emphasize the relationship between narrative and cognition in human minds. For instance, Mark Turner has argued that imagining a narrative sequence is a "fundamental instrument of thought" (1996, 4) and, further, that utilizing some narratives as paradigmatic—patterns that guide the way we interpret the world—is "indispensable to human cognition" (5). The experience of narrative and, in turn, its generation is essential to cognitive development. From the beginning of our experience of the world, we internalize causality: For example, pre-linguistic infants come to expect outcomes (objects falling when pushed, for example) and express surprise at encountering something non-causal (Bruner 1986, 18). Charles Fernyhough describes well the emergence of a toddler's capacity to remember events along with the ability to tell stories with the self at center (2012, 17).<sup>5</sup> And these early stories—as well as the memories they generate—necessarily entail a sense of cause and effect which may be imposed on observed phenomena by human agency.

There is, then, a gap between what happens in the external world and the story our brains develop to explain observed events. As Turner argues, the human mind converts things that happen (an event-story) into *acts* (action-stories) that necessitate agents and objects, which in turn require responsibility and blame; as a result, human audiences will tend to reject narratives that fail to adhere to previous narrative experience. The importance of narrative sequence is implicit in the argument of Aristotle's *Poetics* when he insists that a plot must have a beginning, middle, and end (*Poetics*, 1450b–1451a). For Aristotle, this imitation of events as humans experience them conveys pleasure. Aristotle does not explain why a plot that is causally connected with a clear end is the best one.<sup>6</sup> But if we follow his argument throughout the *Poetics*, a compelling plot—namely one that adheres to audience expectations about causal relations—is more effective in conveying verisimilitude, and therefore most successful in provoking an emotional reaction when the expected pattern is *excepted*, generating surprise and wonder. Aristotle calls this cleansing *catharsis*—and scholars like Martha Nussbaum have argued that catharsis is both emotional and intellectual: that the experience of identifying with a mimetic narrative forces the audience into a "clarification concerning who we are".<sup>7</sup>

So, Aristotle makes it clear that stories with endings that *seem* causally determined facilitate our enjoyment of and identification with a story (along with a clarification of identity). As Andy Clark (2015) proposes in his theory of 'predictive processing', our brains are constantly engaged in a process of predicting outcomes and mapping actions based on a store of prior experiences.<sup>8</sup> These predictive processes govern basic motor functions as well as some higher-order behaviors. While we share such cognitive apparatus with other animals, Clark argues that what makes human cognition different is our ability to shape and rely on our environments and the extended cognitive field provided by human culture and language (14–16).<sup>9</sup> As a result, then, of such basic cognitive 'wiring', outcomes that defy our predictions can cause surprise, if not discomfort.

We can experience a gnawing frustration that comes from not knowing how a story ends; this feeling comes equally from the experience of fiction and from the suspense of real life. The studies I have mentioned so far help to indicate the fundamental level at which this type of emotional feedback is generated. While narrative logic dictates that everything which begins

has an end, this logic is a human *need* with philosophical and neurobiological motivations: not knowing how things turn out causes us nearly existential pain. As Clark summarizes from a perspective of perception and neurological function, our cognitive function "depends crucially upon cancelling out sensory prediction error" (2013, 7); breaks in patterns or unexpected outcomes are "explained away" through a higher-order cognitive process. From a literary standpoint, Johnathan Gottschall proposes that our "mind is allergic to uncertainty, randomness, and coincidence. It is addicted to meaning. If the storytelling mind cannot find meaningful patterns in the world it will try to impose them" (2012, 103).

We might be tempted to describe such a neural 'programming' as a narrative causality bias—but it is one that we come to almost by necessity in response to external stimuli. Psychologists like Jerome Bruner have argued that the thing we describe as the *Self* is a type of evolving narrative 'text' written in relation to our experiences in the world (1986, 130). Evolutionary biologist Edmund Wilson takes this further to assert that our minds themselves consist almost entirely of storytelling.<sup>10</sup> Years of working on the human brain and reflecting on these studies have led Joseph LeDoux to conclude "that consciousness is an interpreter of experience, a means by which we develop a self-story that we use to understand those motivations and actions that arise from non-conscious processes in our brains" (2015, 5–6). The species-level advantage of this narrative capacity is enormous; but it also makes us vulnerable to narrative 'blips'. The human tendency toward confabulation is a good illustration of this. And this tendency may be neurologically determined. In a series of experiments on patients with a separation in the hemispheres of their brains, Michael Gazzaniga and Joseph LeDoux provided an image to the right hemisphere which could not be detected or contextualized by the left. LeDoux summarizes:

For example, in one study we simultaneously showed the patient's left hemisphere a chicken claw and the right hemisphere a snow scene. The patient's left hand then selected a picture of a shovel. When the patient was asked why he made this choice, his left hemisphere (the speaking hemisphere) responded that it saw a chicken and you need a shovel to clean out the chicken shed. The left hemisphere thus used the information it had available to construct a reality that matched the two pieces of information available: it saw a picture of a chicken and it saw its hand selecting a shovel.

(LeDoux 2015, 10)

To put this in an Aristotelian frame: the subject receives images that have no actual causal connection and creates a narrative to connect them. Not only are our brains wired in such a way as to invent a story "rather than leave something unexplained" (Gottschall 2012, 99), but the type of story we create tends to have agents and objects whose arrangement is based on individual experience and cultural beliefs. Our brains use our senses to gather data from the world, but they are economical in doing this: we are constantly filling in details that are not there and completing stories. When our brains encounter surprise or outcomes contrary to our expectations, such a "sensory prediction error" (see Clark 2015 cited above) can produce cognitive dissonance. This is why we get so disturbed when we don't know how something ends: most of the time, our brains are picking out endings and reconstructing narratives that would likely lead to them.

The human desire to bring a narrative to its end comes as no surprise from a literary perspective either—drawing on psychoanalysis, critics like Peter Brooks (1992, 102–103) see the death instinct operative in both the pleasure derived from moving toward a text's end and a concomitant impulse to delay that end or to repeatedly return through the same movement. This is confirmed too by psychologists who study the effect of death-anxiety on human behavior:

narrative functions both to safeguard us against mortal fear and to give us meaning despite it.<sup>11</sup> Critics have explored and plotted different generic and cultural attitudes toward those narratives that effect closure and those that appear to remain open. Indeed, many readers have seen a tension or *dialectic* between openness and closure as an indication of sophisticated narrative, of what some might call literature. But much of this leads us down interpretive paths that are both closed and endless—as the late classicist Don Fowler writes, “whether we look for closure or aperture or a *dialectic* between them in a text is a function of our own presuppositions, not of anything ‘objective’ about the text” (Fowler 1997, 5).

### Ending the poem and the economy of pleasure

What the *Odyssey* has to say about the emotional effect of storytelling and the way it shapes teller and audiences derives in part, I believe, from human sensed experience, both of the pleasure of anticipating a tale’s end and of the pain of not knowing its conclusion. The epic plays with conventions of story-ending and closure; the complexity of this ‘play’ both relies upon generic expectations about closure (in a literary sense) and also reflects an understanding of the emotional impact of narrative endings. *Odyssey* 24 offers at least seven closural moments, including: the second underworld scene, the third retelling of the story of Laertes’ shroud, the last reunion of the homecoming (Odysseus and Laertes), the split debate among the suitors, followed by the death of Eupheithes, an adjudicating conversation between Zeus and Athena, and the imposed amnesty (*Ekleisis*).<sup>12</sup> These moments are entwined; but they also address specific themes and plots explored within the epic.

How the *Odyssey* ends has prevented many readers from appreciating its effects. Since at least the fourth century bce there have been questions about its conclusions—Hellenistic scholars saw resolution in the amorous reunion of husband and wife (23.293–296), while Aristotle saw the epic’s *telos* or completion in the payback of the suitors.<sup>13</sup> Eustathius, however, complained that these interpreters “cut off critical parts of the *Odyssey*, such as the reunion of Odysseus and Laertes and many other amazing things” (Comm. ad *Od.*, II.308). And, although book 24 is now accepted as essential to the whole, it has been called “ugly” (Bakker 2013, 129) and “lame, hasty, awkward, abrupt” (Wender 1978, 63).

In order to appreciate the interpretive challenges posed by these closural moments briefly surveyed above, we need to trace the threads of the epic tapestry back to when Odysseus and Eumaios converse after dining (15.398–402):

Let us delight in one another’s gruesome pains while we drink and dine in my home, remembering. A man may delight later on in his pains when he has suffered many and gone through much.<sup>14</sup>

νῶϊ δ’ ἐνὶ κλισίῃ πίνοντέ τε δαίνυμένω τε  
κῆδεσιν ἀλλήλων τερπόμεθα λευγαλόισι  
μνωσόμεν· μετὰ γάρ τε καὶ ἄλγεσι τέρπεται ἄνθρωπος,  
ὅς τις δὴ μάλα πολλὰ πάθη καὶ πόλλ’ ἐπαλήθῃ

When understood within its broader thematic framework, this passage marks the epic’s programmatic engagement with expectations concerning and emotional responses to closure. Eumaios supports his injunction to find pleasure in pain with something of a proverb—he moves from a proposition about their individual situation to a comment on universal human conditions. Pleasure for Eumaios and, as implied by his gnomic statement, for others too, emerges in part

from a narrative that is definitively in the past. Elsewhere, the epic seems preoccupied with the relationship between narrative and pleasure. But it explores this against a general sensual backdrop: the poem’s narrative presents an economy of pleasure where gods and heroes alike derive enjoyment from feasting (e.g. 1.25, 1.422, 4.27), conversation (4.239), athletic competition (4.626 and 17.168), and sex (5.227).<sup>15</sup> Narratives which bring pleasure often involve Odysseus: Helen invites Telemachus and Menelaos to take pleasure in stories about Odysseus (4.238–241). The Phaeacians enjoy the story of the quarrel of Odysseus and Achilles (8.90–92; Odysseus weeps). Odysseus takes pleasure in the story of Hephaestus (8.367–369), later crying at the story of the Trojan horse (8.521–522). Odysseus, in his own account, takes a dangerous pleasure in the song of the Sirens (12.51–54). This basic pattern is interesting for the range of pleasure experienced (which is largely understandable) and the pain felt by Odysseus. Amid these moments, Menelaos “delights his mind with grief sometimes” (ἄλλοτε μὲν τε γόφ’ ὀρένα τέρπομαι, 4.102) and Penelope likewise describes her days as pleased by grieving and lamenting (ἡμᾶτα μὲν γὰρ τέρπομ’ ὁδορομένη γοώωσα, 19.513–514). These final two passages help frame the aforementioned examples of narrative enjoyment, if we consider Eumaios’ words about taking pleasure in grief more carefully. A man takes pleasure (τέρπεται) *afterwards* (μετὰ) when he has *finished enduring* pain (ἐπαλήθῃ). The presence of the adverb and the aspectual distinction between the verbs of pleasure and suffering give this passage its force and help to guide us to a deeper understanding of the poem’s reflections on narrative and closure.

It is not just a narrative’s embedding in a previous time that makes it pleasurable, but rather its *completion*. At a very basic level, I suggest, the *Odyssey* tells us that pleasure comes from a narrative that *ends*. Even if you have suffered, you can experience pleasure from a tale that has an ending. It is no accident that in books 1, 4, and 8 we find characters confessing to almost paralyzing grief over a tale whose end is unknown—in fact, over the unknown end of the tale that is being told. This theme is not just about the experience of the *Odyssey*’s characters; it also anticipates audience experience of the *Odyssey* and problematic expectations for the resolution of its plot.

### Signaling closure

The final book of the *Odyssey* is in part about how to end a poem. This process of its closure, moreover, itself capitalizes upon both the narrative it has developed prior to this book and an implicit understanding of human psychology. As I explore above, psychological and literary perspectives help to explain why audiences desire to know how a story ends but are troubled by the fact that it must end. I will turn now to explore three signs of closure that emerge in book 24 to show the extent to which the book may prompt similar reflections on closure. First, I will discuss a formulaic pattern that originates in book 1, then the repeated story of Penelope’s shroud for Laertes, and, finally, the conversation between Achilles and Agamemnon at the beginning of book 24.

Zeus’ opening comments in the *Odyssey* (“Mortals! They are always blaming the gods and saying that evil comes from us when they themselves suffer pain beyond their lot [ὅπ’ ἐρ μόρον ἄλγε’ ἔχουσιν] because of their own recklessness [σοφῆσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν]”) offer a paradigmatic lesson,<sup>16</sup> but they also inspire the construction of a narrative in response: the event of suffering initiates an action-story, relating misery to a complex web of human and divine agency. When characters feel pleasure or pain at the telling of a tale, the external audience is cued to seek out its cause.

Storytelling’s effects, then, are at issue early in the poem—indeed, Zeus is responding to one narrative, the story of Aigisthus and Orestes, and expressing frustration over the fact that human beings fail to learn the extent of their own responsibility. For Zeus, the story of Aigisthus presents a paradigmatic problem; but it is a repeated pattern. His frustration derives from suffering



the same experience again and again. Different emotional effects from storytelling are central to the conversation between Penelope and Telemachus in book 1 (337–344):

Phemios, you know many other spells for mortals, the deeds of men and gods, the things singers make famous while they remain here singing as these men sit drinking their wine in silence. Stop this grievous song: it wears always on the heart in my chest and unforgettable grief [*penthos alaston*] has come over me especially. Always remembering that sort of man, I long for my husband whose fame [*kleos*] spreads wide through Greece and Argos.

Φήμε, πολλὰ γὰρ ἄλλα βροτῶν θελκτήρια οἶδας  
ἔργ' ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε, τὰ τε κλείουσιν ἀοιδοί·  
τῶν ἔν σφιν ἄειδε παρήμενος, οἱ δὲ σιωπῇ  
οἶνον πινόντων ταύτης δ' ἀποπαύε' ἀοιδῆς  
λυγρῆς, ἣ τέ μοι αἰὲν ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλον κῆρ  
τείρει, ἐπεὶ με μάλιστα καθέκετο πένθος ἄλαστον.  
τοῖην γὰρ κεφαλὴν ποθέω μεμνημένη αἰεὶ  
ἀνδρός, τοῦ κλέος εὐρὺ καθ' Ἑλλάδα καὶ μέσον Ἄργος.

Penelope asks for the suitors to sing a different song, because this one causes her *penthos alaston*, ceaseless pain. Note how she limits the function of storytelling for this audience: she characterizes the song as *bewitchment* [θελκτήρια], entertainment. There is a gap here in the way the internal audiences respond to the same narrative: the suitors' entertainment is Penelope's pain. This contrast also bears fruit in its psychological reflections. The cause of the difference in their responses becomes clearer when Telemachus speaks (346–355):

My mother, why do you begrudge the singer to delight wherever his mind leads him. Singers aren't to blame but Zeus is who allots to each of mortal men however he wishes. There's nothing wrong with him singing the terrible fate of the Danaans, for men make more famous the song which comes most recently to their ears. Let your heart and mind be bold enough to listen: Odysseus wasn't the only man who lost his homecoming day in Troy, many other men died too.

Telemachus acknowledges that the story is the “terrible fate of the Danaans” but endorses the telling of it for two reasons: first, the most entertaining tale is the most recent one—and no story is more current than this. And, second, the grief is not only hers: other men died during the return home. The difference in the responses of Penelope and Telemachus is easy to explain from an emotional perspective. Penelope is emotionally connected to the absence of her husband—and its effects—in a way Telemachus cannot be. Even though Odysseus' delayed return has had a negative material impact on Telemachus, his father is still just a *story* to him. Accordingly, his reception of the tale relativizes it: Odysseus is one of many. But what often goes unnoticed is that Telemachus and the suitors are able to derive pleasure because they have implicitly provided a different end to the story: They think that Odysseus is dead.<sup>17</sup>

There is additional thematic relevance beyond the divergent emotional responses. When Telemachus makes it to Sparta in book 4, Menelaos confesses to indulging in grief as he thinks back to his companions, the war, and the terrible returns home (4.104–112):

Often, while grieving and mourning everyone and while sitting in my home I sometimes delight my mind with lamentation; and other times I stop, since my fill for shrill lament is fast-coming. I don't grieve so much for all the others when I mourn as for one who troubles my sleep and my food as I remember him—since no one of the Achaeans toiled and achieved as much as Odysseus did. I will always feel grief for him and my woe [*akhos*] for him is always unforgettable [*alaston*] because he has been gone so long and we do not know if he is alive or dead. So, too, must they mourn for him, I imagine, elderly Laertes, prudent Penelope and Telemachus, the child he left just born in their household.

Here again we find an expression of emotion similar to Penelope's. In contrast to Telemachus, Menelaos makes Odysseus exceptional; he singles him out from the many others and imagines the response of those bereft of him. The diction ties his response to Penelope's too: He isolates Odysseus for causing him grief, here too described as *alaston*.<sup>18</sup> Menelaos provides another clue to the difference between Telemachus' response to the homecomings and Penelope's. The unrelenting grief marked by the adjective *alastos* is steeped in uncertainty or a lack of resolution: Penelope does not know if Odysseus is alive or dead. Telemachus' comments make it clear that he does not feel similarly because to his mind the story is over. That Telemachus has written an end to his father's tale is implied in later books. During a conversation with Nestor, in fact, he declares Odysseus dead and incapable of achieving a “true return” (κείνῳ δ' οὐκέτι νόστος ἐπὶ τυμός, 3.241). Later when he asks Menelaos for some fame of his father (εἴ τινα μοι κληῖδονα πατρός ἐνίσποις, 4.316), he attempts to put a limit on the tale by framing this request as a wish to be informed of the “grievous ruin” of that man (κείνου λυγρὸν ὄλεθρον ἐνίσπειν, 4.323).

This dynamic between the pleasurable pain from a sad tale that has an end and the destructive grief from the unresolved narrative appears elsewhere in the *Odyssey*. As I anticipated in discussing Eumaios' invitation to Odysseus to indulge in telling each other sad tales, the fact that the tales are complete and behind them is crucial for their pleasure-content—a positive cognitive feedback loop from telling a complete tale. Stories that have been told and are over are narrative experiences that communicate who the characters are—the stories that we tell each other of our pasts establish identities for our present.

When stories are incomplete and cannot be told, the epic marks them out as having a detrimental effect. Eumaios, in a slightly earlier scene, reveals that he too mourns without ceasing (*alaston*) for Telemachus because he does not know if the boy is alive or dead and it causes grief because he is helpless to effect any change at all (14.174–190). Eumaios draws a direct connection between hearing about his guest's suffering and knowing him (ἀλλ' ἄγε μοι σὺ, γεραίε, τὰ σ' αὐτοῦ κήδε' ἐνίσπες / καὶ μοι τοῦτ' ἀγόρευσον ἐπὶ τυμόν, ὄφρ' ἐδ' εἰδῶ). The adjective *alastos*, also applied to Odysseus' absence earlier by Penelope and Menelaos, has etymological associations to explain its use. I have translated it in different ways (e.g. “ceaseless” or “inescapable”), but its etymology points most clearly to a root that might render it “unforgettable”—marking something that cannot be forgotten no matter how hard one tries.<sup>19</sup> The adjective *alastos* is applied to grief and grieving (with three different lexical roots: *penthos*, *akhos*, and *oduromai*) over events that have no clear ending; they are “unforgettable” in the sense of inescapable. These associations are metanarrative and metacognitive: such grief is connected both to the incompleteness of the *Odyssey* and to our desire to turn events into action-narratives that have clear outcomes. Just as the poem's external audience witnesses its internal audiences struggling with the incompleteness of tales, the external audience experiences strains of similar frustration: in one part, in sympathy for the characters themselves; and in another, in response to a growing need to know the end of the tale itself.

A final occurrence of the same adjective helps to support these last assertions. During the Ithacan assembly on the deaths of the suitors, Eupheithes stands to speak about what the aggrieved families should do.<sup>20</sup> Before he speaks, the narrative describes him (24.428–430):

Among them then Eupheithes stood and spoke, for unforgettable grief [*alaston* . . . *penthos*] filled his thoughts over his son Antinoos whom Odysseus killed first.

τοῖσιν δ' Εὐπείθης ἀνά θ' ἴστατο καὶ μετέειπε·  
παιδὸς γάρ οἱ ἄλαστον ἐνὶ φρεσὶ πένθος ἔκειτο,  
Ἀντινόου, τὸν πρῶτον ἐνήρατο δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς·

This moment departs from the earlier examples in significant ways. First, the narrative describes Eupheithes as suffering “unforgettable grief”—in the earlier passages, it is the characters themselves who use the phrase. Second, Eupheithes is speaking of someone who is already dead and whom they have just buried. This second feature challenges the claim that there is an essential lack of closure to grief described with the adjective *alastos*. Eupheithes explains the source of his grief in the speech that follows (24.428–438):

Friends, this man has accomplished a ‘great’ deed for the Achaeans: He led many fine men away on his ships—then he lost the ships, and he lost the men. And, once he returned, he killed those who were best of the Kephallenians. But come, let us go, before that man flies off to Pylos or shining Elis where the Epeians rule. Otherwise we will be ashamed forever. This will be an object of reproach even for men to come to learn, if we do not pay back the murders of our relatives and sons. It cannot be sweet to my mind at least to live like this. But instead, I would rather perish immediately and dwell with the dead. But, let’s go so that those men don’t cross to the mainland first.

ὦ φίλοι, ἧ μέγα ἔργον ἀνὴρ ὅδε μήσατ' Ἀχαιοῦς·  
τοὺς μὲν σὺν νήεσσιν ἄγων πολέας τε καὶ ἐσθλοὺς  
ᾤλεσε μὲν νῆας γλαφυράς, ἀπὸ δ' ᾤλεσε λαοὺς,  
τοὺς δ' ἐλθὼν ἔκτεινε Κεφαλλήνων ὄχ' ἀρίστους.  
ἀλλ' ἄγετε, πρὶν τοῦτον ἢ ἐς Πύλον ὅκα ἰκέσθαι  
ἢ καὶ ἐς Ἥλιν διὰν, ὅθι κρατέουσιν Ἑπαιοί,  
ἴομεν· ἢ καὶ ἔπειτα κατηφέες ἐσόμεθ' αἰεὶ.  
λώβη γὰρ τάδε γ' ἐστὶ καὶ ἐσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι,  
εἰ δὴ μὴ παίδων τε κασιγνήτων τε φονῆας  
τεισόμεθ'· οὐκ ἂν ἐμοὶ γε μετὰ φρεσὶν ἡδὺ γένοιτο  
ζῶμεν, ἀλλὰ τάχιστα θανὼν φθιμένοισι μετείην.  
ἀλλ' ἴομεν, μὴ φθέωσι περαιωθέντες ἐκείνοι.

The grief attributed to Eupheithes expands our understanding of what qualifies as *alaston*. As Eupheithes explains, the source of his pain is a different type of incomplete story: he—and the other families—are due to pay back Odysseus for the deaths of so many Ithakans or else suffer reproach in the future. So strong is this impulse that Eupheithes would rather die than go on living without completing this obligation. Penelope and Menelaos powerlessly wait for resolution to their anxiety about Odysseus while Eupheithes suffers because he believes he must act to continue the story and write a new ending for his son.

Two additional features make the attribution of *alaston penthos* to Eupheithes more clearly motivated and, indeed, especially powerful in the context of the epic tradition. The first is

etymological: already by the time of Homer, the related noun *alastor* for avenger was active—the man who seeks and exacts vengeance is one who by nature cannot or will not forget.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the passage draws additional force from its resonance with repeated descriptions of parents’ *unforgettable grief*. In the *Iliad*, Thetis, carrying unforgettable sorrow in her heart, has *penthos alaston* in her thoughts as she grieves for Achilles, whom, though still alive, will die. She is powerless to act to save him (πένθος ἄλαστον ἔχουσα μετὰ φρεσὶν· οἶδα καὶ αὐτός; *Il.* 24.105). In the Homeric *Hymn to Aphrodite*, the Trojan king Tros feels unforgettable grief when his son Ganymede disappears (“Unforgettable grief overtook Tros’ mind because he did not know where the divine wind had taken his dear son [Ganymede]: He mourned him thereafter continually every day”; Τρῶα δὲ πένθος ἄλαστον ἔχε φρένας, οὐδὲ τι ᾔδει / ὅπη οἱ φίλον υἱὸν ἀνέρπασε θεσπὶς ἄελλα· / τὸν δὲ ἔπειτα γόασκε διαμπερές ἡματα πάντα, 207–209). And, in Hesiod’s *Theogony*, Rhea has the same emotional response when Kronos eats her children (“[Kronos] did not keep a blind watch, but he noticed the children [being born] and ate them up. And unforgettable grief took Rhea”; τῷ δ' γ' ἄρ' οὐκ ἀλασκοπιὴν ἔχεν, ἀλλὰ δοκεῖων / παῖδας ἐὺς κατέπινε· Ῥῆην δ' ἔχε πένθος ἄλαστον, 466–467). In each case, the inescapable emotion comes from a situation outside the character’s control, is related to a strong emotional bond, and happens at a time of paralysis or inaction. In these examples, the formulaic invocation of grief depends upon a narrative pattern: the pain issues from a lack of resolution, from not knowing whether one thing or another has happened, and not being able to do anything about it.

Here, Homeric formulaic language and its marked deployment echo what modern studies have demonstrated regarding the impact of a certain type of grief. Psychological research has identified unresolved grief—sometimes called “ambiguous loss” (see Boss 1999)—as a special category with symptoms similar to “anxiety, depression, and somatic illnesses” (Boss 1999, 10). The uncertainty or lack of resolution can cause inaction and undermine confidence in the self and the world (*ibid.*, 107). Indeed, additional studies have shown that individuals who are coping with “complicated grief” demonstrate a diminished capacity for attention and compromised cognitive functions (Hall et al. 2014). This is caused in part by a dysfunctional return to the cause of uncertainty, “a repetitive loop of intense yearning and longing that becomes the major focus of their lives.”<sup>22</sup> The courses of treatment effective for unresolved grief have significant implications for my arguments about the emotional impact of narrative in the *Odyssey*. Pharmacological interventions have been shown to be of limited efficacy. Instead, storytelling and long-term psychotherapy have proved to provide the only durative relief.<sup>23</sup>

Without the intervention of another narrative, people who suffer from unresolved grief remain like the parents in Homeric poetry mentioned above—paralyzed in an obsessive cycle of reflection. At times, however, their mental apparatus provides a response from prior experience, from the store of narrative detail that helps to structure their thoughts and guide their actions. When the pattern of unforgettable pain is applied to Eupheithes—and the end of the *Odyssey*—it induces a variation that imperils the survival of Odysseus and threatens a different end to this tale. Each of the strands of the epic’s narrative is clipped or tied off, but Eupheithes has a claim to action that cannot be ignored. His *unforgettable grief* elicits a paradigmatic pattern: children are open-ended tales, narratives that go on after the end of the parent. For this Homeric father, a dead child is certainly not a closed tale; revenge is not just the quickest resolution, it is the primary and conventional end to this tale. In short, Eupheithes addresses his own endless grief with a narrative solution: he plans to write the ending of the tale by killing Odysseus. In this, he is applying a paradigmatic solution. Odysseus has killed his son; Odysseus needs to die.

### The sign of the shroud

Understanding the cognitive basis of our relationship to narrative also entails appreciating possible maladaptive effects. Eupheithes' sorrow and his compulsion to write an ending to his story, then, advances a thematic treatment of the relationship between the closure of a narrative and the experience of grief. The implication is that this is a Homeric dramatization of the psychological impact of narrative which we now know has specific cognitive aspects. The depth of the epic's interest in this theme emerges throughout book 24. Eupheithes' speech at its end, which imposes a conclusion on a story in progress, corresponds well to a conversation that begins the book in the *Nekyia* where a dead suitor tries to re-order the past. The desire to end a tale is prefigured through an examination of causality and completion.

The longest detail of Amphimedon's story of the death of the suitors recounts Penelope's betrayed trick of promising to marry after the completion of her work (24.125–155). At first, this story has a clear function: it is a famous illustration of Penelope's guile that shows how similar to her husband she is, and it characterizes the suitors' frustration by explaining how she resisted them for so long. The interpretive challenge is that this is actually the *third* time in the epic it has been described. In book 2, Antinoos tells the tale to the assembled Ithacans (2.93–110). And then in book 19, Penelope narrates the tale to a disguised Odysseus (19.137–161). Repetition allows the scene to function as a metanarrative reflection of the Homeric art: the shroud stands as a metaphor for the completion of stories in general. Indeed, this metaphorical meaning may have been charged in Greek culture and in early hexameter poetry especially where covering garments function widely as metaphors and metonymies for death, as Douglas Cairns argues (2016, 8–9). While the language has only minor divergences, there are details added with each retelling.<sup>24</sup> Most important among these differences is that in the final description the completion of the fabric is followed by the return of Odysseus and the completion of the *Odyssey*, to a point (24.139–146):

So she was completing it, even though she was unwilling, she finished it, under force. When she showed us the robe she wove on the great loom after she washed it, it shone like the sun or the moon. And then a wicked god brought Odysseus from somewhere from the farthest part of the country, where the swineherd lives. That's where godly Odysseus' dear son came home too from sandy Pylos, sailing with his black ship. The two of them came to the famous city, devising an evil death for the suitors—well, Odysseus came later, it was Telemachus who led him there first.

ὥς τὸ μὲν ἐξετέλεσσε καὶ οὐκ ἐθέλουσ', ὅπ' ἀνάγκης.  
εὖθ' ἢ φᾶρος ἔδειξεν, ὅφηνασα μέγαν ιστόν,  
πλόνας', ἡελίῳ ἐναλίγκιον ἢ σελήνῃ,  
καὶ τότε δὴ ῥ' Ὀδυσῆα κακὸς ποθεν ἦγαγε δαίμων  
ἄγροῦ ἐπ' ἐσχατιήν, ὅθι δώματα ναῖε συβώτης.  
ἐνθ' ἦλθεν φίλος υἱὸς Ὀδυσσεύος θεῖοιο,  
ἐκ Πύλου ἡμαθόεντος ἰὼν σὺν νηὶ μελαίνῃ·  
τῷ δὲ μνηστῆρσιν θάνατον κακὸν ἀρτόναντε  
ἵκοντο προτὶ ἄστυ περικλυτόν, ἧ τοι Ὀδυσσεὺς  
ὕστερος, αὐτὰρ Τηλέμαχος πρόσθ' ἡγεμόνευε.

By narrating the events in this way, Amphimedon appears to be translating them into an 'action-story' in which there is a causal relationship between the completion of the weaving and the completion of the *Odyssey*'s narrative(s). He and the suitors are not responsible for their deaths;

but rather a god and Odysseus. This passage elides the events of the epic itself where there is no clear collusion between Penelope and Odysseus. Not only does it appear to deprive Penelope of some agency and correctly identify some divine agency, but it also depicts Amphimedon as blaming the gods for his own suffering (confirming Zeus' lament discussed above). But, in addition, this passage features a Homeric *character*-mind trying to make sense of a series of events and attributing agency and causality in different directions: now Penelope, now Odysseus and a god, now Telemachus. In his questing to tell a story that makes sense, Antinoos actually weaves together a fairly 'true' picture of agency and causality.<sup>25</sup> But he also imposes an interpretation on the tale—that Odysseus and Penelope colluded ahead of time—which the external audience knows did not clearly happen. The epic, then, presents a character intentionally re-reading his own experiences in a way that allows him to make sense of the world he inhabits even as the audience of the poem is engaged in a similar process.

At the beginning of book 24, then, the *Odyssey* re-centers problems of how we interpret the tales we hear and the impact of our own expectations and needs on the way we retell our stories. The metapoetic and metacognitive nature of his closing gesture is reinforced by the act of weaving the shroud and the object itself. As many have observed, weaving is often a metaphor not just for intelligence but for poetic composition in Greek culture and others.<sup>26</sup> In the *Iliad*, Helen weaves a *pharos* that depicts "The many struggles of the horse-taming Trojans and the bronze-girded Achaeans / All the things they had suffered for her at Ares' hands" (*Il.* 3.121–128). An ancient scholar recognized in Helen's weaving an embedded metaphor for Homer's own art, which he calls "a worthy archetype for his own poetry" (ἀξιόχρεον ἀρχέτυπον ἀνέπλασεν ὁ ποιητὴς τῆς ἰδίας ποιήσεως, Schol. bT ad *Il.* 3.126–127). If we pursue the relevance of the weaving metaphor to the *Odyssey*, we find that it continues to shape itself around the relationship between audience desire and narrative closure. Weaving appears throughout the poem, but its decoration goes undescribed. Helen gives Telemachus a garment to give to his future wife (*Od.* 15.123–130). Calypso (5.62) and Circe (10.222) weave while singing. Nausicaa leaves a robe for Odysseus (6.214) which Arete recognizes because she made it (7.234–235). We even hear that the Naiads who live on the shore of Ithaca weave "sea-purple garments, wondrous to see" (13.108), but we never *see* them. The lack of description might be less confounding if Penelope's delaying were not understood as equivalent to the delaying narrative strategies of the *Odyssey*.<sup>27</sup> But few commentators have worried about what might be pictured on the finely woven cloth. Barbara Clayton writes:

Homer's audience would have assumed an implicit narrative component in Penelope's web, perhaps that she is depicting the heroic deeds of Laertes . . . I do not think that Homer's silence on this point represents the omission of an unimportant detail. I would argue instead that Homer deliberately leaves the narrative content of the web within the realm of potentiality. And this aspect of potentiality in turn complements the fact that Penelope's web is potentially never complete.

(2004, 34)

The undescribed content of the shroud is a metaphor for the unbounded and complete nature of the *Odyssey* itself. It simultaneously responds both to our reluctance to end a tale and our need to do so. Its completion, coterminous with Odysseus' return, seals its connection with that narrative—especially considering that, like the tale of the epic, the shroud was woven and unwoven before it was finally 'made'. But the refusal to provide an image on the shroud—or to describe the image that is there—leaves narrative work to the audience itself.<sup>28</sup> Amphimedon emerges in the poem as a stand-in for someone who 'writes' his own story on the blank surface of the shroud. But since he is an observer and a participant in the narrative, his retelling of the



tale engages with the themes I discussed above regarding the way Homeric characters process and act upon narratives. Even in the underworld, Amphimedon reconsiders and retells his story in an attempt to take control of it. He shows us how he completed it by placing himself in a perspective where he was the victim of unexpected collusion. In doing so, he models (mis-) reading for the narrative's audiences and, further, contributes to the epic's presentation of the impact of narrative on human life. The blankness of the shroud leaves the narrative work to us and we are compelled to finish its tale. We have to tell that story just as, I propose, we have to imagine what happens after the end of the *Odyssey*.

### The end of a poem

While the epic dramatizes our need to provide an end to a tale through the depiction of Eupheithes' death and an exploration of the theme of unforgettable grief, its deployment of the shroud motif applies an implicit understanding of the human narrative mind by creating a puzzle for its audiences. Our modern understanding of cognitive science can help us understand the effect this has *outside the poem*. The unexplained here becomes not a cause of grief but instead an opportunity for agency.

I opened this chapter by discussing some of the thematic and compositional problems of the *Odyssey*'s final book. One advantage for using a cognitive approach to the *Odyssey* is that it helps us to acknowledge that it is within the epic's range of narrative strategies *not* to make sense, or to challenge our expectations for narrative in part because these very expectations are based on *other* narratives. The device of raveling and unraveling narrative becomes a powerful sign of indeterminacy and control. Book 24 returns to this image and features someone whose life (and story) is over, encouraging the audience to think of the shroud and its attendant interpretive issues as the story ends.

Earlier I emphasized the powerful desire on the part of the audience to hear—if not produce—the end of the tale. This desire is connected to our causal sense of narrative, embedded on a cognitive level and present in a compulsion to bring stories—even our own—to completion. This perspective makes me hear the repeated report of the shroud's completion differently: "so she was completing it, though unwilling, under compulsion" (ὥς τὸ μὲν ἐξετέλεσσε καὶ οὐκ ἐθέλουσ', ὑπ' ἀνάγκης). *Anankē* in Greek poetry can signal physical force or threat (as it does here) but it can be generalized as an externally imposed compulsion, something like fate. Thus, this line signals that the sign of the shroud is also in part about the necessary completion of a thing, be it a garment, a poem, or even a life itself.

In its retelling and redeployment as a sign of closure, the shroud is not altogether the most complicated motif: it is delivered by a dead man among the dead. Book 24, then, starts with a moment of narrative surplus modeling how part of its own tale is received by audiences who have no further tales to live. But before Amphimedon speaks, we get to eavesdrop on a conversation between Agamemnon and Achilles (24.93–98):

So you, when you died, didn't lose your name, but your fame will always be noble among all men, Achilles. But what consolation is this for me when I ran the war? Zeus devised ruinous pain for me in my homecoming at the hands of Aigisthos and my destructive wife.

ὥς σὺ μὲν οὐδὲ θανὼν ὄνομ' ὄλεσας, ἀλλὰ τοι αἰεὶ  
πάντας ἐπ' ἀνθρώπους κλέος ἔσσειται ἐσθλόν, Ἀχιλλεῦ·  
αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ τί τόδ' ἦδος, ἐπεὶ πόλεμον τολύπευσα;  
ἐν νόστῳ γάρ μοι Ζεὺς μήσατο λυγρὸν ὄλεθρον  
Αἰγίσθου ὑπὸ χερσὶ καὶ οὐλομένης ἀλόχοιο.

Agamemnon says this to Achilles after the latter has sympathized with him that he did not receive the glorious burial he deserved after fighting at Troy (24.22–34). Before the central players of the *Iliad* hear Odysseus' tale, they appear to contemplate their own status as objects of fame. Agamemnon, in fact, reflects upon the very tale Zeus contemplated earlier. Here, the Aigisthos model is set next to the theme of glorious death. But before some type of synkrisis or comparison can be completed, their reminiscence is interrupted by the arrival of Amphimedon who tells the tale of the shroud and ends by lamenting that the suitors are not yet buried. Agamemnon responds only to the part about Penelope (192–202):

Blessed child of Laertes, much-devising Odysseus, you really secured a wife with magnificent virtue! That's how good the brains are for blameless Penelope, Ikarios' daughter, how well she remembered Odysseus, her wedded husband. The fame of her virtue will never perish, and the gods will craft a pleasing song of mindful Penelope for mortals on the earth. This is not the way for Tyndareos' daughter. She devised wicked deeds and since she killed her wedded husband, a hateful song will be hers among men, she will attract harsh speech to the race of women, even for those who are good.

δλβιε Λαέρταο πάϊ, πολυμήχαν' Ὀδυσσεῦ,  
ἧ ἄρα σὺν μεγάλῃ ἀρετῇ ἐκτίσω ἄκοιτιν·  
ὥς ἀγαθαὶ φρένες ἦσαν ἀμύμονι Πηνελοπείῃ,  
κούρῃ Ἰκαρίου, ὥς εὖ μέμνητ' Ὀδυσῆος,  
ἀνδρὸς κουριδίου. τῷ οἱ κλέος οὐ ποτ' ὀλεῖται  
ἦς ἀρετῆς, τεύξουσι δ' ἐπιχθονίοισιν αἰοιδὴν  
ἀθάνατοι χάριεσσιν ἐχέφρονι Πηνελοπείῃ,  
οὐχ ὥς Τυνδαρέου κόρῃ κακὰ μήσατο ἔργα,  
κουριδίου κτείνασα πόσιν, στυγερὴ δέ τ' αἰοιδῇ  
ἔσσειτ' ἐπ' ἀνθρώπους, χαλεπὴν δέ τε φῆμιν ὀπάσσει  
θηλυτέρῃσι γυναιξί, καὶ ἧ κ' εὐεργὸς ἔησιν.

In this response Agamemnon ruminates on *kleos* and the reception of narrative. And, through this speech and the one cited before, the epic also expresses a concern about how narrative is used. Agamemnon praises Penelope for her intelligence and loyalty but only as a transition into lamenting Klytemnestra again: he claims that her ill-fame is so powerful that it will negatively affect future responses to women regardless of their behavior. It is easy to identify the negative expectancy Agamemnon's prediction effects. Additionally, we witness Agamemnon selectively interpreting the tale: he does not celebrate Odysseus' accomplishment in the slaughter, but emphasizes instead the part of the tale that resonates (or 'dissonates') most strongly with his own. Women will suffer suspicious rumor (*khalepên phêmin*) because of the hateful song told of Agamemnon's wife despite the availability of Penelope's positive tale. This too echoes cognitive understandings of narrative: Agamemnon, like Amphimedon and even Eupheithes, imposes an ending (or interpretation) on the story he hears. Like Agamemnon, we respond to narratives that resonate with what we already know. We apply paradigmatic tales even when they may not apply and this can distract us from seeing how the pattern might not apply.

The forced end of the *Odyssey* runs the risk of giving its audiences something unresolvable and unforgettable, of leaving us with *penthos alaston*, which disrupts our expectations. Such disruption produces, as discussed above, a cognitive dissonance—this dissonance can in turn provide a motivation to resolve it by seeking out a different explanation or integrating information into a new pattern.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the epic's ending turns into a moment of what we might

call *aporia* or pathlessness in a Platonic dialogue. In recent work, Laura Candiotti (2015) argues that emotion and reason collaborate cognitively in the aporetic state. Candiotti draws on cognitive studies that examine “epistemic emotions” to argue that the aporetic state entails a “transformative process that allows us to find, within negativity itself, the key to imagine an otherness” (242). Further, she suggests that the emotional shame and the cognitive field required to achieve this state are dependent upon group intellectual and emotional work, what some have called the extended mind and the extended emotions.<sup>30</sup> From the perspective of performance, we would here understand the instrumental nature of the audience in shaping its own and each other’s perception of and response to the narrative. Except, in this mutual reshaping, the audience itself is remade as well.

The *Odyssey*’s final book begins with concerns about the reception of narrative and reflects upon the difficult challenges of bringing a tale to its end. The conversations of the dead also prompt audiences to think about what kind of tale this is: Achilles received immortal fame for dying in war; Agamemnon became part of a negative homecoming paradigm with his wife. The open-end remains for Odysseus’ own story. By retelling Odysseus’ *killing of the suitors* within parenthetical considerations for different types of fame, the epic makes clear that it is really Odysseus’ story that is at issue here and, further, that the final details added in this story transform what kind of story it has become. The end of the *Odyssey* acknowledges, then, the paradigmatic forces of audience expectation and cognitive dissonance exerted on its closure which motivate the compulsion to bring the story to an end.

A longer exploration of this theme would include a fuller explication of the *ekklēsis*, the suddenly *imposed* end of the *Odyssey*. But this chapter’s comments have helped to frame the effect of such immediate and ‘false’ closure on its audience(s). If the epic leaves us with *unforgettable* grief, it comes from the pain of not having our questions answered and knowing they likely will not be. These moves are critical of a simplistic and overly paradigmatic use of myth and they echo both what Aristotle says about the importance of predictability and surprise in effective narratives and what modern science has told us about the human mind: that we desire clear causality and closure so much that we will fabricate it if necessary. The grief that the epic’s players experience at not knowing Odysseus’ fate echoes the real-life pain of not knowing a loved one’s fate, not understanding how to live (or act) after a momentous event, or the anxiety of an unknown death that awaits everyone. Such abruptness and lack of closure play upon our reflexive desire to know a story’s end and demand that its audiences consider what *other* kinds of endings might be possible.

## Notes

- 1 Versions of this chapter were presented at the 2016 CAMWS Annual Meeting in Williamsburg, VA, New York University, and Harvard University. Much gratitude is due to helpful comments from audiences there and to Peter Meineck for insightful and helpful comments on an earlier draft.
- 2 For overviews of Homeric psychology, see Harrison 1960; Russo and Simon 1968; and Russo 2012.
- 3 Palmer (2010) calls “intermental thought” a type of “extended cognition or intersubjectivity” that characterizes the dynamic relationship between external and internal functions of minds (39–41). For a theory of mind related to this, see Zunshine 2006, 6–8.
- 4 For “folk psychology”, cf. Bruner 1986, 6; and White 2007, 102–106.
- 5 For the evolutionary development of the human capacity for narrative, see Gottschalk 2012, 26–31; cf. Dennet 2017, 177–204; cf. Logan 2007, 41–58 for the emergence of language and the theory of extended mind. Churchland (2013, 204–205) argues against the proposal that language makes consciousness possible.
- 6 For a recent analysis of Aristotle’s plots, see Meineck 2017, 30–51. Meineck draws on the theory of predictive processing which proposes that our brains are always predicting outcomes for given

circumstances based on prior models or patterns. Surprise creates a ‘sensory error’ that sharpens and unsettles cognition. Cf. Clark 2015.

- 7 See Nussbaum 1986, 390–391; contra Nuttall 1996, 10–16.
- 8 See also Clark 2013 and the integration of his theories in Meineck 2017.
- 9 For the importance of human language in the development of consciousness, see above, note 5. There is some debate about the extent to which cognitive function and narrative can be universalized. For an overview of recent debates and a nuanced presentation of the relationship between core cognitive operations and cultural variations, see Senzaki et al. 2014. Cf. Kaplan et al. 2017.
- 10 Cf. Le Hunte and Golembiewski 2014, 75: “Thanks to storytelling, evolution can take place in a single lifetime. You don’t need to die of thirst to realize that going into the desert without water is a bad idea.”
- 11 See Solomon, Greenberg, and Pyszczynski 2015, 80–82 for the connection between mortal anxiety and both cultural discourse and individual narratives.
- 12 In addition to these signs of closure, the promise of an inland journey foretold by Teiresias’ prophecy in book 11 adds another layer of indeterminacy to how the epic ends. On this see especially Peradotto 1990, 75–78 and Purves 2010, 77–89.
- 13 Schol. in *Od.* 23.296 HMQ list this as “the end [*péras*] of the *Odyssey*” whereas Schol. in *Od.* 23.296 M.V. Vind. 133 attest this as “the end [*télos*] of the *Odyssey*.” For an overview of the epic’s end, see Bertman 1968; Moulton 1974; Wender 1978.
- 14 All translations are my own.
- 15 See also discus-throwing (4.624 and 17.167–169), watching the beggar Iros fight Odysseus (18.36–39), banqueting (17.604–606), and revelry (18.304–306).
- 16 For Zeus’ lines as programmatic see Adkins 1960, 19–20; cf. Marks 2008, 22–23. Contra Van der Valk 1949, 243; Clay 1983.
- 17 For character belief about Odysseus’ death, see Barker and Christensen 2015, 94–95; for Telemachus’ desire, see Murnaghan 2002.
- 18 For a short analysis of the adjective *alaston*, see Barker and Christensen 2015, 94–96. Cf. Loraux 2006 (cited below, note 19).
- 19 Cf. Slatkin 2011, 95–96 for Thetis; cf. Marks 2008, 67–68. *ἀλαστός*: *alastos*, likely from the root *\*lath-*, ‘escape memory’; cf. Gk. *λανθάνω* (‘escape notice’); *ἀληθής* (‘true’); *λήθη* (‘forgetfulness’). It is also related to *ἀλάστορ* (*alástōr*, ‘avenger’) as ‘one who does not forget’. See Chaintraine s.v. *ἀλάστορ*.
- 20 See Loraux 2006, 156–161 for a discussion of the poetics of “mourning that cannot be forgotten”.
- 21 See above, note 12.
- 22 Zisook and Shear 2009, 69. They go on to describe a “maladaptive” excess of avoidance and obsession leading to social isolation.
- 23 See Boss 1999, 129; Zisook and Shear 2009, 70–71 for “complicated grief treatment” which “combines cognitive behavioral techniques with aspects of interpersonal psycho-therapy and motivational interviewing”. Cf. Shear et al. 2016.
- 24 For the differences, see Lowenstam 2000.
- 25 See Lowenstam 2000, 339–341.
- 26 On weaving and female fame, cf. Mueller 2010. Murnaghan 1987, 95–96: Penelope is also a weaver of plots. On weaving in the *Odyssey* and *mētis*, see Slatkin 2011, 234–237; Clayton 2004, *passim*.
- 27 Cf. Austin 1975, 253; Peradotto 1990, 83–84. For the possibility that in other traditions of Odysseus’ return home Laertes and Penelope were colluding, see Haller 2013.
- 28 See, again, Clayton 2004, 38.
- 29 See Harmon Jones et al. 2015 for the relationship between cognitive discrepancy and dissonance reduction.
- 30 For a succinct articulation extended mind theory—which posits that other people and the environment function as an essential part of the functioning of human minds—see Clark and Chalmers 1998. Cf. the longer exploration in Logan 2007. For intermental thought and the importance of ‘social minds’ for understanding how fiction works, see Palmer 2010, 240–245.

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