

## **The *Phâros* of Laertes: Weaving the Fabric of Epic**

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*Δεν ύφαινα, δεν έπλεκα,  
ένα γραφτό άρχιζα, κι έσβηνα  
κάτω απ' το βάρος της λέξης...*

*I wasn't weaving, I wasn't knitting  
I was writing something  
erasing and being erased  
under the weight of the word...*

Katerina Anghelaki Rooke, *Λέει η Πηνελόπη (Penelope says)*.

## EUMETIS' RIDDLES

[...] ἢ τε δόξα τῶν ἀγωνιστῶν, Ὀμήρου καὶ Ἡσιόδου, πολλὴν ἀπορίαν μετ' αἰδοῦς τοῖς κρίνουσι παρεῖχεν, ἐτράποντο πρὸς τοιαύτας ἐρωτήσεις, καὶ προέβαλ' ὁ μὲν, ὡς φησι Λέσχης,<sup>1</sup>

μοῦσά μοι ἔννεπε κείνα<sup>2</sup>, τὰ μήτ' ἐγένοντο πάροιθε  
μήτ' ἔσται μετόπισθεν<sup>3</sup>,

ἀπεκρίνατο δ' Ἡσίοδος ἐκ τοῦ παρατυχόντος:

ἄλλ' ὅταν ἀμφὶ Διὸς τύμβῳ καναχήποδες ἵπποι  
ἄρματα συντρίψωσιν ἐπειγόμενοι περὶ νίκης

καὶ διὰ τοῦτο λέγεται μάλιστα θαυμασθεῖς τοῦ τρίποδος τυχεῖν.”

“Τί δὲ ταῦθ' ;” ὁ Κλεόδωρος εἶπε, “διαφέρει τῶν Εὐμήτιδος αἰνιγμάτων; ἂ ταύτην μὲν ἴσως οὐκ ἀπρεπές ἐστι παίζουσαν καὶ διαπλέκουσαν ὥσπερ ἕτεροι ζωνία καὶ κεκρυφάλους προβάλλειν ταῖς γυναῖξιν, ἄνδρας δὲ νοῦν ἔχοντας ἐν τινι σπουδῇ τίθεσθαι γελοῖον.”

[...] since the repute of the contestants, Homer and Hesiod, caused the judges much perplexity as well as embarrassment, the poets resorted to questionings of this sort, and Homer, as Lesches asserts, propounded this:

Tell me, O Muse, of events which never have happened aforesaid,  
Nor in the future shall ever betide,

and Hesiod answered quite off-hand:

When round Zeus in his tomb rush the steeds with galloping hoof-beats,  
Crashing car against car, as they eagerly run for a trophy.

And for this it is said that he gained the greatest admiration and won the tripod.”

“But what difference is there,” said Kleodoros, “between things like this and Eumetis' riddles? Perhaps it is not unbecoming for her to amuse herself and to weave these as other girls weave girdles and hair-nets, and to propound them to women, but the idea that men of sense should take them at all seriously is ridiculous.”

Plutarchus, *Septem sapientium convivium* 154 A-B

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<sup>1</sup> I reproduce here the Greek text as printed in the Loeb edition of Plutarch by Babbitt (1928). For an overview on the textual problems posed by this passage and the alternative editorial solutions see Bassino 2013: 19-20.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Od.* i 1.

<sup>3</sup> On the riddle and the possible attribution of these two lines see Bassino 2012 (and 2013: 19-25), according to whom the verses could derive from “a now lost corpus of hexameters used in poetic contests similar to the collection of verses in the *Certamen* [of Homer and Hesiod] or indeed fluid oral epic performances and stock phrases used in a witty and provocative way. The fact that the Muses are asked not to sing a particular topic reverses the traditional epic invocation to the Muses, and in itself suggests a riddling or agonistic context for their creation, which is precisely the kind of context in which Plutarch mentions them (2013: 24-25)”.

In her study on weaving in ancient and modern Greece Evy Johanne Håland cites Plutarch's presentation of the maiden Eumetis, who, despite all her learning and wisdom, should not be taken seriously, when "weaving her riddles"<sup>4</sup>. Still, Plutarch's own attitude towards Eumetis<sup>5</sup> and her intellectual and compositional skills happens to be a little more nuanced and open to discussion than it may seem. When Aesop is brought in as the maiden's champion, he is able to prove the superiority of Eumetis' *noûs* by asking Kleodoros one of her famous riddles, apparently related to medical matters: the physician is unable to answer<sup>6</sup>.

So, Eumetis' riddles are woven in hexametric pattern, as are the lines attributed to Homer and Hesiod and bluntly compared to them by Kleodoros, but, explicitly according to the same speaker, these riddles, woven like other girls weave girdles and hairnets, should not be taken seriously at all by 'men of sense' – who do take the epics seriously though. The aim of this paper is to defend quite the opposite opinion and show how the association between weaving and (oral) poetry could be more than metaphorical and also shed light on the relevance of weaving within funerary contexts and ritual lamentation. Moreover, I will argue that, by the means of this famous association, a path is revealed toward a broader understanding of the development of the Odyssean epic discourse. The burial cloth of the hero Laertes, a product of Penelopean *mêtis*, will lead us back in time by its traditional threads to the event of an ancestral and archetypical *próthesis*, when stories of the deceased might have been both figured and sung within a ritual framework. Simultaneously, the almost four year long process of weaving/unweaving/re-weaving will be paralleled to the cyclic weaving of the pan-Athenaic peplos, also serving as metapoetic allusion to oral composition and performance.

But, let's go back to Eumetis for a while. The very name of the girl<sup>7</sup> is in itself both a valuable introduction to our topic and a tempting *point de départ*. Laura Slatkin, discussing how images of artisan production (in particular weaving) are actually mapped onto the concept of poetic composition in the *Odyssey*<sup>8</sup>, conveniently recalls the crucial role and peculiar conceptualization of *mêtis* in the poem as concerns the narratological analysis of its primary characters, namely Odysseus and Penelope, and the functional polyvalence of the event of weaving in the narrative. In particular, the Queen of Ithaca refers to the process of weaving and unweaving the burial cloth (or bier cloth: as we will see below) for Laertes as her peculiar *mêtis*<sup>9</sup>. The formulaic conjunction disseminated in the *Odyssey* between *mêtis* and one of the verbs for weaving, *hupháinō*, not only

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<sup>4</sup> Håland 2004: 170.

<sup>5</sup> On Plutarch's attitude toward intellectual women see Blomqvist 1995; Håland 2011: 7-9. On Plutarch's and riddles see Beta 2009 (in particular pp. 100-102).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Plut., *Septem sapientium convivium* 154 B-C. On this passage see the analysis of Harries 1998: 188 ff.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Plut., *Septem sapientium convivium* 148 D: [...] οὕτω γὰρ ταύτην ὁ πατήρ αὐτός, οἱ δὲ πολλοὶ πατρόθεν ὀνομάζουσι Κλεοβουλίνην [...] that is only her father's name for her, and most people call her Cleobulina after her father).

<sup>8</sup> Slatkin envisages *mêtis* as an element crucial to the narrative structure in the *Odyssey* and fundamental to its plot and values. See Slatkin 2011: Part II. Chapter 3. On 'textual' *mêtis* see also Papadopoulou-Belmechi 1994: 20 ff.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Od.* xix 158. On Penelope and her "metic" intelligence see Raphals 1992: 215-220: while Athena is the divine designer of Odysseus' homecoming, Penelope is the mortal weaver of this very same design. Lisa Raphals' book is a study of the nature and scope of *mêtis*; making use of a comparative approach the author regards *mêtis* as a universal mode of knowing found in Greek culture and in ancient and medieval Chinese texts. In the second half of her book, she focuses on the role of "metic" intelligence and examines several themes common to the Homeric poems and two Ming novels: among them, that of "designing women."

can be easily paired with the couple Eumetis-*diaplékō*, but can be retrospectively illustrated by the comparison between the maiden's hexametric riddles and the woven artifacts intended as typical female production: "weaving is a sort of 'female speech' associated with girdles and hair-nets, typical female symbols, connected with both a female way of handling things and female cunning (Håland 2004: 9)."<sup>10</sup>

In their essay *Mētis and the Artificial* Anagnostopoulos and Chelidoni<sup>11</sup> consider *mētis* to cover cognitive processes employed for devising courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones. Homer's epics, as the most ancient source about *mētis*, "reveal some of its aspects by narrating, on the one hand, the activities of cunning gods, among who, besides Zeus himself, we find prominent Athena and Hephaestus, who, by no fortuitous coincidence, are also the gods of technology<sup>12</sup>; and, on the other hand, mostly human practices, and among them those of a human being cunning *par excellence*, namely the *polumētis* and *poikilóboulos* Odysseus (Anagnostopoulos and Chelidoni 2008: 435)."<sup>13</sup>

Two traditional compound epithets stressing Odysseus' multiform and cunning intelligence, namely *poikilóboulos*<sup>14</sup> and, most important, the Homeric *poikilomētēs*<sup>15</sup>, are formed by the stem of the nouns *boulē* and *mētis* and the adjective *poikilos*, so closely connected with all terminology related to both patterned textiles and pattern-weaving (*poikillein*), as well to particular metal artifacts, as Gregory Nagy has eloquently showed<sup>16</sup>. Focusing the scope of our research, it will be of interest to investigate the adjective *poikilos* as a lexical link able to redirect us from Mycenaean linear B tablets dealing with multi-colored<sup>17</sup>, variegated (patterned?) textiles to Penelope's *mētis*

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<sup>10</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of the association of *mētis* and weaving in the *Odyssey* see Clayton 1994: 30-42.

<sup>11</sup> Anagnostopoulos and Chelidoni 2008.

<sup>12</sup> On pattern-weaving and metalwork, and Athena and Hephaistos as models for the work of craftsmen see Nagy 2010a: 291: "The linking of pattern-weaving to metalwork in Homeric poetry is not just a matter of metaphor. The actual craft of pattern-weaving is closely linked to the actual craft of metalworking [...] To begin, there is the Athenian festival that inaugurated the weaving of the Peplos of Athena, the *Khalkeia*, the name of which is derived from the word *khalkos* 'bronze'. This festival celebrated the synergism of the divinities Athena and Hephaistos as models for the work of craftsmen. As the synergistic partner of Hephaistos, Athena was worshipped as *Erganē*, that is, the divinity who presides over the work (*ergon*) of craftsmen. Since the weaving of the woolen Peplos was begun at the festival of the *Khalkeia*, it is relevant that the name for the female weavers of the Peplos was *ergastinai*."

<sup>13</sup> As Holmberg (2003: 7) rightly underlines "[O]dysseus and Hephaistos also share an internal quality which is both innate and necessitated by their physical weakness, whether actual as in the case of Hephaistos, or feigned, as is frequently the case for Odysseus. This is *μητις*, by means of which in *Odyssey* 8 Hephaistos captures the illicit lovers with his device of a net. Hephaistos' epithets include *κλυτοτέχνης* (*Od.* 8.286; *II.* 1.571, 18.143 and 391), *κλυτόμητις* (*Homeric Hymn* 20.1), *πολύμητις* (*II.* 21.355), and *πολύφρων* (*I.* 21.367; *Od.* 8.297, 327), all of which indicate his connection with *μητις* and two of which also describe Odysseus (*πολύμητις*, *πολύφρων*)." On epithets of Odysseus (and Penelope) pointing to cunning intelligence see Raphals 1992: 219-220. Even though Penelope is never called *polútropos*, the epithet is appropriate to the quality of her intelligence, as shown by Marquardt 1985.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *A. Pl.* 4.300.5: *τειρόμενόν τε πλάνησιν Ὀδυσσέα ποικιλόβουλον* ("Odysseus of changeful counsel, distressed in his wandering"). The epithet is related to Prometheus by Hesiod: *δῆσε δ' ἄλυκτοπέδησι Προμηθεά ποικιλόβουλον* "[Zeus] bound Prometheus of changeful counsel with distressful bounds" (*Theog.* 521) and to Hermes in *Orphei Hymni* 28.3: *εὐφρων, ποικιλόβουλε, διάκτορε ἀργειφόντα* "gracious, of changeful counsel, messenger slayer of Argus."

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *II.* XI 482. *Od.* iii 163; vii 168; xiii 293; xxii 115.202.281. Significantly enough, *poikilomētēs* is also an epithet of Hermes, Odysseus' great-grandfather: cf. *Hymni Homerici, In Mercurium* 155.514.

<sup>16</sup> See Nagy 2010a: Chapter 10.

<sup>17</sup> As a reference work, see Del Frio, Nosch and Rougemont 2010: 348.

intended as source, process and product at the core of the Odyssean self-referentiality, expressed by the fabric of Laertes' *phâros* and mirrored into it.

As the pronoun couple Οὗτις/μήτις<sup>18</sup> is known as metonymical *senhal* for transformational Odysseus thanks to his own *mêtis* and rhapsodic performance, the burial cloth of Laertes in its loom-state, process and design should be primarily intended as privileged metaphorical nexus for the composition of the *Odyssey*<sup>19</sup> and, more generally, of epic poetry, by the ability to disclose a particular context of origin and activation, where the features of weaving and rhythmical chanting, as well the “stories” woven in the fabric, and those referred to in ritual mourning, were marked by a close interplay.

Laertes' *phâros* narration (performed three times, by three different performers, in three different situations and venues, with slight but significant variations<sup>20</sup> – a multitext) and Penelope's own method of producing a fabric by weaving/unweaving/re-weaving (and again) together are apt to conjure the process of composition and coming into being of epic poetry as ‘acoustic’ performance, unique but reproducing itself as a living, autopoietic tradition. As a complement to this understanding, we must not forget that Penelope's weaving is never directly described but always related: it exists in the *Odyssey* as a story only, as narrations of the same story.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, neither we witness Penelope's operations at the loom, nor we see the burial cloth through the description of the master narrator: we are only told, and re-told, about all this matter by three different internal narrators, although Penelope eventually reclaims *de facto* the role of the former.<sup>22</sup>

A structural metaphor like Poetry Is Weaving can be easily traced back inside (and outside) Indo-European linguistic sphere: several scholars have done this with plenty of evidence in recent and less recent years<sup>23</sup>, making use of the classical theory of metaphor. But, as Anthony Tuck has convincingly demonstrated, the original association between weaving and song appears to be more than metaphorical, “[w]ith song an expected and active element in the production of textiles (Tuck

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<sup>18</sup> For a narratological interpretation see Bergren 2008 (1983): 87-91 and notes. The problem of the ‘identities’ of Odysseus arising from rhetorical performances and through communicative acts is analyzed from a cognitive science point of view by Rivers and Tirrell 2011: 44-45. For the importance of the ruse with the name in the folktale and epic versions of the episode in the frame of early pictorial narratives see Giuliani 2013: 78 ff. On the wordplay(s) on *mêtis* see also Raphals 1992: 212.

<sup>19</sup> So Clayton 1994: 82. See also Levaniouk 2011: Chapter 15.

<sup>20</sup> For a detailed account see Lowenstam 2001: 335-342.

<sup>21</sup> See Beck 2013: 5-6 and in particular n. 16: “I cannot agree with the position of Scheid and Svenbro, where it is argued that ‘*Il est donc impossible de savoir par ce biais si, pour Homère, la aoidé ou le "chant" était un tissu métaphorique*’ (Scheid and Svenbro 1994: 120). While it may be ‘impossible to verify’ whether the poets of the Homeric poems conceived of weaving as an analog for poetic composition, the evidence is certainly suggestive. The weaving of Laertes' shroud, as I argue below, mirrors the compositional strategies of the *Odyssey*, and the shroud Helen weaves in *Iliad* 3, depicting scenes from the Trojan war (πολέας...ἀέθλους / Τρώων θ' ἰποδάμων καὶ Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων / οὓς ἔθεν εἴνεκ' ἔπασχον ὑπ' Ἄρηος παλαμῶν), provides a *mise-en-abyme* for the poem. If not explicit, the connection between weaving and poetic composition in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is nevertheless rich.”

<sup>22</sup> If Antinoos and Amphimedon narrate the web story as referring the words of Penelope to them, she in turn narrates the tale to Odysseus as referring *her own words to the suitors*, in a quite endless referential game marked by circularity. Cf. *Od.* ii 95 (= xxiv 130): ἄφαρ δ' ἡμῖν μετέειπε and xix 140: ἄφαρ δ' αὐτοῖς μετέειπον.

<sup>23</sup> See West 2007: 36-38 and notes for further bibliography; Nagy 2002: Chapter 3; for the weaving imagery in Homer and the lyric poets see the ‘classic’ paper of McIntosh Snyder 1981. On the problematic directionality of the metaphor see Bergren 2008 (1983): 16: “Greek culture inherits from Indo-European a metaphor by which poets and prophets define themselves as “weaving” or “sewing” words. That is, they describe their activity in terms of what is originally and literally woman's work *par excellence*. They call their product, in effect, a “metaphorical web”. But which, then, is the original and which the metaphorical process? Is weaving a figurative speech or is poetry a figurative web?”

2006: 545).”<sup>24</sup> I will start my study presenting one visual artifact decorated in the Situla Art style and dating from the Indo-European Early Iron Age as an example of possible interaction between singing and weaving, and I will try to explain the genesis of the metaphor within a cognitive linguistics theoretical model, in order to explore its particular entailments in the experience of poetry making.

## SINGING THE WEB

On a terra-cotta vase from *tumulus* 27 of the necropolis of Sopron<sup>25</sup> (western Hungary) excavated in 1891 and dated to the Hallstatt C period we can see two women wearing big triangular dresses, one spinning and another weaving at a tall warp-weighted loom<sup>26</sup>. Next to them there is a smaller figure (probably a man<sup>27</sup>) with a lyre in his hands and two other women raising their hands above their heads as though they were dancing or enacting a particular ritual. The women are richly dressed and appear to be high-ranking aristocratic ladies. According to Larissa Bonfante “it is possible to think of the musician on the vase as ‘singing the web, participating in the activity by providing the pattern for the weaver, rather than only entertaining the woman at their work.’”

This idea was previously and more in general introduced, illustrated and defended by Tuck<sup>28</sup>, who suggested that the linguistic and poetic association between weaving and singing preserved in several Indo-European languages may also indicate the existence of rhythmic chants and metrical narrations allowing weavers to remember patterns and reproduce them as required. Particular songs could be envisioned as mnemonic devices containing numerical strings, associated with particular designs, and activated as such in co-occurrence with actual weaving.

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<sup>24</sup> On the interrelationship between narrative, song and textile manufacture see also Tuck 2009. John Heath, in his study (2011) on the connection between women’s mythic storytelling and wool-working, recalls the Homeric archetypes for “narrative wool-working (p. 71)” and the ‘mysterious’ pattern of the burial cloth for Laertes.

<sup>25</sup> On *tumuli* 27 and 28 of Sopron see the fundamental study of Allinger (2003: 61-90) focusing on gender-related meaning of the findings in relationship with ritual and religion.

<sup>26</sup> See Allinger 2003: 71: “[D]as Motiv der Stoffverarbeitung auf dem Kegelhalsgefäß des Tumulus 27 [ist] eine einzigartige Erscheinung in der gesamte mitteleuropäischen Hallstattzeit.”

<sup>27</sup> Determining the figures as women or men is not an easy task: different and contrasting proposals were made. Recently, Karina Grömer recalled as typical for this kind of pottery the fact that women are weaving big triangular dresses, while men trousers or smaller triangles (Grömer 2013: 39 citing Dobiat 1982). For a more problematic interpretation trying to avoid binary categorizations and contemplating a dialectical relation between biological sex and cultural gender roles see Brøns 2013: “Finally, a biconical impasto vase from tomb 27 in the Sopron-Varhely necropolis in Hungary, belonging to the Hallstatt C period, also carries interesting scenes of textile production. To the left is a figure in a triangular garment spinning, while to the right a similar dressed figure operates a large two-storied weave (Fig. 5). The figures in these textile scenes are all crudely presented and are usually regarded as women because of either long hair and/or long garments. However, M. Ehrenberg has questioned if it is possible to determine the sex of the figures with certainty. She finds it possible that, for example, the triangular garments on the Sopron-Varhely vase are capes, not dresses. Long attire is therefore not sufficient to identify a person as female, since such an interpretation is based on a traditional Western differentiation between the sexes [...]” Barber, in her monumental work on prehistoric textiles, writes: “A typical Hungarian evening in the villages consisted of a group of women getting together and spinning or embroidering all evening, while the men entertained them with stories, music songs, and dances [...] The Sopron vase shows the same tradition 3000 years ago – and most likely it went back another 3000 years [...] (Barber 1991: 294).” The same scholar, three years later (Barber 1994: 88-89), inserts a drawing into her book (from a photograph) picturing Hungarian girls wearing costumes similar to those on the Sopron vase. In her 1994 publication Barber speaks only of “women spinning, weaving (on a warp-weighted loom) and *entertaining one another with music and dance* [emphasis mine].”

<sup>28</sup> See Tuck 2006. 2009.

More recently, Marie-Louise Nosch has taken into consideration cognitive affinities between the rhythmic action of weaving and the Greek lyric metric tradition, calling the binding system of a fabric, as tabby or twill, its rhythmic structure and comparing the textile rapport and pattern to the combination and alternation of short and long syllables within the metric feet.<sup>29</sup>

If we focus on the Homeric epics, the pairing of weaving and singing happens to be quite consistent in the *Odyssey*.<sup>30</sup> The nymphs Calypso and Kirke<sup>31</sup> sing while weaving and their peculiar singing apparently can by itself convey the information that they are at the loom, as revealed by the consideration of Polites, who, standing in the forecourt, infers that Kirke is weaving inside the house at a “great loom (μέγαν ἱστὸν<sup>32</sup>).”

It seems likely that experiential co-occurrence of rhythmical chant and weaving, as well as structural homologies and correlations in the cognitive experiences of weaving and singing, generated the conceptualization of (oral) poetry as weaving. Putting forward this assumption, I am not appealing to the classical *comparison* theory of metaphor: rather, in the cognitive view, processes like *mapping*<sup>33</sup> or *blending*<sup>34</sup> actually transfer and integrate meaning from a domain to another, so we can actually shape abstract concepts with the very metaphors we use to grasp them, conceptualizing more abstract domains through more concrete ones. In short, according to cognitive science, metaphor is not simply the way we talk about abstract things (like making poetry), but how we think about them as well<sup>35</sup>.

Activities as weaving and rhythmical singing that co-occurred in meaningful ways, could have driven generalization for particular metaphorical inferences, causing to build representations and predict properties that were anticipated during the practice with the more concrete domain<sup>36</sup> – weaving in our case. A certain range of experiences related to weaving was selected so that a structural similarity between them and the range of experiences involved in performing poetry

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<sup>29</sup> See Nosch 2014: 94.

<sup>30</sup> See Tuck 2006: 539-540.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *Od.* v 61-62; x 226-228. The verb ἐπιόχομαι, describing the weaver moving to and fro and placing the weft threads through the warp by hand while standing before the loom, is relevant from a cognitive point of view stressing the role of the sensorimotor system in cognition and in establishing significant associations between domains of experience. The well known metaphorical characterization of epic poetry as a path of song could well be understood as conceptualized through a similar experience. On the path-song association see Bakker 1997: 60-62.

<sup>32</sup> *Od.* x 226.

<sup>33</sup> In cognitive linguistics, metaphor is defined as understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain: a *mapping* is the systematic set of correspondences that exist between constituent elements of the source and the target domain. Elements of target concepts may come from source domains and be not preexisting. In brief: metaphor is seen as a *mapping* from one domain to the other. For a detailed account see Shutova and Teufel 2010.

<sup>34</sup> The notion of *blending* or conceptual integration was developed by Gilles Fauconnier and distinguishes between four spaces: a source input space, a target input space, a blend between both, and a so-called generic space. The mapping created between the source input space and the target input space creates a *blended space*, and the relevant features of the *blend* are not just directly derived from the original input spaces. See Geeraerts 2006: 2. As a reference work see Fauconnier and Turner 2002.

<sup>35</sup> See Lakoff and Johnson 2003 (I refer to the new edition of their classic work of 1980). Proposing a cognitive metaphor theory in *Metaphors We Live By*, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson treat conceptual metaphors as a fundamental mechanism of mind, not only affecting the way we communicate (or embellish) ideas, but actually structuring our basic perceptions and understandings of the world.

<sup>36</sup> See Flusberg et alii 2010: 7.

emerged. Through this operating model, metaphorical conceptualization can create and induce also additional similarities, which help us to understand how the individual highlighted experiences fit together in a coherent way and what they have eventually to do with each other.<sup>37</sup>

In the metaphor Making Poetry Is Weaving, the concept of creating additional or new similarities can be clarified by recalling the iconographic evidence of several cases in which “it can be difficult to decide whether a depiction illustrates weaving on a hand loom or playing music on a lyre (Nosch 2014: 94).” This suggests that the artisans may have been conscious of, and expressed this kind of play upon meanings and forms.

Louise Clark, studying small textile frames pictured on Greek vases, noticed that hand looms are flat and lyre-like, “small enough to be held on a woman’s lap [...] sometimes curved like a lyre, with a pair of horizontal bars separating them near the top and bottom (Clark 1983: 92)”. We will discuss this particular similarity later, when dealing with the chelys lyre and its particular relationship to women.<sup>38</sup> It is interesting that Clark herself, examining the Sopron vase, cannot tell if the smaller figure holds a hand loom or a lyre, and recalls that the object has been called also a spinning reel, thus reinforcing (by notionally reversing the process) the relevance of new similarities in the range of experiences like singing and weaving. In fact, the principal activities described on the vase are weaving, and, apparently, a ritual attached to this occasion, or, the other way round, a ritual, which inherently involved weaving and possibly music and singing as well.

The vase from Sopron, as an artifact deposited into (and found in) a tomb, has an explicit burial association. It is inviting to assume also the figured motive to be connected with burial rituals and practices.<sup>39</sup> The fabric on the loom could be itself a burial cloth, woven with patterns inspired and constructed by the rhythmical chant providing the numerical grids regarding threads and knots necessary to produce certain images on the textile. Furthermore, weavers possibly had active roles in the funerary function in Early Iron Age communities: the characteristics of the deceased could be not totally lost if they were woven as ‘stories’ in a funerary garment.<sup>40</sup> As successive anti-sumptuary legislation<sup>41</sup> implicitly confirms (the shroud *had* to be plain and white), elaborated patterned textiles, used as funeral cloths, may have been the norm in Greece in the Early Archaic period.

Highly elaborated ‘story cloths’ (upon which the well-known depicted pall fragment recovered in Crimea was probably modeled<sup>42</sup>) requested obviously a lot of numerical information to be memorized and then displayed in the process of weaving<sup>43</sup>. Gary Urton, during his anthropological fieldwork in Andean communities, has gathered plenty of information on how difficult counting and arithmetic procedures are implemented by skilled weavers when producing the most sophisticated

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<sup>37</sup> See Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 150-152.

<sup>38</sup> See also Larsson Lovén 2013: 141 (n. 37).

<sup>39</sup> See Allinger 2003: 72-74.

<sup>40</sup> See Pinagli 2011. On weaving and collective memory in archaic Greece see Von Hofsten 2011.

<sup>41</sup> For Athens see Shapiro 1991: 630-631. See also Barber 1991: 377-378. On the women’s role in funeral ritual and the Solonic legislation as an attempt to prevent competition and rivalry between aristocratic families see Hardwick 1993: 156.

<sup>42</sup> See Barber 1991: 378-379.

<sup>43</sup> On the ability to develop and retain in mind a mental template or construct in order to dictate the physical form of a particular artifact, see Wincott Heckett 2007.



patterned textiles. He has done so in the most reliable way: by learning the basics of weaving himself. He recalls how “older women has routinized and incorporated the rhythms of weaving so deeply into their bodily movements that is difficult for them to articulate clearly the step-by-step movements, especially the regimes of counting, that are required to weave a particular design (Urton 1997: 115).”

This picture is consistent with an idea of cognition rooted in sensorimotor system and with the results of the *blending* process as described by Turner and Fauconnier in relation to the cognitive unconscious<sup>44</sup>. The authors explain that: “we live in the blend for activities that are crucial to survival – perception, sensation, arousal, immediate reaction to basic environmental threats [...] and there is little survival value in checking step by step how that global insight is achieved [...] In other activities, conscious apprehension has more leeway to go back and forth, to ‘live in the full integration network’ [...] It is often desirable to decrease the extent to which consciousness lives in the full network. The acquisition of expertise is in many respects the achievement of successful integration networks in which living in the blend gives you the desired effects with no conscious attention [...] *Expert performance* consists in having acquired the blended pattern in such a way that it is felt consciously as primitive [emphasis mine].”<sup>45</sup>

Both the epic singer of tales and the weaver of patterned textiles are living in the blend when skillfully performing their crafts. Also, they may live in a very similar one. Is the smaller figure on the Sopron vase playing music or weaving on a hand loom? Is (s)he a man or a woman? A singer or a weaver? Or is (s)he both? Are the female weavers/ritualists only entertained or provided with encoded oral narratives to be visualized on the fabric? Are they audience or performers?

As part of this dynamic mutuality, the Sopron visual narrative could relate in addition two distinct occasions and events, compressing and conflating them into a single frame, proceeding logically from center (picking out the loom as such) to periphery. The major female figures could be read as the same figures<sup>46</sup> showed twice in different incidents of the funerary ritual: at first weaving a burial cloth then mourning the dead (not depicted, but physically present in the *tumulus*), both actions modulated by music and singing enacted by the smaller figure who balances the centrality of the loom with a duplicated function.<sup>47</sup> This interpretation supposes that the arms of the more

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<sup>44</sup> On this concept see Kihlstrom 1987. According to the cognitive social psychologist, implicit perception, memory, learning, thought, and language processing constitute the cognitive unconscious. Contemporary psychology speaks also of *unconscious knowledge* to refer to cases in which subjects display available knowledge to which they lack conscious access.

<sup>45</sup> Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 83-84. Within the frame of his theory of *habitus* Pierre Bourdieu makes some fitting observations discussing Albert’s Lord description of the training of the *guslar*: the practical mastery of singing is acquired by the bard “through sheer familiarization, by ‘hearing the poems’, without the learner’s having any sense of learning” during an “apprenticeship through simple familiarization, in which the apprentice insensibly and unconsciously acquires the principles of the ‘art’ and the art of living [...] (Bourdieu 1977: section I)” Bourdieu’s remarks are cited by Karanika (2014: 169-170) when discussing the *chelichelōne* song as choral training in relationship with lament and weaving.

<sup>46</sup> Admittedly, the dress of the spinning woman seems to be different from the other big dresses, but I do not see this particular as thwarting my interpretative effort. It is not necessary that the scene shows twice the *same women*: it is relevant that they might represent the *same figures*. The four taller figures are not positioned at the same height either in relation to the inferior line of dots: the figures closer to the loom protrude all of part of their legs underneath that line. This can suggest not only a differentiation in space, but in time also.

<sup>47</sup> About how artists collapse a series of events into one picture (concerning vase depictions of Homeric narratives), see Lowenstam 1992: 173-174.

distant figures (from the loom) are raised in a mourning gesture.<sup>48</sup> We have no positive confirmation on this: nonetheless, the archeological context does not contradict the assumption that in the scene a funerary ritual is performed. Obviously, my terminology about mourning collapses here description and interpretation. Anyway, the gesture seems used to signal the figures' interaction with the transcendent, which may be implied by the gesture itself<sup>49</sup>, a gesture that, in its signification of mourning, extended well beyond the borders of ancient Europe. The relative stability of the two hands mourning gesture(s) throughout Mycenaean, Geometric and Archaic depictions is the topic of the next section of this study: I will treat it as a figurative formulaic element which will be useful to introduce the textual evidence on the *phâros* of Laertes.

## MOURNING FIGURES AND *PHÁREA*

As Gail Hoffman states at the beginning of her study on Cycladic folded arm figures, “[c]lose examination of the actual expressions and gestures of grief as well as women’s central role in mourning show that these elements of the funeral remain remarkably consistent over the millennia separating fifth-century Athens from the Early Bronze Age Cyclades (Hoffman 2002: 525).” A renowned series of Late Bronze Age terracotta sarcophagi, the famous Tanagra larnakes, show scenes of mourning<sup>50</sup>: female mourners are depicted with arms raised and bent at the elbow and hands lifted to, or touching the head (or clasped above it). These contoured women are similar to the sculpted figurines, freestanding or attached to vessels, placed in graves from Late Bronze Age down to fifth century BCE and associated with prayer and religious functions, or straightly interpreted as mourners by their gesture with hands raised to their head, as in the famous case of the lekane from Perati Chamber Tomb 5 published by Iakovidis<sup>51</sup>. The Perati example is quite “unique among Mycenaean figurines (Burke 2008: 76)” for the clear replication of this typically female mourning posture.<sup>52</sup> If we accept the interpretation that the Warrior Vase from Mycenae portrays scenes from a funerary performance including a woman with an arm raised to her head,<sup>53</sup> it valuably helps serve as a bridge between a Late Bronze Age ritual participant and the silhouette of a mourning woman depicted on a Middle Geometric krater from Kerameikos and recorded by Coldstream as “the first human figure in Attic art.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> See Allinger 2003: 73.

<sup>49</sup> See Morris 2001.

<sup>50</sup> See the detailed presentation of Vermeule 1965, in particular pp. 142-143: “No doubt these gestures had become a formal crystallization of instinctive expressions of anguish, long traditional in Mycenaean graveside ceremonies [...] The motif of mourning represented by the larnakes and the terracottas is not entirely new in this late period, although in them the search to formulate the rites and emotions of death is successfully completed and the formula lasts with little iconographic change through the archaic period.” On Mycenaean funerary imagery and lament in Greek prehistory see Also Burke 2008: 70-92.

<sup>51</sup> See Iakovidis 1966.

<sup>52</sup> On typology and development of Mycenaean figurines see French 1971.

<sup>53</sup> See Burke 2008: 84: “In summary, what I wish to stress is not the historical context of the Warrior Vase but, rather, its depositional context. It was found in an area used as a cemetery of the Mycenaeans for centuries. It begins a tradition of large decorated ceramics used to mark burials [...] Most likely, if the illustration of the woman were complete, we would see that she has both her arms raised in what became the common position of lament.”

<sup>54</sup> Coldstream 2003: 61.

The attitude expressed through the position of the arms both raised is a formal evidence of lamentation and it is the way female mourners are predominantly (but not exclusively)<sup>55</sup> illustrated on Geometric vases representing *próthesis* scenes. The two hand mourning gesture, as a symbol of the funerary sphere, is almost exclusively connected with women<sup>56</sup> (Ahlberg points out only one exception<sup>57</sup>) supposed to tear their hair or scratch their faces, vividly expressing grief and bereavement by bodily posture. The *próthesis* subject recurs “in every subsequent period down to the white lekythoi of the later fifth century (Shapiro 1991: 629)”, reflecting consistently the main Homeric features of the lamentation over the corpse of the hero with women mourning emotionally, tearing their hair and touching the head of the deceased:

πρῶται τόν γ' ἄλοχός τε φίλη καὶ πότνια μήτηρ  
 τιλλέσθην ἐπ' ἄμαξαν εὐτροχὸν αἴζασαι  
 ἀπτόμεναι κεφαλῆς· κλαίων δ' ἀμφίσταθ' ὄμιλος.  
 καὶ νῦ κε δὴ πρόπαν ἦμαρ ἐς ἠέλιον καταδύντα  
 Ἔκτορα δάκρυ χέοντες ὀδύροντο πρὸ πύλων [...]

First among them were Hektor's wife and his honored mother  
 who tore their hair, and run up beside the smooth-rolling wagon,  
 and touched his head. And the multitude, wailing, stood there about them.  
 And now and there in front of the gates they would have lamented  
 all day till the sun went down and let fall their tears for Hektor [...]

## II. XXIV 710-714

In Geometric vases a cloth, always check-patterned with only a few exceptions<sup>58</sup> and projected in the field above the deceased, is another characteristic, almost ‘formulaic, element of *próthesis* iconography: it has been interpreted whether as the roof of a pavilion, or as a blanket lifted only in a functional perspective so that we can see the actual laying out of the body. Anyway, it is not a funeral garment, a shroud, because the long robes in which the deceased appear sometimes to be dressed represent clearly an entirely differentiated element that may (or may not) co-occur with the bier cloth/pall/blanket.<sup>59</sup> This pairing of a linen garment and a bier cloth seems to be exactly mirrored in Patroklos' *próthesis*:

ἐν λεχέεσσι δὲ θέντες ἕανῶ λιτὶ κάλυψαν

<sup>55</sup> The main types of attitude are illustrated by Gudrun Ahlberg in her fundamental study: in particular see Ahlberg 1971: 327 sketch 3.

<sup>56</sup> The gesture is also recurrent in the Etruscan archaic reliefs from Chiusi with *próthesis* scenes: a beautiful cinerary urn with lion paws (end of sixth, fifth century BCE) shows several figures with hands at their head (the reddish paint of the hair is preserved) both surrounding the *klinē* (long side) and performing a funerary procession (short side). On *próthesis* and *ékphora* scenes on reliefs from Chiusi see Jannot 1984: 368-373.

<sup>57</sup> See Ahlberg 1971: 78.

<sup>58</sup> The checkered pattern (as well its few cross-hatched variations) can refer to substantial patterns, binding systems (like tabby or twill) of the textile material itself (so Ahlberg), or rather could be considered as regularization into ‘Geometric diction’ of the appearance of elaborated patterned textiles. It is tempting to consider the elaborate weaving designs, animals, processions of charioteers and warriors, with which the minor registers are filled, as a meta-iconographical device to zoom into the actual details of the bier cloth. The cloth was too a structural and traditional element in the context of funerary performance to be differentiated without loosing its symbolic association: ‘formulaic’ status was necessary to convey the right communication values. For an example of a textile frieze mirroring the main scenes depicted on the vase see Barber 1991: 364.

<sup>59</sup> See Ahlberg 1971: 40-42; 55 ff.

ἐς πόδας ἐκ κεφαλῆς, καθύπερθε δὲ φάρεϊ λευκῷ.

[...] and laid him on a bed, and shrouded him in a linen sheet,  
from head to feet, and over that a bright cloth.

## II. XVIII 352-353

I will return presently on the adjective λευκός. Now, it is time to present Laertes' own funeral cloth: the *Odyssey* calls it always a φᾶρος<sup>60</sup>. It is modified by ταφήϊον “for burial” (ii 99; xix 144; xxiv 134) and it is also referred to as σπεῖρον (ii 102; xix 147; xxiv 137) and ἰστὸν (ii 104; xix 149; xxiv 139). While σπεῖρον is used (by Penelope) when pointing to the role of display and consumption of wealth<sup>61</sup> in the context of the funerary performance<sup>62</sup> (with an allusion to social control by other female members of the community<sup>63</sup>) and ἰστὸν when illustrating the process of weaving and defining the textile as its progressive accomplishment and final result<sup>64</sup>, φᾶρος (ταφήϊον) seems to be the more ‘literal’ and proper naming for this piece of cloth as such.

Φᾶρος, etymologically speaking, is an isolated word in ancient Greek and we cannot establish reliable correspondences with other Indo-European languages. Concerning its usage, “au premier millenaire le mot est seulement épique et poétique (Chantrain 1977: 1179). In linear B tablets the word occurs in plural written syllabically (‡Z† /pa-we-a /p<sup>h</sup>arweha/), designating pieces of textiles or garments<sup>65</sup>, or as acrophonic syllabogram (‡ /PA for pa-wo /p<sup>h</sup>arwos/) ligatured (endogram) to the \*159 TELA □ logogram, possibly for specifying the type of textile<sup>66</sup>. TELA+PA appears also on

<sup>60</sup> Cf. *Od.* ii 97(-104); xix 142(-149); xxiv 132(-139).

<sup>61</sup> See Shapiro 1991: 630-631. For burial cloths in particular, see Barber 1991: 378.

<sup>62</sup> For performance in Mycenaean funerary practices see Boyd 2014: 194-197. The (weaving of the) cloth as public manifestation of expression is explained by Karanika 2014: 44. The word σπεῖρον occurs in the *Odyssey* meaning “a covering wherewith to honour a dead body (Cunliffe 1977)”, and – like φᾶρος – cloth for the sail of a ship, or, in plural, untailored pieces of cloth. According to Chantraine σπεῖρα and σπεῖρον “sont évidemment apparentés et tirés d’une racine signifiant ‘plier, entourer, envelopper’ qui se retrouve dans σπάρτον, σπάργανον (Chantraine 1977: 1035). For consumption of clothes in funerary performance as source of *kléos* cf. *Il.* XXII 512-514.

<sup>63</sup> See Mueller 2010: 4; Håland 2004: 168-170; Boyd 2014: 197.

<sup>64</sup> See Edmunds 2012 about the warp-weighted loom: “[...] a loom is essentially more a method or a process than a thing. A so-called ‘primitive loom’ may consist of nothing but a few sticks and bits of string in addition to the cloth or imminent cloth being woven [...] The loom materializes temporarily in the process of weaving and is not necessarily separable in thought from either process or product, as is evident in the introduction of Penelope’s ruse.” Cf. *Od.* 94-95: στησαμένη μέγαν ἰστὸν ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ὕφαινε / λεπτὸν καὶ περίμετρον. The word ἰστὸν at line 94 must be translated as “loom”, while at line 95 it is understood as the object of ὕφαινε “she wove” and it must mean “weaving” in the sense of fabric. The term was in use in Mycenaean Greek: *i-te-ja-o* (*histeiaon* genitive plural feminine) is a hapax attested in a Pylos Tablet probably designating female weavers. See Barber 1991: 270. On weaving in Mycenaean society see Shelmerdine 2008. For the *histón* as a marker of gendered separation in ancient Greece see Bertolín Cebrian 2008.

<sup>65</sup> See Del Frio, Nosch and Rougemont 2010: 347: “In some cases, it is difficult to say if the nouns designated a garment or a piece of textile. The same can be said also for pa-we-a, /p<sup>h</sup>arweha/, since in Homer φᾶρος is either a garment or a piece of textile, according to the context.” See also Nosch 2012: 327-329; for pa-we-a attested in tablets from Mycenae see Varias 2010: 156-157. The author proposes an interesting interpretation of a tablet (Oe 111) from the Oe series recording amounts of wool to make *pa-we-a*: the text might possibly make a distinction between special and plain *pa-we-a*.

<sup>66</sup> See Nosch 2012: 306. In this study on the textile logograms in the linear B tablets, Nosch (p. 319) interestingly compare the iconography of the ladies’ dresses on one of the above cited Tanagra larnakes (see Vermeule 1965: plate XXVI no. 3 (b) and XXVII no 3. (a) (b)) with the Tel Haror textile logogram.

tablets recording activities in the cult.<sup>67</sup>

In Homer φᾶρος occurs 29 times. Commonly meaning a cloak or mantle, apparently without sleeves, an outer garment with respect to the χιτῶν<sup>68</sup>, and also worn (and woven) by nymphs<sup>69</sup> (in this case *opposed* to χιτῶν and χλαῖνα as garments worn by a man<sup>70</sup>), the word designates a burial cloth eight times (of Laertes in the *Odyssey*<sup>71</sup>, of Patroklos<sup>72</sup> and Hektor<sup>73</sup> in the *Iliad*), and once, in plural, pieces of cloth for making sails<sup>74</sup>. The φᾶρος is an outer garment for the living, with respect to χιτῶν, as well for the dead, with respect to λιτί of *Iliad* XVIII 352; this is confirmed also by *Il.* XXIV 588: ἀμφὶ δέ μιν φᾶρος καλὸν βάλων ἠδὲ χιτῶνα (said of the maidens clothing Hektor's body), although (or because) the line is entirely formulaic and usually said of the living when clothing themselves.

Apart from ταφῆϊον (describing future contextual purpose) and the 'peripheral'<sup>75</sup> μέγα and καλόν, all adjectives (ἐϋπλυνές<sup>76</sup>, λευκόν<sup>77</sup>, ἀργύφειον<sup>78</sup>, πορφύρειον<sup>79</sup>, ἀλιπόρφουρον<sup>80</sup>) by which the word φᾶρος is modified in the Homeric poems are related to the concept of brightness (on a scale from light to dark) and light reflectance: Homeric φάρεα are (variously) resplendent, and this is

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<sup>67</sup> See Nosch and Perna 2001. Besides \*146 and \*166+WE and \*164 “[t]wo other types of Mycenaean woollen cloth occur once on tablets recording activities in the cult: the heavy te-pa, often noted TELA+TE, and TELA+PA, which denotes pa-we-a /p<sup>h</sup>arwea cloth [...] The cloth types \*146, \*166 + WE and te-pa and pa-we-a are not only of different materials, they are also procured through different systems monitored by the palace officials: te-pa and pa-we-a are parts of the ta-ra-si-ja corvée [...] \*146, \*164, \*166+WE and TELA+TE are used for two purposes in the cult: for offerings and as remuneration for cult personnel (cf. pp. 471-473).”

<sup>68</sup> For a telling example see *Od.* viii 186-187: ἦ ῥα, καὶ αὐτῷ φάρει ἀναΐξας λάβε δίσκον / μείζονα καὶ πάχετον, στιβαρότερον οὐκ ὀλίγον περ (So he spoke, and jumped up, cloak still on, and grabbed a discus / larger than the others, thicker and much heavier [...])

<sup>69</sup> By Calypso and Kirke: cf. *Od.* v 230=543: αὐτὴ δ' ἀργύφειον φᾶρος μέγα ἔννυτο νόμφη (the nymph clothed herself in a long silver-white robe). At *Od.* xiii 108 the nymphs of the Phorcys Bay cave φάρε' ὑφαίνουσιν ἀλιπόρφυρα “weave robes as dark as the sea.”

<sup>70</sup> We know, anyway, that the *khitōn* was currently worn also by women.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. *Od.* ii 97; xix 138.142; xxiv 132.147.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. *Il.* XVIII 353.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. *Il.* XXIV 580.588.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. *Od.* v 258.

<sup>75</sup> I refer here especially to the first of the three conditions for peripheral elements as individuated by Bakker, that is neutrality with respect to context (see Bakker 2005: 5-6).

<sup>76</sup> Cf. *Od.* viii 392.425; xiii 67; xvi 173. The adjective, meaning “well-washed”, “well-cleansed”, underlines and describes the whiteness/brightness of the cloth metonymically (the effect of the process by the process itself).

<sup>77</sup> Cf. *Il.* XVIII 353; XXIV 231.580.588 and see the following discussion in the text.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. *Od.* v 230; x 543. Ἀργύφειος/ἄργυφος means properly “silver-shining”, “silver-white”, and thus “bright”, and it is a Homeric “épithète de moutons et [...] de vêtements (Chantraine 1977: 105).”

<sup>79</sup> Cf. *Od.* viii 84.221. On this adjective, as well as on ἀλιπόρφυρος (sea-πόρφυρος, of true πόρφυρα dye), see the discussion in the text. Nagy (2010: 283-288) amply discusses the adjective in relationship with textiles and the pan-Athenaic Peplos.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. *Od.* xiii 108.

particularly true for the burial cloth of Laertes, which after being washed is “like the sun and the moon.”

εὖθ' ἢ φᾶρος ἔδειξεν, ὑφήνασα μέγαν ἱστόν,  
πλύνασ', ἠελίῳ ἐναλίγκιον ἢ ἐσελήνη [...]

when she showed it to us, after she finished weaving,  
after washing it, it was like the sun and the moon [...]

*Od.* xxiv 148-149

As explained above, here Amphimedon (re-producing Penelope’s tale) designate the cloth as ἱστόν because he is conceptualizing it as the eventual result of the process of weaving (ὑφήνασα) on the loom – and, from his Hades perspective, the ἱστόν justly materialized also as *his* burial cloth<sup>81</sup>, although he lays still *unburied*. If we consider the other two burial φάρεα mentioned in the poems, Patroklos’ and Hektor’s, they are both said to be λευκά<sup>82</sup>. The adjective, stemming from the Indo-European words family designating light and sources of light (cf. Lat. *lux* “light”, *luna* < \**leuksna-* “moon”), indicates in Greek marble, snow, water, the sun, metal surfaces, and, more in general, clear and shiny objects endowed with the capacity to reflect light.<sup>83</sup> In Mycenaean Greek *re-u-ko/ka* it is a typical modifier of textiles.<sup>84</sup> That said, it is not a hasty inference to envision Laertes’ *phâros*, which is ἠελίῳ ἐναλίγκιον ἢ ἐσελήνη, to be λευκόν.

The adjective πορφύρεος is at the dark end of this particular brightness range. Mycenaean *po-pu-re-ja* / *po-pu-re-jo[* / *po-pu-ro* is also a well known adjective connected with textiles and textile production. Furthermore, as summarized by Del Freo, “[n]otations such as TELA+PO or *re* TELA/ ‘*re*’ TELA+TE might also be understood as including abbreviations of the colours of the textiles (PO, *re*, see above, *po-pu-re-ja* / *po-ni-ki-jo*, and *re-u-ko*, etc.).<sup>85</sup>”

As it has been noticed, almost “all Mycenaean color terms are contextualized with categories of objects such as plants and fabrics” and “many of the Mycenaean words refer to cloth but not to other items, and include terms which later define the color in Greek regardless of the context (Busatta 2014: 331 citing Warburton 2007).” In particular, *po-pu-re-ja* / *po-pu-re-jo[* / *po-pu-ro* is related to the textile dying process utilizing *murex* shell<sup>86</sup> (πορφύρα): as in the case of ἐϋπλυνής, the adjective describes the appearance of the cloth metonymically (the effect of the process by the process itself) and conjures an iridescent cloth, displaying a spectrum of colors that shimmer and change (from apparent red to apparent deep blue or brown). Keeping this in mind, the Homeric adjective ἀλιπόρφυρος can both stress the perception of blue rather than red and refer to the veracity of the process completed adding true *murex* marine shell dye.

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<sup>81</sup> As Nadia Sels noted (2013: 184): “[t]he shroud paradoxically comes to symbolize the death of the men who forced Penelope to finish it.”

<sup>82</sup> This is directly stated of Patroklos’ burial cloth (cf. *Il.* XVIII 353), and we can infer the same for Hektors’ (cf. *Il.* XXIV 588 which is deducted from his ransom (cf. *Il.* XXIV 580) including twelve φάρεα λευκά (cf. *Il.* XXIV 231).

<sup>83</sup> See Busatta 2014: 320.

<sup>84</sup> See Del Freo, Nosch and Rougemont 2010: 348.

<sup>85</sup> Del Freo, Nosch and Rougemont 2010: 348.

<sup>86</sup> For a detailed account see the dissertation of Guckelsberger 2013.

The fact that terminology related to textiles yields an indisputable ‘textual’ continuity between linear B tablets and Homeric poems is also evident in the usage of ποικίλος (cf. Mycenaean *po-ki-ro-nu-ka* “with multicolored fringes/endings” or “multicolored weft”<sup>87</sup>) which describes elaborately patterned textiles<sup>88</sup> and also ornamented and variegated metalwork<sup>89</sup>.

Implicitly postulating from the beginning of this study that Penelope is intended to weave a highly patterned burial cloth for Laertes, we stressed the inherent relevance of *poikillein* in the conceptual metaphor Making Poetry Is Weaving. But, as noted just now, as far as the *phâros* of Laertes is concerned, we can only glean textual evidence to infer a λευκόν *phâros*<sup>90</sup>, and, as Clayton conveniently noted “there is no reason [based on text] to assume that the shroud had a design at all (Clayton 1994: 34).” We will return on this most important argument later in our study. For now, it is only necessary to stress that, according to what Barber has acutely pointed out discussing the plausibility of such a time-consuming weaving by Penelope<sup>91</sup>, the Homeric audiences would have assumed that the cloth should be far more elaborated than a monochromatic piece of fabric. We have corroborating evidence of this ancient assumption.

## THE CHIUSI *ISTÓN*

Perhaps the most accurate rendering of a warp-weighted loom on a visual artifact is that on the red figure skyphos (ca. 430-420 BCE) from Chiusi<sup>92</sup> by the so-called Penelope Painter. The vase shows highlights of Odysseus’ *nóstos*: a ‘compressed’ side A depicts Odysseus entering his palace (wearing the traditional wanderer outfit: hat, staff, etc. In an astute *mise en abîme*, Odysseus also carries his own skyphos!) and being foot-washed<sup>93</sup> by his old nurse (labeled<sup>94</sup> Antiphat(t)a: we will discuss this in a moment); Eumaios stands besides Antiphat(t)a/Eurykleia apparently in the act of offering some gift to Odysseus. Side B shows Penelope seated in a pensive mood, Telemachus at her left carrying two spears: an unfinished patterned weaving (*istón*) hangs on a warp-weighted loom (*istón!*). We clearly see a row of ‘tapestry’ figures, *pégasoi*, griffins and a winged figure running across the design<sup>95</sup> (very similar to the one depicted on the friezes of Demeter’s cloak on

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<sup>87</sup> For a convincing interpretation of the difficult, composed word *po-ki-ro-nu-ka* see Lújan 1996-97: 347-349 who builds his argument referring also to *Od.* ii 94-98.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. *Il.* V 375 = X 386 of Athena’s peplos (!).

<sup>89</sup> Cf. e.g. *Il.* IV 226; X 322 for chariots; XVI 134 for armor.

<sup>90</sup> It is also true that, in the light of the above, the features of a λευκόν *phâros* and a ποικίλον *phâros* should not be rigidly dichotomized and mutually exclusive.

<sup>91</sup> See Barber 1991: 358-359.

<sup>92</sup> Chiusi, Museo Archeologico Nazionale: 62705 (formerly Collezione Civica: C 1831).

<sup>93</sup> On ancient representations of the foot-washing scene see Mitchell Havelock 1995.

<sup>94</sup> For a presentation of this artifact in the context of the (textual or non-textual) function of the inscriptions on vases see Neer 1998: 28-32. All the names (ΟΛΥΣΣΕΥΣ, ΑΝΤΙΦΑΤΑ, ΕΥΜΑΟΣ, ΠΗΝΕΛΟΠΗ, ΤΗΛΕΜΑΧΟΣ – ΑΝΤΙΦΑΤΑ written from right to left) were depicted in white paint, but unfortunately vanished as a consequence of the most recent restoration and are no longer readable.

<sup>95</sup> Ellen Harlizius-Klück actually reconstructed at the loom the starting border of the fabric on the skyphos from Chiusi with these winged figures in the context of the “Weaving codes - Coding Weaves” project. See Chatzoudis 23.09.2014.

the cup by Makron, ca. 490 BCE,<sup>96</sup> and – not very convincingly according to me – interpreted as Perseus by Arrigoni<sup>97</sup>). The figure of Penelope “is a quotation from a well-known statue-type: the so-called Mourning Penelope, known from fifth-century terracotta reliefs, Roman copies, and a marble fragment from Persepolis (Neer 1998: 30).” Among the reliefs, it is important to recall the marble stele from Thessaly<sup>98</sup>, ca. 350 BCE, that, to my knowledge, is the only visual instance conflating the scenes from side A and B of the Chiusi skyphos, with Eurykleia, Odysseus and Penelope at the loom in the same frame<sup>99</sup>.

Margaret Miller, discussing oriental textiles as sources of iconographic images in the fifth and the fourth century, calls the Chiusi skyphos “[t]he earliest representation of a weaving certainly to suggest Oriental textiles [...] just after the middle of the fifth century” and observes that “[p]erhaps in classical Athens only near eastern textiles looked sufficiently complicated to sustain Penelope’s hoax (Miller 1997: 77).” Despite recently reinstated skepticism<sup>100</sup>, particular iconographical features, as the shadow cast on the fabric by Telemachus and the foreshortening of Penelope’s stool, seem to confirm the widely accepted derivation of (at least part of) the scene from a mural by Polignotos situated in the pronaos of the temple of Athena Areia at Plataia, and depicting the *mnēsteroktonia*.<sup>101</sup> Because the mural itself is lost, we will never know if the pattern of the textile on the loom could derive from the mural painting as well. As a matter of fact, muralists like Polignotos of Thasos and Mikon of Athens influenced vase-painters in the years following the Persian Wars, when the Greeks grew more and more impressed by the rich coloring and patterning of the Near Eastern textiles<sup>102</sup>.

It has been suggested<sup>103</sup> that, given the purported inconsistencies between the pictorial narratives and the dictate of Homeric text, the Penelope Painter could have been rather inspired by Sophocles’ lost play *Niptra* (The Bath Scene) centered on the recognition of Odysseus by his nurse, whose Sophoclean name was possibly Antiphat(t)a<sup>104</sup>. This particular reconstruction (further complicated by the problematic relationship between the *Niptra*, the *Odysseus Akanthoplex*<sup>105</sup> and

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<sup>96</sup> See Barber 1991: 363.

<sup>97</sup> See Arrigoni 2007: 12-16.

<sup>98</sup> Athens, National Archeological Museum 1914.

<sup>99</sup> It is not entirely clear if Neer does not acknowledge this stele when he writes: “If ever a vase offered a programmatic contrast between its two sides, it is this one. *The iconography is not unique, but nowhere else do the particular scenes appear together*, and the antithesis is visible even at the most superficial level (Neer 1998: 29 – emphasis mine).”

<sup>100</sup> See Andreae and Parisi Presticce 1996: 387.

<sup>101</sup> An accurate report is to be found in Iozzo 2012: 73. See also Neer 1998: 18.

<sup>102</sup> As Miller (1997: 76) recalls, Herodotus uses the expression *παραπετάσματα ποικίλα* (IX 82) when describing the variegated colored tapestry displayed in Mardonius’ establishment, collected as booty after the battle of Plataia.

<sup>103</sup> Originally By Ribbeck 1875 (2013): 273. 681-682.

<sup>104</sup> Leer (1998: 32) proposes that the painter replaced intentionally Eurykleia with Antiphat(t)a to equate the nurse who reads the scar as *émpedon séma* with the deadlocking, “antilogic” (Antiphatta meaning “Counter-Talker”) reply typical of the sophistic *antilogikê*. This seems to me highly improbable.

<sup>105</sup> See Debiasi 2004: 265.



Pacuvius' *Niptra*<sup>106</sup>) is highly controversial<sup>107</sup> and I prefer to think that the Penelope Painter had *cyclic* material in mind (insofar a designation like *Homeric* and an opposition *Homeric* vs. *non-Homeric* might have been almost meaningless for our fifth century painter). We have also to recall what Lowenstam wrote about artists who knew 'Homeric' poems and 'other' poems as well and "never read the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, but had *merely*<sup>108</sup> heard rhapsodes (1992: 170)" – anyway, what else could they do in the mid-fifth century? Interestingly enough, on the Chiusi skyphos Odysseus is labeled as Olys(s)eus, the Corinthian and Boiotian variant of the name (Ὀλυσσεύς / Ὀλυττεύς).

What all these variants, possibilities and figurative materializations demonstrate beyond any doubt is that the Chiusi skyphos deals in a way or another with traditional episodes and elements familiar both to the painter and the public.<sup>109</sup> Shared knowledge and expectations contemplated (or even requested) an Ὀλυσσεύς, an Ἀντίφαττα, a certain 'assemblage' of components and actions (apparently not consistent with the storyline of our *Odyssey*) and, most important for us, a patterned textile hanging on Penelope's loom.

Traditions relating Telemachus' role as *ktistês* of the Etruscan city of *Clevsie*-<sup>110</sup> and, more in general, epic material variously echoing the Hesiodic line according to which the sons that Odysseus had with Kirke "ruled over all the famous Tyrsenoi"<sup>111</sup>, could have been brought the Athenian skyphos into the hands of an Etruscan aristocrat interested in 'reading' and reaffirming his heroic genealogy and the charter myth concerning his city.<sup>112</sup> Chiusi and its famous Etruscan cippi with reliefs showing also a significant number of string instruments of the lyre family<sup>113</sup> give us the opportunity to introduce the next section of this study that will be initially focusing on the chelys lyre, then tracing the performances of 'female bards'.

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<sup>106</sup> Cicero himself at *Tusculanae* V 16, possibly citing Pacuvius' *Niptra*, calls Odysseus nurse *Anticlea*. Is this a mere *lapsus mentis*? On the supposed or real model(s) of Pacuvius' *Niptra* see Schierl 2006: 386-417.

<sup>107</sup> See Iozzo 2012: 73 and n. 33.

<sup>108</sup> Italics mine.

<sup>109</sup> Skaftø Jensen (2014: 92) recently returned to this subject: "I have argued elsewhere that the written *Iliad* and *Odyssey* remained largely unread until well into the 4th century B.C., and that even after they gradually became better and better known, they belonged to the educated minority, while a living epic tradition continued with rhapsodes entertaining audiences wherever they were to be had, singing stories of the wars of ancient times as they had always done, unhampered by the fact that two special versions had been taken down from dictation. Illustrations on vases and other materials allow us a glimpse into the multiforms of Homeric performance. To me, then, a *trophos* called Antiphata is a witness to a different realisation of this scene from the Trojan tradition than the one we have in the *Odyssey*, and the phenomenon reinforces the hypothesis that the *trophoi* were part of the Homeric tradition as a type rather than as individuals."

<sup>110</sup> See Iozzo 2012: 74-75.

<sup>111</sup> *Theog.* 1016: πᾶσιν Τυρσηνοῖσιν ἀγακλειτοῖσιν ἄνασσον.

<sup>112</sup> See Malkin 1998: 160-162

<sup>113</sup> See Lawergren 2007: 119-121. A beautiful lyre is carved in a marble cippus base with scenes of dance and music of the early fifth century (Chiusi, Museo Archeologico Nazionale: 62888). On a Pietra Fetida relief from Chiusi now in Baltimore (Baltimore, The Walters Art Gallery: n° 23.13) we can probably see a chelys lyre. See Jannot 1984: 133: "Au centre, de profil droit, mais se dirigeant vers la gauche, un jeune homme avance en se retournant. Il tient une petite lyre en écaille de tortue suspendue à son poignet gauche et tient dans sa main droite levée au niveau de sa tête le plectre dont il a joué." This *lyre suspendue* recalls a red-figured Apulian chous depicting a girl swinging a tortoise tied to a string (ca. 360-350 BC. British Museum: 1856,0512.12): the vase is adduced by Karanika (2014: 172) when discussing the *chelichelōne* game.

## PLAYING THE CHELYS

“In ancient Greece the chelys lyre was the quintessential instrument of the amateur musician. The simplest of the stringed instruments, it earned its name from its soundbox, made from a shell of a tortoise (*chélys*). According to the *Homeric Hymn 4 to Hermes* (20-60), Hermes invented the chelys lyre as a youngster and later gave it to Apollo as an instrument of reconciliation (Bundrick 2005: 14).” Although no depiction of the chelys lyre has survived from the Bronze Age, we might have material evidence of it in the form of two tortoise shells and fragments of others with drilled holes from the East Sanctuary of Phylakopi: it is likely they served as soundboxes.<sup>114</sup> This instrument is supposed to be the humbler and non-professional equivalent of the seven-string concert lyre, the kithara, whose first picture is the one on the famous Ayia Triada Sarcophagus with scenes of funerary performance, dating to about 1370-1320 BCE.<sup>115</sup> Toward the left of side A, a man dressed in a long robe is playing a kithara. Because of the red skin and the close-cropped hair, this figure is definitely interpreted as male: remarkably, he wears a robe identical to the female in front of him and shows a womanly bust.

John Younger speculates that the assumed humbler status of the chelys lyre made it the instrument women played as non-professionals in non-official, ‘private’ performances: an everyday lyre.<sup>116</sup> However, linear B tablets record only one name for lyres: *ru-ra* (/lura/), while Homer usually uses *phórmix*<sup>117</sup> and, in two occasions, *kitharis* (as object of the verb *phormízō*)<sup>118</sup>.

After “the final collapse of the social hierarchy and political organisation in the Aegean [...] the musical instruments effectively disappear from the Aegean visual record, only to reappear just before the mid-8th century BCE when social complexity and statehood re-emerged with the rise of the *polis* (Mikrakis 2011: 61).” The earliest depictions of the chelys lyre are over four hundred years more recent than the Phylakopi fragments: two hydriae and one pottery fragment from Attica, dating from the end of the eighth century, depict musical or religious processions in which a man is shown playing a lyre with a sound box which is altogether round, and, especially by the evidence of one vase, clearly not made of wood, but of the shell of a tortoise.<sup>119</sup> In later times, a closer relationship was explicitly expressed in visual culture between women and chelys lyre: particularly in the second half of the fifth century women (in addition to Muses) are often depicted with lyres in

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<sup>114</sup> See Younger 2007: 2. See also Mikrakis 2011: 61; Creese 1997: 49-55. For a general survey on the subject of music in the Aegean Bronze Age see the work of Younger (1998).

<sup>115</sup> See Burke 2005. For an interpretation of the sarcophagus in connection with Egypt see the thesis of Martino (2005).

<sup>116</sup> See Younger 2007: 2.

<sup>117</sup> On the Homeric *phórmix* and its ‘modes’ see West 1981. According to literary tradition, Terpander increased the number of strings on the lyre from four to seven. Thus, Homeric *phórmix* was believed to have had only four strings, as the lyres usually depicted on artifacts from late Geometric period. The Homeric Hymn to Hermes referred to the god’s lyre as an instrument made of seven strings of sheep gut to sound in concord (51: *ἑπτὰ δὲ συμφώνους ὄϊων ἐτανύσσατο χορδάς*). Details about construction, tuning and number of strings of the chelys lyre are narrated by Mathiesen 1991: 237-248.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. *Il.* III 54; *Od.* i 153.

<sup>119</sup> See Creese 1997: 56-57.

their homes. Bundrick opportunely stresses this kind of association of mortal women with the Muses by the means of the chelys.<sup>120</sup>

Recalling the physical resemblance between the hand loom and the (chelys) lyre, we can now interpret it in the other direction too: women shown playing the chelys lyre in their homes can be allusive of women weaving on the hand loom. Moreover, as Sarah Pomeroy pointed out<sup>121</sup> dealing with the *Distaff* of Erinna, we have to think about that, quite unexpectedly, representations of women seated and playing the lyre on vases are far more familiar than depictions of women weaving.

As the story goes, the occurrence of the word ἀλακάτα (Doric for ἡλακάτη), along with the name of Erinna herself, as well as the reference to Baukis within the 8 portions of papyrus discovered in January 1928 by Evaristo Breccia at Oxyrinchus, led the Italian scholars Girolamo Vitelli and Medea Norsa to assume that the discovery was of the hexametric poem Ἡλακάτη, cited in the lexicon *Suda* as authored by Erinna.<sup>122</sup> The recurrent (line 5, 7 and 16) word χελύννα (Aeolic for χελώνη<sup>123</sup>) and the accepted reconstruction of line 15 ([λε]υκᾶν μαινομέν[οισιν ἐσάλατο π]οσσῖν ἀφ' ἴ[π]ρω[ν]) prompted C. M. Bowra to suggest that Erinna was describing the *tortoise* (the *chelichelōne*, a game played by girls) in the context of the lamentation for her dead friend Baukis<sup>124</sup>. Martin West's 1977<sup>125</sup> elaborate argument<sup>126</sup>, constructed to lead to the conclusion that, in brief, such a sophisticated poem could not have been written by a girl who spent all day at her loom and spindle, is very helpful here to stress the importance of the multiple associations emerging from the text and from Erinna's traditional figure between lament, weaving, poetry, the *tortoise* game and, not merely etymologically, the chelys lyre.

Andromache Karanika underlines the references embedded in Erinna's fragment (as well in Pollux as *testimonium* of the *chelichelōne* chant) to female work, especially weaving.<sup>127</sup> A stylized version of a real girls game activity brings forth the themes of weaving and death. Lament like language expresses in an antiphonal structure the 'ritual' weaving of a burial cloth (an activity possibly accompanied by song performance itself):

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<sup>120</sup> See Bundrick 2005: 15.

<sup>121</sup> See Pomeroy 1978: 19.

<sup>122</sup> For an accurate account of the discovery and the papyrologic efforts of reconstruction, see Neri 1997. See also McIntosh Snyder 1991: 86-92.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Sapph. *Oxy.* 1787 *Fr.* 1 + 2.11: φιλάοιδον λιγύραν χελύνναν. The fragment of Sappho qualifies the chelys lyre as φιλάοιδον "musical" "friend of singing" and λιγύραν "clear" "shrill". On *ligurós* see Karanika (2014: 48): "The adjectives *ligurós* and *ligís* describe the kind of sound that Greeks liked best, a fine, clear, and precise voice. It refers to an ensemble of qualities that channel the concept of the enchantingly beautiful voice, the kind of voice that can be produced by a great number of agents – orators, musical instruments like the *phórmnix*, figures like the Sirens and Circe, as well as the tone of funeral lament and sounds of birds and the wind."

<sup>124</sup> See Bowra 1933: 181; 1936: 328.

<sup>125</sup> See West 1977.

<sup>126</sup> On West's argument and for an interpretation of the poem centered on the *tortoise* see Arthur 1980: "The following discussion and interpretation of the poem is centered on the two symbols of the title, one of which, the tortoise, is explicit in the poem, the other, the mirror (by which I mean the mirror of the self), is implicit. Both are 'personal' and both are 'conventional,' in very much the same way that the poem as a whole is an elaborate interlacing of personal feeling and intimate experience with traditional and popular motif (p. 58)."

<sup>127</sup> See Karanika 2014: Chapter 6.

χελιχελώνη, τί ποιεῖς ἐν τῷ μέσῳ;  
ἢ δὲ ἀποκρίνεται  
ἔρια μαρύομαι καὶ κρόκην Μιλησίαν.  
εἴτ' ἐκεῖναι πάλιν ἐκβοῶσιν  
ὁ δ' ἔκγονός σου τί ποιῶν ἀπώλετο;  
ἢ δέ φησι  
λευκᾶν ἀφ' ἵππων εἰς ἀλασσαν ἄλατο.

*Chelichelone*, what are you doing in the middle?

And she answers:

I am weaving wool and Milesian thread.

And they shout back:

How did your son die?

She says:

he jumped from white horses into the sea.

Pollux, *Onomasticon* IX 125, 7-13

Penelope does not weave on a hand loom, nor sing accompanied by a chelys. But, her weaving performance on the warp-weighted loom is inherently connected to lament and funerary performance. Weaving a burial shroud may be considered a ritual component of the funeral-to-be, encompassing song, gesture and rhythmic movements. As we stressed above, Penelope is not directly represented weaving, least singing at the loom, but, as we will explain in detail, this depends mostly upon the peculiarly metapoetical function of her weaving. We will address next Laertes' burial cloth, "a garment destined for public sight (Karanika 2014: 44)" as means of ritual expression connecting lament, weaving<sup>128</sup>, the deceased hero and his kin in the funerary performance.

## SINGING THE DEAD

It is intriguing to parallel Penelope with the lyre player pictured on the Ayia Triada sarcophagus: both share female and male features. Clayton, discussing Penelope's own bardic stance, opportunely points out the particular status of the Ithacan Queen: she is the only female in Homeric poems who weaves also metaphorically, who weaves *mêtis* (a feature exclusive to men and epitomized by Odysseus) along with her physical fabric, or *as* her fabric, and also narrates her *mêtis* in her own storytelling. The choice of the verb *τολυπεύω* is highly significant in the metaphorical context of *Od.* xix 137 (ἐγὼ δὲ δόλους *τολυπεύω*), because this is the only instance of figurative *tolupeueîn* "wind off," "achieve," "accomplish" not referred to the business of war and tactics<sup>129</sup> by a male character. Otherwise, when the subject is a woman the verb means "wind off carded wool into a clew for spinning."

The (supposed) fact and the phrase that put in motion and motivate all the weaving (so the *mêtis/dólos* and its narration too) are also intriguing – and always the same: ἐπεὶ θάνε δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς ("because the godlike Odysseus has died"; cf. *Od.* ii 96; xix 141; xxiv 131). This very

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<sup>128</sup> Interestingly, the adjective *πυκ(ι)νός* designates in Homer both frequent outbursts of grief (Cf. *Il.* XVIII 318: *πυκνὰ μάλα στενάχων* – Achilles is crying 'densely' for Patroklos) and a tightly 'woven' / cunningly devised *dólos* (Cf. *Il.* VI 187: *πυκινὸν δόλον ἄλλον ὕφαινε*). The adjective clearly builds on the concept of closeness in texture and repetition, drawing attention on an acoustic and 'visual' component.

<sup>129</sup> See Clayton 1994: 32; Holmberg 2003: 10.

event is not only factually denied by the plot<sup>130</sup> and the closure of our Odyssey, but it is the narrative outcome the Odyssean weaving of Penelope is determined to counter, both literally and metaphorically. Pura Nieto has shown how Penelope and her *istón* are the direct counterpart to Phemios' bardic activity and its *phórmnix*<sup>131</sup>: she is introduced in the poem when, overhearing Phemios singing the *nóstoi* from her room, tries to stop him<sup>132</sup> in an effort and with the intention "of determining the tradition and the form she believes it should take (Nieto Hernandez 2008: 47)." The point of going back to her chamber after Telamachus' rebuke (and possibly resuming work, i.e. *weaving*)<sup>133</sup> it is clearly to allude to Penelope's own (determinant) contribution to tradition, the weaving of a burial cloth that would be the one for Laertes, not for Odysseus. Penelope's ἡλακάτη is much like Erinna's, and her *ιστόν* resembles functionally a chelys lyre. As an *ante litteram* Athenian woman, Penelope is depicted (and depicts herself) playing the 'lyre' in her home. In our Odyssey the bardic performance of Phemios (and its tradition) is eventually rejected<sup>134</sup>, countered and displaced by Penelope's (metaphorical) weaving: her burial cloth will encompass a 'virtual' pattern mirroring Odysseus' *nóstos* and, by a narratological Droste effect, her weaving/unweaving. Activity and process will function as metapoetical reference to epic structured performance, as we will examine later. Indeed, this function of Penelope's weaving stretches to future audiences, and eventually to us, as typically Odyssean. But, what about a pre-Odyssean function of weaving in the frame of a funerary performance enacted ἐπει θάνε δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς?

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<sup>130</sup> Athena herself, as *deus ex machina* behind Odysseus' unexpected return asserts by a 'programmatic' speech act early at scroll i 196 οὐ γάρ πο τέθνηκεν ἐπὶ χθονὶ δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς (for godlike Odysseus is not yet dead on hard land): only a tradition guaranteeing *nóstos* (and *kléos* within 'regulated' epic performance) is authorized by the divine patroness of Odysseus. It is Athena who, ultimately, chooses the right tradition to be sung in her great festival *forever*.

<sup>131</sup> See Nieto Hernandez 2008: 51-52: "As is well known, in the Indo-European languages the loom is a symbol for poetry and poetic creation and, at the same time, a feminine form of expression, the female word. Helen, for example, in a famous passage (*Il.* III 125-128), weaves scenes of the Trojan war. But weaving, spinning and the production of cloth also have in Greek myth a strong association with death, which sends us back to the bow. It is probably enough to mention the repeated stories of death caused by certain fabrics (Medea, Deianeira, or the famous story of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela) or the fact that destiny or fate is represented by the image of spinning thread in the figure of the Moirai. By virtue of these associations the loom is close to both the bow and the lyre, and in that sense occupies an ambiguous, and maybe even superior, position in relation to the other two instruments. In the case of Penelope's loom, the connection with death is quite clear: she has been weaving the shroud for Laertes." On the complementary metaphorical association between fate and *weaving* (not spinning) in the Indo-European tradition (in particular in the Old Norse tradition) see Bek-Pedersen 2009. The author stresses how the pattern of the textile emerges from the mind of the weaver and how "[f]ate, as that inescapable truth that already exists within a person before they act, can be likened to the pattern that is present in the warp already before weaving commences (Bek-Pedersen: 36)." The nexus of spinning, weaving and course of individual life in antiquity is discussed by Scheid and Svenbro (1996: 158-160).

<sup>132</sup> Cf. *Od.* i 336-342. When Penelope asks Phemios "to cease from this sad song" (ταύτης δ' ἀποπαύε' ἀοιδῆς / λυγρῆς: i 340-341) she claims for a bardic prerogative, the faculty of deciding to change the subject of the story, or, more properly, to shift to the consequent section of the story itself, that is the performative act of the *metábasis*. In fact, the *nóstos* of Odysseus will be the consequent, and it will be not *ligrós* as it will not become part of Phemios' 'cyclic' material. It's up to Penelope to 'weave' the consequent section as Odyssean (and pan-Athenaic) tradition and to reject her son's acknowledging of an undifferentiated (and disgraceful for Odysseus) tradition of *nóstoi* (οὐ γάρ Ὀδυσσεύς οἷος ἀπώλεσε νόστιμον ἡμᾶρ ἐν Τροίῃ, πολλοὶ δὲ καὶ ἄλλοι φῶτες ὄλοντο "Not only Odysseus lost in Troy the day of his homecoming, but many other men perished": *Od.* i 354-355). On *metábasis* see Nagy 2002: Chapter 2.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. *Od.* i 356-357: ἄλλ' εἰς οἶκον ἰούσα τὰ σ' αὐτῆς ἔργα κόμιζε, / ἰστόν τ' ἡλακάτην τε [...] "go back to your chamber in the house, and busy yourself with your own tasks, your loom and distaff [...]"

<sup>134</sup> So Pucci 1987: 199. On the 'agonistic' stance adopted by Penelope vs. Phemios see also Papadopoulou-Belmehdi 1994: 63-68.

As Michael Boyd wrote, the performance of funerary ritual is one of the hallmarks of the Mycenaean period.<sup>135</sup> Funerary performance “is produced in discursive consciousness aimed at achieving certain goals while cognizant of the scrutiny of those co-present, the affordances of place and ‘tradition’ as shared, negotiable memory of past performances (Boyd 2014: 194).” Material culture plays a unique role in “creating spectacle” in funerary events and the burial cloth is an irreplaceable element both in an early stage of the funeral, as part of the preparation of the corpse for the *próthesis*, and in the *próthesis* itself. Penelope knows well:

[...] μή τίς μοι κατὰ δῆμον Ἀχαιῶδων νεμεσῆσῃ,  
αἶ κεν ἄτερ σπείρου κεῖται πολλὰ κτεατίσσας.

I fear the Achaean women would reproach me  
If he should lie in death without a cloth for all his wealth.

*Od.* xix 146-147 (= ii 101-102; xxiv 136-137)

Dressing in (and covering the corpse by) a special raiment displays the close relationship of the next in kin with (and obligation to) the deceased in the presence of community members invited to gaze upon the dead and to witness the body during the ritual procession to the grave.<sup>136</sup> Along the different stages of the funerary performance, mourning modulated in ritual gesture and vocal lamentation remained consistent from the times of the Ayia Triada procession and the Tanagra larnakes figures until fifth century Athens and beyond. According to Bertolín Cebrián’s hypothesis on the origin of epic<sup>137</sup>, funeral lament originated epic discourse as far as lamentation lost its illocutionary and ritual connection to the funerary performance and the mourners left behind the tombs of the ancestors during the first Ionian migration. Notwithstanding the difficulties posed by such an assumption, and by Bertolín’s own lines of argumentation<sup>138</sup>, I will retain the idea of the funerary performance as a potentially generative nexus of practices, links and metaphors.

In particular, the centrality of scenes depicting grand funerary performances in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* cannot be underplayed: Patroklos, Hektor and Achilles, as illustrious dead, are all recipients of adequate lamentation. It is a fact that untimely death generates lament and *kléos*, and that *kléos* is circulated by epic, which keeps accurate record of lament and funerary ritual.<sup>139</sup> As we noted, the *Iliad* tells us about Patroklos’ and Hektor’s burial cloths. The *Odyssey*, describing the early stages of the funerary performance for Achilles seems to overlook this element, but explicitly designates a golden two-handled vase crafted by Hephaistos as urn for his bones<sup>140</sup>, and we must

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<sup>135</sup> See Boyd 2014: 192.

<sup>136</sup> See Boyd 2014: 198.

<sup>137</sup> See Bertolín Cebrián 2006: 34-60.

<sup>138</sup> See Di Fazio 2009; Jason 2007-2008. I find particularly problematic accepting the rigid and strictly diachronic distinction between ancestors and heroes as it is formulated in Bertolín’s book.

<sup>139</sup> Nagy (1979: Chapter 6) has demonstrated how the three concepts of *kléos*, *ákhos* and *pénthos* are strictly interwoven into the epic text.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. *Od.* xxiv 73-79. At lines 76-77 we are told that Achilles’ bones, placed within the golden vase, were mixed with those of the dead Patroklos (ἐν τῷ τοι κεῖται λεύκ’ ὀστέα, φαίδιμ’ Ἀχιλλεῦ, μίγδα δὲ Πατρόκλιοιο Μενoitιάδαο θανόντος). This detail is consistent with Mycenaean transformational activities of rearrangement of burials, when bones were often disarticulated and gathered in pits or niches. “The recognizable bones that recall the individual are transformed into anonymous remains of ancestors (Boyd 2014: 201).”

not forget the connection between pattern-weaving and metalwork in Homeric poetry<sup>141</sup>. In this context, it is not out of place to recall the words of Anthony Tuck about the “emergence of complex geometric designs covering the entirety of burial kraters and amphoras which often have been thought to represent woven patterns (Tuck 2006: 541).”

The role of an object as essential as a burial cloth in funerary ritual (reflected by the constant presence of the bier cloth in Geometric *próthesis* scenes) is also to refer to a special relationship between the weaver(s) and the dead, with the weaver(s) posed to emphasize the memory of the dead, linking them to the living in general and to their successors.<sup>142</sup> As proposed above, if we consider weaving a burial cloth the very first stage of a funerary ritual, we can also regard pattern weaving and ritual mourning as two different, but related, ‘fields of discourse’ (in the sense of the interpretative archeology of John Barrett<sup>143</sup>), with the possibility that the performers “transform the symbolic content of one field by its metaphorical association with the symbolic content of the other (Barrett 1991: 4).”

Aristocratic funerals probably required of women producing luxurious and elaborated textiles for the prestigious deceased<sup>144</sup>: they “perhaps showed his patron deity and the exploits of himself and his ancestors: a fitting tribute to a hero at his death, a eulogy on cloth (Barber 1991: 380).” If we are supposed to imagine a story cloth for Odysseus, it is not difficult to see Athena on it.

## BACK TO THE FUTURE

Antinoos’ narration about the *phâros* of Laertes is preceded by a clear temporal demarcation concerning Penelope’s delaying tactics:

ἤδη γὰρ τρίτον ἔστιν ἔτος, τάχα δ’ εἴσι τέταρτον,  
ἐξ οὗ ἀτέμβει θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσιν Ἀχαιῶν.

Already now it is the third year – and soon it will be the fourth –  
since she has deceived the hearts in the breasts of all the Achaeans.

*Od.* ii 89-90

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<sup>141</sup> See Nagy 2010a: 291 and n. 8 of this paper. Paradoxically, the silence about Achilles’ burial cloth could also be considered a small gap in the reticence of epic toward the notion of his immortalization.

<sup>142</sup> Transmission of memory through woven artifacts is analyzed by Karanika in relation to the peplos gifted by Helen to Telemachus who is about to leave the palace of Menelaus (cf. *Od.* xv 125-127): “The phrase μνήμη Ἑλένης χειρῶν [*Od.* xv 126], “a reminder of Helen’s hands,” highlights the emphasis given to memory that is carried not only verbally but also through a finished woven garment [...] Thus she transmits her memory to the house of Odysseus (Karanika 2014: 39).” See also Mueller 2010: 8-14.

<sup>143</sup> Barrett (1988) identifies The Field of Discourse as the dynamic situation within which people draw upon available conditions in communicative action: it is an area in time-space occupied by virtue of the practice of a particular discourse. Archaeologists, taking into account the fact that material objects are embedded in discourses (which structure social practices) and are used in a symbolic sense, can evaluate the mechanisms by which people knew and understood their world as a specific set of cultural beliefs.

<sup>144</sup> See Tuck 2006: 541.

A full three-year period is then directly connected to the weaving of the *phâros*, which is here apparently envisioned as the last (and the more lasting) of a series of (probably concurrent<sup>145</sup>) *dóloi* (ἡ δὲ δόλον τόνδ' ἄλλον ἐνὶ φρεσὶ μερμήριξε “she devised this other trick in her heart”: *Od.* ii 93):

ὥς τρίετες μὲν ἔληθε δόλω καὶ ἔπειθεν Ἀχαιοῦς·  
ἀλλ' ὅτε τέτρατον ἦλθεν ἔτος καὶ ἐπήλυθον ὄραι [...]

Thus by this trick she kept the Achaeans from knowing for three years.  
But when the fourth year came around as the seasons rolled along [...]

*Od.* ii 106-107

So, the weaving/unweaving/re-weaving ruse clearly spanned over a period of three complete years, and was exposed in the fourth, or when the fourth approached, if we count, like the Greeks did, starting with year one. It is tempting to see here a reference to the considerable amount of time (nine months: from the thirtieth day of the month Pyanopsion to the twenty-eighth day of the month Hekatombaion) spent weaving the Peplos to be dedicated at the pentaeteric Great Panathenaia, a reference that is “subtextual” in the sense specified by Gregory Nagy<sup>146</sup> apropos of the peplos presented to Athena by the women of Troy at *Iliad* VI 286-296. As Nagy points out, “[t]he focus of the narrative here is on the peplos to be presented to Athena, and the ritual reality of this peplos emerges from the variation in the three consecutive restatements [*Il.* VI 90-93; 271-273; 286-96] that describe it [...] The third restatement, which is the longest and most complex, requires the greatest poetic virtuosity – and variability [...] In the Homeric tradition, wording that requires the greatest poetic virtuosity is conventionally assigned to the master narrator as the ultimate virtuoso (Nagy 2010a: 268).” Likewise, the weaving of Laertes’ *phâros* is narrated three times in the *Odyssey* (*Od.* ii 96-110 by Antinoos to Telemachus and the Ithacan assembly; xix 141-156 by Penelope herself to Odysseus; xxiv 131-146 by Amphimedon to Agamemnon): even if Penelope’s narration is not the last one in terms of the plot, “in the manner of oral poetry, her telling refers to all other occurrences of her tale, including the one in the underworld that is chronologically still in the future (Levaniouk 2011: Chapter 15).” Within the analogy of these two narratives and considering what we have previously said of Penelope’s ‘bardic’ presence, we can consider her not only as a professional weaver but also as master narrator<sup>147</sup>, able to collapse the difference between literal and metaphorical weaving and to appropriate and re-direct tradition from wrong (Phemios’ *nóstoi*) to right tale (Odysseus’ *nóstos*), and from ‘un-authorized’ toward ‘authorized’ audiences, composed of festival participants who could not miss at all such a reference to a multiannual period of (re-)weaving.

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<sup>145</sup> The ‘false’ messages tactics could have been started after the weaving itself: Antinoos says “τάχα δ’ εἴσι τέταρτον” at line 89 and “ὅτε τέτρατον ἦλθεν” at line 107. The apparent discrepancy between lines 89 and 107 can be resolved if the verb ἔρχομαι is used with the meaning “to approach”, “to draw near” (common in Homer but usually referred to a person or persons as subject: see for instance *Il.* VII 275; X 540; *Od.* iii 34). For a different interpretation see West 1981: 265-266.

<sup>146</sup> “The *text* of the *Iliadic* narrative refers to the Peplos of Athena at the time of the Trojan War, while the *subtext* refers to the Peplos of Athena in the context of the seasonally recurring festival of the Panathenaia, which is the actual occasion for the Homeric narration (Nagy: 2010: 266).”

<sup>147</sup> For the opposite opinion see Kruger 72-73. Raphals counts Penelope amongst the (limited) ranks of “designing women” able to substantially influence and shape the denouement of the *Odyssey* through their *mêtis*: “Like Athena, she excels in weaving. She acts without acting by unweaving what she has designed and thereby preserves her design intact. Just as Homer is the master bard, Penelope’s the master weaver, whose designs preserve the future life of Odysseus in a simulacrum of the death of Laertes.”



The third performance by Amphimedon has a most interesting coda:

εὖθ' ἢ φᾶρος ἔδειξεν, ὑφήνασα μέγαν ἰστόν,  
πλύνας', ἠελίῳ ἐναλίγκιον ἢ ἔσελήνῃ,  
καὶ τότε δὴ ῥ' Ὀδυσῆα κακός ποθεν ἤγαγε δαίμων  
ἀγροῦ ἐπ' ἐσχατιήν, ὅθι δώματα ναῖε συβώτης.

when she showed it to us, after she finished weaving,  
after washing it, it was like the sun and the moon;  
even then some evil spirit brought Odysseus  
to the outskirts of the land, where the pig herder lived.

*Od.* xxiv 147-150

Several details here have to be pointed out and discussed. I will review at the end of this study the supposed chronological discrepancy between Antinoos' and Amphimedon's accounts on the completion of the *phâros* with respect to Odysseus' return (making it short: from an oral performance perspective I think there is none). First, the *phâros* itself: as we have seen, the word in the *Odyssey* can designate a cloak, a burial cloth or (in plural) pieces of untailed cloth for making sails. At *Od.* v 258-59 Kalypso brings cloth (φάρσα) and Odysseus makes sails (ἰστία) with skill (εὖ). As we know, the Athenian 'Ship of State' was paraded on wheels along the route of the pan-Athenaic Procession on the occasion of the presentation of the Peplos to the goddess Athena in the festival of the quadrennial Panathenaia. This ship was adorned with the pattern-woven Peplos of Athena, rigged to the mast as a ritual sail.<sup>148</sup> Although the pan-Athenaic Peplos is commonly referred to by the word πέπλος, for the biennial observance of the 29<sup>th</sup> Thargelion, Nicomachus' revised sacrificial calendar<sup>149</sup> mentions ahead of all other offerings for Athena a φᾶρος / [ἐρίων] καθαρῶν "a *phâros* of pure [wool]"<sup>150</sup>. While Franciszek Sokolowski initially identified the φᾶρος with Athena's πέπλος<sup>151</sup>, Noel Robertson recently and more convincingly argued that this woolen textile is a "mantle" produced and presented to Athena at the biennial Callynteria: "[w]hen Athena was dressed again each year at the Callynteria of 28<sup>th</sup> Thargelion, it had always been with the old peplos newly washed. That was the point of the age-old 'washing rites.' But every second year, it now appears, she was dressed as well in a newly woven mantle. We are reminded of the newly woven peplos that was presented at the Great Panathenaia every fourth year (Robertson 2004: 139)." In any case, the fact that the word φᾶρος does not occur in Attic prose (but is common in tragedy) is a further indication that it was used in Nicomachus' calendar as a marked term related to a ritual context and a ritual fabric.

Further relying on the model proposed by Nagy for the peplos of *Iliad* VI, we can imagine that a narrative tradition concerning the ritual weaving of a patterned burial cloth spanning a long period of time had been progressively attuned to an extended, multiannual interval to allude to the pan-Athenaic festival and to the ritual weaving of the Peplos, the pattern-woven textile *par excellence*. The word *phâros* used in the *Odyssey* for the burial cloth reverberates as well in other ritual activities connected to the worship of Athena, as we just saw.

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<sup>148</sup> See Nagy 2010a: 283.

<sup>149</sup> Completed at the end of the fifth century. See Henrichs 2003: 54-56.

<sup>150</sup> See Robertson 2004: 138.

<sup>151</sup> See Sokolowski 1936: 456-457.

The ‘washing rites’ of the Plynteria<sup>152</sup> could entertain the same kind of relationship with the particular emphasis placed on Penelope washing (also metrical emphasis: πλύνασ(α) first foot of the hexameter) the fabric before its presentation. The traditional activity of washing the woven cloth, probably recorded also on linear B tablets<sup>153</sup>, could be conceptually redefined by performers and audiences familiarized to ‘washing rites’ connected to the Peplos (or φᾶρος) of Athena. Furthermore, the weaving of Penelope, put again in a position of a marriageable maiden by Odysseus’ absence and presumed death, resembles a virginal weaving<sup>154</sup>. Accordingly, she can also be paralleled to an *Arrhéphoros* both starting a ritual weaving and performing a secret task at night: in her case, *unweaving* at torchlight (νύκτας δ’ ἀλλύεσκεν, ἐπὴν δαΐδας παραθεῖτο: *Od.* ii 98 = xix 150 = xxiv 140).

In Amphimedon’s words, as mentioned above, the woven fabric is like the sun and the moon (ἠελίῳ ἐναλίγκιον ἢ σελήνῃ): in the *Odyssey*, the comparison to sun and moon occurs in two other passages, describing by the very same line the houses of Menelaos (iv 45: ὣς τε γὰρ ἠελίου αἴγλη πέλεν ἢ σελήνης) and of Alkinoos (vii 84). The word αἴγλη indicates both the brilliant light of the sun or moon and the radiance of metals (the house of Alkinoos has bronze walls with rows of lapis-lazuli stones, golden doors and silver doorposts: cf. *Od.* vii 86-89) and, once again, connects fabric and metal artifacts as products of weaving and metalwork. The palace of Alkinoos is shaped on Near-Eastern models<sup>155</sup>, just like the patterned textile on the Chiusi loom. We are supposed to imagine variegated friezes running across the palatial walls of Scheria. Is the same assumption to be made about the cloth woven by Penelope and shining like the sun and the moon? Are we dealing with a *poikílon pháros*? As visualized by the imagination of the Penelope painter, I think the pan-Athenaic audiences had no doubt about this. The Parthenon frieze itself was multicolored and so was the sculpted pan-Athenaic Peplos upon which the participants of the procession could notionally see themselves processionalizing.<sup>156</sup> Still, Homer does not confirm textually this legitimate, self-evident assumption. The text maintains an affirmative silence.

## THE POET CRAFTED A WORTHY MODEL FOR HIS POETRY

I do not think that a pre-Odyssean tradition about a burial cloth (for Odysseus?) attributed peculiar significance to being the cloth patterned. Of course it could be: we know it from later examples of material culture, among them scant but important remains of a painted pall<sup>157</sup>. Surely, the association between weaving and oral poetry, lament and funerary performances is of Indo-European ascendance and was conceptualized upon structural similarities, suggesting a vital role for memorialized patterns and ritualized practices.

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<sup>152</sup> On Ithacan Plynteria as “signe précurseur de l’union des sexes” see Papadopoulou-Belmehdi 1994: 118-119. This ritual washing preludes structurally to the return of Odysseus and the reunion of husband and wife, as I argue in the last section of my study.

<sup>153</sup> On this see Firth 2012: 236 n. 28. The logogram TELA+KU is interpreted as a textile that has been washed (cf. κλύζω “wash, rinse out”).

<sup>154</sup> See Levaniouk 2011: Chapter 15.

<sup>155</sup> See Cook 2004.

<sup>156</sup> See Barber 1991: 361; 1992: 114-115.

<sup>157</sup> See Barber 1991: 379.

As far as the Odyssean tradition is concerned, the poem both invested a great deal in conjuring an elaborately patterned textile and developed quite as much reticence about overtly designating the *phâros* as *poikilon*. I propose that this could be the only way to craft an adequate metapoetical model for the tradition, encompassing its life until and beyond textualization. The very pattern to be seen in the *phâros* will become eventually definite in the Odyssean alphabetic text, as silenced and de-multiplied result of performances we unfortunately can no more listen to.

One of the most famous scholia to the *Iliad* bears witness to the extent to which ancient scholarship noticed early on the metapoetical potential offered by patterned textiles and, particularly, story cloths:

ἀξιόχρεων ἀρχέθπον ἀνέπλασεν ὁ ποιητῆς τῆς ἰδίας ποιήσεως

The poet has crafted a worthy model for his own poetry.  
bT 126–27

This scholion, belonging to the bT ‘exegetical’<sup>158</sup> tradition and preserved by the beautiful 11th century manuscript known as Venetus B (Marcianus Graecus Z. 453 [= 821]), refers to the text of *Il.* III 125-128:

τὴν δ’ εὖρ’ ἐν μεγάρω· ἦ δὲ μέγαν ἰστὸν ὕφαινε  
δίπλακα πορφυρέην, πολέας δ’ ἐνέπασσεν ἀέθλους  
Τρώων θ’ ἵπποδάμων καὶ Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων,  
οὕς ἔθεν εἶνεκ’ ἐπασχον ὑπ’ Ἄρης παλαμῶν·

She [Iris] found her [Helen] in the great chamber; she was weaving a great web,  
a purple folding robe, working into it the numerous ordeals  
of Trojans, tamers of horses, and of Achaeans, wearers of bronze khitons,  
ordeals that they suffered at the hands of Ares all because of her.

*Il.* III 325-328.

The scholiast, followed by modern critics, recognizes that the patterned textile woven by Helen<sup>159</sup> depicts precisely the ordeals of the heroes on the plains of Troy, “corresponding in general terms to the content of the *Iliad* itself (Elmer 2005: 24).” As a matter of fact Homer rarely presents

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<sup>158</sup> On ancient scholia to Homer see Dickey 2007: 19.

<sup>159</sup> The role of Helen as a composer, a creator of epic poetry is recalled by Pantelia (2002: 26): “Her weaving in *Iliad* 3 tells her story within the larger frame of Homer’s story. Her lament sings the glory of Hector within the larger frame of Homer’s song. In this instance, Helen employs the only recognized form of public speech available to women, to make sure that the memory of Hector will not die with him. Hector is buried surrounded by singers, and Helen fulfills her own prediction [cf. *Il.* VI 357-358] by performing the last, or perhaps the “first” song in his honor.” Pantelia proposed the association (centered around the figure of Helen) between weaving, singing and *kléos* also in her 1993 article (p. 495) about metaphorical implications of spinning and weaving in Homer. On memorialization through weaving see Mueller 2007: 355. Holmberg (2003: 9) points out that the memory itself of Helen’s weaving is granted through the ability of epic to preserve *kléos* and memorize the great deeds of the dead beyond the limitations of space and time: “Helen’s tapestry, however, is embedded within the monument of the *Iliad*, and memory of her tapestry only survives through the skill and immortality of that epic. In this example, we see the explicit association of narratives woven in fabric with the female. The weaving of fabric and the weaving of a narrative are so closely associated here as to suggest that the oral tradition understood or considered the poetic creation of a narrative to be analogically related to weaving.” For the connection between weaving, women and storytelling see also Fletcher (2009) who proposes that the text of Euripides’ *Ion* “[c]an be read as a tapestry which Creusa and the Chorus help to produce; they weave the new tale of Ion’s reunion with his mother from within the text. This illusion is facilitated not only by the well established connection between poetic creation and weaving, but also by other texts (mentioned above) which implicitly suggest a correspondence between women’s weaving and the text they inhabit (p.134).”

the precise pattern of the woven product and, besides this very passage, only at *Il.* XXII 440-441 (Andromache working into a purple *díplax* patterns of flowers)<sup>160</sup> the design of the web is openly revealed and described. Both passages contain important references to the poetics of epic in general<sup>161</sup>, and to the Iliadic narrative in particular, as Nagy has shown discussing them in detail: “[t]he linking of the pattern-woven narrations of Helen and Andromache with the poetic narration of the Iliad is a matter of metonymy. As for the actual parallelism of this poetic narration with the craft of pattern-weaving, it is a matter of metaphor. In terms of the metaphor, the pattern-weaving of a fabric is the narrating of an epic. This metaphor is embedded in the narrative of Homeric poetry, and we see it at work in the Iliadic passages showing Andromache and Helen in the act of pattern-weaving at their looms (Nagy 2010a: 278).” The adjective πορφυρέη qualifying both patterned textiles is also relevant to inherent and dominant features of the pan-Athenaic Peplos (the fabric is traditionally known for its yellow as well as purple coloring and Pindar names *Porphuriōn*<sup>162</sup> the opponent of Athena in the charter myth of the Gigantomachy).<sup>163</sup>

Although no detail is revealed about the pattern woven into Laertes’ burial cloth, the emphasis on the process<sup>164</sup> of weaving and re-weaving can suggest by itself the main feature of composition and performance of oral poetry<sup>165</sup> and can be as useful as an adjective like πορφύρεος for an Athenocentric conceptualization of this same performance. Furthermore, the story of the weaving (in itself a repetitive activity) and re-weaving the *phâros* is re-performed three times in the *Odyssey*, thus strengthening at multiple levels the parallelism between re-weaving and re-performing. If we consider Antinoos, Penelope and Amphimedon three ‘rhapsodes’, we can simultaneously have female and male performers and female and male weavers. This last concept is not without import in the context of the ritual re-weaving of the Peplos for the Panathenaia as religious festival contemplating also the structured re-performing of the epics.<sup>166</sup>

The assumption that the narrative(s) about Laertes’ cloth are mainly process-oriented is demonstrated by the representation of Penelope’s weaving in the collective imagination as an *unfinished weaving*, even though Penelope herself confesses that she *had* to finish her work and Amphimedon recalls the presentation of the *phâros* to the public. This ‘false memory’ is caused by the fact that the process is far more emphasized and brought to the foreground than the object (i.e. the fabric) it was supposed to produce, and, consequently, what the posterity remembers is “Penelope as weaving endlessly (Clayton 1994: 46)” an unfinished fabric. The burial cloth tale is constructed upon a paradigmatic routine repeating itself and labeled as *le paradigme de Pénélope* by Didier Deleule. The purpose of this routine is not the achievement of a material, fixed result, but, on the contrary, the reaffirming of endless possibilities of re-running the performance. As Deleule

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<sup>160</sup> *Il.* XXII 440-441: ἀλλ’ ἦ γ’ ἰστὸν ὕφαινε μυχῷ δόμου ὑψηλοῖο / δίπλακα πορφυρέην, ἐν δὲ θρόνα ποικίλ’ ἔπασσε (“[...] but she was weaving a web in the inner room of the high house / a double purple robe, and inworking patterns of flowers”).

<sup>161</sup> See Karanika 2014: 46-47.

<sup>162</sup> Cf. *Pyth.* 8.12-13.

<sup>163</sup> See Nagy 2010a: 288-289.

<sup>164</sup> In Homer the craft of weaving is never meant to produce a textile ‘oblivious’ of the process of its production. See Karanika 2014: 40.

<sup>165</sup> See Clayton 1994: 34-36.

<sup>166</sup> See Nagy 2010b: 15-22.

underlines “ce qui est visé – et tel est le paradoxe – n’est nullement la production de l’objet fini, un *érgon*, mais bien son inachèvement [...] L’objet produit par l’être humain [...] est remplacé par une production, une *poiesis* infinie [...] (Deleule 2001: 14-16)”. Penelope’s weaving performance has at its core the periodic reenactment of itself, the periodic return *à la case départ*.

The ‘false memory’ of posterity about an unfinished Odyssean weaving in some respects reinforces and validates the parallelism between Penelope and the *Arrhéphoroi*, who were entrusted with the notable duty of ritually starting the task of weaving the pan-Athenaic Peplos, which was then accomplished by professional weavers and exceeded the duration of the *Arrhephoria* (starting in the month Skyraphorion).<sup>167</sup> Indeed, Jean-Marc Moret rightly associated this kind of *tissage-laborage* polarity with one major myth of transformation related to the cult figure of Athena *Ergánē*, that of Arachne, who, as a spider, is destined to lifelong weaving and re-weaving.<sup>168</sup> As is well known, the figure of Athena *Ergánē* was highly relevant to the Athenian festival that inaugurated the weaving of the Peplos of Athena, the Khalkeia, celebrating the synergism of Athena and Ephestos, honored as models for the work of craftsmen.<sup>169</sup>

From this angle, the burial cloth of Laertes, both as (unsaid) *poikilon phâros* and ‘periodic’ *istón*, clearly makes reference to the cultural framework of Athenian festivals and, in particular, to the pan-Athenaic structured re-performing of epic. It remains to be determined the possible motivation of the Homeric reticence about the in-woven pattern, and to envisage a particular design to be associated with it. On this question, I agree with Clayton’s argument that “Homer deliberately leaves the narrative content of the web within the realm of potentiality (Clayton 1994: 34):” ultimately, this (almost) unrestrained potentiality has to be connected with the compositional process in re-enacted performances of oral poetry, that is its distinctive and original performativity.

We are not really supposed to imagine a particular narrative component in Penelope’s weaving, but rather to focus on the process of weaving and re-weaving as *image* of composition and performance. What is to be pointed out further is that this process-mirroring-another-process activity had also a diachronic dimension. Any infraction of this ‘reticence-law’ through the periods Nagy designates as “fluid” and “formative” in his evolutionary model<sup>170</sup> would have undermined the conceptualization of the *possibilities* of oral composition and performance through the process of re-weaving. In other words, if the burial cloth had been matched with a particular narrative, becoming an ‘explicit’ and ‘narratable’ story-cloth, it would have maintained only its metaphorical association with epic craft, becoming an instance of metapoetical pattern-weaving similar to the

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<sup>167</sup> For a discussion on the *Arréphoroi* and the *Arrephoria* see Robertson 1983.

<sup>168</sup> See Moret 1991: 236-237. The parallelism between Penelope and Arachne is centered on the relevance of the process of weaving itself. Cf. *Metamorph.* VI 17-18: *nec factas solum vestes, spectare iuvabat / tum quoque, cum fierent: tantus decor adfuit arti [...]* (“and it was not only a joy to see the finished cloths, but also to watch them made: so much beauty added to art. [...]). Monica Salvadori stresses the ‘performativity’ of Arachne’s weaving: “È l’atto performativo [...] che affascina Ovidio [...] Aracne è protagonista dell’intero processo di lavorazione della lana, che viene fatto vivere al lettore, coinvolto, in ultima battuta, nel giudizio finale sull’origine del sapere di Aracne (2012: 504) [...]” For the episode of Arachne as one focus of Ovidian metapoetical commentary connecting weaving with the telling of mythological stories see Heath 2011: 86 ff. For the significance of weaving and the metaphorical relationship between weaving and storytelling in the Ovidian *Metamorphoses* see Rosati: 1999: 251: “The episode of Arachne and Minerva is, in short, an essay on narrative technique, a discourse on the partiality and ideology of the point of view of the producer of a text.” On Arachne and Minerva and the concept of textiles as texts to be gazed upon and read, see Salzman-Mitchell 2005: Chapter 4.

<sup>169</sup> See Nagy 2010b: 12.

<sup>170</sup> See Nagy 1996: 42.

Iliadic ones: the process-like and routine qualification would have been irremediably lost (or at least substantially weakened) along with some deep resonations with an Athenocentric re-interpretation.

Notionally, the only story to fit into the *phâros* could be that of the *Odyssey* itself along with all its *infinite* (but regulated) possibilities of re-composition in performance. Which begs the question: how to materialize such a larger than life and anti-logic weaving? An answer could be: to decrease the possibilities of re-composition to one without totally erasing the compositional mechanism and evolutionary path of the living tradition. From a diachronic perspective, this is what the Alexandrian philologists unwittingly did. The textualization of the Homeric epics eventually produced that particular and monumental set of interwoven symbols that is our *Odyssey*. The pattern generated by this peculiar weaving of alphabetic symbols is the only pattern to be matched with Laertes' burial cloth without being unfaithful to tradition and disrespectful to the 'reticence-law' and its implication.

So far, I was reticent myself, because, contrary to received wisdom, I kept translating *phâros* as "cloth" and not as "shroud" without saying why. This is for two reasons. First, I do not think it is a shroud. Visual culture and 'word excavation'<sup>171</sup> suggest it rather was a bier cloth or a blanket covering the corpse wrapped in linen. Second, and most important, the only thing we can imagine literally wrapped by a patterned burial 'shroud' is not Laertes' corpse but – as a consequence of what we just proposed – *Odyssey's* textual body<sup>172</sup>. The tale of the *phâros*, by its three material instances, wraps almost the entire text (from beginning of action to closure through the climactic confrontation between Odysseus and Penelope), and, reversely, the entire written text is the pattern of the *phâros*. Building on this perspective we can also think about papyrus both as writing support and as a patterned burial cloth.

Papyrus scrolls meant to accompany a body (or a tradition) in the 'after-life' do not represent a singular idea, as it may seem. The same is true for the notion of a shroud intended as imag(in)ed re-affirmation of a particular tradition. We will discuss briefly two renowned examples in the next section of our study.

## OF SHROUDS AND TEXTS

Drawing a parallel between the Derveni Papyrus and the gold incised lamellae and *epistómia*<sup>173</sup> buried with the dead, Yannis Tzifopoulos recognized the slightly different function of the former and the latter: if the deceased materially needed the text in his 'afterlife', one would expect the papyrus to have been placed inside the bronze krater with the deceased's remains, or, at least, inside the grave.<sup>174</sup> The Derveni Papyrus was instead discovered in 1962, strewn among other remains of

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<sup>171</sup> This powerful expression is of Barber. See Barber 1991: 260-282.

<sup>172</sup> Hans Boersma amply discusses such a concept presenting Gregory of Nyssa's interpretation of Scripture as one instance of a measurable, diastemic body. See Boersma 2013: Chapter 2 and in particular p. 54: "In this chapter, I raise the question of how this understanding of the "measured body" of time and space relates to Nyssen's view of what I call the "textual body" of Scripture. I will argue that, ultimately, for Gregory, the textual body of Scripture is one example of measured body that is subject to the conditions of time and space."

<sup>173</sup> In his recent study (2010) of twelve small gold lamellae from Crete Tzifopoulos places the texts engraved on these lamellae in the epic and hymnic tradition, within which the texts on the lamellae and *epistómia* are also solidly placed. They reveal a hieros logos whose poetics and rituals are not much different from Homeric rhapsodizing and prophetic discourses. *Epistómia* and *lamellae* were tokens for entrance into a golden afterlife: the Orphic initiates who were buried or cremated with them believed that they had earned 'paradise'. See also Tzifopoulos 2014b.

<sup>174</sup> See Tzifopoulos 2014a: 139.

the pyre, on the slabs covering Derveni Tomb A: apparently, it was not intended to be an *entáphion*<sup>175</sup> by the deceased's family members. However, significant similarities exist between the golden *lamellae* and the Papyrus, in terms of archeological context and of their texts.

The fact that a high status soldier took with him on the pyre a hexametric commentary on a cosmogonic poem by Orpheus speaks on behalf of a role whatsoever for the text in the funerary ritual: the dead body and the text were bound to undergo the same transformation, along with spearheads, spikes, greaves and a shield within a particular field of action<sup>176</sup>. In any case, papyrus scrolls as *entáphia* are known<sup>177</sup>, and also we are aware of intriguing scenes depicting papyri on the walls of Macedonian tombs: one famous instance is from a cist tomb at Agios Athanasios. On one wall of the tomb (inside of which is a silver-plated larnax containing bones wrapped in a purple-gilded textile with a meander design<sup>178</sup>) a wooden box is painted with two scrolls of papyri on top. It is not certain if the scrolls allude to the deceased's musical activity (as Maria Tsimbidou-Avloniti proposes<sup>179</sup>), or rather they allude to an element of the funerary performance itself.

As far as Derveni Tomb A is concerned, both the remains of the pyre and the *entáphia* objects hint to a sumptuous funerary ritual aimed at the heroization of the deceased modeled upon Homeric secondary cremation practices: this was customary within Macedonian conservative and archaizing kingly elite throughout the Hellenistic period<sup>180</sup>. The inscribed papyrus was an element of the final stage of the funerary performance and, although it was not supposed to materially survive the cremation fire (the very same can be said for burial cloths and garments), nonetheless it played a peculiar role for both the participants and the dead, for their mutual relationship and belief concerning life and death. Thus, the Derveni Papyrus can be regarded as element of a rite of passage as vital as an *epistómion*, even if its ritual meaning escapes us.

In Greek burials *epistómia* (in addition to covering the mouth or the face) were placed in the hand or on the chest, or inside the mouth itself instead of (or with) a coin as Charon's obol<sup>181</sup>. From their part, Jews used pottery shards to close a corpse's eyes believing they must not open before glimpsing the next world, and, as a discovery of first century CE Jewish tombs seems to confirm,

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<sup>175</sup> The oldest Greek text examples so far found in Greek territory, almost a century older than the Derveni Papyrus, are indeed recorded on fragments of a papyrus buried as *entáphion* in the so-called Musician's Tomb in Daphne (ΜΠ 7449, 8517-8523) dating from 430-425 BCE. The papyrus-roll was probably a property of the deceased, a young person and perhaps a musician (fragments of writing tablets, of a harp, of a lyre and the tube of an aulos were also found). The legible parts of the polyptychon and papyrus fragments have been published by West (2013) and Karamanou (2014) and appear to be poetic in nature, possibly showing points of contact with the language of epic: "In the second line it is tempting to recognize an allusion to the magnificent verse spoken by Herakles in the Hesiodic Wedding of Keyx when he arrived uninvited at the wedding feast (fr. 264 M.-W.), αὐτόματοι δ' ἄγαθοι ἀγαθῶν ἐπὶ δαΐτας ἔενται, 'good men come to good men's banquets of their own accord'. It was a famous line, alluded to by several classical writers.<sup>5</sup> If the ]ν[ is rightly read, the verse was not quoted in full. In the next line perhaps κλέος (or Ἡρα]κλέος!), or εὐ]κλεῶς or ]κλεῶς (West 2013: 77)." On the Daphne Papyrus see also Pöhlmann and West 2012.

<sup>176</sup> "Agency is an explicitly humanistic perspective for understanding ancient people and social reproduction. It emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between people's conscious and unintended actions and their social, ideological, and material conditions (Dobres 2014: 59)." On the concept of agency and its evolution see Robb: 2010 (in particular pp. 499-501 on fields of action). See also Dorman 2002.

<sup>177</sup> Cf. n. 147. For other instances see Piano 2013: 245-246; Rusten 2014: 115-116.

<sup>178</sup> See Andrianou 2012 citing Tsimbidou-Avloniti 2000: 549.

<sup>179</sup> See Tsimbidou-Avloniti 2000: 553.

<sup>180</sup> See Tsimbidou-Avloniti 2006: 322; Piano 2013: 246-247.

<sup>181</sup> On funerary practices involving coins see Stevens 1991.

also coins.<sup>182</sup>Faint traces of objects placed over the eyes were spotted in the three-dimensional rendering of the body image preserved and imprinted on the most discussed and famous burial shroud in the Western tradition: the Turin Shroud.

It is not our intention to discuss here under any perspective the multiple questions related to the Turin Shroud and disseminated into centuries of (scholarly) debate. The controversial results of the 1988 Radiocarbon Dating<sup>183</sup> of samples of the Shroud do not affect the way it is important in our study.<sup>184</sup> Whether the Turin Shroud dates from the first century CE or, according to the 1988 tests, from the range of years 1260-1390 CE (a slightly later period of time than the first supposed *testimonium* about the Shroud by Robert De Clari and coinciding with its appearance in France around 1356) its relevance concerns how a(n) (eventually) written tradition is mirrored by the image on a burial garment.

The Gospel of John describes Jesus' burial clothes as ὀθόνια "linen cloths", "linen bandages" (20:6)<sup>185</sup>and σουδάριον "a cloth used in swathing the head of a corpse", "face-covering" (20:7). Matthew (27:59), Mark (15:45) and Luke (23:53) use the term σινδῶνα "fine linen cloth (in which the bodies of the dead were wrapped)". The Turin Shroud is of tight linen weave in a herringbone pattern. The image on it is the full figure of a man, naked and with hands crossed over the pelvic area. Body markings on the image correspond with Gospel accounts of the wounds received by Jesus before, during, and after his agony. There is no evidence of the legs being broken.<sup>186</sup>

The story in the Gospel tradition is re-affirmed and narrated through the 'design' of a burial textile, which, in turn, can be recognized as the burial cloth cited in the Gospels. If we consider this last (and controversial) Droste effect and recall the idea of the *Odyssey's* textual body as the pattern on Laertes' burial cloth, it is not arduous to conceptualize the alphabetic remains of Homeric epics as the only actual weave to 'retrospectively' depict and describe the process of oral epic composition and performance.

This particular conceptualization gives us the possibility to remember and further develop Roger Woodard's conclusion about the Hellenistic epigram relating the death of Homer, vexed to death by a riddle he could not unknot, a riddle *woven* by fisher boys on Ios (γρῖφον ὑφηνάμενοι<sup>187</sup>). According to Woodard "[i]t was no weaving of a riddle that was Homer's bane – but the weaving of the alphabet [...] It was a woven viral hexameter that did him in (Woodard 2014: xi)." In our line of reasoning, to say that the textualization of the epics ended the living tradition is to say that the textual body of the epics is the pattern of the burial cloth of Homer himself. But, thanks to alphabetic weaving, the threads of tradition, as Penelope's fabric, (μή μοι μεταμῶνια νήματ' ὄληται: *Od.* ii 98 (= xix 143 = xxiv 133), were not vainly-woven and this burial cloth accompanied epic into death, as well guaranteed its (after-)life.

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<sup>182</sup> See Hachili 2005: 437-443.

<sup>183</sup> See Damon *et alii* 1989.

<sup>184</sup> The most recent proposal is by Carpintieri *et alii* 2014. See also Antonacci 2011: 156 ff.

<sup>185</sup> The term ὀθόνιον is a diminutive of ὀθόνη, a word occurring in Homer always in plural and meaning "fine linen cloths" Cf. *Il.* III 141; XVIII 595; *Od.* vii 107. As burial garments, ὀθόνια occurs in Lucian, *Dialogi mortuorum* 10.2.2.

<sup>186</sup> See Bortin 1980: 110.

<sup>187</sup> *Anth. Pal.* 7.1.2.



## NOT VAINLY-WOVEN: THE COMPLETED FABRIC

Pierre Chantraine etymologizes the adjective μεταμώνιος as a compound word, formed by joining a preposition (μετά), a main word (ἄνεμος) and a suffix (-ωνιος), meaning “*emporté par le vent*.”<sup>188</sup> Basic semantic information: vain. This interpretation is supported also by the gloss of Apion<sup>189</sup>: μεταμώνια· μάταια, ἀπὸ τοῦ μετὰ τῶν ἀνέμων ἰέναι and by Pindar’s μεταμώνια θηρεύων (“chasing after the wind” = “chasing impossible things”) of *Pyth.* 3.23 and ψεύδη μεταμώνια (“falsehoods carried away by the winds” hence “vain”) of *Olymp.* 12.6a. As object of ἀγορεύω (*Arg.* 3.1096) and βάζω<sup>190</sup> (*Arg.* 3. 1121), μεταμώνια occurs in Apollonius Rhodius meaning “vain (talking),” “(telling) pointless things.”

Although other explanations are given and the etymology remains still dubious, the fact that the yarns of Penelope’s fabric were eventually not vainly-spun and her weft not carried away by the wind is clearly affirmed: the fabric, as well the fabric-pattern, is completed. Odysseus returned and, so, the Odyssean tradition stresses that this is not *his* burial cloth. Penelope chose the right threads to materialize the right pattern. Phemios was not at all a good weaver of songs, let alone of *mêtis*. The cyclic material and a supposed pre-Odyssean tradition according to which the burial cloth was woven ἐπεὶ θάνε διὸς Ὀδυσσεύς are no more authorized. The chant-like, alliterative refrain μή μοι μεταμώνια νήματ’ ὄληται could be read as ‘antidote’<sup>191</sup> speech act in the process of Penelope’s literal and metaphorical weaving. Control has to be gained and maintained by Penelope not only on the suitors through material weaving, but also and foremost on tradition. Phemios, as male ‘cyclic’ singer, is silenced and his threads rejected; both the loom setup and the weft interlacing depend upon Penelope’s design and oversight: her threads will not be blown away by the wind. As far as control on weaving and tradition can be asserted and maintained, the burial cloth will not end up as a marriage garment, nor it will be displayed at Odysseus’ funeral, but it will represent the visual and final project of his *nóstos* and of his *kléos*, that is the fabric of his epic of twenty years. The antidote chant of Penelope and her re-weaving kept herself away from re-marriage and Odysseus from death.

Yet, Odysseus and the burial cloth are strictly connected.<sup>192</sup> In Amphimedon’s account the presentation of the *phâros* and the return of Odysseus are related and clearly brought together. Performatively, the presentation of the *phâros* has the return as a consequent: such is the *oimé* woven by Penelope as female singer, or as a pan-Athenaic male weaver. Under this perspective and, more in general, within a logic of oral composition and performance, scholarly debate about presumed discrepancies<sup>193</sup> between Antinoos’ and Amphimedon’s account on the completion of the

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<sup>188</sup> See Chantraine 1977: 690.

<sup>189</sup> [Apion], *Fragmenta de glossis Homericis* frag. 72, line n. Cf. Hesychius, *Lexicon*: alphabetic letter mu entry 1028 line 1: μεταμώνια· μάταια AS. ἀνεμοφόρητα. Eustathius explains μεταμώνια as variant form of μεταμώλια (*Commentarii ad Homeri Odysseam* 1 p. 86 line 3).

<sup>190</sup> Cf. *Od.* xviii 332. 392. 33. Cf. *Scholia in Apollonii Rhodii Argonautica (scholia vetera)* p. 43 l. 12 [...] μεταμώλιον: μεταμελείας ἄξιον. γράφεται δὲ καὶ μεταμώνιον, ὃ ἐστὶ μάταιον, μετὰ ἀνέμων φερόμενον.

<sup>191</sup> I owe this particular remark to Andromache Karanika (personal communication), who also recalled my attention to Lyons’ (2012: 26-29 citing McClure 1999: 83) discussion on this passage.

<sup>192</sup> Daniel Silvermintz, proposing an interpretation of Penelopean weaving (and unweaving) as a metaphor for political transition and fabric as the civic order of Ithaca, writes that “[t]he final moment of Penelope’s ruse is the completed shroud, which terminates the ceaseless weaving and represents the return of Ithaca to a state of stability (2004: 35).”

<sup>193</sup> See the discussion in Lowenstam 2001: 342-344.

cloth and its relation with the time of Odysseus' return can be substantially underplayed. Amphimedon, as in vase painting, renders a more compressed narrative with a partial overlapping. The authorized closure is fixed: the presentation of the *phâros* is a climactic moment of the festival in honor of the returning hero.

Instead of a processional ascension to the Acropolis, we witness a *katábasis* in the house of Hades, where Hermes escorts the suitors. From there, Amphimedon points to a patterned textile, shining like the sun and the moon. Like the one on the Parthenon frieze, this *poikílon phâros* remains still folded, un-cremated and un-buried, between the pages of our books.

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