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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Cognitive mapping and social cognition in ancient Greek narrative: novelistic couples

Chrysanthos S. Chrysanthou

Classics and Philosophy, University of Cyprus, Cyprus
Email: chrysanthou.s.chrysanthos@ucy.ac.cy

Abstract

Although individual and collective minds in the ancient world have received considerable scholarly attention, the cognitive dynamics of social interaction itself – particularly the role of cognition in intimate relationships – remain largely unexplored. This article addresses this gap by introducing the concept of 'cognitive mapping' and applying it to couples in the five extant ancient Greek novels as a case study. Cognitive mapping offers a framework for analysing how novelistic couples alternate between alignment, in which partners share cognitive and emotional states, and misalignment, in which misunderstandings disrupt relational harmony. By tracing how lovers map one another's emotions, intentions and desires through embodied processes and shared experiences, this study sheds new light on character interaction, plot development and reader engagement. It further demonstrates how novelistic narratives construct the couple as an interdependent cognitive system, in which lovers think, feel and respond as a single unit. This approach has broader implications for the study of personal identity, couples' psychology and embodied interpersonal relations in the ancient world, as well as for ancient narrative theory and contemporary cognitive approaches to classical literature.

Keywords: cognitive narratology; cognitive classics; ancient Greek novel; social cognition; couples/groups

I. Introduction

Being part of a couple involves a shifting mix of empathy, identification, idealization, tension and conflict, all of which shape how individuals mentally represent their relationships. Partners constantly negotiate, reassess and adapt as they interact in changing contexts. These cognitive patterns are not only central to real relationships but also strongly influence how romance is portrayed in literature.

Recent work in social psychology and cognitive science has deepened our understanding of how people form and sustain mental representations of their partners. Frank Fincham and his colleagues argue that examining these representations helps explain the cognitive processes that shape couple-level interaction and allow a relationship to function as a self-determining, self-stabilizing system.[1] This conception of the couple as a self-determining system underpins our analysis of enactive intersubjectivity and social cognition in the five extant Greek novels (Chariton's

[1] Fincham et al. (2007).

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Callirhoe, Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*, Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*, Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* and Xenophon's *Ephesiaca*).

This article introduces 'cognitive mapping'[2] as a methodological tool for analysing intimate relationships in ancient Greek narrative. Cognitive mapping depicts the beliefs individuals hold about their partner and their relationship.[3] These maps guide interpersonal interaction by shaping expectations, emotions and interpretations. Applying cognitive mapping to literary texts offers a new way to understand how novelistic couples achieve alignment, shared cognitive and emotional states, or fall into misalignment, where misunderstandings disturb relational harmony.

The concept of 'distributed cognition'[4] is central to cognitive mapping. It holds that cognitive processes do not reside solely in individual minds but unfold across social and environmental contexts. As Thomas Fuchs and Hanne De Jaegher argue, in dyadic interaction 'we participate with the other in the emergence and transformation of intentions, affects and understandings.'[5] In everyday life, social cognition arises through direct engagement (rather than theorizing about or simulating another person's mental states) via mechanisms such as 'bodily resonance, affect attunement, coordination of gestures, facial and vocal expression and others'.[6]

In two-person systems, 'enactive intersubjectivity'[7] helps explain a range of collective phenomena. These include 'interpersonal alignment'[8] and 'dyadically expanded states of consciousness';[9] the 'self-expansion model', in which others become part of one's extended self;[10] the emergence of stable dyadic interaction patterns;[11] and the 'fusion of egos', where two individuals function as 'a we-subject'.[12] Studies also show that partners in joint action incorporate each other's capabilities into their own planning.[13] Some scholars therefore regard dyads, especially long-term couples, and larger groups as integratively coupled cognitive systems with their own problem-solving, decision-making and memory capacities,[14] which emerge from group organization and dense interaction rather than from merely adding up individual abilities.[15] This enactive, collectivist view of mind and social understanding is particularly useful for analysing novelistic couples, whose interactions often display joint attention, emotional synchronization and affective alignment.

[2] The idea of a 'cognitive map', first introduced by Tolman (1948), originally described an individual's mental grasp of spatial environment (see Kitchin and Freundschuh (2000); Rescorla (2017)). It was later broadened to denote mental models of any process or concept (Eden (1992)). In couples therapy, Brok (2007) 186 uses the term to describe 'the range, detail, and variability of beliefs each member of the couple has toward the other'.

[3] In classical studies, the term has been used in its spatial sense to describe the brain's ability to form unified representation of the surrounding environment to support memory and action: Hawes (2017); Crielaard (2021); Schneider (2022). *Cf.* Lowe (2000) on plot construction and Whitmarsh (2009) 38, 42 on how book divisions shape the reader's cognitive mapping of Chariton's plot. More broadly in literary studies, see Bjornson (1981); Arnold (2006); Fisher and Mennel (2010); Tally Jr (2016); (2019).

[4] See Hutchins (1995); Huebner (2014).

[5] Fuchs and De Jaegher (2009) 482.

[6] Fuchs and De Jaegher (2009) 466.

[7] Fuchs and De Jaegher (2009) 469–70.

[8] Tollefsen et al. (2013); Pacherie (2017).

[9] Tronick (1998).

[10] Aron et al. (2002).

[11] Fincham et al. (2007).

[12] Gilbert (2014) 259–70.

[13] Richardson et al. (2007); Sebanz and Knoblich (2009).

[14] See, for example, Theiner et al. (2010); Harris et al. (2014).

[15] On group cognition, see, for example, Huebner (2014); Theiner (2014); Tollefsen (2015); Szanto and Moran (2016); McNeese et al. (2021a); (2021b); (2021c).

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Greek and Roman thought displays a long-standing interest in intersubjective cognition, especially within romantic and social bonds.[16] In Plato's *Symposium*, Aristophanes has Hephaestus ask two lovers whether they wish to be fused into 'one person' (192d), a passage later cited by Margaret Gilbert as an early instance of 'ego-less' fusion in intimate relationships.[17] Aristotle is said to have likewise described friendship as 'a union of two bodies in one soul' (Diog. Laert. 5.1.20), anticipating aspects of distributed cognition by presenting friendship as a unified system with cognitive properties distinct from those of its members.[18] Plutarch's *Coniugalia praecepta* similarly portrays marriage as an intimate union involving a mutual amalgamation of bodies, property, friends and relations (142f–143a).[19] Comparable ideas appear in Musonius Rufus, who speaks of marriage in terms of 'noble union', 'mutuality' and 'harmony' (lecture 13), and in St Paul's claim that spouses exercise authority over one another's bodies (1 Cor. 7:3–4).[20] More broadly, philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics conceived cognition as distributed across brain, body and world.[21] Recent scholarship on ancient social interaction and emotion, drawing on psychology and on Erving Goffman's work on 'face', demeanour and deference, has further shown how Greek concepts like honour, esteem and recognition, as well as emotions such as shame, emerged from the interplay between self-regard and the regard of others in social contexts.[22]

This article applies cognitive mapping to the five fully preserved Greek novels, which follow the romantic journeys of young lovers. These works frequently provide explicit insight into characters' inner lives, often presented as public and social phenomena expressed through speech, behaviour, appearance and bodily cues.[23] They also offer a rich portrayal of social cognition, showing how couples engage in interpretive acts, form mental images of one another and experience emotional alignment or discord. Achilles Tatius, for instance, treats internal states as publicly visible through facial expression and bodily comportment (6.6.2). Novelistic groups likewise function as cognitive agents,[24] while individuals remain acutely responsive to the mental activity of others.[25] Closely related is the pervasive role of rumour, especially in Chariton's *Callirhoe*, as a force shaping perception and action.[26] Together, these features highlight the socially distributed nature of cognition, where (mis)understandings emerge from the interaction of multiple perspectives.

I argue that cognitive mapping serves as a structuring principle in ancient Greek narrative, guiding both character development and plot. Greek novels depict characters navigating intricate social and emotional situations in which misunderstanding, deception

[16] Gill (1996); (2006); Farenga (2006). See also Sorabji (2008) and Verheij (2014) on how intersubjectivity often goes hand in hand with the individualist aspects of self.

[17] Gilbert (2014) 259–60.

[18] Konstan (2019).

[19] Goessler (1999) 110–11 stresses that for Plutarch, 'the aim of marriage was … above all, a spiritual *symbiôsis* … marriage is an affinity of souls (*sympatheia*)'. See Tsouvala (2008) on Plutarch's marital *homonoia*.

[20] See Alvares (2022) 48–51.

[21] Cairns (2019). See also Habinek (2011); Candiotto (2019); Gill (2019). On enactive forms of cognition in ancient material, see Grethlein and Huitink (2017); Huitink (2019). On embodied, embedded, extended and enactive cognition in antiquity, see Anderson et al. (2019). On the study of ancient mind, see Lauwers et al. (2018); Meineck et al. (2019); Budelmann and Sluiter (2023); Clifford and Buxton (2024).

[22] Cairns (1993); (2020); Cairns et al. (2022).

[23] On speeches, see De Temmerman (2022a); (2022b); Morgan (2022a); (2022b); Tagliabue (2022). On body language, see Lateiner (1998); (2015); Jouanno (2001); Liviabella Furiani (1996); (2000); (2002); De Temmerman (2007); (2014) 289–304; König (2008) 132–34.

[24] Chrysanthou (2024). On collective minds in antiquity, see Eidinow (2016); Dilley (2017); Meineck (2017); Segev (2017); Budelmann (2019); Chrysanthou (2023); (2024); Hardwick (2024).

[25] See, for example, Chariton 1.1.7, 2.4.1, 2.4.4, 3.1.7, 5.5.3–4, 9.5.3; Ach. Tat. 2.28.3, 6.10.4–6, 8.10.9–11.

[26] Tilg (2010) 240–70.

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and reconciliation drive the action. A key concept in analysing these characters is David Konstan's 'sexual symmetry', which holds that male and female protagonists are portrayed as cognitively and emotionally equal, challenging earlier assumptions of female subordination.[27] Koen De Temmerman refines this view by showing that protagonists evolve cognitively over the course of the narrative: rather than having fixed traits, they undergo psychological and cognitive change shaped by introspection, external challenges and interpersonal dynamics.[28]

This study advances approaches to novelistic characterization by showing how partners often operate as a unified cognitive unit, continually remapping their emotional and intellectual compatibility as new experiences, misunderstandings and shifting emotions arise. Examining how characters interpret, adjust or misinterpret their views of each other clarifies how misalignment generates narrative tension and how reconciliation occurs through renewed cognitive alignment. This dynamic perspective on cognitive mapping illuminates character development and erotic relationships, revealing the cognitive and emotional mechanisms shaping characters' choices and the reader's engagement. It also highlights how the couple functions as an evolving cognitive system whose changing structure produces distinctive behaviours and effects.

The article is organized as follows. Section II explores cognitive alignment within couples, analysing the practices through which lovers fuse into a tightly coupled cognitive system in which meaning and social understanding arise from dynamic, embodied interaction. Section III turns to misunderstanding and misalignment, showing how these arise from discrepancies between the lovers' cognitive maps. Section IV concludes with broader implications for classical, narratological and cognitive approaches.

II. The couple as a cognitive system

In the ancient Greek novel, lovers operate through intertwined mental and emotional processes through which they shape each other's perceptions, intentions and actions. Cognitive mapping is key to this interaction: partners continuously track one another's emotions and desires through shared experience, bodily attunement and joint cognitive activity. This recurrent fusion of two minds into a collective cognitive entity shapes both characterization and readerly engagement.

i. Visual and bodily attunement: gazing, kissing and embracing

First, the Greek novels contain philosophical meta-comments, worth quoting at length, that highlight how interactions between lovers often involve mental and affective interdependence:

1. So it is that genuine affection and wholehearted love disregard all external pains and pleasures and compel the mind to concentrate thought and vision on one object: the beloved. (Heliod. 1.2.9)[29]
2. Charicleia was now utterly vanquished, even more a slave to her passion than before, after seeing Theagenes a second time. For when lovers look one another in

[27] Konstan (1994). On symmetrical love in the Greek novels, see also Fusillo (1989) 186–96.

[28] De Temmerman (2014).

[29] Tr. Morgan (1989) throughout for Heliodorus' novel, adapted. Similarly, I use Goold (1995) for Chariton, Whitmarsh (2001) for Achilles Tatius, Morgan (2004) for Longus and Henderson (2009) for Xenophon of Ephesus. All these translations are used with slight changes throughout the article.

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the eye, their ardour is reawakened; the sight rekindles their hearts and fuels the flames of love. (Heliod. 4.4.4)[30]

3. You do not understand the value of the sight of the beloved: it yields more pleasure than the act itself. You see, when two pairs of eyes reflect in each other, they forge images of each other's body, as in a mirror. The effluxion of beauty floods down through the eyes to the soul, and effects a kind of union without contact. It is a bodily union in miniature, a new kind of bodily fusion. (Ach. Tat. 1.9.4–5)
4. The pleasure of the spectacle floods in through the eyes and settles in the breast, ever drawing with it the image of the beloved. This pleasure is impressed upon the soul's mirror, leaving its form there; then the beauty floods out again, drawn towards the desirous heart by invisible beams, and imprints the shadowy image deep down inside. (Ach. Tat. 5.13.4)

Drawing mainly on Plato's *Phaedrus* (249e–255d),[31] these passages emphasize that love concentrates the mind intensely on the beloved. They also highlight the power of eye contact: the lovers' gazes form a kind of dialogue, extending their bodies and creating a system of mutual incorporation (*cf.* the imagery of *bodily union* (τῆς τῶν σωμάτων μίξεως) and *bodily embrace* (σωμάτων συμπλοκή)), even when physically apart. Gaze contact is thus one of the strongest markers of how Greek-novel lovers map one another and establish dyad-level patterns of meaning, understanding and emotion.[32] In Xenophon of Ephesus, Anthia is immediately captivated by Habrocomes as soon as they see each other, while he is struck down by Eros (1.3.1). Similarly, Clitophon confesses that Leucippe's beauty pierced him 'sharper than darts', entering through the eyes into the soul (Ach. Tat. 1.4.2–5). Later, after his release from chains, Clitophon describes meeting Leucippe and initiating their relationship through eye contact: 'Her eyes were fixed on me … This was how we greeted one another: with our eyes' (7.16.3–4).

Beyond visual exchange, lovers in the Greek novel experience bodily attunement, where physical closeness intensifies emotional connection. This appears in moments of touch, embrace and coordinated movement, all reinforcing their emotional and mental alignment. Clitophon describes the force of a lover's kiss: 'I could feel the pressure of her kiss upon me as though it were a real presence there … When lips meet and mingle … they draw souls up toward the kisses. I know not of any time before when my heart had been so joyous' (Ach. Tat. 2.8.1–3).[33] Like the gaze, kissing becomes a medium of emotional transmission, allowing lovers to map each other's desires onto their own bodies. At a dinner, Clitophon kisses the part of a cup Leucippe has touched; she imitates him, and they exchange symbolic kisses through the shadows of their lips on the cups (Ach. Tat. 2.9.1–3), a vivid form of subverbal communication showing perfect mutual attunement. In Xenophon of Ephesus, Anthia 'locked her lips' on Habrocomes' and their thoughts passed 'from one heart to the other' (1.9.6). She then kisses his eyes, calling them the source of both her suffering and her love, and 'joins' her own eyes to his (1.9.7). Here, eyes and kisses create an embodied meeting of minds, an intimacy that aligns with the couple's full mutuality in love on their wedding night.[34]

[30] *Cf.* Heliod. 3.7.5, 7.7 on the genesis of love through the eyes/sight.

[31] Platonism in the ancient Greek novel has been extensively researched. See, for example, Morales (2004) 17–18, 50–60; Whitmarsh (2005); Nì Mheallaigh (2007); Repath (2011); Alvares (2022) 35–36, 130–31, 175–76, 208–19. Tagliabue (2017) 114–15, commenting on Ach. Tat. 5.13.4, notes the evocation of Plato's *Cratylus* 420a–b.

[32] On eyes and social cognition, see Stawarska (2006). In Achilles Tatius, see Morales (2004) 130–35, 156–65. In ancient Greek culture, see Cairns (2005); Currie (2023) 15–16. *Cf.* Liviabella Furiani (2003) on eyes and ears in Heliodorus, especially in relation to beauty.

[33] Zeitlin (2018) analyses kissing as a crucial aspect of male and female erotics in Achilles Tatius.

[34] See Tagliabue (2017) 116–18 on the couple's mutuality. Note also Anthias' earlier words to Habrocomes, which allude to sexual union: 'Let us cling together and become one (συμφύντες ἀλλήλοις ἀναμιγῶμεν), let us

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Embracing likewise reinforces the lovers' mutual coupling. When Theagenes and Charicleia realize they are both alive, 'they collapsed … in a mute embrace that seemed to fuse their very beings' (Heliod. 2.6.2–4). Later, alone in a cave, 'they clasped one another in a prolonged embrace so tight that they seemed to be of one flesh' (5.4.5), echoing the Platonic image of joined lovers in Aristophanes' myth (*Symp.* 192b–c, 192e).[35] A similar idea appears in Longus, where Daphnis and Chloe's 'kissing never stopped, and their embraces were as of two people fused into one' (4.6.3). Through such embraces, the lovers momentarily become a single being.

ii. Becoming one: phantasia, parallelism, jointness and 'we'-language

Alongside embodied practices such as gazing, kissing and embracing, which bind lovers mentally and emotionally, cognitive mapping also encompasses additional interactive processes that help establish intersubjectivity and form the couple as a cognitive system. These include *phantasia*, parallelism, joint actions and feelings, and the use of 'we'-language.

By *phantasia* I mean those moments when lovers, though physically separated, remain in intimate rapport through imagination, memory, visualization or dreams.[36] Clitophon's account of falling in love with Leucippe is exemplary: in his dreams he speaks with her, touches her, even kisses her, 'and the kiss was real' (Ach. Tat. 1.6.5).[37] Dreams frequently serve as spaces where novelistic lovers envision one another,[38] forming cognitive maps that contain images, actions, emotions and settings, and thus chart the evolution of their relationship. *Phantasia* also shapes how lovers interpret events. While reading Leucippe's letter accusing him of causing her suffering and of infidelity, Clitophon imagines himself gazing upon her and even relives the torture she endured: 'for when my mind cast the eyes of my soul upon the letter's tidings, the reading-matter became as visible as real matter' (Ach. Tat. 5.19.6–7). Here, the lovers' cognitive maps briefly diverge. Leucippe, misinformed, blames Clitophon and questions his fidelity (5.18.1–6), revealing how fragile cognitive maps become when trust is unstable. Clitophon, though accepting responsibility for her pain, denies infidelity and stresses his virginity (5.19.1–2), while imaginatively entering her emotional world and sharing in her suffering (5.19.5). This misalignment is short-lived. Leucippe soon revises her view of Clitophon (5.22.7, 6.16.3–4). However, it

drench our garlands with each other's tears so that they too can share in our love (παρ' ἀλλήλων δάκρυσιν ἵν' ἡμῖν καὶ οὗτοι)' (Xen. Eph. 1.9.5). On the first person plural as a marker of mutuality, see Doulamis (2002) 82. Tagliabue (2017) 118 highlights the words συμφύντες, συνερῶσιν (1.9.5) and συνηρμόκει (1.9.6), whose συν- prefix signals reciprocity. The participle συμφύντες also evokes the Platonic myth of the androgyne in *Symposium* 191a, with its notion that each person is one half of a human whole (Tagliabue (2017) 118, citing Laplace (1994) 445).

[35] Alvares (2022) 171.

[36] Scheiter (2012) shows that Aristotle uses *phantasia* for the imagistic states involved in perceiving appearances. In pseudo-Longinus (*Subl.* 15.1), the term denotes any image-producing mental state, especially when vivid, emotionally charged language makes an audience 'see' the scene (Halliwell (2022) 27, 232–36). Morales (2004) 90 notes that by the second century CE *phantasia* comes to mean 'imagination' or Pollitt's 'intuitive insight', implying the 'seeing' of what is not perceptible (Pollitt (1974) 53). For broader ancient discussions of *phantasia*, in poetics, philosophy, empathy, *enargeia* and immersion, see Silverman (1991); Bakhouche (2009); Sheppard (2014); Tuominen (2014); Briand (2015); Huitink (2019).

[37] *Cf.* Ach. Tat. 1.19.3: 'To me, though, she seemed still present: though departed, she had left behind her image in my eyes.'

[38] See Xen. Eph. 5.8.5; Chariton 2.9.6 ('An apparition of Chaereas stood before her, in all things like unto him, in stature and bright eyes, and voice, and wearing the same garments on his body. As he stood there he said, "My wife, I entrust our son to you"'). *Cf.* Chariton 3.7.4, 5.5.5–7; Heliod. 6.8.3–6; Longus 2.10.1, 3.9.5. On dreams in the ancient Greek novel, see MacAlister (1996) 84–114, 165–89; Plastira-Valkanou (2001); Fernández Garrido (2003); Pizzone (2013).

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powerfully underscores the depth of their bond. Her doubts arise from momentary jealousy, whereas Clitophon demonstrates unwavering devotion by imaginatively inhabiting her mental-affective space. This represents an ideal dimension of intimacy. The narrative effects of such cognitive misalignments will be examined in the next section.

Lovers often imagine the other's presence in complex or dangerous situations.[39] A striking case occurs when Callirhoe deliberates alone about her unborn child. She 'held the image of Chaereas against her womb' and imagines a joint council of husband, wife and child: 'Let us plan together what is best for us all (βουλευσώμεθα περὶ τοῦ κοινῇ συμφέροντος) … Let us inquire also of your father', recalling that Chaereas appeared in a dream and entrusted their son to her (Chariton 2.11.1–3). This scene shows a split within Callirhoe's own self, revealing that her decision emerges from an imagined triangular interplay between her mind and the minds of her husband and child. This unique moment of fictive collective decision-making highlights the cognitive interdependence characteristic of intimate groups.

Beyond *phantasia*, novelistic lovers also display growing parallelism in their emotions, intentions and mental activity. This parallelism produces not only Konstan's 'sexual symmetry' but a jointly constructed cognitive map that enables the couple to process their world together. A first indication appears in descriptions of their mutual discovery of love, where each lover mirrors the other's emotional state and experiences the same symptoms, as if functioning as a single unit.[40] Heliodorus offers a vivid example:

> For at the moment when they set eyes on one another, the young pair fell in love, as if the soul recognized its kin at the very first encounter and sped to meet that which was worthily its own. For a brief second full of emotion they stood motionless; then slowly, so slowly, she handed him the torch and he took it from her, and all the while they gazed hard into one another's eyes, as if calling to mind a previous acquaintance or meeting. Then they smiled a fleeting, furtive smile, discernible only as a slight softening of their expressions. And then they blushed, as if they were embarrassed at what had occurred, and a moment later, I suppose as their passion touched their hearts, the colour drained from their faces. In short, in the space of an instant, an infinity of expression passed across both their faces, as every imaginable alteration in complexion and countenance bore witness to the waves that pounded their souls. (3.5.4–6)

The love between Theagenes and Charicleia is presented in strongly Platonic terms[41] as the product of a dynamic, embodied interaction in which the partners become tightly coupled. Through gazes, shared memories, posture, facial expression and emotional exchange, their bodies and minds attune to one another, enabling mutual understanding and a shared affective experience grounded in intercorporeality and the meeting of their souls. As Calasiris tells Charicleia, 'The moment you set eyes on each other … your souls recognized partners worthy of one another and were affected in precisely the same way' (Heliod. 4.11.2).

[39] See, for example, Heliod. 2.2.2: 'Charicleia was not with him, but in his thoughts he saw her and pictured the cave to himself as a bridal chamber.' See also Xen. Eph. 1.5.1, 2.11.5, 3.5.1–2, 3.5.10, 5.8.3–4; Chariton 1.14.9–10.

[40] Longus 1.13.5–14.4, 2.2.2 ~ 1.17.2–18.2, 2.2.1; Xen. Eph. 1.2.9, 1.3.3–4, 1.4.1–5.4, 1.7.4; Chariton 1.1.7; Heliod. 3.17.3–5 ~ 3.19.1. On the parallelism between Daphnis and Chloe in Longus, see Konstan (1994) 79–90; De Temmerman (2014) 217 with n.43; Gill (2019) 123, 133; Alvares (2022) 139–40. Morgan (2018) 621–622 notes the identical emotions of Daphnis and Chloe and their 'instinctive *homonoia*'. On the uniformity of the description of the symptoms of love in the novels, see Maehler (1990); Konstan (1994) 33–34.

[41] Morgan (1989) 414 n.87; Alvares (2022) 170, notes especially Aristophanes' speech in the *Symposium* (189c–193e) and the passage on the soul's recollection of beauty in the *Phaedrus* (249d–251d).

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This interconnection between lovers' souls recalls David Hume's remark that 'the minds of men are mirrors to one another, not only because they reflect each other's emotions, but also because those rays of passions, sentiments and opinions may be often reverberated.'[42] Novelistic lovers frequently echo each other in this way, signalling deep interdependence and synchronization. Their closely aligned cognitive maps allow them to process experience not as individuals but as a unified pair. Theagenes and Charicleia, for instance, remember their misfortunes together. The narrator stresses that

> the words and substance of their lamentations were virtually identical. 'O Theagenes!' she wailed and wailed, and each time he responded, 'O Charicleia!' 'What new chance has made us its victims?' he cried, while she sobbed, 'Whatever lies in store for us?' And with each thought they embraced and renewed their kisses through tears. (Heliod. 7.14.4–8)

There is a balance between the exchanges of the two intimates, a kind of antiphony (*cf.* 7.15.1: 'While she was still piteously lamenting in this vein, Theagenes echoing (συνεξαίροντος) her grief with sorrows of his own'), which has the capacity to strengthen their emotional bond. A similar pattern appears when Daphnis visits Chloe: she replies to him 'like an echo' (Τοιαῦτα ἀντιφωνήσασα πρὸς τὸν Δάφνιν ἡ Χλόη καθάπερ ἠχώ, Longus 3.10.4–11.1).[43] It is tempting to think that in a bucolic novel like Longus', the presence of echoes may evoke the tradition of the amoebaean pastoral singing exchange which reproduces some aspects of real shepherd life,[44] although here we do not have a song and the issue at stake is not an actual contest but a reassuring, intimate dialogue about fidelity.[45] As with Leucippe and Clitophon, a brief cognitive misalignment occurs: Daphnis fears Chloe may forget him during the winter, while Chloe firmly restates her loyalty (3.10.3–4). This temporary divergence only highlights the depth of their attachment, contrasting a lover's anxiety with the other's echoing reassurance.

Parallelism also appears in the lovers' actions and life events. In Xenophon of Ephesus, Euxinus urges Habrocomes to accept Corymbus' love, while Corymbus simultaneously tries to persuade Anthia to yield to Euxinus. Despite Habrocomes' more emotional reaction at the beginning,[46] the two lovers end up giving the same response, namely asking for more time to think over the proposal (1.16.6–7). Silvia Montiglio has noted that 'Xenophon's protagonists are together and speak in one voice.'[47] There follow Habrocomes' and Anthia's speeches about the pirates' offers, which reveal the similarity of their situations as well (2.1.1–6). As Konstan has noted, their speeches 'seem virtually identical in tone and content. Scramble the gender of the pronouns and modifiers, and it is not easy to determine which speech was the woman's and which the man's'.[48] In Achilles Tatius, Leucippe reveals to Clitophon her dream of Artemis, who stands before her and instructs her to remain a virgin until she marries him; Clitophon remembers that he had a similar vision (4.1.2–8). This is a kind of 'double dream', which denotes a 'circumstance of mutuality' referring to 'the fact that no sexual intercourse will occur at this point' between the two lovers.[49] In Longus, Daphnis and Chloe have the same dream, where they lie naked

[42] Hume (2000) 365.

[43] Alvares (2022) 138 notes that 'the reference to Echo (3.11.1) does not mean that Chloe merely repeats Daphnis' words, but rather their relationship recalls that "breathing together" imagined by Musonius.' See section I.

[44] See Pearce (1993) 63–64; Karakasis (2011); Encuentra (2018).

[45] On this theme in the scene, see De Temmerman (2014) 223–24.

[46] De Temmerman (2014) 137.

[47] Montiglio (2010) 39.

[48] Konstan (1994) 25.

[49] Hilton (2024) 221 *ad loc.*

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with each other (2.10.1), and react to it in an identical manner: 'They woke next morning even more possessed, and started whistling their flocks down, impatient for kisses. The moment they saw each other, they ran to meet and smiled simultaneously' (2.10.2).

Parallelism also features in the behaviour of the two lovers, which constitutes another fundamental aspect of cognitive fusion in novelistic couples. Examples include deciding together,[50] taking joint actions,[51] paying joint attention (Heliod. 5.7.2–3), experiencing affective states collectively and shaping joint thoughts. A few examples of the last two types can be mentioned here. In Heliodorus, the narrator describes how 'Theagenes and Chariclea gave together a sudden cry of sorrow. "O Pytho! O Delphi!" they sobbed' (2.11.5). During Theagenes' Delphian foot race, Charicleia seems to be almost telepathically attuned to him. Calasiris relates that 'her feet began to skip and dance, as if, in my estimation, her soul were flying beside (συνεξαιρομένης) Theagenes and sharing his passion (συμπροθυμουμένης) for the race' (4.3.3–4). Jonas Grethlein has stressed that 'the double use of compound verbs with the prefix *sun* linguistically expresses her bond with Theagenes' and that 'Charicleia's immersion in his current situation goes so far that she starts moving her feet and thereby mimics his running.'[52] This is a clear example of what Fuchs and De Jaegher call 'incorporation', meaning that Charicleia perceives Theagenes' expressions and actions with her own body. Her body 'reaches toward and "conjoins"' with his movements; she is actually prompted to move as well.[53] We may compare her similar reaction to Theagenes' bull fight in Ethiopia, which involves an intensive fusion with him: 'She felt the pain of any injury to Theagenes … as keenly as if it were her own life at stake. So great was her anguish that it even became apparent to Persinna, who said: "You seem to be facing the danger in proxy for [Theagenes]"' (10.29.2–4).[54]

As well as emotional sharing,[55] there are multiple scenes in the Greek novels which involve shared or joint thoughts. In Xenophon of Ephesus' work, for example, 'Habrocomes and Anthia lay in a close embrace with much on their minds, pity for their fathers, homesickness for their country, worry about the oracle, doubts about the voyage' (1.11.1). On occasions the two lovers appear to constitute the single subject of a certain view or thought. In Longus, Daphnis and Chloe 'thought it would be a good idea to celebrate their wedding in pastoral style' (4.37.1), while later the narrator notes that 'not only that day but for as long as they lived, they led a pastoral [*sc.* life] for most of the time. The gods they worshipped were the Nymphs, Pan and Love … and [they] thought that fruit and milk were the sweetest food' (4.39.1). Longus' novel ends with Daphnis and Chloe having sex on their wedding night: they 'lay together naked (γυμνοὶ συγκατακλιθέντες), embraced one another and kissed (περιέβαλλον ἀλλήλους καὶ κατεφίλουν)' (4.40.3). As Konstan has noted, 'the final moment of the narrative does not deny mutuality to marital intercourse.'[56] It may be objected that Daphnis assumes the role of the active partner; he teaches sex to Chloe. But still, at the end the couple develops to a certain degree a shared framework of understanding erotic experience, since Chloe learns from Daphnis

[50] See, for example, Heliod. 2.18.1 ('Knemon's plan met with their approval, and they decided to act upon it'); Heliod. 6.10.1–2. *Cf.* Chariton 2.11.1–3, analysed above in section II.ii; Xen. Eph. 2.1.6–2.1 ('And that was their decision').

[51] See, for example, Heliod. 2.19.2 ('They began to put their plan into effect'); Longus 1.10.1–3 ('As they grazed their flocks side by side they did everything together'); Longus 1.31.3, 2.2.4–6, 2.31.2–3, 2.38.3; Ach. Tat. 3.17.7, 8.11.3 (joint acceptance of challenge), 8.19.3 (joint intention).

[52] Grethlein (2015b) 131.

[53] On 'incorporation', see Fuchs and De Jaegher (2009) 473–74.

[54] On fusion, Gaylin (1987) 103 notes: 'The concept of fusion as I will use it literally means … a confusion of ego boundaries … the identification of your pain with my pain and your success with my success'.

[55] See also Xen. Eph. 1.3.4, 1.9.1, 1.16.1; Chariton 8.7.2; Heliod. 8.13.3.

[56] Konstan (1994) 90.

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something about the matters of *eros* (4.40.3).[57] This highlights another key aspect of cognitive mapping: it is not merely an individual process but can also be a collaborative and evolving structure that takes shape through interaction with others. Here and elsewhere in the Greek novels, the final reunion of the couple is signalled by the fact that the lovers are experientially at one.[58] This sense of jointness or togetherness at the end underlines the continuation of an interrupted relationship and the restoration of an everlasting emotional bond between the couple.

Collective experience often leads partners to adopt a first-person-plural perspective ('we'). In these contexts, the couple operates as a single body, which uses first-person-plural language to express common things, states and views. They may even develop a 'we'-speech. In Heliodorus' *Ethiopica*, Theagenes and Charicleia 'cried on their way to the meeting [sc. with the robber captain], "What fate awaits us?", and pleaded with Knemon to do what he could to help them' (1.19.2). Moreover, when they recognized the name of Hydaspes, 'the young couple exclaimed in unison (ἀνεβόησαν ἅμα), "We are saved! The gods be praised"' (9.24.2). In Longus, the couple's reflections on Phileta's theoretical love lesson are given in 'we'-language throughout: 'People in love are sick, and so are we. They lose interest <in food>; and we have lost interest likewise. They cannot sleep; and that is happening to us too now … We must try for those cures he mentioned' (2.8.2–5; *cf.* 2.9.1–2). On this scene John Morgan has remarked that 'the lovers rehearse their problems in telepathically identical soliloquies. No indication is given of who is speaking.'[59] In Xenophon of Ephesus, Habrocomes and Anthia pray together in the temple of Isis: 'To you, greatest goddess, we are grateful for our salvation. Thanks to you, goddess that we esteem most of all, we have reclaimed each other' (5.13.4).

In all these instances, 'we'-utterances define the relationship of the couple in significant ways.[60] They support the sense of shared understanding and help to shape the life of a couple,[61] by contributing to the formation of collective identity or (to use Raimo Tuomela's term) 'group ethos', entailing certain beliefs, standards, norms, values, goals and practices of the group with which one identifies.[62] The lovers feel, reason and act in what Tuomela calls 'we-mode', functioning fully as group members and understanding themselves as a unit.[63] Oaths of fidelity play a key role in this, since lovers commit together to certain principles and jointly accept them.[64] The couple thereby becomes a 'plural subject'

[57] The development of 'shared knowledge' is not the same thing as the development of educational symmetry between the couple. Downie (2022) argues that Daphnis and Chloe differ in the ways in which they learn things throughout the novel.

[58] See also Chariton 8.1.7–10: 'At the same instant they both cried out (ἀμφότεροι συνεβόησαν): "Chaereas!" "Callirhoe!" As they rushed into each other's arms (περιχυθέντες δὲ ἀλλήλοις) they fainted and fell to the floor … Gradually they recovered; then after gazing at each other and kissing, they swooned again, and this happened a second and a third time. The only thing they could say with one voice (μίαν φωνὴν ἀφιέντες) was, "Are you really Callirhoe whom I hold in my arms?" and "Are you really Chaereas?"' *Cf.* Xen. Eph. 5.13.3 (with Tagliabue (2017) 104–05, 121–22 on the heroes' spirituality and mutuality), 5.15.1; Ach. Tat. 8.19.2–3; Heliod. 10.40–41.

[59] Morgan (2004) 184 on Longus 2.8.1.

[60] There are also multiple cases where the 'I' shifts to 'we', and vice versa, or an 'I' uses 'we'-language, for example, Heliod. 1.8.2–3, 2.4.1–4, 4.18.1–3, 5.7.1, 8.13.4–5; Xen. Eph. 2.1.1–6, 2.2.2–6; Ach. Tat. 4.9.4–7, 8.3.5–9, 8.19.2–3; Chariton 2.2.8, 3.10.4–8, 8.8.12–13. There, the individual adopts the 'we'-perspective as a member or the spokesman of the pair.

[61] On the role of 'we'-narratives in the formation of identity of corporate groups, see Schmid (2014); Tollefsen and Gallagher (2017).

[62] Tuomela (2007).

[63] Tuomela (2020) 11: 'We-mode thinking is a group's and its members' thinking and reasoning in terms of the thick "togetherness" notion of "we" about attitudes, actions, and emotions attributable to a social group and its members.'

[64] See Longus 2.39.1–5; Xen. Eph. 1.11.4–6, 1.16.1, 2.1.5, 2.7.5, 3.5.6–8, 3.6.5, 3.12.4; 5.14.1–4; Heliod. 1.25.1–26.1, 5.4.4–5.

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(in Gilbert's terms) of certain beliefs and views.[65] The same is true of the group language[66] that a couple creates to communicate about particular things and navigate their environment. In a telling passage from Heliodorus, Theagenes and Charicleia agree upon some signs that enable them to pass secret messages between them and thus solve problems together, even if they are separated (5.4.6–5.2, 7.6–7). Such collective commitments allow the two lovers to function as group members, reflecting a number of 'group-social obligations'[67] which, in turn, contribute to stable patterns of joint activity and interpersonal behaviour over time.

iii. Social cognition and the reader's experience

Ancient Greek novels offer much to contemporary cognitive scientists and philosophers of mind, who might find useful support for their views on enactive intersubjectivity and social cognition, by seeing joint action and alignment, collective cognition and shared affective experience described so vividly in premodern literature. Shaun Gallagher and Daniel Hutto, for example, have argued that in everyday life we come to understand the intentions and the behaviours of other people through the perception of gestures, bodily movements, facial expressions and so on, what they call 'an embodied "Interaction Theory" of social cognition'.[68] In addition, they have stressed that exposure to and engaging in specific kinds of narratives (especially about people who act for specific reasons) teaches children how to attribute mental states to other people and make sense of actions in terms of reasons, what Hutto calls 'the Narrative Practice Hypothesis'.[69] Their first argument is consistent with what we have seen in the narrative of ancient Greek novels: couples often represent a tightly connected system, where meaning and social understanding emerge from several enactive and embodied processes of interaction and coordination. In this sense, ancient novelistic couples anticipate modern phenomenological approaches to enactive intersubjectivity and group cognition.[70]

Gallagher and Hutto's second argument about narrative competence takes us beyond narrative to include the relationship between narrative and reading experience. More recently, Tim Whitmarsh and Grethlein have both emphasized the role of emotions and mental activities in shaping narrative and reader response. Whitmarsh has argued that the Greek novels encourage readers to evaluate and share in the emotions of characters, to examine moral consequences and reflect on the nature of the romance.[71] Grethlein has focused on the experiential dimension of storytelling, arguing that the manipulation of time, suspense and shifts in perspective in Heliodorus' novel heighten emotional immersion.[72] Cognitive mapping enriches these insights by providing a structured way to analyse not only how characters' emotions and mental frameworks develop within the novel's broader cognitive architecture, but also how the reader is drawn to engage with

[65] For Gilbert (2014), 'joint commitment' is a situation where a member of a group expresses his/her readiness to be jointly committed with the others as a body in a certain way, thus becoming a 'plural subject' of a belief, intention, etc. This expression establishes common knowledge, which leads to an 'informal agreement' between the constituent parties, creating obligations and entitlements that inhere in a joint commitment. See also Gilbert (2023) 30–69.

[66] See Gilbert (1989) 132–45.

[67] See Tuomela (2020) 16 on collective commitment in 'we-mode'.

[68] Gallagher and Hutto (2008) 17.

[69] Gallagher and Hutto (2008); Hutto (2008); (2011). For a similar line of thought, see Kidd and Castano (2013); Chesters (2014); van Duijn (2018); Gallagher (2020).

[70] Detailed references can be found in the introduction of this article.

[71] Whitmarsh (2022). On emotional struggles and reader absorption, see Fusillo (1999); Kytzler (2003); Repath (2007); Cummings (2018).

[72] Grethlein (2015a); (2015b); (2023) 81–114.

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the text. Just as characters develop and shape their cognitive maps over the course of the narrative, readers too construct cognitive maps of the interpersonal relationships depicted in the story, including patterns of dyadic consciousness and action that govern the development of plot and the depiction of the two lovers both as isolated individuals and as a single collective character. I argue that by following the characters' evolving perceptions, readers experience moments of cognitive alignment (when they share a character's perspective) and misalignment (when they recognize misunderstandings the character has not yet resolved) and construct their own correlative mental models. This practice is consistent with cognitive narratology's emphasis on experiential reading, where audiences actively engage with the characters' psychological landscapes.[73] By engaging with the protagonists' cognitive maps, readers participate in a dynamic interpretive process, experiencing first-hand the highs and lows of mental and emotional fusion. As the next section demonstrates, this process is not limited to moments of alignment. Misalignment and cognitive disruption also play a vital role in structuring narrative meaning and adding emotional depth in ancient storytelling.

III. Misaligned cognitive maps and narrative tension

Cognitive mapping, while often fostering alignment between lovers in ancient Greek novels, also plays a crucial role in moments of misalignment, misunderstanding and narrative tension. Misreading of minds, misplaced jealousy and false assumptions frequently lead to separation and suffering for novelistic couples, highlighting how cognitive maps can be inaccurate, incomplete or actively distorted. These misalignments not only shape character interactions and propel the plot by driving conflict and separation, but also contribute to readerly effects such as irony and suspense, as the audience is invited to reconcile conflicting perspectives and anticipate the generically predictable resolution of misunderstandings. This section further highlights how alignment and misalignment work together to shape the cognitive landscape of the ancient Greek novel.

One of the most vivid examples of misalignment occurs in Chariton's *Callirhoe*, where Chaereas constructs an inaccurate cognitive map of Callirhoe. His jealousy and emotional rashness lead him to assume betrayal where none exists, driving the novel's central conflicts. When the scheming suitors conspire to provoke Chaereas by revelling in Callirhoe's house, he reacts impulsively, exclaiming: 'It is the fact that you have forgotten me that hurts so much' (1.3.5). His reaction illustrates how cognitive maps can be manipulated by external influences, such as rumours and disguises, leading to emotional turmoil and narrative tension.

Chaereas' assumption is entirely mistaken, as Callirhoe has remained faithful, yet his cognitive map is shaped by preconceived ideas about love, honour and betrayal. His emotions, primarily jealousy and anger,[74] override his ability to assess the situation rationally, leading him to project false motives onto Callirhoe. This misalignment between the two lovers intensifies when Callirhoe in turn misreads Chaereas' motives, accusing him of harbouring his own unfaithful intentions: 'No one has come revelling to my father's house. Perhaps your vestibule is used to revels, and your marriage has hurt your boyfriends' (1.3.6). De Temmerman has noted that 'there are cracks in the symmetry' between Chaereas and Callirhoe throughout the novel, but his analysis is limited to the external characteristics (for example, Callirhoe's beauty) or the social status of characters, without considering their mental states and relational perceptions.[75] Cognitive mapping

[73] See, for example, Fludernik (1996); Herman (2003); Palmer (2004); (2010); Zunshine (2006).

[74] Scourfield (2003) offers a good analysis of how Chaereas' uncontrollable anger functions as the novel's key plot impulse.

[75] De Temmerman (2014) 48–50.

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allows us to see that the two lovers form an image of each other that is based on emotions (indignation, jealousy) and misinterpretation rather than intimate love and rational understanding. Their emotional responses demonstrate how cognitive maps are shaped and updated in response to new (but sometimes erroneous) information and assumptions. The reader, however, is positioned to see the characters' misplaced jealousy and inaccurate representations of their relationship, which creates dramatic irony and heightens suspense. Accordingly, the reader is encouraged to reconcile the conflicting perspectives and eagerly anticipate whether and how the lovers will recognize their errors and correct their cognitive maps.

The same pattern recurs throughout *Callirhoe*, often with increasingly severe consequences. Due to his misreading of Callirhoe's alleged love affair (1.4.6–7), Chaereas is ultimately 'overcome by anger' (κρατούμενος δὲ ὑπὸ τῆς ὀργῆς, 1.14.12), striking Callirhoe and setting the stage for their separation. When Callirhoe returns to life in the tomb, she blames Chaereas for thinking of another marriage (1.8.4), although a few chapters later, when she is abducted by the tomb-robbers, she laments Chaereas' love for her (1.14.7).

Another example of misalignment occurs in Chaereas' reaction to the news that Callirhoe is the lawful wife of Dionysius, and that they have a child together (4.3.9–10):

> Faithless Callirhoe, wickedest of all women! Because of you I have been sold, have wielded a shovel, have carried a cross and been delivered into the hands of the executioner. And you were living in luxury and celebrating your marriage while I was in chains! It was not enough for you to become the wife of another while Chaereas was alive, but you had to become a mother as well!

Chaereas appears to carry a map of Callirhoe and their relationship which is inaccurate and certainly not aligned with hers. Callirhoe describes to Dionysius a dream in which Chaereas appeared before her in chains, wishing to approach her, by referring to him as follows (3.7.5):

> 'An unfortunate man,' she said, 'whom I married as a girl. Even in my dream he was not happy; I saw him in chains. Poor husband, so you died while looking for me, for the chains signify your death. Meanwhile I am living in luxury and lie upon a gilded bed with another husband! But it will not be long before I come to you. Though in life we could not enjoy each other's company, yet we shall have each other in death.'

Both Chaereas and Callirhoe refer to his toiling wanderings as well as to her new status as wife of Dionysius, currently enjoying luxury and wealth. But while Chaereas assumes that Callirhoe has forgotten their marriage and that she now lives in kingly comfort, she, assuming that Chaereas is dead, confirms her current status, only to reaffirm her everlasting devotion to him. There is no moment in the narrative where Callirhoe forgets Chaereas or abandons the desire not to be alive without him (3.10.4–8, 4.1.1, 4.1.11–12, 5.1.7). This is a clear sign of her marital fidelity or *sōphrosunē*,[76] which is illuminated through the symmetrical juxtaposition of the cognitive maps of the two lovers. When he decides to go to Miletus and claim his wife from Dionysius, Chaereas writes a letter to her, to test her devotion and fidelity (4.4.5). This serves as an index of the insecurity of a husband who still fails to make correct inferences about the mental and emotional states of his wife, and therefore has, as De Temmerman noted, a 'problematic attitude towards his wife's *sôphrosunê*'.[77] In the letter Chaereas expresses his uncertainty about Callirhoe's love:

[76] De Temmerman (2014) 50–61.
[77] De Temmerman (2014) 55.

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'Remember our marriage chamber … If you should still remember me, then my sufferings are nothing; but if you are otherwise disposed, then you sentence me to death' (4.4.8–11).

Chaereas exhibits the same mindset when he meets Callirhoe in the courtroom in Babylon. There, as soon as she sees Chaereas, she runs to him, but Dionysius prevents her from embracing him (5.8.1). She stands speechless, shedding tears, with feelings of love for Chaereas and respect for Dionysius (5.8.3, 5.8.6). As Callirhoe wonders why Chaereas did not embrace her (5.9.4–5), Chaereas constructs a map of her that is rather unfavourable and critical of her (5.10.7):

> When Callirhoe saw me, she did not come and kiss me. Though I stood at her side, she felt shame before another man. She need not be embarrassed! I shall anticipate the decision. I shall not wait for an ignominious end … Good luck, my wife, for wife I call you, even if you love another! I am going away and will not get in the way of your marriage. Be rich! Live in comfort! Enjoy the luxury of Ionia! Keep the man you want!

Chaereas' misreading of Callirhoe's mind gives the reader certain privileged insights into his passionate character and prompts them to scrutinize the divergence between what Chaereas says and how the chaste and faithful Callirhoe feels (6.5.2, 6.6.5, 6.7.8–13). Naturally, a few chapters later Chaereas resorts to self-blame and emphasizes Callirhoe's love for him (6.2.11, 7.1.6). This shifting mind enhances more forcefully the perplexity of the audience about the couple's (re)mapping of each other and their climactic reunion.

Although not with the same frequency, a similar pattern is found in the other extant Greek novels. In Longus, after Daphnis discovers his real parents, Chloe weeps and complains (4.27.1–2):

> Daphnis has forgotten me. He is dreaming of a wealthy marriage. What was the point of making him swear by his goats instead of the Nymphs? He has deserted them as he has deserted Chloe. Even when he was making offerings to the Nymphs and Pan he had no desire to see Chloe. Maybe he has found maids in his mother's service who are better than me.

Although it is true that the discovery of his parents led Daphnis to forget Chloe for a moment (4.23.2), he never thought of another marriage. Here we may compare Daphnis' words when he learns about Chloe's abduction by Dryas, which correspond to but reverse Chloe's earlier lament (4.28.2–3):

> Unhappy recognition! How much better it was for me to be a herdsman! How much better off I was when I was a slave! Then I could look at Chloe … But now Lampis has snatched her and gone, and when night comes he will go to bed <with her>. And here I am drinking and living in luxury, and my oaths by Pan and the goats were meaningless.

Likewise, when Charicleia pretends that she wants to marry Thyamis, Theagenes exclaims: 'What affliction could be less familiar, more unrighteous than oaths and vows transgressed, than Charicleia putting me out of her thoughts and assenting to marriage with another?' (Heliod. 1.25.1–2). Charicleia, however, dispels all his fears and suspicions, confirming her absolute devotion to him (1.25.2–26.6). There is a juxtaposition between Theagenes' jealousy and Charicleia's cleverness here.

All these passages show that two diametrically opposite cognitive maps are often constructed and used to spot the gap between the words of one lover (Chloe; Theagenes) and the actual conduct of the other (Daphnis; Charicleia). It is true that, just as in the case

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of Chaereas and Callirhoe, by the end of the novel, couple members are willing to revise their maps[78] and achieve reconciliation through restored cognitive alignment. Such contrasting cognitive maps do not, therefore, cancel out the fundamental mental and emotional symmetry between the two lovers but emphasize their emotional suffering and struggles as they attempt *to make sense of one another as a pair*. Additionally, they enhance readerly engagement, creating moments of narrative tension (the reader sees a couple, which otherwise should be a single unit, experience disruption) and dramatic irony (the reader possesses knowledge that the characters lack). They also hold the reader in suspense: how will the lovers overcome this misalignment? We expect from the novel's generic conventions that they will in the end, but how? This question centrally touches on the minds of characters, including not simply their emotions but also their thoughts, assumptions, feelings and motives. Thus, I do not agree with Silvia Montiglio, who has recently argued that 'the experience of suspense' in the Greek novel 'is more emotional than cognitive'.[79] This study has shown that the reader is drawn via cognitive mapping to follow the characters' evolving perceptions and complex psychology, reconcile conflicting perspectives and anticipate the resolution of false interpretations and misunderstandings. This is primarily a cognitive experience.

IV. Conclusion

The preceding sections have shown that lovers in the ancient Greek novels continuously engage in processes of mental and emotional mapping, which influence their interactions and the unfolding of events. The cognitive maps of lovers reveal how perceptive, rational or emotionally driven individuals are, since they dramatize their own efforts as mind-readers and how fully they are aligned with each other. These maps are continually updated as individuals interact with their partners, reassess their relational expectations and respond to external changes. In the context of literature, this dynamic aspect of cognitive mapping provides a compelling lens through which to examine character development and the evolution of interpersonal relationships over the course of a narrative.

Key narrative events hinge on the accuracy or inaccuracy of cognitive maps. Misalignment between characters' perceptions of one another generates narrative conflict and dramatic tension, while the process of realigning cognitive maps is often tied to narrative resolution/denouement and character reconciliation. The more integrated the couple's cognitive maps, the more distressing their separation becomes for both the characters and the audience. This interplay between alignment and disruption generates narrative suspense, encouraging readers to invest emotionally in the resolution of the lovers' journey. The concept of cognitive mapping therefore allows us to see how plot and characterization are fundamentally intertwined and shape reader response. Narrative comprehension involves both temporal progression and mental state attribution.[80]

Another substantial contribution of cognitive mapping is that it allows us to study not only individuals but cognitive systems as well. This article has shown that couples from the Greek novels are embedded in several processes of embodied, and often intercorporeal, interaction, including gaze contact, facial expression, kisses, embraces, *phantasia*, parallelism, joint actions/feelings and 'we'-language. The processes are not always

[78] See Chloe (Longus 4.29.4–5); Theagenes (Heliod. 2.1.2–3, 2.4.1–4).

[79] Montiglio (2021) 350, and *passim*. *Pace* also Montiglio (2021) 351, who notes that 'we are hard pressed to find suspenseful episodes in Chariton's novel.'

[80] Although Grethlein (2023) 81–114 does not completely deny the notion of mind as an important component of narrative, his approach to experiential narrative grants priority to narrative time and plot over consciousness and characters (see pp. 91, 94 n.59, 164).

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distinct from one another, but they are intertwined in a complex fashion. Through these processes, the two lovers are fused together and become a tightly coupled interactive system, a kind of single character. This system, which exhibits sometimes unpredictable patterns of evolution and interaction, possesses certain collective behaviours and functions that carry a characterizing, aesthetic and explanatory power over and above that of the individual mind. The acceptance of the couple as a dynamic unit and the study of the cognitive interpersonal behaviour that occurs between the embodied agents involved lead to a better understanding of both individual and group identity as well as group perceptions and intragroup relations.

The application of the notion of cognitive mapping to narrative analysis has further implications for both literary studies and the study of social psychology and cognition in the ancient world and beyond. First, it introduces a way of understanding narrative as a means of giving form to and conceptualizing social cognition in intimate relationships. This approach can equally be applied to other dyads or larger collectives in narratives of ancient or later times. To limit ourselves to ancient material, it would be of great interest to examine, for example, the relationship between Odysseus and Penelope in the *Odyssey*, Achilles and Patroclus in the *Iliad*, Electra and Orestes in Aeschylus' *Choephori* or Medea and Jason in Euripides' *Medea* through the lens of cognitive mapping.

Beyond narrative studies, the proposed phenomenological reading of ancient novelistic couples offers a historical dimension to current research in cognitive science and philosophy of mind. It prefigures contemporary approaches to social understanding and intersubjectivity as interactional, enactive, embodied and socially situated and shared processes. It is also consistent with, and corroborates, the findings of those scholars who acknowledge the adequacy of macro-level explanations and are ready to accept group cognition and agency as well. If we want to extend this contribution to include consideration of the experience of the reader, cognitive mapping can be of special interest to those philosophers of mind who advocate the importance of narrative for the development of our intersubjective abilities, for it reveals the interactive and immersive qualities of ancient storytelling and accordingly encourages experiential reading. By following the characters' development of their cognitive maps, readers participate in similar processes of cognitive mapping while engaging with the text. They are drawn to construct their own mental models of alignment and misalignment in their understanding of interpersonal relationships and social cognition in narrative and beyond.

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