

## GODS' BLUE HAIR IN HOMER AND IN EIGHTEENTH-DYNASTY EGYPT

Quid cum capillis color gratus et nitor splendidus inlucet et  
contra solis aciem uegetus fulgurat... et nunc aurum  
coruscans in lenem mellis deprimitur umbram, nunc coruina  
nigredine caerulos columbarum e collis flosculos  
aemulatur... ad instar speculi reddit imaginem gratiorem?

(Apul. *Met.* 2.9)

This is in effect a footnote to a footnote. Phidias once told the painter Panaenus that he planned to base his chryselephantine statue of Zeus at Olympia on Homer's description of the heaven-shaking moment when that god yielded to Thetis by nodding with his blue eyebrows (κυνέγισιν... ὀφρύσι, *Il.* 1.528, Strab. 8.3.30 [C 345]). In his discussion of Phidias' statue—the footnote in question—Charles Picard refers to Homer's text, and wonders, 'ces sourcils bleus... ne s'expliquent-ils pas par comparaison avec les statues aux sourcils inscrites, ou aux chevelures postiches en κύανος (lapis-lazzuli, *uk-yu* des Babyloniens)? L'art égyptien employait aussi cette curieuse technique, que la Grèce délaissa.'<sup>1</sup> The suggestion implicit in this rhetorical question has been largely ignored by Homerists,<sup>2</sup> yet I shall try to show in what follows that it has greater explanatory value than the interpretations that these same scholars generally prefer.

Before beginning, I must freely admit that Graeco-Roman colour terms are notoriously tricky: Sappho, for example, turns green in the throes of an anxiety-attack; Pelias' wits are white; purple swans glide through the text of Horace; and so on (Sappho 31.14 Lobel-Page, Voigt; Pind. *Pyth.* 4.109;<sup>3</sup> Hor. *Carm.* 4.1.10). Confronted with such improbabilities, William Ewart Gladstone speculated that Homer perceived the prismatic colours only vaguely and indeterminately, or in other words that Greeks of the archaic period were colour-blind.<sup>4</sup> More recent authorities have taken a less drastic approach. Eleanor Irwin says that Homer's colour-terms are imprecise because his characters cannot think in abstract terms and so formulate the question, 'What is colour?'<sup>5</sup> P. G. Maxwell-Stuart argues that previous students of Greek colour-terms have created most of their own difficulties by focusing on verse.<sup>6</sup> If one ignores literary history, in which verse pre-dates prose, and assigns the label of literal meaning exclusively to prose usage, while attributing such extra meanings as appear in poetry to the semantic expansion of imagery, one can conclude that terms such as κύανος normally refer only to colour—and to the same colour that modern Westerners typically perceive.

<sup>1</sup> C. Picard, *Manuel d'archéologie grecque* (Paris, 1935), 1.136, n. 1. This article was written with aid of a grant entitled, 'Fish, god and hero in early Greek religion', from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I am grateful to that body for its support, and to Taryn Webb and an anonymous referee for *CQ* for much good advice.

<sup>2</sup> But cf. G. Germain, *Genèse de l'Odysée: Le fantastique et le sacré* (Paris, 1954), 153, n. 2.

<sup>3</sup> With W. B. Stanford, 'Pelias and his pallid wits: on ΑΕΥΚΑΙΣ ΦΡΑΣΙΝ in Pindar *Pythians* 4.109', in M. E. White (ed.), *Studies in Honour of Gilbert Norwood* (Toronto, 1952), 42–5.

<sup>4</sup> W. E. Gladstone, 'The colour sense', *Nineteenth Century* 2 (1877), 366–88.

<sup>5</sup> M. E. Irwin, *Colour Terms in Greek Poetry* (Toronto, 1974), 22.

<sup>6</sup> P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, *Studies in Greek Colour Terminology* 1 ΓΛΑΥΚΟΣ (Leiden, 1981), 5.

Blue hair, whether of eyebrows, head, or chin, is a striking feature of Homer's gods. As well as Zeus (cf. *Il.* 17.209), Hera has blue eyebrows (15.102), Dionysus has blue hair (*Hymn. Hom.* 7 [Bacch.] 5), and *κυανοχαίτης* or *κυανοχαίτα*, 'blue-haired', is a standing epithet of Poseidon (*Il.* 13.563 × 8), which he once shares with Hades (*Hymn. Hom.* 2 [Cer.] 347, cf. Eur. *Alc.* 261). This adjective is also used of the manes of horses, as well as of bulls ([Hes.] *Scut.* 120, *Thebais* fr. 7 Bernabé, 6<sup>A</sup> Davies, *Hymn. Hom.* 4 [Merc.] 194), though once the horse in question is the god Boreas in disguise (*Il.* 20.224). Among later poets, Thetis, Victory and Thebe have blue hair or eyebrows (Pind. *Paean* 6.83–4, Bacchyl. 5.33, 9.53). Against this list we can set the two mortals who have blue hair in Homer: the dead Hector (*Il.* 22.402) prior to his embalming by Aphrodite (23.184–7) and Odysseus, who has a blue beard (*Od.* 16.176, reading *γενειάδες*) or hair (reading *ἐθειράδες*, G U *et uaria lectio apud* Eust.) when Athena transforms him during his meeting with Telemachus. Yet Greeks thought their gods human in nature and of the same race as men (Hdt. 1.131, Pind. *Nem.* 6.1); their hair ought, therefore, to be some colour naturally occurring in humans, such as black. So why this odd convention?

Homerists are divided over its meaning. Leaf and Bayfield pointed to the then newly discovered 'Bluebeard' from the Old Parthenon at Athens, whose now faded hair and beard were still bright blue and whom they believed to represent Triton, and argued that 'Poseidon is "blue-haired" because he is god of the blue sea.'<sup>7</sup> To this Irwin rightly objects that while Homer's sea has many colours—*γλαυκός*, *ἡεροειδής*, *μέλας*, *οἶνοψ*, *πολίος* and *πορφύρεος*—blue is not among them (the closest being *ιοειδής*, 'violet'), for *κύανος* does not modify the sea until Simonides (567.3–5 PMG).<sup>8</sup> In any case, this fails to account for Zeus, Hera and the rest.

Another approach is to deny that *κύανος* and derivatives mean blue at all, and to translate them as 'black' or 'dark'.<sup>9</sup> The chief argument for this is that *νεφέλη* *ἐκάλυψε μέλαινα* (*Il.* 18.22) and *νεφέλη δέ μιν ἀμφεκάλυψε/κυανέη* (20.417–8), being interchangeable, are semantically equivalent. Synonymy is of course a striking feature of epic,<sup>10</sup> yet while many epithets for one noun often give the scope that the formulaic language requires, they need not be synonymous. Homer's ships are variously 'hollow', 'beaked', and 'swift', clearly not synonyms. Moreover, its congeners in several Near Eastern languages show that *κύανος* denotes a distinctly blue substance. These include Sumerian *KÛ.AN*, 'the metal of heaven', Akkadian *uqnû*, *qunû*, 'lapis lazuli (or the colour thereof)', Ugaritic *iqn(i)û*, 'lapis lazuli', and Hittite *ku(wa)nna*, 'copper, calcium copper silicate (that is, blue frit)'.<sup>11</sup> Not only

<sup>7</sup> Leaf and Bayfield on *Il.* 20.144 (vol. 2, 488), and R. Heberdey, *Altattische Porosskulptur* (Vienna, 1919), 55–6; against the identification with Triton see J. Benton 'Blue-Beard', in G. Beccatti et al. (edd.), *Studi in onore di Luisa Banti* (Rome, 1965), 47–9; and B. Kiilerich, 'Bluebeard—a snake-tailed Geryon?' *Opuscula Atheniensia* 17 (1988), 123–36.

<sup>8</sup> Irwin (n. 5), 89.

<sup>9</sup> 'Black': R. Carpenter, *Folk Tale, Fiction and Saga in the Homeric Epics*, Sather Classical Lectures 20 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1946), 30–1; 'dark': Irwin (n. 5), 89; and A. Heubeck, S. West, and J. B. Hainsworth, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*, 1: *Books 1–8* (Oxford, 1988), 160.

<sup>10</sup> W. Whallon, 'The Homeric epithets', *YCS* 17 (1961), 97–142; H. A. Paraskevaides, *The Use of Synonyms in Homeric Formulaic Diction* (Amsterdam, 1984).

<sup>11</sup> R. Halleux, 'Lapis-lazuli, azurite ou pâte de verre? A propos de *kuwano* et *kuwanowoko* dans les tablettes mycéniennes', *SMEA* 9 (1969), 47–66 at 62–6; M. L. West, *The East Face of Helicon* (Oxford, 1997), 13; L. Von Rosen, *Lapis Lazuli in Geological Contexts and in Ancient Written Sources*, Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology, Pocket-Book 65 (Partille, 1988), and *Lapis Lazuli in Archaeological Contexts*, Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology, Pocket-Book 93 (Jonsö, 1990).

were the Mycenaeans familiar with this last substance, which they called *ku-wa-no* (PY Ta642, 714),<sup>12</sup> but they even manufactured it, if the *ku-wa-no-wo-ko-i* of MY Oi701–5 are indeed \**κυφανοφοργοί* as they seem to be.<sup>13</sup> Blue-glass paste encrusted on the gypsum frieze of the Great Megaron at Tiryns confirms this.<sup>14</sup> Thus, only an aesthetic aversion to the idea keeps one from rendering Homer's *κυάνεος* as 'blue'. It is suggestive, though hardly probative, that while Woodhouse's dictionary gives many Attic words for 'black (adj.)' and 'dark (adj.)', *κυάνεος* is not among them.<sup>15</sup>

For her part, Irwin says that 'the darkness [*sic*] of Zeus' and Hera's brows is particularly suited to the context, and relates to their emotions as well as to their hair colour', but this leaves Poseidon *κυανοχαίτης* out of account, and it is a Parryist axiom that the bards did not choose such standing epithets to fit contextual features like a character's mood at a given moment.<sup>16</sup>

More recently, Richard Janko has argued that *κυανοχαίτης*, which he renders 'dark-maned', was originally applied to Poseidon in theriomorphic form (cf. *βοῶπις* of Hera and *γλαυκῶπις* of Athena).<sup>17</sup> This may of course be true, but Janko adduces no evidence, and translates the compound's *κυανο-* element as 'dark', whereas we have seen that 'blue' is the obvious and natural meaning. Moreover, the verb *παραλέχεσθαι* used of Boreas in equine disguise mounting mares (*Il.* 20.224) so disturbs Alfred Heubeck—for horses have no beds (*λέχη*) nor do they lie together (*παρά*) on them—that he supposes the phrase, including epithet, transferred from Hesiod (*Theog.* 278), where it is used of Poseidon.<sup>18</sup> The equal possibility of transfer from horse to god and vice versa weakens both hypotheses.

A possible way out is afforded by the passages that associate *κύανος* with hand-crafted artefacts. We have already mentioned Zeus' nod inspiring Phidias. More pertinent are passages themselves inspired by artefacts. *Κύανος* is used of the legs of a table (*τράπεζα* . . . *κυανόπεζα*, *Il.* 11.627–8, or its 'border', if *πέζα* can mean this, cf. Schol. Ap. Rhod. 4.46 [p. 263 Wendel]), on the breastplate of Agamemnon (11.24–7, cf. Exodus 28.18), on his shield (34–5), and on the cornice of Alcinous' palace (*Od.* 7.87), which recalls the Tiryns frescos. It also marks out a ditch on Achilles' shield (*Il.* 18.564) in a passage that Alexandre Moret well compares to a painting in the eighteenth-dynasty tomb of Nakhti.<sup>19</sup> To these texts we may add Athena giving Odysseus 'woolly hair like the hyacinth flower' (*Od.* 6.231). While this may refer to the *form* of the hyacinth,<sup>20</sup> the alternative ancient view (Eust. 251) that it refers to

<sup>12</sup> A. Morpurgo, *Mycenaeae graecitatis lexicon*, Incunabula graeca 3 (Rome, 1963), 175; L. R. Palmer, *The Interpretation of Mycenaean Greek Texts* (Oxford, 1963), 338 9; M. Ventris and J. Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek* (Cambridge, 1973<sup>2</sup>), 340.

<sup>13</sup> P. G. W. Glare and A. A. Thompson (edd.), *Greek-English Lexicon: Revised Supplement* (Oxford, 1996), 188 s.v. *κύανος*.

<sup>14</sup> H. Schliemann, *Tiryns* (London, 1886), 284 92; W. Helbig, *Das Homerische Epos aus den Denkmälern erläutert* (Leipzig, 1887<sup>2</sup>), 72 4, 100 6; M. P. Nilsson, *Homer and Mycenae* (London, 1933), 138–9.

<sup>15</sup> S. C. Woodhouse, *English Greek Dictionary* (London, 1910), 80, 195.

<sup>16</sup> Irwin (n. 5), 91 2; M. Parry, 'About winged words', *CP* 32 (1937), 59 63 = *The Making of Homeric Verse*, ed. A. Parry (Oxford, 1971), 414 18, *contra* G. M. Calhoun, 'The art of formula in Homer—*ἔπεα πτερόεντα*', *CP* 30 (1935), 215 27.

<sup>17</sup> R. Janko, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, 4: *Books 13–16* (Cambridge, 1992), 116.

<sup>18</sup> A. Heubeck, 'Nochmal zur "innerhomerischen Chronologie"', *Glotta* 50 (1972), 129–43, at 131–5 = *Kleine Schriften Erlanger Forschungen*, Series A Vol. 33 (Erlangen-Nürnberg, 1984), 81 5.

<sup>19</sup> A. Moret, *Kings and Gods of Egypt* (New York and London, 1912), 244.

<sup>20</sup> M. E. Irwin, 'Odysseus' "hyacinthine hair" in *Odyssey* 6.231', *Phoenix* 44 (1990), 205 18.

the flower's *colour* seems just as likely. Indeed, 'it is hardly possible to ignore the colour of a flower'.<sup>21</sup> Thanks to Sappho we know that the ancient hyacinth has a πορφύρεον ἄθος (105C Lobel-Page, Voigt, cf. Euphorio fr. 40 Powell *CA*, Pancrates *apud* Ath. 15.677F, Meleager 46.3–4 [4237–8 Gow-Page, *HE*]). Moreover, Odysseus' later transformation also involves blue hair or beard, as we have seen. If Athena indeed makes Odysseus' hair πορφύρεος, it is interesting that the text illustrates this (*Od.* 6.232–4) with an epic simile drawn from the sphere of metalworking.

Since epic associates κύανος with objects so often, we may suspect that real artefacts inspired the bards. And artefacts there were, Mycenaean themselves producing some, as we have seen. When we ask if any used blue to represent divine hair, the answer is a resounding yes. As Picard noted, it was a convention of Egyptian art, derived from the Near East like lapis lazuli itself, which was mined at Serr-i-sang in the upper Kokcha Valley between Parwara and Lower Robat, Badakhshan in Afghanistan, to colour the hair of gods and the wigs of kings and the dead with either lapis or the ersatz blue frit.<sup>22</sup> Well-known examples include the inner coffin of Yuya, father-in-law of Amenhotep III, which has blue eyebrows, a limestone relief of Smenkhare (perhaps it represents Tutankhamūn) in a blue wig with one of the daughters of Amenhotep IV Akenaten in a blue crown, the back of Tutankhamūn's throne, showing him and Queen Ankhesenamūn in blue perukes, the innermost coffin of Tutankhamūn with blue eyebrows and postiche, a relief of Ḥa'py, the Nile-god with blue hair on a sandstone pillar from the temple of Ramesses II at Abydos, and the Opening of the Mouth vignette from the Papyrus of Hunefer *Book of the Dead* in the British Museum, which shows both mummy and Anubis with blue hair.<sup>23</sup>

Egyptian texts confirm gods' flesh to be gold and their hair lapis lazuli. So the hymn to Osiris at the beginning of the *Book of the Dead* describes him as 'golden of body, blue [*hsbdd*] of head'.<sup>24</sup> We read on a boundary stela of Amenhotep IV Akhenaten, 'Beware of saying what Re said when he began to speak: "My skin is pure gold"'.<sup>25</sup> Again, the tale of the destruction of mankind on one of the gold shrines from the tomb of Tutankhamūn and elsewhere begins, 'It happened [in the time of the majesty of] Re, the self-created, after he had become king of men and gods together: Mankind plotted against him, while his majesty had grown old,

<sup>21</sup> Heubeck, West, and Hainsworth (n. 9), 308 ad loc.

<sup>22</sup> Lapis-mining: E. R. Caley and J. F. C. Richards, *Theophrastus on Stones* (Columbus, OH, 1956), 127, with bibl.; blue hair in Egyptian art: H. Kees, 'Farbensymbolik in ägyptischen religiösen Texten', *Nachrichten von der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, philologisch-historische Klasse* 11 (1943), 413–79 at 466–7; H. Schäfer, *Principles of Egyptian Art*, ed. Emma Brunner-Traut, trans. John Baines (Oxford, 1974), 71; R. H. Wilkinson, *Symbol and Magic in Egyptian Art* (London, 1994), 101, 111; and A. Stratos, 'Breaking the color code', *Tour Egypt Monthly* (an online magazine) 26 (1 June 2001) <http://www.egyptmonth.com/mag06012001/magf4.htm>.

<sup>23</sup> Yuya's coffin: J. Fletcher, *Chronicle of a Pharaoh: The Intimate Life of Amenhotep III* (Oxford, 2000), 71; Smenkhare-relief: P. Johnson, *The Civilization of Ancient Egypt* (New York, 1999<sup>2</sup>), 145; Tutankhamūn's throne: I. E. S. Edwards, *Tutankhamun: His Tomb and its Treasures* (New York, 1976), 40–1; his coffin: S. Donadoni, *Egyptian Museum, Cairo* (Montreal, 1972), 116; Ḥa'py-relief: Anon., *Egyptian Mythology* (London, 1965), 96; Opening of the Mouth vignette: Wilkinson (n. 22), 122, fig. 80.

<sup>24</sup> R. O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, revised edn (Austin, 1985), 27 = *The Egyptian Book of the Dead: The Book of Going Forth by Day*, ed. J. Wasserman (San Francisco, 1998<sup>2</sup>), plate 2.

<sup>25</sup> M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, 2: *The New Kingdom* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1976), 55.

his bones being silver, his flesh gold, his hair true lapis lazuli.<sup>26</sup> So too a poet comparing his beloved to the Sun in the *Chester Beatty Papyrus I* calls her hair true lapis lazuli.<sup>27</sup> Colour was important to the Egyptians, the word *īwn* also meaning 'nature', or 'disposition';<sup>28</sup> oddly its determinative is the sign for human hair (D3 in Gardiner's sign-list).

The Greeks felt the same about gods' flesh. So Aristophanes' Xanthias exclaims, ὦ χρυσοὶ θεοί (*Ran.* 483), Pythagoras tried to prove his divine origin by showing his golden thigh (*Iambl. Vita Pythagorae* 19), and Zeus impregnated Danaë, and on one version Alcmena, in a golden shower (*Soph. Ant.* 949–50, *Pind. Pyth.* 12.17–18, *Isth.* 7.5).<sup>29</sup> Apart from the Homeric texts already adduced, the Greeks seem not to have thought gods' hair blue. Nonetheless, they believed hair a sign of vitality,<sup>30</sup> and, gods' vitality being superhuman, they felt their hair special in some way. Normally it is golden,<sup>31</sup> but the 'immortal' lock that served Nisus as a magic life-token (*Aesch. Cho.* 619) was said to be purple (*Paus.* 1.19.4, *Prop.* 3.19.22), and a ceremonial Mycenaean 'boar's tusk' helmet from Dendra in the Argolid whose 'tusks' are made of blue glass<sup>32</sup> recalls blue pharaonic wigs.

To explain this belief we should perhaps look to the sky, brilliant by day, and deep blue flecked with stars by night. Greek gods, Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντες, are celestial (Hades, though he lives elsewhere, is their next of kin), and their substance is naturally that of the realm wherein they dwell. What better candidates than gold for the daytime sky and lapis lazuli, with its sparkling inclusions of pyrite (FeS<sub>2</sub>), for that of night? If blueness attaches specially to Poseidon through his link to water, as Leaf and Bayfield thought, we recall that earthly water just reflects that of heaven.<sup>33</sup>

We know that, among other influences, Egyptian beliefs and artefacts affected Mycenae especially during the Thutmosid and Ramesside periods. Contact is proved by the discovery of well over a thousand fragments of LH IIIA 2 pottery, probably of Rhodian or Cypriot manufacture, at Akhetaten (modern Tell el-Amarna).<sup>34</sup> Egypt is known to the writers of the Linear B tablets (KN Db 1105),<sup>35</sup> and the *Odyssey* speaks of Egyptian Thebes as a city from which visitors could bring back rich presents, and of the river 'Egypt', which men visited for trade or piracy

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 198; cf. J. B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, 1969<sup>3</sup>), 11.

<sup>27</sup> Lichtheim (n. 25), 182.

<sup>28</sup> R. O. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* (Oxford, 1961), 13.

<sup>29</sup> H. L. Lorimer, 'Gold and ivory in Greek mythology', in C. Bailey et al. (edd.), *Greek Poetry and Life* = *Festschrift Gilbert Murray* (Oxford, 1936), 14–33 at 20–21.

<sup>30</sup> L. E. Woodbury, 'Gold hair and grey: or the game of love: Anacreon FR. 13 (358) PMG = 13 Gentili', *TAPA* 109 (1979), 277–87 at 285 = *Collected Writings* (Atlanta, 1991), 332–3.

<sup>31</sup> West on Hes. *Theog.* 947–8 (p. 417).

<sup>32</sup> T. E. Haevernick, 'Mycenaean glass', *Archaeology* 16.3 (1963), 190–3 at 192.

<sup>33</sup> R. D. Griffith, 'Homeric διπετέος ποταμοῖο and the celestial Nile', *AJP* 118 (1997), 353–62 at 358.

<sup>34</sup> F. H. Stubbings, *Mycenaean Pottery from the Levant* (Cambridge, 1951), 90; see also J. D. S. Pendelbury, *Aegyptiaca* (Cambridge, 1930); R. S. Merillees, 'Mycenaean pottery from the time of Akhenaten in Egypt', in V. Karageorghis (ed.), *Acts of the International Archaeological Symposium: 'The Mycenaeans in the Eastern Mediterranean'* (Nicosia, 1973) 175–86; J. Bouzek, *The Aegean, Anatolia and Europe: Cultural Interrelations in the Second Millennium B.C.* (Göteborg, 1985); J. L. Crowley, *The Aegean and the East* (Jonsæred, 1989); C. Lambrou Phillipson, *Hellenorientalia* (Göteborg, 1990), 39–41; and E. H. Cline, *Sailing the Wine Dark Sea: International Trade and the Late Bronze Age Aegean* = *BAR Int. Ser.* 591 (Oxford, 1994).

<sup>35</sup> Ventris and Chadwick (n. 12), 136.

(*Od.* 4.126–7, 14.257–65, 17.423–34). The easiest way for artistic media and conventions to travel is with the artists themselves. Manfred Bietak has recently found at the sometime Hyksos capital of Avaris (modern Tell el-Dabā) frescos painted at the outset of the eighteenth dynasty that depict bull-leaping and other acrobatics.<sup>36</sup> Nanno Marinatos and other experts who have examined them confirm that they are the work of Minoan artists. The Thera ship-frescos also, if more vaguely, suggest contact with Egypt.<sup>37</sup>

Newly arrived Egyptian beliefs arguably spawned in the incipient epic vocabulary loan-words concerning gods (for example, νέκταρ, *Il.* 4.3, etcetera < *ntrī*, ‘divine’) and the dead (*Ἡλύσιον πεδίον*, *Od.* 4.563 < *šht i3r.w*, ‘Field of Rushes (in the Beyond)’, and μάκαρ, *Il.* 1.339, etcetera < *m3’ rw*, ‘justified’), as well as generating calques of a more generally descriptive nature (γαῖα μέλαινα, *Il.* 2.699, etcetera < *Km.t*, ‘the Black Land, Egypt’, διπετέος ποταμοῖο, 16.174, etcetera < *ḥꜥꜣ m pt*, ‘heavenly Nile’, and ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἥως, *Od.* 2.1, etcetera, arguably inspired by the rayed sun-disk of Amenhotep IV Akhenaten).<sup>38</sup> It may be that κυανέῃσιν ... ὀφρύσι, κυανοχαίτης, etcetera entered the epic word-hoard at the same time and from the same source.

One might object that the Greeks could have got to the point of using blue of gods’ hair independently. Certainly κυάνεος is used in enough sombre contexts to make it appropriate, with all due θεοσεβεία, in such descriptions: it describes the cloud with which a god veils a dying warrior (*Il.* 20.418), the mourning veil of Thetis (24.93–4), the gloom in the chest in which Polydectes sends Perseus and Danaë to their apparent deaths (Simon. 543.12 *PMG*), as well as Hades himself (*IG* 14.1389 ii 25). This jibes with later uses of the word, for Selina Stewart has shown that Aratus uses it (*Phaen.* 48, 329, 398 and 702) exclusively in threatening contexts.<sup>39</sup> Yet it is only for *divine* mourning that κυάνεος is appropriate; with humans the *mot juste* is μέλας.<sup>40</sup> So we are thrown back on the question of why blue is peculiarly appropriate to gods, and foreign influence seems the most economical explanation.

Again, one might accept foreign influence while thinking that the idea came straight from Mesopotamia, but the Tiryns frescos and other Mycenaean objects show that Bronze Age Greeks used what Egyptians called *ḥsbd iꜣꜣt*, ‘made lapis’ rather than the real thing, *ḥsbd m3’*, that is κύανος σκευαστός as opposed to κ. αὐτοφύης in Theophrastus’ parlance (*de lapidibus* 55).<sup>41</sup> This suggests Egypt rather than Mesopotamia as the immediate provenance for both the artistic material and the theological-cum-poetic convention.

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<sup>36</sup> M. Bietak, *Avaris: The Capital of the Hyksos: Recent Excavations at Tell el Dabā* (London, 1996), 73–6.

<sup>37</sup> L. Morgan, *The Miniature Wall Paintings of Thera: A Study in Aegean Culture and Iconography* (Cambridge, 1988), 169–70.

<sup>38</sup> On nectar, see R. D. Griffith, ‘Nektar and nitron’, *Glotta* 72 (1994), 20–3; on the Field of Rushes see G. Alford, ‘Ἡλύσιον a foreign eschatological concept in Homer’s *Odyssey*’, *JIES* 19 (1991), 151–61, with bibl.; on μάκαρ: see A. H. Krappe, ‘Μάκαρ’, *Revue de Philologie* 14 (1940), 245–6; on black earth, the sky-flying river, and rosy-fingered dawn, see R. D. Griffith, ‘Homer’s rose-fingered dawn and the rayed sun-disk of Amenhotep IV’, *Sileno* 19 (1993), 91–100, ‘Homer’s black earth and the land of Egypt’, *Athenaeum* 84 (1996) 251–4 and (n. 33), *passim*.

<sup>39</sup> S. Stewart, ‘The “blues” of Aratus: colours of threat in the *Phaenomena*’, in M. A. Hardie (ed.), *Hellenistica Groningana 8: Beyond the Canon* (Leiden, forthcoming).

<sup>40</sup> West on Hes. *Theog.* 406 (p. 280).

<sup>41</sup> D. E. Eichholz, *Theophrastus: De Lapidibus* (Oxford, 1965), 125.