

rechtigten Platz einnimmt: zu **dh(e)uel-* ‚aufwirbeln, trüben (Wasser, den Verstand); trübe, dunkel, geistig schwach‘ gehören u. a.: gr. *θολερός* ‚verwirrt, betört‘, illyr. *Δύαλος* ‚der Rasende‘, got. *dwals* ‚einfältig‘, ae. *dol* ‚albern‘, ahd. *tol* ‚töricht, unsinnig‘.

“Off-Color” Allusions in Roman Poetry

BY ROBERT J. EDGEWORTH, Baton Rouge, Louisiana/U.S.A.

When the modern reader peruses a text in classical Latin, he must expect to encounter some puzzling surprises. Most of these have long been resolved, and the solutions enshrined in the masses of notes and commentaries now appended to classical texts. In certain cases, however, the reader finds that the “solutions” advanced are either unconvincing, or contradictory, or altogether lacking. A prime example is the situation, by no means rare, in which a Roman author uses a color term in a way which appears unsuitable, perverse, or even impossible—in short, “off the mark”.

Satisfactory solutions of many such instances are gradually being propounded.¹⁾ In general it is true that a *common cause* underlies very many of these situations: the Roman author is attempting to allude to a Greek source (usually Homer) while failing to realize that the term bore a *different* meaning for Homer than for the later author’s Greek-speaking contemporaries.

To justify this generalization it will be useful to examine a number of such passages.

A) Minerva’s eyes. Cicero *De Natura Deorum* I.83, *caesios oculos Minervae*.

Cicero is obviously attempting to translate the Homeric epithet of Athena, *γλαυκῶπις*.²⁾ He takes the epithet as meaning “gray” or

¹⁾ Cf. “What Color Is ‘Ferrugineus’?” *Glotta* 56 (1978) 297–305, “Does ‘Purpureus’ Mean ‘Bright’?” *ibid.* 57 (1979) 281–291, “‘Inconsistency’ in Vergil and in Homer,” *ibid.* 59 (1981) 140–142, “Terms for ‘Brown’ in Ancient Greek,” *ibid.* 61 (1983) 31–40, “‘Luteus’: Pink or Yellow?” *ibid.* 63 (1985) 212–220, all by the present author.

²⁾ Used 94 times in *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, seven times in the Hymns. For full references see Alice Elizabeth Kober, *The Use of Color Terms in the Greek Poets* (Geneva, N.Y. 1932) 43–48; P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, “Studies in Greek Colour Terminology, Volume I: ΓΛΑΥΚΟΣ,” *Mnemosyne* Supp. 65 (1981) 235 n. 497.

“green” (evidently *not* as “blue,” judging from the words which follow immediately in contrast, *caeruleos esse Neptuni*, in reference to Neptune’s eyes³)). But we take it that *γλαυκ-* in Homer’s speech referred to brightness and not to hue.⁴)

B) The lion’s eyes. Catullus 45.7, *caesio ... leoni*.

The allusion is to *Iliad* Y 172, [*λέων* (line 164)] *γλαυκιδίων δ’ ἰθὺς φέρεται μένει*.⁵) We are dealing her with a *glaring* lion; the context stresses rage, and the *color* of the eyes is neither pertinent nor formulaic. But Catullus understands it as “light blue,” the usual meaning of the term since Plato’s day.

C) The rainbow. Propertius iii.5.32, *purpureus ... arcus*.

Propertius is not referring here to a “bright” rainbow, much less to a purple one, but is alluding to *Iliad* P 547, *πορφυρέην ἱρὶν*.⁶) For Homer, “*πορφύρεος* is not definitely chromatic,” but refers to sheen or iridescence.⁷) Propertius, however, is misled by the meaning of the Greek term in his own day.

D) Clouds. Vergil, *Aeneid* viii.622, *caerulea nubes*.

(Cf. *caeruleus ... imber*, iii.194, v.10.) Although the general model for this simile is found in Apollonius Rhodius Δ125 f (at the seizure of the Golden Fleece), this particular phrase is inspired by Homer’s formula *κυανέη νεφέλη*.⁸) In Homer’s speech the term *κυάνεος* is *not* chromatic, but refers to anything dark.⁹) A dark cloud, of course, is virtually a literary cliché.

³) In Homer Poseidon is called dark-haired, *κυανοχαίτης* (to the Romans, “blue-haired”), rather than blue-eyed: *Iliad* N 563, Ξ 390, O 174, 201, Y 144, *Odyssey* γ 6, ι 528, 536.

⁴) Eleanor Irwin, *Colour Terms in Greek Poetry* (Toronto 1974) 201; Helmut Dürbeck, *Zur Charakteristik der griechischen Farbenbezeichnungen* (Bonn 1977) 175–177; Kober (above, n. 2) 43–48. Maxwell-Stuart (above, n. 2), however, concludes to the contrary, p. 142: “*Γλαυκῶπις*, then, meant ‘with light blue eyes.’”

⁵) Cf. Hesiod *Shield* 430, *γλαυκιδίων δ’ ὄσσοις δεινόν*, where the term is used, again, of a lion (cf. line 426, *δεινὸν ὄρων ὄσσοισι, λέων ὧς κ.τ.λ.*). After Hesiod the word does not recur until quite late (3rd century A.D.): Maxwell-Stuart (above, n. 2) 42–45, 153, Kober (above, n. 2) 43. Kenneth Quinn is aware of the allusions, but imagines that Homer is speaking of a “green-eyed lion”: *Catullus, The Poems* (London and Basingstoke 1970) p. 225 *ad loc.* But on the color of feline eyes see P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, “Studies in Greek Colour Terminology, Volume II: *ΧΑΡΟΠΟΣ*,” *Mnemosyne* Supp. 67 (1981) 4.

⁶) *Glotta* (above, n. 1) 57 (1979) 289.

⁷) Irwin (above, n. 4) 18; cf. H. Gipper, “Purpur,” *Glotta* 42 (1964) 39–69, and Dürbeck (above, n. 4) 129–137.

⁸) *Iliad* E 345, Y 418, *Odyssey* μ 75, 405, ξ 303.

⁹) Irwin (above, n. 4) 103–110; J. André, *Étude sur les Termes de Couleur dans la Langue Latine* (Paris 1949) 374.

The difficulty is that *caeruleus* does *not* mean “dark” but is specifically “blue.” Long before Vergil’s time the meaning of the Greek term had shifted to mean “blue,” and so *caeruleus* was used as its translation – appropriate in the case of most Greek authors, less so in the case of archaic ones. The result is that Homer’s reference to an ordinary phenomenon here becomes a picture of something rather rare in nature – a blue cloud.

E) Bulls. Vergil, *Aeneid* iii.20 f., *nitentem ... taurum*.

The parallel expression *candentem ... taurum* at v.236 might be either “gleaming” or “white,” but in the present passage the Latin speaks of a “shining bull,” something quite extraordinary.¹⁰⁾ Rather than being a reference to bovine albinism, this phrase is probably inspired by Homer’s *ταῦρον ... αἶθωνα*, *Iliad* Π 487 f, and *βόες ... αἶθωνες*, *Odyssey* σ 371 f.

It has been argued strongly that *αἶθων* in Homer probably meant “brown”;¹¹⁾ but in later times the adjective was understood as “shining” or “gleaming.” Vergil’s choice of epithet rests at least in part upon a misunderstanding of Homer’s intended meaning.

F) The sea. Vergil, *Georgics* iv.373, *in mare purpureum*.

The allusion is to Homer, *Iliad* Π391, *ἐς δ’ἄλα πορφυρέην*.¹²⁾ Again, Homer’s term makes perfect sense given its archaic meaning (see “C” above). Its later meaning is chromatic, like that of its Latin equivalent. So there emerges in Vergil a picture based not on the sea’s actual color, but on a classical allusion.

G) Blood. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* ii.20, *decolorem sanguinem*.

Cicero is here faced with the difficult task of translating the phrase *χλωρόν αἶμα* from Sophocles’ *Trachiniae* 1055.¹³⁾ Since *χλωρός* meant “green” in the Greek of Cicero’s day, and since he knew that blood is never green, he had to suppose that the blood in question here (Heracles’) had been discolored by Nessus’ poison.

(The startling application of the term *viridis* to blood at Seneca *Oedipus* 297 is very likely an allusion to this same Sophoclean phrase.)

¹⁰⁾ Cf. *Aeneid* ix.627 f, “iuvencum candentem.”

¹¹⁾ *Glotta* (above, n.1) 61 (1983) 31–40, Kober (above, n.2) 106–107; cf. Dürbeck (above, n.4) 177–186.

¹²⁾ *Glotta* (above, n.1) 57 (1979) 283; cf. O.Schrier, “Love with Doris,” *Mnemosyne* 4th ser.32 (1979) 307–326, esp.316–322.

¹³⁾ Cf. Euripides *Hecuba* 127.

But this was probably not Sophocles' meaning at all. We now understand that "the basic meaning of *χλωρός* is 'liquid, moist'".¹⁴⁾

Examples could be multiplied, but the pattern is sufficiently clear, and can afford a valuable key to the correct understanding of other similar passages in Roman literature.

Fumum vendere and *fumo necare*

To the Memory of Smokey

By J. LINDERSKI, Chapel Hill, N. C.

The delightful expression *fumum vendere* has intrigued the philologists since the days of Erasmus, Casaubonus, Gothofredus and Salmasius.¹⁾ Recently B. Baldwin in his erudite article, "*Fumum vendere* in the *Historia Augusta*", *Glotta* 63 (1985) 107–109, has dispelled most of the remaining smoke. In the *Iudicium Coci et Pistoris* of Vespa (*Anth. Lat.* 199 Riese; 190 Shackleton Bailey) the baker is characterized as a man who "semper multis se dicit vendere fumum" (line 61). Baldwin points out that the baker is a braggart, that "a joke on his peddling influence²⁾ admirably suits the context", and that on

¹⁴⁾ Irwin (above, n. 4) 33, cf. 74–75; also "Epithets for Honey," *Vergilius* 25 (1979) 41–42, by the present author.

¹⁾ For Erasmus, see Baldwin 107. The comments of Casaubonus and Salmasius are easily available in the edition *Historiae Augustae Scriptores VI cum notis selectis Isaaci Casauboni, Cl. Salmasii et Jani Gruteri accurate Cornelio Schrevelio* (Lugduni Batavorum 1661; the edition *cum notis integris* appeared in 1671); see *Ant. Pius* 11 (Casaubonus), *Avid. Cass.* 4 and *Alex. Sev.* 36 (Salmasius). Iacobus Gothofredus commented on the *fumi venditio* in a note on Libanius, *Or.* 5.3 = 51.7 Foerster; see his *Opera juridica minora*, ed. Ch. H. Trotz (Lugduni Batavorum 1773) 443 n. 6, and below, n. 18. A similar expression is *fabulas vendere* (*Gord.* 24.4) for which I was not able to find any parallels. *Fumum vendere* survives in contemporary Italian as *vender fumo*: "raccontare fandonie, vantarsi di un credito che non si ha" (cf. *Il nuovo dizionario Italiano Garzanti* [Milano 1984] s.v.). Cf. also A. Otto, *Die Sprichwörter der Römer* (Leipzig 1890) 149.

²⁾ In fact what the baker is peddling is not his influence but rather his, in the eyes of the cook, nugatory concoctions, made of trifling ingredients, nuts, honey and flour. He boasts much (*iactat*, line 65), but delivers only smoke. Cf. A. J.