

INTRODUCTION

What colour is *flauus*?

Hippolyte, sic est: Thesei uultus amo
 illos priores quos tulit quondam puer,
 cum prima puras barba signaret genas
 ...
 quis tum ille fulsit! presserant uittae comam
 et ora flauus tenera tingebat pudor.

Yes, Hippolytus: Theseus' face I love, those looks he had long ago as a boy, when his first beard signalled his pure cheeks ... Then how he shone! Headbands encircled his hair, and yellow shame (*flauus pudor*) tinged his tender face.

Seneca, *Phaedra* 646–9, 651–2

candida uestis erat, praecinctorum flore capilli,
 flaua uerecundus tinxerat ora rubor.

Shining white was your clothing, your locks were bound round with flowers, a modest blush (*rubor*) had tinged your yellow cheeks (*flaua ora*).

Ovid, *Heroides* 4.71–2¹

Sixty years ago, Eric Laughton drew attention to a problem that occasionally arose in the translation of the Latin colour term *flauus*.² This is a term that dictionaries conventionally describe as a loose equivalent of our category 'yellow'.³ Laughton however argued that 'yellow' was an altogether unsatisfactory translation for *flauus pudor* and *flaua ora* in the contexts cited above, but instead they referred exclusively and unambiguously to the 'blond'

¹ All translations are my own. As this introduction will demonstrate, the translation of Latin colour terms is far from straightforward; for this reason, all translations of colour offered within the texts I cite should be considered provisional rather than definitive.

² Laughton (1948) and (1950).

³ So the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, s.v. *flauus*, where 'yellow' is its primary meaning. André (1949) 128–9 considers *flauus* first in his study of 'Le Jaune'.

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hair that marked out the cheeks of adolescent boys. ‘Blushing modesty’ and the like, which had been proposed for *flauus pudor* by various translators, as well as the *Thesaurus* and Lewis and Short, was incorrect.⁴ The *Thesaurus* had interpreted Ovid’s *flaua ora* in the same way, by taking *flaua* proleptically after *tinxerat* (so the blush had ‘tinged his face yellow’). Laughton’s solution was to claim that the *Thesaurus* was wrong to connect *flauus* with the skin, and that the category primarily denoted (or suggested) blond hair.⁵ This object-specific reading was, he argued, sustained by such examples as Virgil’s Clytius whose cheeks are sprouting their first blond hairs (*flauentem prima lanugine malas / ... Clytium*’, *Aeneid* 10.324–5) and soldiers in Silius Italicus whose cheeks rub against helmets before they are even marked by the first blond down (*galeaque teruntur / nondum signatae flaua lanugine malae*’, *Punica* 2.318–19), where the connection with the blond *lanugo* is explicitly formulated. So deep-seated was this connection that the *Thesaurus*’ other examples of alleged ‘yellow skin’ (*flaua cutis*) could not stand: thus, Valerius Maximus’ description of *uir flauus coloris* (1.7.ext.6), Seneca’s angry *flauus rubentesque* (*De Ira* 2.19.5) and his ethnic group *flauus* (*Epistle* 58.12) immediately evoke blond hair.⁶ A further example (Ovid, *Amores* 2.4.39) compares a ‘yellow girl’ (*flaua puella*) to a ‘pale girl’ (*candida puella*) and girls who have a ‘swarthy colour’ (*fuscus color*): here too *flauus* must denote the ‘blond’.⁷ This could be corroborated by various examples of Greek ‘yellow’ (*xanthos*) from the *Greek Anthology*.⁸ Although Laughton’s correction of this linguistic

⁴ Lewis and Short (1879) s.v. *flauus*; *TLL* s.v. *flauus* 889 F ‘*de cutis humanae colore subrutilo*’. For translators, cf. Miller (1917) on *Hippolytus* (before the play was renamed *Phaedra*) 652 ‘blush of modesty’. Racine (1677), perhaps recognising the difficulty, had ignored it altogether (*Phèdre* 642 ‘Cette noble pueur coloroit son visage’); similarly Harris (1904) 195 ‘the first bloom of youth’.

⁵ So, for example, ‘*Ganymede flauo*’ (Hor. *Carm.* 4.4.4); ‘*flauus ... Britannis*’ (Luc. 3.78). Laughton (1950) 88 suggests a similar model for *xanthos*, although he accepts the dubious LSJ line that *xanthos* could in later Greek denote complexion.

⁶ So too Claudianus Mamertus, *De Statu Animae* 1.20. At Festus p. 272 M/339.3L, however, *flauus* appears to be used to describe eyes.

⁷ The category, Laughton suggests, was perhaps institutionalised through the use of blond wigs in Roman comedy to mark out barbarian slaves; so Plaut. *Capt.* 648; *Mil.* 792; Ter. *Haut.* 1061. *Candidus* and *fuscus* typically referred to skin colour: further on Ov. *Am.* 2.4.39, see below pp. 138–40.

⁸ Laughton (1950) deals with two epigrams of Strato at 12.5.1–2 and 12.244.

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mistake has been – with some exceptions – accepted and reflected in later translations, commentaries and dictionaries,⁹ the important ramifications that his observations hold for the study of colour in Greco-Roman culture still remain, after sixty years, to be fully exploited.

In his 1950 article, Laughton posited that *flauus* should be understood as ‘blond’ because it (along with the Greek category *xanthos*) was a classic epithet of heroines and goddesses in Greek and Roman verse, as well as freshly bearded adolescent males.¹⁰ This argument that it was the literary context that made *flauus* ‘blond’ was a diversion from his original, bolder, line that one should position this category linguistically and conceptually as a primary designator of blond hair. That original proposal had big implications: ‘blond’ should come first in our dictionaries – with ‘yellow’ as a secondary category whenever *flauus* was used to refer to something that was not hair, such as gold, corn or sand. Laughton had put his finger on an important cultural pattern. With this key semiotic rearrangement (rather than a mere literary conjecture), the Roman reader would have no doubt to what *flauus pudor*, *flaua ora* and *flaua puella* referred.

However, one would be wrong to claim that the simple rule *flauus* = blond would resolve all the difficulties surrounding this category. Although it seems certain that the *Thesaurus* incorrectly proposed ‘skin colour’ as one of the semiotic registers for *flauus*, there is an extensive and diverse list of physical contexts which employ *flauus*, where ‘blond’ does not appear to work. The *Thesaurus* finds two main areas for application of *flauus*: first,

⁹ So Fitch’s translation (2002, Loeb) of Sen. *Phaedra* 652 renders *flauus pudor* as ‘golden modesty’; Boyle (1987) 83 ‘golden shame’ (although he adds ‘suffusing his gentle cheeks’, suggesting he has not seen Laughton); *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, s.v. *flauus* cites this passage as an example of *flauus* = blond. André’s work on colour (1949 – perhaps just missing Laughton’s article) suggested that *flauus* at Ov. *Her.* 4.72 and Ov. *Am.* 2.4.39 refers (as part of its ‘nuances brunes’) to ‘la couleur d’un teint hâlé par le soleil’ (he misses the Seneca passage altogether). Giardina’s edition (1966) 279 prefers an alternative manuscript edition replacing *flauus* with *flammis*, although he is aware of Laughton’s suggestions. This change is unhelpful and should be dismissed. The Bristol Classical Press edition (Lawall, Kunkel and Lawall, 1982) copies this alteration. See Bremmer (1973) 180, suggesting *flauus rubor*. Coffey and Mayer (1990) revert to *flauus pudor* and accept Laughton’s suggestion (albeit warning that ‘behind the unusual phrase lies a complicated process of literary cross-reference’).

¹⁰ So Laughton (1950) 89.

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where it represents the Greek *glaukos* in referring to the sparkle of moving water (*de nitore scintillanti aquae commotae*) or to the underside of olive leaves (*de foliis oliuae a colore partis inferioris*); second, where it imitates Greek *xanthos* or *purros*. This second usage is divided into six subject categories: (1) ash/sand/mud/dust; (2) honey/wax; (3) hair; (4) ripe corn; (5) gold; (6) skin; along with a seventh category for one-offs such as wedding bonds (*uincula*), bile and wine.

The two semantic categories in which *flauus* appears to pick up *glaukos* are poorly represented, and complicated. The first category, in which *flauus* describes disturbed water, is surmised from two difficult fragments of early Latin verse, one depicting ships sweeping over the ‘yellow marble’ (*flauum marmor*) of the sea, and the other describing a ritual washing in ‘yellow water’ (*flaua lympa*).¹¹ Both fragments are preserved only because they presented a visual puzzle for Aulus Gellius’ imaginative discussion of colour terms at *Noctes Atticae* 2.26 (see below pp. 229–33). The second area where *flauus* = *glaukos* – the underside of olive trees – is likewise an individual poetic peculiarity, also debated in the Gellius passage: Virgil *Aeneid* 5.309 describes Aeneas’ promise of an olive wreath to the contest-winners – ‘their heads will be crowned by the yellow olive’ (*flauaque caput nectentur oliua*). Several interpretations have been proposed, including ‘pale green’, allusions to yellow pollen and the reflection of yellow sunlight; a more likely explanation is that Virgil was suggesting a metaphor where olive leaves could be made to resemble hair.¹² The *Thesaurus’ glaukos* category, then, is too sparse and too problematic (even for ancient interpreters) to stand as an acceptable register of *flauus*.

¹¹ Enn. *Ann.* 384 and Pacuvius, *Tragedies* 266. Warmington’s Loeb translation (1961) of both is unimaginative (‘a sea of yellow marble’, ‘yellow water’). Harrison (2003) 80 discusses these uses and concludes that they must refer to foaming water.

¹² Fairclough (1932); Williams (1960) 104–5; Henry (1889) 89 had suggested the olive’s yellow pollen; Mackail (1930) 181, ‘the pale golden-grey of the leavage’. Cf. Edgeworth (1992) 129, who suggests that ‘olive leaves are green when first taken from the tree, but quickly turn yellow’. Virgil’s epithet picks up *xanthēs elaias* (Aesch. *Pers.* 617), but this is the only precedent and refers to the oil rather than the foliage. Broadhead (1960) 161 interprets this reference in the *Persians* as an example of the imprecision of ancient colour. André (1949) 130–2 suggests instead an imaginative play of sunlight on the leaves. This colour problem has been discussed most recently by Harrison (2003), who suggests replacing *flauaque* with *glaucaque*.

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The manifold instances where *flauus* represents the Greek categories *xanthos/purros*, on the other hand, cannot be so easily dismissed. *Flaua harena* ('yellow sand') was a fairly regular association in Latin verse,¹³ and Tiber (along with other rivers) earned the epithet *flauus* – although divine personification, with the characteristic blond hair of divinities, may be implied.¹⁴ Honey is often described as *flauus*.¹⁵ So too wax (but only in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*).¹⁶ Corn and cornfields several times take this category – although one detects a poetic allusion to blond hair.¹⁷ *Flauum aurum* ('yellow gold') was a regular chromatic label: the beautified Aeneas resembles Parian marble set with *flauum aurum* and Martial could describe gold coins as *flaua moneta*, and gold dishes as *flaua chrysendeta*.¹⁸ Elsewhere, in a poem packed with material metaphor, he claims true electrum shines less than the 'yellow metal': *minus flauo metallo*, 8.50.5 – just as fine silver surpasses 'snow-white ivory', *niueum ebur*. Propertius could describe the unique stone *chrysolithos* as possessing a 'yellow light' (*flauum lumen*, 2.16.44), and Statius could imaginatively describe Numidian marble quarries as *flaua metalla* (*Siluae* 1.5.36).

The *Thesaurus*' one-offs, then, point to the possibility of a more flexible use of *flauus* = 'yellow'. Tibullus describes as *flaua uincula* the durable bonds of marriage (2.2.18); one commentator suggests this might allude to chains of gold, although he ends (as most commentators do) by connecting it to a far more general register

¹³ So Ov. *Met.* 14.448 (*in mare cum flaua prorumpit Thybris harena*); 15.722; Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* 1.613 (*multa flauus caput Euris harena* – although note the blond hair imagery here); Stat. *Theb.* 4.737 (*flauam Libyem*). Cf. also Verg. *G.* 3.350 (*turbidus et torquens flauentis Hister harenas*); Ov. *Met.* 9.36. The manuscript of the only prose example in the *Thesaurus* (Cato *Orig.* 114 *mulieres nostrae capillum flauo cinere unguabant ut rutilus esset*) is spurious.

¹⁴ For example, Catull. 67.33; Verg. *Aen.* 7.31; 9.813; Sen. *Hercules Oetaeus* 591. André (1949) 129 connects *flauum marmor* and *lympha flaua* in Ennius and Pacuvius to this usage; Holford-Strevens (2003) 220 n. 120, following André, understands *flauus* in these contexts (surely wrongly) as 'brightly gleaming'. For a comprehensive catalogue and discussion of *flauus* describing the blond hair of deities and heroes, see the long note in Pease (1935) 471–3. See also Dana (1919) 22.

¹⁵ Lucr. 1.938 (*mellis dulci flauoque liquore*); Ov. *Met.* 1.112; Stat. *Theb.* 10.578; Columella, *Rust.* 10.417.

¹⁶ Ov. *Met.* 3.487; 8.198; 8.670.

¹⁷ So Tibullus 2.1.48 *deponit flauas annua terra comas*. See also Verg. *G.* 1.73; 1.316; Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* 1.70.

¹⁸ Verg. *Aen.* 1.592; Mart. 14.12.1; cf. 12.65.6 where he uses the substantive *flauus de moneta Caesaris*. For dishes, see 2.43.11. Cf. Apul. *Met.* 6.13 (*flauentis auri mollitie*). For André (1949) 130 these are examples of 'nuances rouges'.

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of ‘yellow’ in the Roman wedding ceremony.¹⁹ Ovid mentions *flaua pyrethra* (chamomile, *Ars Amatoria* 2.418) and *flaua liba* (wheatcakes, *Fasti* 4.476). Columella (4.30.4) talks of the Greek willow as possessing a *flauus color* (other types are *purpureus* and *rutilus*). Statius connects the category to clothes (*flauis amictus*, *Silvae* 2.3.16) and grapes (*Thebaid* 5.269 – but here as a wreath).²⁰ These examples demonstrate that *flauus* could be (with a certain amount of imaginative poetic flair) transferred to objects possessing broadly the same wavelength, where ‘yellow’ constitutes a more or less satisfactory translation. The same patterns occur with the use of the verbs *flaueo* and *flauesco* (particularly the participles *flauens* and *flaescens* which denote especially the movement of hair/corn/water).²¹ However, the *Thesaurus*’ category *de crinibus* (referring to hair) accounts for more than half the total references to *flauus* and – particularly when the skin category *de cutis humanae colore* has been correctly integrated into it – contains the large majority of all the direct prosaic uses of *flauus*.²² This is evidence enough, it seems, both to reinstate ‘blond’ as the primary meaning of *flauus*, and to recognise that tentative efforts were in place in the educated metropolitan elite literature of the early Empire to extend this *color* beyond the blond. The issue that requires examination by both the philologist and the intellectual historian is the nature of this interface between the object and *how it looks*, and the question of when, how and why an object’s natural *color* could be transferred to other objects outside the term’s semantic range.

¹⁹ Murgatroyd (1994) 77–8. Cf. Maltby (2002) 392 (‘the chains are *flaua*, bright yellow or saffron, because this was the colour connected with the wedding ceremony’); Smith (1913) 413–14. The *color nuptialis* specified by Plin. *HN* 21.46 is in fact *luteum*, and Pliny implies this is reserved for the *flammeum*. It could be that *flaua uinacula* is a corruption, and that one should substitute *laeta* (cf. Hor. *Carm.* 1.33.14).

²⁰ Cf. Columella, *Rust.* 3.21.3 on grape types ‘uel generis albi uel flauentis uel rutili uel purpureo nitore micantis’.

²¹ *TLL* s.v. *flaueo* and *flauesco*. For the various nuances of these verb forms, see André (1949) 241–6. At 128 he claims that the *flauus* : *flaueo* : *flauesco* frequency ratio is 75:13:10.

²² André (1949) 128–9 recognises this (‘L’emploi le plus caractéristique de *flauus* concerne les cheveux, représentant 66% des exemples du terme en prose, 45% des exemples poétiques’). André also points out that *flauus* can be used for the hair of animals, although he slots this under ‘nuances brunes’.

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Flauus is by no means an isolated case. The adjectives *uiridis* and *uirens* ('green') most commonly described the healthy crops and shrubs of Roman agriculture and horticulture, or the rich verdure of the Italian countryside.²³ Vitruvius, for example, discussing urban architectural design, advocates 'green spaces' (*uiridia*) because of the healthy sensation they bestow upon the viewer (5.9.5).²⁴ *Viridis*, however, is one of those Latin colour terms which stands in our dictionaries somewhat awkwardly on the line between representing our colour 'green' and the quality 'vigorous'. Most dictionaries aim to separate the two loosely: it seems incompatible with our idea of colour, for example, that Gellius could describe a strong and vigorous sound, such as the letter 'H', as *uiridis*.²⁵ Columella talks about the green *taste* of olives, and others describe the oil of the freshest varieties as *uiride*.²⁶ Pliny advises that seeds be sown under a 'green sky' (*uiride caelum*) – not literally 'green' of course, but clear and fresh and conducive to germination.²⁷ Similarly, it hardly seems plausible that Virgil's Euryalus, cut down in his '*uiridis*' youth was in any *real* sense 'green', nor the cheeks of children in Statius, nor the flame which Horace pictures

²³ Along with the substantives *uiridia*, *uirentia*, *uirecta*, *uiriditas* and the verbs *uireo*, *uireasco* and *uirido*; see André (1949) 184–94. For example, Cic. *Leg.* 1.5 *uiridis ripa*; Verg. *G.* 2.219 *uiride gramen*; 3.144; Hor. *Carm.* 1.25.17 *hedera uirens*; Columella, *Rust.* 1.5 *uirentia*; 12.57 *uiridia*; Apul. *Met.* 4.2 *uirecta*; Cic. *Sen.* 45 *herbescens uiriditas*; Verg. *Aen.* 6.206 *fronde uirere noua*; Sen. *Thyestes* 54 *uirescunt*. In Rome there was even a district called *uicus uiridarius* (*CIL* 6.2225). The associations of ancient 'green' with health and vitality have been very thoroughly explored by Trinquier (2002), with critique by Bradley (2006b).

²⁴ Vit. *De arch.* 5.9.5 'the subtle and rarefied air (*subtilis et extenuatus aer*) from the *uiridia*, flowing in on account of the movement of the body, clears the vision (*perlumat speciem*) and so carrying away the thick moisture (*umorem crassum*) from the eyes, leaves the gaze defined and the vision sharp (*aciem tenuem et acutam speciem relinquit*).'

²⁵ Gell. *NA* 2.3.1 (*H litteram ... inserebant ... uocibus uerborum firmandis ... ut sonus earum esset uiridior uegetior*; cf. 13.21.13 (*uiridior sonus*)).

²⁶ Columella, *Rust.* 12.49.8 (*uiridem saporem oliuarum*); Suet. *Iul.* 53; cf. Quint. *Inst.* 12.6.3 (*fructum studiorum uiridem*); Cic. *Verr.* 1.45 on fresh/green firewood (*ignem ex lignis uiridibus*); Liv. 29.1.14; Ov. *Ib.* 235. In Columella, 42 out of 51 occurrences of *uiridis* constitute (in agricultural terms) the opposite of *aridus* – see André (1949) 187. Ov. *Hal.* 90 on shallows *verdant* with submarine plants (*num uada subnatis imo uiridentur ab herbis*); cf. Calp. *Ecl.* 2.57–8 describing a fertile river bank, *uirides qua gemmeus undas / fons agit*. The *Oxford Latin Dictionary* notes that uses of *uiridis* to denote the sea and streams 'may refer, in part at least, to the colour of surrounding vegetation'.

²⁷ Plin. *HN* 17.74; so also Calp. *Ecl.* 5.21 *tunc florent siluae uiridisque renascitur annus*.

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spouting out of Mount Etna.²⁸ The blood of Seneca's Tiresias could be (figuratively speaking) *uiridis*, as could the 'ripe' old age of Virgil's Charon.²⁹ The list goes on, a series of colour puzzles that have caught the interest of generations of scholars. These examples, however, are not just anomalies: *uiridis* was 'verdant'. Just as *flauus* was the property of blond hair, *uiridis* was the property of plants and leaves, and much more than just what colour they were.³⁰ When Virgil described the growth of trees and grass (*arbori fetus alibi, atque iniussa uirescunt / gramina*), there was no sense in separating the 'green' and the 'grow'.³¹ To describe, think of, experience *uiridis* for a Roman was to engage in a conceptual world of cultivation and growing.³²

Like *flauus*, however, *uiridis* could break beyond the semantic range of 'verdant' (and so, in a sense, become a 'colour'). Outside verdure, *uiridis* was most commonly used to denote 'green' rocks, earths and minerals, particularly emeralds – presumably because

²⁸ Verg. *Aen.* 5.295; Stat. *Silv.* 3.3.125 (*uirides genae*); Hor. *Epod.* 17.33 (*uirens flamma*); cf. Manilius 2.941 on the rising sun (*uiridis ... Phoebus*). Cf. Stat. *Theb.* 4.98 on a snake emerging fresh in its new skin from hibernation, *laetisque minax interuiret herbis*.

²⁹ Sen. *Oedipus* 297; cf. Manilius 5.212 on the *uiridis sanguis* of sap. Verg. *Aen.* 6.304 *iam senior [Charon] sed cruda deo uiridisque senectus*; Sil. *Pun.* 5. 569 on the veteran Labicus as *uiridissimus irae*; Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* 1.77; Sen. *Ep.* 66.1 *senem ... uiridem animo ac uigentem*; Liv. 6.22.7 on the aged dictator Camillus in the Volscian wars: *sed uegetum ingenium in uiuido pectore uigebat uirebatque integris sensibus*; Columella, *Rust.* 1.pref.12 on the importance to farmhands of maintaining *uiridis aetas cum robore corporis*. Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 3.75 on a prevalent evil possessed of *uiriditas*; *Rep.* 6.8 where Scipio advocates as rewards suited to *uirtus* not statues and triumphs, but *uiridiora praemiorum genera*.

³⁰ *Viridis* and its cognates may have belonged to a broad Latin semantic field that included such quintessential terms as *uir*, *uirtus* and *uis* – although the etymological relationship between these words is dubious; see Pokorny (1959) 1123–4 and 1133. Cf. also *Od.* 16.47, where a visitor in a poor man's cottage sleeps on a bed made up of $\chi\lambda\omega\rho\alpha\iota\ \rho\acute{o}\pi\pi\alpha$, boughs that possess a vital freshness and softness; see Clarke (2004) 135. Struycken (2003) 285–6 argues convincingly that uses of $\chi\lambda\omega\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$ by Democritus and other philosophers are emphatically phenomenological, evoking 'sprouting plants' and 'sap'.

³¹ Verg. *G.* 1.55; cf. Ovid's description of Elysium at *Am.* 2.6.50 (*udaque perpetuo gramine terra uiret*). Cf. *Ecl.* 8.59; Columella, *Rust.* 11.2.67; Varro, *Ling.* 6.9 (etymologising 'uer'); Apul. *Flor.* 10.4 (*uirores pratorum*); Plin. *HN* 16.88 on the underside of deciduous leaves, *pars inferior a terra herbido uiret colore*; André (1949) 186 does attempt a figurative – chromatic separation. Clarke (2004) 134–6 makes a similar point about the Greek category $\chi\lambda\omega\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$, which (he argues) evokes 'kinetic' qualities such as 'fecund', 'oozing', 'vitality', and (in some cases) loses 'the chromatic aspect of the prototypical content'.

³² Thus Cic. *Verr.* 3.47 on the *colles nitidissimi uiridissimique* of pre-Verrine Sicily; Lucr. 5.783–5 on the origins of the world herbaciously rooted in a *uiridis nitor* and *uiridans color*.

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they had a similar wavelength.³³ A Roman could describe the parrot – something of a rare visual treat – as *uiridis*.³⁴ This category could also be used, with a certain degree of cultural sneering, to evoke the faces of woad-painted Britons,³⁵ madmen,³⁶ and those who were looking unwell or disorientated.³⁷ *Viridis*, then, could (like *flauus*) be extended beyond the object which it most properly described.

One final example: the category *caeruleus*, which evoked the appearance of deep sea or copious waters. One of Rome's biggest aqueducts, a great Claudian technical feat which brought thousands of gallons of fresh water into the capital from across Italy, brought water to the *fons Caerulea*, a deep reservoir so called (Frontinus tells us) from its *similitudo* – to the sea.³⁸ The *Thesaurus*, however, like other dictionaries, considers *caeruleus* to be derived from *caelum*, and sets 'sky-blue' as its first and primary meaning. Two early Latin verse fragments indeed appear to set this category in the

³³ Lucr. 4.1126 *uiridi cum luce zmaragdi*; Vitruv. *De arch.* 7.7.4 *creta uiridis*; Prop. 3.3.27 *uirides lapilli*; Plin. *HN* 37.115; Sid. Apoll. *Carmina* 5.38–9, describing green *marmor Lacedaemonium* on the shield of Roma, is naturally drawn to the lively appearance of grass 'sprouting' out brightly to meet the gaze: *post caute Laconum / marmoris herbosi radians interuiret ordo*. For further discussion of emeralds in Pliny, see below pp. 102–3. For a comprehensive study of the therapeutic properties of green stones (especially emeralds) and animals (e.g. lizards and scarabs), situated in Egyptian ritual and iconography, see Trinquier (2002) 98–114.

³⁴ [Ov.] *Epistula Sapphus* 38.

³⁵ Ov. *Am.* 2.16.39 (*uirides Britanni*). On Britons and woad, see Carr (2005) and below pp. 175–6. *Caeruleus* could also be used to describe woad.

³⁶ Plaut. *Men.* 828, *uiden tu illi oculos uirere? ut uiridis exoritur colos / ex temporibus atque fronte, ut oculi scintillant, / uide*. Presumably, a green mask is being worn. The rendering of 'pale' and 'sickly' in the Gratwick commentary does not account for these nuances.

³⁷ Cf. Plaut. *Curc.* 22–3, on the sick pimp Cappadox: *quis hic est homo / cum collatiuo uentre atque oculis herbeis?*; *Ciris* 225, where the lovesick Scylla is afflicted by *uiridis pallor*; cf. Celsus, *Med.* 2.4.7 on green vomit. Faces are of course not usually 'green' by the standards of our colour charts (even though we still use the expression); one might argue that it is an appropriate category for sickness because it is so out-of-place. Artificial *uiridiana* could incur the stigma of a natural colour unnaturally achieved – see Sen. *Controv.* 10.pref.9. Russian (for example) does not recognise the connection of green and sick faces. On *χλωρός* used for pale faces, see Clarke (2004) 133, 135 (where he curiously considers paleness to be 'chromatically green').

³⁸ Frontin. *Aq.* 13–14 (*a similitudine appellatus est*). Frontinus does not feel the need to spell out the object of this *similitudo* – commentators have noted 'The Blue' (Bennett) and 'la source bleu' (Grimal), although this is clearly unsatisfactory. Further on the *fons Caerulea*, see *CIL* 6.1257; Suet. *Claud.* 20.1. For a lexicographical synopsis of *caeruleus*, see André (1949) 162–75. Cf. Christol (2002) on 'Les Couleurs de la mer'.

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INTRODUCTION

sky, and several later poets follow suit.³⁹ The equation *caeruleus* = ‘sky-blue’, however, is not correct.⁴⁰ Many of these instances use *caeruleus* explicitly as the property of a sky raining heavily, or heavens about to open. Others are implicit. In the *Georgics*, for example, Virgil describes as *caeruleus color* the colour of the sun when it is about to deliver rain (*pluuiam denuntiat*).⁴¹ Several references describe stars that herald rain.⁴² *Caeruleus* could denote storm-clouds,⁴³ and marked out the most watery parts of the rainbow (see below pp. 40–1). It did not, however, describe the clear blue sky.⁴⁴ Like the ‘blond’ entry of the *Thesaurus* ‘*flauus*’, the semantic section ‘*de aqua et eius incolis*’ (water and those that live in it) forms by far the largest subject category under the entry ‘*caeruleus*’. This was the property of deep, moving water, and all the qualities and associations it evoked.⁴⁵ In *Aeneid* 8, Tiber introduces himself as *caeruleus Thybris* (64).⁴⁶ In a Senecan tragedy, *caerulea Crete* denoted not a blue island, but an island associated with, or surrounded by, deep waters.⁴⁷ The substantive *caerulea* was regularly used to describe ‘the deep’,⁴⁸ and this was what one would expect the sea to look like.⁴⁹

³⁹ Enn. *Ann.* 65 *caerulea caeli templa*; cf. 9 *quae caua corpore caeruleo cortina receptat*; Naevius in Varro, *Ling.* 7.7 *hemisphaerium ubi concha caerulea saeptum stat*. Cf. also Ov. *Fast.* 3.449 (*caeruleum caelum*); Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* 7.378 (*caerulei ... Olympi*); Verg. *G.* 1.453 (*color solis caeruleus pluuiam denuntiat*); cf. Sen. *QNat.* 1.3.4.

⁴⁰ Many scholars have reproduced this mistake: see (for example) Baran and Chişleag (1968) 163, ‘bleu comme le ciel’.

⁴¹ Verg. *Aen.* 1.453; cf. Verg. *Mil.* 4.41 *lunae color caeruleus indiat pluuias*; *Aetna* 332 *caeruleo siccus Ioue fulgeat aether*; Ov. *Met.* 15.789 on the face of *caeruleus Lucifer* spattered with a rain of blood.

⁴² So Cic. *Arati Phaenomena* 142 ‘*Pistrix*’.

⁴³ Cic. *Arati Phaenomena* 204; Verg. *Aen.* 3.194; 5.10; 8.622; Ov. *Pont.* 7.94; [Quint.] *Declamationes* 12.16; cf. Homeric κινάρεη νεφέλη, Hom. *Il.* 5.345; 20.418; *Od.* 12.405.

⁴⁴ This is recognised by Smyshliaeva [Смышляева] (2002) 290–1.

⁴⁵ The same Latin authors who force us to question this connection nevertheless explicitly place *caeruleus* in the sea: Enn. *Ann.* 143 <*pont*> *i caerulea prata*; 385 *caeruleum sale*; Cic. *Acad.* 2.105 *mare modo caeruleum uidebatur*.

⁴⁶ *Caeruleus* also poetically described sea or river deities – particularly their swirling hair, but more generally divinities deeply implicated in water: so Ov. *Met.* 5.432; *Fast.* 1.375; *Epiciedion Drusi* 224; Ov. *Ars am.* 1.224.

⁴⁷ Sen. *Hercules Oetaeus* 1874. Cf. Stat. *Theb.* 9.242 *caeruleis ... piscibus*. Cf. Ov. *Met.* 14.555 *caeruleus, ut fuerat, color est nauium Aeneae*; Pers. 6.33 *caerulea in tabula* (a painting of the sea).

⁴⁸ As Cic. *Carmina* fr. 29.3 *est transuectus caerulea cursu*; Verg. *Aen.* 3.208 *caerulea uerrunt*; Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* 1.460 *petit caerulea*; Sil. *Pun.* 4.298 *diuisaque caerulea pulsu*.

⁴⁹ Cf. Ov. *Pont.* 4.10.59–64, who complains that the sea at Pontus was not ‘*caeruleus*’ enough (*caeruleus uix est diluiturque color*) due to its unusual geography. Cf. Plin. *Ep.*