

THE TERMINOLOGY FOR BEAUTY IN THE *ILLIAD* AND *ODYSSEY*

An ancient Greek proverb declares, ‘beautiful things are difficult’.¹ One obvious difficulty arises from their almost limitless variety: sights, sounds, people, natural phenomena, man-made objects and abstract ideas may all be *beautiful*, but what do these things have in common? It is not just beauty’s breadth of application, then, that makes it difficult, but the way its meaning varies depending on context. The beauty of a child may mean something quite different from the beauty of an old and wizened face, let alone the beauty of a supermodel. In common parlance, *beautiful* may be used as a general term of approbation alongside others like *lovely* or *fine*, while in academic discourse, the word *beauty* has a life of its own: since the emergence of aesthetics as an independent discipline in the mid-eighteenth century, beauty has been constantly theorised and responded to in different ways that have laden the term with its own peculiar historical baggage.² And although some of these philosophical reflections on beauty may have trickled into the common cultural consciousness, in

¹ Pl. *Hp. mai.* 304e: χαλεπὰ τὰ καλὰ. I am very grateful to I.J.F. De Jong, J. Elsner, R.L. Hunter, C. Metcalf, M. Paprocki, R.C.T. Parker and *CQ*’s anonymous readers. Their patience, criticism and encouragement have been invaluable in helping me through these ‘difficult beautiful things’.

² For some recent approaches to beauty and its modern history, see N. Zangwill, *The Metaphysics of Beauty* (Ithaca, 2001); W. Steiner, *Venus in Exile: The Rejection of Beauty in Twentieth-Century Art* (Chicago, 2002); A.C. Danto, *The Abuse of Beauty: Aesthetics and the Concept of Art* (Chicago 2003); E. Prettejohn, *Beauty and Art* (Oxford, 2005); A. Nehamas, *Only a Promise of Happiness: The Place of Beauty in a World of Art* (Princeton, 2007); R. Scruton, *Beauty* (Oxford, 2009); J. Brouwer, A. Mulder, and L. Spuybroek (edd.), *Vital Beauty: Reclaiming Aesthetics in the Tangle of Technology and Nature* (Rotterdam, 2012); A. Chatterjee, *The Aesthetic Brain: How We Evolved to Desire Beauty and Enjoy Art* (Oxford, 2014); P. C. Hogan, *Beauty and Sublimity: A Cognitive Aesthetics of Literature and the Arts* (Cambridge, 2016).

general they seem a far cry from beauty's most ubiquitous incarnation in modern Western society, in the cosmetics industry; to put it another way, if you go into a beauty salon in search of a Kantian ideal of disinterested contemplation, I suspect you will be disappointed.

All this goes to show that beauty is a protean beast, notoriously slippery in the hands of those who try to define it. The lack of a clearly defined concept of beauty certainly poses a challenge to those wishing to explore ancient attitudes to beauty, but it is not insurmountable. The inquiry calls for an approach that is attentive to the historical contingency of our ideas and the potential discrepancies between ancient and modern conceptual categories.³ From our brief sketch of beauty's various modern uses and permutations, it is clear that we should not expect to find a Greek concept that bears precisely the same range and depth of meanings. But what common features make beauty identifiable across time and place? In general terms, beauty pertains to the attractive way things appear. At the most basic level of perception, beauty pleases: beautiful things attract and demand our attention because they please us. Yet beyond this basic element of pleasure, any number of emotional and cognitive responses to beauty is possible: delight, desire, wonder, sadness, even fear.⁴ The important point is that beauty is affective. To call something 'beautiful' is to make a claim not just about how something appears, but about how it makes you feel. What is at stake is a special

³ On the challenges in studying ancient aesthetics, see J.I. Porter, *The Origins of Aesthetic Thought in Ancient Greece: Matter, Sensation, and Experience* (Cambridge, 2010), 25–56; P. Destrée and P. Murray (edd.), 'Introduction', in P. Destrée and P. Murray (edd.), *A Companion to Ancient Aesthetics* (Chichester, 2015), 1–13.

⁴ It is for this reason that beauty is not coterminous with attractiveness (although inextricably linked) and why 'beautiful' is different from 'pretty', which is purely pleasing; beauty cannot therefore be reduced, in Tolstoy's words, to 'nothing other than what is pleasing to us.' See L. Tolstoy, *What is Art?* (London, [1897] 1995), 52. On the relationship between beauty and attractiveness, see Nehamas (n. 2), 24-30.

kind of relationship between appearance and experience, between the properties of perceptual objects and the effects they have. Nowhere is this clearer than in Homer's representation of Helen, whose beauty is conveyed not just by her appearance 'like the immortal goddesses', but by its extraordinary agency over the Greeks and Trojans: her appearance is a justifiable cause, so the Trojan elders say, for ten years suffering in war.⁵

This paper investigates some of our earliest literary evidence for Greek views on beauty: the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. How does Homer express beauty? What words, if any, does he have for 'beauty' and 'beautiful'? How else does the poet express beauty without an explicit word for 'beauty' or 'beautiful'? Semantic studies on Greek beauty have focussed almost exclusively on the adjective κάλως, though D. Konstan's recent work has brought its cognate noun κάλλος into the picture.⁶ The Greek terminology for beauty, however, was far from limited to a single semantic family. What we find in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is a rich and diverse terminology for expressing beauty in nuanced ways. To achieve a well-rounded understanding of Homeric and early Greek attitudes to beauty, therefore, we must interrogate these various ways of expressing beauty, their relationship with one another and with our own ideas about beauty. Exploring ancient attitudes to an unstable concept like beauty must begin as an exercise in translation, ever attentive, in Matthew Arnold's words, to 'the shade, the fine distinction' of semantic meaning.⁷

⁵ Hom. *Il.* 3.156–8.

⁶ D. Konstan, *Beauty: The Fortunes of an Ancient Greek Idea* (Oxford, 2014); D. Konstan, 'Beauty', in P. Destrée and P. Murray (n. 3), 366–80; D. Konstan, 'Beauty and Desire between Greece and Rome', in D. Cairns and L. Fulkerson (edd.), *Emotions between Greece and Rome* (London, 2015), 45–66.

⁷ M. Arnold, *On Translating Homer* (London, 1862), 11. On the importance of sensitivity to semantics when analysing foreign notions of beauty, see C. Sartwell's *Six Names of Beauty* (New York, 2004).

I. 'BEAUTY' AND 'BEAUTIFUL'

As the most prolific word in Homer's terminology for beauty, *καλός* seems an appropriate place to begin. With over three hundred appearances, *καλός* is one of the most common adjectives in the Homeric poems, applied to everything from people, animals and armour, to songs, buildings and natural phenomena.⁸ In most cases, 'beautiful' is an apt translation of *καλός* in its denotation of a general, attractive aspect of appearance common to such a broad spectrum of visible and audible objects. The same applies to the cognate adjective *περικαλλής* which intensifies the meaning of *καλός* and is only applied to visible objects in Homer; in signifying attractive physical appearance, it may be rendered as 'most beautiful' or 'exquisite' in each case.⁹

Significantly, however, *καλός* also shades towards meaning simply 'good': 'it is *kalos* to do this', for instance, is a standard way of saying 'it is *good/appropriate* to do this'.¹⁰ Whether *καλός* designates an aspect of appearance or quality, therefore, is often hard to disentangle, especially for material objects: does *τεύχεα καλά* mean 'beautiful armour' or 'good armour' in the sense of 'well-

⁸ Cf. *TLG*: s.v. *καλός*; *LfgrE*: s.v. *καλός*.

⁹ *περικαλλής* appears fifty-five times in Homer and is applied to a diverse range of physical objects (chariots, houses, armour, people etc.). In the *Odyssey* (e.g. *Od.* 4.130, 8.439), *κάλλιμος* also appears, which is entirely synonymous with *καλός*.

¹⁰ E.g. Hom. *Il.* 21.440; *Od.* 3.69–70. See *LfgrE* s.v. *καλός* (3b).

made’?¹¹ The semantic range of *καλός* seems to imply that if something *looks* good, then it *is* good. As a result, some scholars have wondered whether the Greeks were even able to differentiate between (say) a person’s beauty and moral virtue, or between a material object’s beauty and quality of manufacture.¹² The latter case—to which we will return—is certainly difficult, but when it comes to people, Homer clearly shows that *καλός* can denote beauty without implying moral virtue or excellence of character.

The obscure Greek soldier Nireus is described as ‘the most beautiful [*κάλλιστος*] man that came to Troy... after the blameless son of Peleus [*Achilles*]; but he was weak [*ἀλαπαδνός*] and few people followed him.’¹³ That Nireus was *κάλλιστος*, ‘most beautiful’, clearly does not imply that he was also especially excellent in character, for he lacks the heroic essentials of strength and a large following.¹⁴ In another instance, however, *καλός* signifies precisely the kind of appearance that manifests nobility and prowess. At the sight of Agamemnon, Priam eulogises: he comments how he is ‘good and big’ (*ἡύς τε μέγας τε*) and claims, ‘never have I seen with my eyes a man so

¹¹ Cf. Konstan (n. 6 [2014]), 31–4. Cf. Pl. *Hp. mai.* 290c–291d; Xen. *Mem.* 3.8.5–6; Arist. *Eth. Eud.* 1249a. There seems no substantive difference, moreover, between the Homeric epithets *καλλιζωνος* (‘beautiful-girdled’) and *εύζωνος* (‘well-girdled’); *καλλίκομος* (‘beautiful-haired’) and *ἡύκομος* (‘fair-haired’); *καλλιπλόκαμος* (‘of beautiful locks’) and *εὐπλόκαμος* (‘of fair locks’); *καλλίρροος* (‘beautiful-flowing’) and *εύρροος* (‘fair-flowing’). It is because of this slippage between appearance and quality that *καλός* is most often translated as ‘fine’; see n. 17.

¹² See A. Kosman, ‘Beauty and the good: situating the *kalon*’, *CP* 105 (2010), 341–57; G.R. Lear, ‘Response to Kosman’, *CP* 105 (2010), 357–62, esp. 358. Cf. U. Eco, *History of Beauty* (New York, 2004), 37.

¹³ Hom. *Il.* 2.673–5.

¹⁴ Cf. Paris, who is similarly distinguished by his beauty but deficient in heroic excellence; see Hom. *Il.* 3.39–57, 3.390–4. So, too, Euryalus at *Od.* 8.158–77.

kalos, nor so majestic; for he has the look of a king.’¹⁵ The emphasis on regal and majestic appearance suggests that *καλός* here means something closer to ‘noble in appearance’ than ‘beautiful’.

The examples of Nireus and Agamemnon show that (in Homer at least) *καλός* connotes no single claim to the relation between appearance and character: the adjective can convey both the superficial beauty of Nireus and the noble and distinguished appearance that affirms Agamemnon’s status as the most powerful Achaean king.¹⁶ Ranging from ‘beautiful’ to ‘noble in appearance’ for people, and from ‘beautiful’ to ‘good’ for objects and ideas, *καλός* both subsumes and surpasses the range of the English word *beautiful*.¹⁷

To understand how *καλός* relates to other Homeric terms and expressions for beauty, we must explore the common properties of things that are *καλός* and what responses they evoke. Priam’s description of Agamemnon introduces one of the most common properties: bigness. In his own words, Achilles is ‘beautiful and big’ (*καλός τε μέγας τε*), just like Ares and Athena on his shield, ‘beautiful and big in their armour (*καλῶ καὶ μεγάλῳ σὺν τεύχεσιν*).¹⁸ Throughout Homeric epic, men and women described as *καλός* are also big, and this also applies to animals and material objects:¹⁹ Rhesus’ horses are ‘the most beautiful... and biggest’ (*καλλίστους... ἠδὲ μεγίστους*);²⁰

¹⁵ Hom. *Il.* 3.167–70.

¹⁶ On the semantic development of *καλός* after Homer, see Konstan (n. 6 [2014]), 31–61.

¹⁷ For more on *καλός*, see *Lfgre*: s.v. *καλός*; K.J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (London, 1978), 15–16, 69; R. Barney, ‘Notes on Plato on the *kalon* and the good’, *CP* 105 (2010), 363–77; T.H. Irwin, ‘The sense and reference of the *kalon* in Aristotle’, *CP* 105 (2010), 381–96; A. Ford, ‘Response to Irwin’, *CP* 105 (2010), 396–402.

¹⁸ Hom. *Il.* 21.108; 18.518.

¹⁹ For other examples of *καλός* and bigness for people, see Hom. *Od.* 1.301, 3.199, 6.276, 10.396, 11.309–10, 13.289, 15.418, 16.158.

²⁰ Hom. *Il.* 10.436. Cf. *Od.* 9.426.

Hecuba's peplos for Athena is 'most beautiful in its embroideries and biggest' (κάλλιστος... ποικίλμασιν ἤδὲ μέγιστος).²¹

Radiance is another outstanding quality of things that are καλός, like Hecuba's peplos, which 'shone like a star' (ἀστὴρ δ' ὡς ἀπέλαμπεν).²² The Homeric lexicon contains a panoply of terms to convey the radiance often possessed by things that are καλός.²³ Hera's tresses are 'shining, beautiful' (φαινοῦς καλούς);²⁴ her 'beautiful veil... was white like the sun' (κρηδέμνω... καλῶ... λευκὸν δ' ἦν ἠέλιος ὥς);²⁵ 'the brightness of Achilles' beautiful, cunningly-wrought shield reached heaven' (Ἀχιλλῆος σάκεος σέλας αἰθέρ' ἴκανε | καλοῦ δαιδαλέου).²⁶

Achilles' shield exemplifies another feature characteristic of καλός objects: skilful manufacture, illustrated most often by the juxtaposition of καλός with δαιδάλεος, derived from δαιδάλλω,

²¹ Hom. *Il.* 6.294. Cf. 18.83–4; *Od.* 10.227, 14.5–7, 15.107.

²² Hom. *Il.* 6.295. On the aesthetics of radiance in Greek culture, see R.A. Prier, *Thauma Idesthai: the Phenomenology of Sight and Appearance in Archaic Greek* (Tallahassee, 1989), 50–6; E. Parisinou, *The Light of the Gods: The Role of Light in Archaic and Classical Greek Cult* (London, 2000); R. Neer, *The Emergence of the Classical Style in Greek Sculpture* (Chicago and London, 2010), *passim* esp. 59–68; Konstan (n. 6 [2014]), 42.

²³ E.g. αἴγλη, αἰόλος, ἀστερόεις, αὐγή, γανώω, λάμπω, λιπαρός, μαρμαίρω, παμφαίνω, σέλας, σιγαλόεις etc. Cf. Hom. *Il.* 6.218–19, 18.130–1; *Od.* 6.26–7, 15.107–8.

²⁴ Hom. *Il.* 14.176–7.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 184–5.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 19.379–80.

‘to work cunningly’, ‘embellish’.²⁷ Like its cognates δαίδαλος and πολυδαίδαλος, δαιδάλεος contains not only a sense of craft, but quality, intricacy and skill in craftsmanship.²⁸ Their common association with καλός objects therefore underpins the slippage between an object’s beauty and excellence of kind implied by the semantic range of καλός. Similar to δαιδάλεος in its range of application, association with καλός objects, and connotation of intricate, skilful manufacture is the adjective ποικίλος, which also variously denotes polychromy, elaborate adornment and embroidery.²⁹ Antinous gives Penelope, for instance, ‘a big, most beautiful peplos, intricately embroidered in many colours’ (μέγαν περικαλλέα πέπλον, | ποικίλον).³⁰

In addition to bigness, radiance, and skilful manufacture, the precious metals gold, silver and bronze have an important place in the catalogue of common properties of things that are καλός.³¹ Menelaus’ ‘most beautiful’ (κάλλιστον) treasure is a mixing-bowl ‘all of silver, its rims finished

²⁷ See Hom. *Il.* 9.187, 11.32, 16.222, 18.390, 18.612, 22.314; *Od.* 1.131, 10.315, 10.367. Cf. A. Bergren, ‘Plato’s *Timaeus* and the aesthetics of “animate form”’, in R.D. Mohr and T. Sattler (edd.), *One Book, the Whole Universe: Plato’s Timaeus Today* (Las Vegas, 2010), 343–72, at 358–60, where she links aspects of ‘Homeric beauty’ with Plato’s demiurgic narrative in the *Timaeus*.

²⁸ On δαίδαλος, see S.P. Morris, *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art* (Princeton, 1992).

²⁹ Like δαιδάλεος, ποικίλος applies above all to objects of metalwork, carpentry and embroidery. On the parallel between them, see F. Frontisi-Ducroux, *Dédale. Mythologie de l’artisan en Grèce ancienne* (Paris, 1975), 52–5; Bergren (n. 27), 360–1. On ποικιλία, see E. Berardi, F.L. Lisi, and D. Micallella (edd.), *Poikilia. Variazioni sul tema* (Acireale, 2009); A. Grand-Clément, ‘*Poikilia*’, in P. Destrée and P. Murray (n. 3), 406–421.

³⁰ Hom. *Od.* 18.292–3. Cf. *Il.* 3.327–28, 6.289. ποικίλος is most commonly applied to armour in Homer (τεύχεα ποικίλα, e.g. *Il.* 3.327, 4.432, 6.504 etc.). It seems no coincidence that the most common adjective applied to armour (τεύχεα and ἔντεα) in Homer is καλός.

³¹ E.g. Hom. *Il.* 3.330–1, 9.187, 11.18, 12.295 etc.; *Od.* 1.137, 4.130–2, 10.315, 21.7 etc.

with gold' (ἀργύρεος... ἄπας, χρυσῶ δ' ἐπὶ χεῖλεα κεκράνται).³² Encapsulated by the prolific expression καλός χρυσεῖος, 'beautiful, golden', the association of καλός with gold is particularly strong.³³

So much for the physical properties of things that are καλός. What about their effects? Desire and wonder stand out. Hermes 'desired' (ἠράσσατ') Polymele, 'beautiful in the dance' (χορῶ καλή), just as Tyro 'desired' (ἠράσσατ') Enipeus, 'the most beautiful of rivers' (κάλλιστος ποταμῶν).³⁴ The sight of Athena's 'most beautiful light' (φάος περικαλλές) is a 'wonder' (θαῦμα) to Telemachus, while Hephaestus assures Thetis that he will make for Achilles 'beautiful armour [τεύχεα καλά], such that any mortal man will wonder at [θαυμάσσειται]'.³⁵

Pleasure and delight are pervasive responses to *mousike* in Homer, and although music, dance and song need not be καλός to have this effect, the connection is discernible on a number of occasions.³⁶ Apollo 'took pleasure', 'delighted as he listened' (τέρπετ' ἀκούων) to the Achaeans singing 'the beautiful paean' (καλὸν... παιήονα).³⁷ Likewise, the Sirens sing to Odysseus in their

³² Hom. *Od.* 4.614–16.

³³ See Hom. *Il.* 5.730–1, 11.632–3, 14.238, 14.351, 18.290, 18.562, 18.612, 22.315, 24.101; *Od.* 1.137, 4.53, 5.232, 7.173, 10.369, 10.545, 15.136, 17.92, 22.9, 24.3.

³⁴ Hom. *Il.* 16.180–2; *Od.* 11.238–9. Cf. *Il.* 20.223–5; *Od.* 11.281–2.

³⁵ Hom. *Od.* 19.34–6; *Il.* 18.466–7. Cf. *Il.* 3.396–8, 18.83–4; *Od.* 17.306–7. On the relation between wonder and beauty for material objects in Archaic epic, see C. Hunzinger, 'Le plaisir esthétique dans l'épopée archaïque: les mots de la famille de θαῦμα', *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé* 1 (1994), 4–30. Cf. Neer (n. 22), esp. 57–69.

³⁶ On the pleasures of *mousike* in Homer and elsewhere in Greek literature, see A.-E. Peponi, *Frontiers of Pleasure: Models of Aesthetic Response in Archaic and Classical Greek Thought* (Oxford, 2012).

³⁷ Hom. *Il.* 1.473–4.

‘beautiful voice’ (ὄψα κάλλιμον) that if he stay with them a while, he will go on his way ‘having delighted... and knowing more’ (τερψάμενος... καὶ πλείονα εἰδώς).³⁸ Allied with the promise of knowledge, the ‘beautiful’ quality of the Sirens’ song—otherwise described as ‘clear’ (λιγυρός) and ‘sweet-voiced’ (μελίγηρως)—seems to contribute to its power to please and ‘charm [θέλγουσιν] all men’.³⁹ In other words, it is at least part of what makes the Sirens’ song so deadly—attracting, pleasing and luring men to their deaths.⁴⁰ The immediate context might suggest the pleasing effect of the Sirens’ ‘beautiful voice’, but the broader narrative complicates and enriches the picture: the pleasing effect of their song is the Sirens’ weapon of deception.⁴¹

A good point of comparison is Odysseus’ tearful response to Demodocus’ song about the Trojan horse, which prompts Alcinous to interrupt the song, ‘for it is not pleasing [χαριζόμενος] to all’, and to ask Odysseus who he is.⁴² Odysseus reassures his host that there is ‘nothing more pleasing’ (οὐ... τέλος χαριέστερον) than precisely his present situation: when ‘good cheer’ abounds among people as they dine, listen to a bard, and enjoy food and wine in plenty. ‘To me’, Odysseus says, ‘this seems to be the most beautiful thing’ (τοῦτό τί μοι κάλλιστον ἐνὶ φρεσὶν εἶδεται εἶναι).⁴³ But because of his personal investment in the subject of Demodocus’ song, Odysseus’ response to this ‘most beautiful’ situation is not unalloyed pleasure, but intense sadness. This inversion of the expected affect is underscored by Odysseus’ reference to his ‘grievous

³⁸ Hom. *Od.* 12.188–92. Cf. 12.52.

³⁹ Hom. *Od.* 12.39–40, 44, 187.

⁴⁰ On the power of the Sirens’ song, see Peponi (n. 36), 70–94.

⁴¹ Compare Hera’s seduction of Zeus, where her beautiful appearance inspires Zeus’ ‘desire’ (14.294) and therefore effects her deception.

⁴² Hom. *Od.* 8.538.

⁴³ Hom. *Od.* 9.5–11.

troubles' (κῆδεα... στονόεντα) immediately after his portrayal of 'this most beautiful thing'.⁴⁴ So although pleasure may be the expectation, narrative context—in this case, Odysseus' personal story—conditions and complicates the response to καλός.⁴⁵

Desire, wonder, pleasure, even sadness: the adjective καλός is tied to an affective register in Homer and closely associated with a set of physical properties, namely, bigness, radiance, skilful manufacture and precious metals. In their range of effects, καλός things present no great discrepancies with how *beautiful* things may affect us now, though there is no question that καλός is broader than the English adjective in its range of signification from 'beautiful' to 'good'. By contrast, its cognate noun κάλλος is far more limited than our notion of *beauty*.

This is true for both its range of application and meaning. While we may speak of the *beauty* of people, objects, ideas and practically anything else, for fifteen of its sixteen appearances in Homer, κάλλος is applied to anthropomorphic appearance. The exception is a 'well-made, silver mixing-bowl' (ἀργύρεον κρητῆρα τετυγμένον) presented as a prize in the funeral games for Patroclus: 'it could hold six measures, and surpassed in beauty [κάλλει ἐνίκα] all others in the whole world, since Sidonians, skilled in crafts, fashioned it well [πολυδαίδαλοι εὔ ῥσκησαν]'.⁴⁶ The large size of the mixing-bowl, the fact that it is silver, and the emphasis on its expert manufacture—denoted by τετυγμένον and πολυδαίδαλοι εὔ ῥσκησαν—recall the outstanding properties of objects that are καλός. The effect of the mixing-bowl's 'beauty' is not explicit. But since it is presented as first prize in the contest, it seems reasonable to infer that its preeminent 'beauty' enhances its desirability as a possession for the victor.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 12–13. Cf. Peponi (n. 36), 62. Penelope's sorrow in response to Phemius' song about the return of the Achaeans parallels Odysseus here (Hom. *Od.* 1.325–44).

⁴⁵ For the same reason, there is not a dry eye among the Achaeans as they listen to the dirge for Achilles sung by the Muses 'with their beautiful voice' (ὀπι κάλη) (Hom. *Od.* 24.60).

⁴⁶ Hom. *Il.* 23.741–3.

This is underpinned by κάλλος's application to people, where it has a strong connection with desire, as Konstan has highlighted.⁴⁷ The desire inspired by κάλλος is often either implicitly or explicitly sexual. Homeric women are courted and married 'for the sake of their *kallos*', and men like Ganymede and Cleitus abducted by the gods 'on account of their *kallos*'.⁴⁸ And like other desirable human attributes, κάλλος is presented as a divine blessing: heroes and heroines are said to have 'beauty from the gods' (θεῶν ἄπο κάλλος).⁴⁹

In *Odyssey* 18 Homer envisages a very literal take on this epic formula as Athena endows Penelope with 'immortal gifts in order that the Achaeans would marvel [θηησαίατ'] at her';⁵⁰ Athena's motivation for this ploy is that Penelope 'win greater honour from her husband and son'.⁵¹ Athena washes Penelope's face with 'immortal beauty' (κάλλει... ἀμβροσίῳ), presented here like a physical ointment that Aphrodite uses when 'she joins the desirable [ιμερόεντα] dance of the Charites'.⁵² And 'she made her bigger and fuller in appearance, and whiter than sawn ivory' (μακροτέρην καὶ πάσσονα θῆκεν ιδέσθαι, | λευκοτέρην δ' ἄρα μιν θῆκε πριστοῦ ἐλέφαντος).⁵³ The erotic power of Penelope's divinely endowed κάλλος is palpable: at the sight of her, the suitors went 'weak at the knees, their hearts charmed by eros [ἔρω δ' ἄρα θυμὸν ἔθελχθεν], and they all prayed to go to bed with her'.⁵⁴

⁴⁷ See Konstan (n. 6).

⁴⁸ Hom. *Il.* 13.428–33; *Od.* 11.281–82; *Il.* 20.233–35; *Od.* 15.251. Cf. *Il.* 3.390–4, 6.155–61.

⁴⁹ Hom. *Od.* 8.457–60, 6.18; *Il.* 6.156–7. Cf. *Hom. Hy.* 5.77; *Hes. Cat.* 120.4.

⁵⁰ Hom. *Od.* 18.191.

⁵¹ Hom. *Od.* 18.158–62.

⁵² Hom. *Od.* 18.194.

⁵³ Hom. *Od.* 18.195–6. On female beauty in Greek poetry, see K. Jax, *Die weibliche Schönheit in der griechischen Dichtung* (Innsbruck, 1933).

⁵⁴ Hom. *Od.* 18.212–13.

So the Achaeans marvel at Penelope as Athena intended, while the deceptive potential of Penelope's erotic beauty is suggested by the use of the verb ἔθελχθεν, 'charmed', 'beguiled'. In this state of erotic enchantment, the suitors are easily exploitable, as Penelope coaxes from them a shower of gifts vainly hoped to win her affection—much to Odysseus' delight, for he recognises Penelope's ulterior motives.⁵⁵ And so Athena achieves her aim of enhancing Penelope's honour in the eyes of her husband. The narrative sequence therefore reveals how the goddess harnesses the erotic agency of κάλλος to manipulate the suitors and benefit Odysseus and Penelope. The suitor's immediate response and the narrative sequence underline the noun's strong connection with desire. Unlike its cognate adjective καλός, the noun κάλλος in Homer is limited in its range of meaning and application: it unambiguously signifies 'beauty' in the narrow sense of desirable physical appearance.⁵⁶

Yet something of the conceptual breadth of the modern notion of beauty is approximated by the Greek noun χάρις, derived from the Indo-European ancestor *gher- meaning 'pleasure', 'delight'.⁵⁷ χάρις has two essential spheres of meaning. On the one hand, it refers to an ideal of social reciprocity, of 'pleasure' from favours given and received.⁵⁸ On the other, χάρις signifies an aesthetic quality possessed by people, objects and immaterial things that attracts, charms and pleases. In this context, χάρις approximates the modern notion of beauty, as some scholars have

⁵⁵ Hom. *Od.* 18.281–3.

⁵⁶ Cf. Konstan (n. 6 [2014]), 61. Penelope's reference to Telemachus' κάλλος at Hom. *Od.* 18.218–19 is the only instance in Homer where the noun has no obvious link with desire.

⁵⁷ For the etymology of χάρις, see B. Maclachlan, *The Age of Grace. Charis in Early Greek Poetry* (Princeton, 1993), 4; R.S.P. Beekes, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek* (Leiden, 2010), s.v. χαίρω.

⁵⁸ See Maclachlan (n. 57), esp. 3–31, 73–86; R. Parker, 'Pleasing thighs: reciprocity in Greek religion', in C. Gill, N. Postlethwaite and R. Seaford (edd.), *Reciprocity in Ancient Greece* (Oxford, 1998), 105–25.

recognised.⁵⁹ The relationship between χάρις and κάλλος as Greek words for ‘beauty’, however, has been neglected. So how do they compare and what can this tell us about Homeric and early Greek attitudes to beauty?

After Odysseus’ supplication of Nausicaa in *Odyssey* 6, Athena steps in as his personal beautician: she pours ‘*charis* on his head and shoulders’, makes his hair like flowers of hyacinth and, as she did for Penelope, makes him ‘bigger and stouter’ (μείζονά... καὶ πάσσονα).⁶⁰ Just as bigness reappears, so too gold and silver: Athena enhances Odysseus’ appearance with χάρις like a craftsman overlaying silver with gold in the creation of ‘pleasing works’ (χαρίεντα... ἔργα).⁶¹ Odysseus thus appears κάλλει καὶ χάρισι στίλβων, ‘glistening with *kallos* and *charis*’; evidently a seductive sight, as Nausicaa ‘marvelled’ (θηεῖτο) at him, quietly longing for such a man to be her husband.⁶² The synonymity of κάλλος and χάρις here is remarkable: ‘glistening with desirable beauty and pleasurable beauty’ (though an ugly translation) perhaps best conveys their similarity and subtle distinction.⁶³ Yet when Athena beautifies Odysseus to facilitate his long-awaited reunion with Pene-

⁵⁹ See Maclachlan (n. 57), 10–11, 31–40; G. Nagy, *Homer the Preclassic* (Berkeley, 2010), 267.

⁶⁰ Hom. *Od.* 6.229–31.

⁶¹ Ibid. 232–4.

⁶² Ibid. 237–45.

⁶³ I take the translation of χάρις as ‘pleasurable beauty’ from G. Nagy (n. 59), 267. Because of its similar range of social and aesthetic meaning, ‘grace’ is the most common translation of χάρις. Though sometimes useful as an approximation—‘glistening with beauty and grace’, for example—there are some problems with this translation. First, ‘grace’ does not capture the importance of pleasure to χάρις. Second, grace’s strong connection with Christian theology is potentially misleading: since χάρις is a fundamental concept in ancient Greek religion, there is a danger in over assimilating Greek χάρις with Christian grace. Third, in denoting beauty with respect to motion, posture, and elegance of proportions, grace is in fact more specific than χάρις in its aesthetic meaning.

lope even that distinction is blurred. Introduced with Athena pouring ‘much *kallos*’ on Odysseus, the passage concludes with ‘so she poured *charis* on his head and shoulders’.⁶⁴ *κάλλος* and *χάρις* thus appear interchangeable as Homeric words for ‘beauty’.

The difference between the two nouns becomes clear, however, when Athena pours *χάρις* on Odysseus before the assembled Phaeacians. Again she makes him ‘bigger and stouter’ (*μακρότερον καὶ πάσσονα*), and here the goddess’ purpose is explicit: she enhances his appearance with *χάρις* ‘in order that he would be *philos* to all the Phaeacians and *deinos* and *aidios*’.⁶⁵ As before, Odysseus’ *χάρις* has a pleasing effect, the sort that may make the Phaeacians’ ‘marvel [*θηήσαντο*] at the sight of him’, and make him *φίλος*—‘dear’, ‘welcomed’, ‘loved’.⁶⁶ But this pleasing effect is untouched by the erotic overtones that characterised the appearances of *χάρις* alongside *κάλλος* in the episodes with Nausicaa and Penelope. In contrast, this *χάρις* may engender the perception of Odysseus as *δεινός τ’ αἰδοῖός τε*, ‘respected and revered’, two qualities that in Homer underline social authority.⁶⁷

Though at times interchangeable, therefore, *χάρις* differs from *κάλλος* in its greater freedom from desire. Both nouns point to an attractive aspect of appearance that pleases and inspires aesthetic admiration: signified by the verb *θηέομαι*, beholders ‘marvel’, ‘gaze in wonder’ at *χάρις* and *κάλλος*.⁶⁸ Furthermore, they are both connected with gold, silver, and impressive stature, and both represented as forms of radiance: like Odysseus, Paris ‘glistens with *kallos*’ (*κάλλεῖ... στίλβων*),

⁶⁴ Hom. *Od.* 23.156–62.

⁶⁵ Hom. *Od.* 8.19–22.

⁶⁶ Hom. *Od.* 8.17. Cf. G. Pasquali, *Terze Pagine Stravaganti* (Florence, 1942), 140.

⁶⁷ Cf. Hom. *Il.* 3.172, 18.394; *Od.* 14.234.

⁶⁸ See Hom. *Od.* 2.13, 6.237, 8.17, 17.63–4. On *θηέομαι*, see V.H.J. Mette, ““Schauen” und “Staunen””, *Glotta* 39 (1960), 49–71.

and ‘*charis* shone from’ (χάρις δ’ ἀπελάμπετο) the earrings of Hera and Penelope.⁶⁹ But while κάλλος is bound to desirability, the ‘pleasurable beauty’ denoted by χάρις embraces a broader spectrum of pleasing and compelling appearances, both those that are erotically attractive and those that provoke reverence and respect.⁷⁰ In this way, Homer’s use of χάρις is closer to the modern notion of beauty than his use of κάλλος. Just as the beauty of a supermodel and of an old and wizened face may come together despite their differences under beauty’s broad conceptual wing, so might χάρις embrace such a range of appearances, all endowed with the power to please our eyes and mind, but for very different reasons.⁷¹

χάρις’s greater range of application than κάλλος in Homer reaffirms its greater proximity to the modern notion of beauty. With one exception (Achilles’ mixing-bowl), κάλλος is exclusively applied to anthropomorphic appearance in Homer. By contrast, χάρις denotes a kind of ‘beauty’ possessed not just by people and objects, but by words and deeds as well.⁷² It seems then that χάρις signifies an aesthetic property comparable to the modern notion of beauty in both its conceptual breadth and range of application. At their core, Homeric χάρις and modern beauty share a broad sense of pleasure-bearing power.

The same power to please characterises the noun’s derivative adjective χαρίεις. Although something may be χαρίεις—‘pleasing’, ‘attractive’—for any reason, the adjective is most often applied to visible objects such as clothes and human features where the sense is ‘physically attractive’; that is, the conventional meaning of *beautiful*. As we might expect, therefore, the adjectives χαρίεις

⁶⁹ Hom. *Il.* 3.392; 14.183; *Od.* 18.298. Cf. *Hom. Hy.* 5.174–5.

⁷⁰ Cf. Hom. *Od.* 2.12–14 and 17.63–4, where Athena’s dispensations of χάρις on Telemachus attract aesthetic admiration untouched by desire.

⁷¹ For discussion of beauty’s ability to embrace both the erotic and reverential, see Scruton (n. 2), 53–5; Konstan (n. 6 [2014]), 8–30.

⁷² See Hom. *Il.* 14.183; *Od.* 8.175, 15.320, 18.298.

and καλός sometimes work in tandem as equivalent aesthetic terms like their cognate nouns.⁷³ Helenus recommends the ‘most attractive’ (χαριέστατος) peplos as an offering for Athena, and Hecuba duly chooses the one that is ‘most beautiful’ (κάλλιστος).⁷⁴ As Homeric terms for ‘beauty’ and ‘beautiful’, the καλός—κάλλος and χάρις—χαρίεις semantic families demonstrate a high degree of conceptual overlap and interconnection, discernible in their range of meanings, associated affects and physical properties. That said, each term has its own peculiar aesthetic connotations, whether its the ontological associations of the adjective καλός, the noun κάλλος’s connection with desire, or the broad idea of pleasure-bearing power conveyed by χάρις and χαρίεις.

Yet Homer has a further set of words meaning ‘beauty’ and ‘beautiful’ in nuanced ways: the adjective ἀγλαός and its derivative noun ἀγλαΐη. The adjective ἀγλαός is applied to a variety of visual objects: gifts, prizes, people, Achilles’ limbs, women’s handiwork, water and sacred groves.⁷⁵ What common feature denoted by ἀγλαός do these diverse things possess? Although it is often interpreted as connoting radiance, the range and distribution of its application suggest rather that

⁷³ Cf. the brief comparison of χαρίεις and καλός in J. Latacz, *Zum Wortfeld «Freude» in der Sprache Homers* (Heidelberg, 1966), 99.

⁷⁴ Hom. *Il.* 6.90; 6.294. For more examples of the equivalence of καλός and χαρίεις, see *Od.* 9.5, 11; the face and brow of Achilles—the ‘most beautiful’ (κάλλιστος) Greek (*Il.* 2.673–4)—are both χαρίεις at *Il.* 16.798, 18.24.

⁷⁵ The exception is Hom. *Il.* 7.203: ἀγλαὸν εὖχος. Cf. Hes. *Theog.* 628.

ἀγλαός points to affect.⁷⁶ It is noteworthy, for instance, that ἀγλαός is the most common Homeric word to qualify objects given from one person to another in order to delight and honour the recipient. Above all, this applies to ‘gifts’ (ἀγλαὰ δῶρα), but also to ‘ransom’ (ἄποινα) and ‘prizes’ (ἄεθλα).⁷⁷ That ἀγλαός designates a general delightful quality is underpinned by its likely derivation from ἀγάλλομαι, ‘to delight in’, ‘exult in’, ‘be proud of’.⁷⁸ It seems that like the use of *beautiful* in colloquial expressions like ‘what a beautiful day’, ἀγλαός is a general term of approbation with a nuance of delight.

In many cases, such as water, sacred groves, Achilles’ limbs and women’s handiwork, it is evidently the physical appearance of objects that makes them ἀγλαός, and here ‘beautiful’ makes an apt approximation.⁷⁹ The adjective’s appearance in conjunction with καλός and χαρίεις reinforces this sense. Circe’s ‘big web’ is one of those ‘delicate and attractive and beautiful

⁷⁶ The supposed link with radiance depends on a hypothetical etymological relationship with γελάω; see P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque: histoire des mots* (Paris, 1968), s.v. ἀγλαός. For the common interpretation of ἀγλαός and ἀγλαΐη as denoting radiance, see e.g. *Lfgre*: s.v. ἀγλαός (B); C. Segal, *Aglaia: The Poetry of Alcman, Sappho, Pindar, Bacchylides and Corinna* (Lanham, 1998), 1–7; D.T. Steiner, *Images in Mind: Statues in Archaic and Classical Greek Literature and Thought* (Princeton and Oxford, 2001), 214.

⁷⁷ E.g. Hom. *Il.* 1.23, 4.97, 11.124 etc.; *Od.* 4.589, 7.132, 9.201 etc.

⁷⁸ Cf. Beekes (n. 57), s.v. ἀγλαός; O. Szemerényi, *Syncopé in Greek and Indo-European and the Nature of Indo-European Accent* (Naples, 1964), 155. The inference of radiance to ἀγλαός and ἀγλαΐη in modern scholarship may be owed to the fact that visually delightful things—denoted by ἀγλαός and ἀγλαΐη—are often radiant in Greek literature; but this is different from these words themselves signifying radiance.

⁷⁹ See Hom. *Il.* 2.307, 506, 19.385 etc.

works' (λεπτά τε καὶ χαρίεντα καὶ ἀγλαὰ ἔργα) that goddesses make,⁸⁰ the evocation of their bigness and affective power to please (χαρίεις) and delight (ἀγλαός) underscores the expression of their beauty. Likewise, Achilles' old armour is described as 'massive, a wonder to behold, beautiful' (πελώρια θαῦμα ιδέσθαι | καλά); such were Peleus' ἀγλαὰ δῶρα—'glorious/delightful/beautiful gifts'—from the gods.⁸¹

In this instance, the aesthetic properties of the armour seem instrumental to why they are ἀγλαός. Yet we cannot always be sure. Like the potential ambiguity of objects that are χαρίεις—which may be 'pleasing' aesthetically or otherwise—we may wonder whether 'gifts' can be ἀγλαός, 'delightful', 'splendid', simply by virtue of being given rather than because of their appearance.⁸² Like καλός and χαρίεις, therefore, ἀγλαός does not unambiguously signify 'beautiful'. All three adjectives intersect with and diverge from the word *beautiful* in different ways—a relationship which, if nothing else, may clarify the cultural contingency of what we deem worthy of the label *beautiful*.

The cognate noun ἀγλαΐη, by contrast, is more specific as a Homeric word for 'beauty'. For five of its eight occurrences in Homeric epic, ἀγλαΐη refers to a general feature of physical appearance which only living beings—humans and animals—may possess, unlike κάλλος and χάρις which both apply to people and material objects. Unlike them, moreover, ἀγλαΐη has a special association with pride in appearance—further support, it seems, for its derivation with ἀγλαός from

⁸⁰ Hom. *Od.* 10.222–3.

⁸¹ Hom. *Il.* 18.83–4.

⁸² This also applies to ἄποινα and ἄεθλα; e.g. Hom. *Il.* 1.23, 23.262; *Od.* 4.589, 11.357.

ἀγάλλομαι, ‘to delight in’, ‘exult in’, ‘be proud of’.⁸³ This association with pride is best illustrated by Homer’s simile of a horse to analogise the charge into battle of Paris and Hector respectively.⁸⁴ The poet likens each to a horse that races across the plain κυδιόων, ‘exulting’, ‘bearing himself proudly’. The sense of pride in appearance continues in the description of the horse as ‘he holds his head high, and his mane streams around his shoulders’. All this amounts to the horse ἀγλαΐηφι πεποιθώς: ‘trusting in his splendour’, or, ‘confident in his beauty’.⁸⁵

Allied with this element of pride, ἀγλαΐη has a connotation with superficial good looks. At the sight of his old dog Argus, the disguised Odysseus wonders whether the hound has speed to match his ‘fine form’ (καλὸς... δέμας) or is like one of those ‘table dogs’ that ‘masters tend for the sake of their *aglaiē*’; that is, ‘for their [superficial] beauty’, ‘for the sake of show’.⁸⁶ Is Argus the canine equivalent of Nireus, beautiful only in appearance, or like Achilles, is his beauty matched by

⁸³ This connotation is reaffirmed by the two instances when ἀγλαΐη does not refer to an aspect of appearance. At Hom. *Od.* 17.244–5 the connotation of pride and showiness tip over into the negative sense of ‘excessive pride’, or in the plural, ‘vanities’. Conversely, at *Od.* 15.78–79 the association with pride takes a positive meaning: Menelaus tells Telemachus that ‘it is both an honour [κῦδος] and source of pride [ἀγλαΐη] and advantage [ὄνειαρ] to have a meal and then set off over the great boundless earth’. On the interpretive difficulties of these lines, see A. Heubeck and A. Hoekstra, *A Commentary on Homer’s Odyssey. Volume II, Books ix–xvi* (Oxford, 1989), 235.

⁸⁴ Hom. *Il.* 6.506–11; 15.263–8.

⁸⁵ Hom. *Il.* 6.509–10 = 15.266–7.

⁸⁶ Hom. *Od.* 17.307–10.

excellence? In contrast to the sort of appearance that manifests ability, ἀγλαΐη is here used to denote a superficial kind of beauty.⁸⁷

When applied to women, ἀγλαΐη betrays the same set of nuances. The ‘beautiful-cheeked’ (καλλιπάρης) housemaid Melantho is warned by Odysseus that someday ‘you may lose all the beauty [ἀγλαΐην] in which now you surpass the other housemaids’.⁸⁸ Abusive, ungrateful and deceitful, Melantho is one of the most detestable characters in the *Odyssey*; conveyed with the noun ἀγλαΐη, her beauty is clearly only skin deep. This connotation is reaffirmed by the noun’s link with cosmetics. When Eurynome encourages Penelope to wash and anoint her cheeks before presenting herself to the suitors, Penelope says that it is no use because ‘the gods destroyed... [her] beauty’ (ἀγλαΐην... θεοί... ὤλεσαν) when Odysseus left for Troy.⁸⁹ So Penelope believes she has lost the ἀγλαΐη, ‘the glamorous beauty’, she had twenty years ago, but thanks to Athena she has enough κάλλος, ‘desirable beauty’, to weaken the suitors’ knees.

For both Penelope and Melantho, moreover, ἀγλαΐη is represented as a quality one loses, perhaps suggesting the noun’s association with youthful good looks: just as Penelope believes she has lost her ἀγλαΐη of twenty years ago, so Melantho’s ἀγλαΐη may soon fade.⁹⁰ In sum, ἀγλαΐη

⁸⁷ Given this connotation, the appearance of ἀγλαΐη in connection with Nireus makes perfect sense. He is ‘the son of Aglaïē [Ἀγλαΐης] and Charopos’ (Hom. *Il.* 2.672). The peculiar nature of Nireus’ beauty is implied by his mother’s name which personifies the noun ἀγλαΐη: his characterisation as Aglaïē’s son underlines both his beauty—he is the ‘most beautiful’ (κάλλιστος) Achaean after Achilles—and its superficiality—for he is ‘weak’ and a leader of few.

⁸⁸ Hom. *Od.* 18.321; 19.81–2.

⁸⁹ Hom. *Od.* 18.180–1.

⁹⁰ Cf. Hes. *Theog.* 946–7: Ἀγλαΐην... ὀπλοτάτην Χαρίτων.

primarily denotes a superficial, glamorous kind of beauty marked by a certain pageantry, which corresponds with the use of the word *beauty* in the modern cosmetics industry.⁹¹

Rather than one word for ‘beauty’ and one for ‘beautiful’, Homer has three sets of alternatives which are conceptually interconnected yet distinguished by their various semantic and aesthetic idiosyncrasies: κάλλος and καλός; χάρις and χαρίεις; ἀγλαΐη and ἀγλαός. Yet Homer’s terminology for beauty does not stop there for the simple reason that expressing beauty does not depend on an explicit word for ‘beauty’ or ‘beautiful’.

II. IMPLICIT EXPRESSIONS

The Homeric lexicon contains a variety of terms and formulaic expressions that convey beauty without one of the more obvious lexical suspects so far discussed. Let us begin with the nouns ἄγαλμα, κόσμος, and μορφή. Derived from ἀγάλλομαι, the noun ἄγαλμα follows naturally from the preceding discussion of ἀγλαΐη and ἀγλαός.⁹² What an ἄγαλμα is varies considerably: a horse, an ivory cheekpiece, the Trojan horse, a necklace, a brooch, and gold and woven goods are all ἀγάλματα in Homer.⁹³ What an ἄγαλμα does, however, remains consistent: as its etymology suggests, it is an object that is a source of simultaneous pride, pleasure and delight to its owner. In other words, an ἄγαλμα is defined by its pleasing effects, and this explains why for five of its eight occurrences in Homer the noun describes gifts, both for humans and gods—a notable similarity

⁹¹ Cf. later authors’ use of ἀγλαΐη to mean ‘festivity’, in the sense of elaborate and spectacular display, e.g.: Hes. [Sc.] 272; Pind. *Ol.* 9.99; *Pyth.* 1.3.

⁹² On the relationship between ἄγαλμα, ἀγλαός and ἀγλαΐη, see J.W. Day, *Archaic Greek Epigram and Dedication: Representation and Reperformance* (Cambridge, 2010), 91–4.

⁹³ See Hom. *Il.* 4.144; *Od.* 3.274, 3.438, 4.602, 8.509, 12.347, 18.300, 19.257.

with the common application of ἀγλαός to δῶρα, ‘gifts’. It is clear, moreover, that the pleasing effects of ἀγάλματα are inseparable from their aesthetic properties.

Nestor employs a goldsmith to gild the horns of a sacrificial heifer for Athena ‘in order that the goddess might look at the *agalma* and be pleased’ (ἵν’ ἄγαλμα θεᾷ κεχάροιτο ἰδοῦσα).⁹⁴ The gilded heifer is an ἄγαλμα because of the pleasure—signified by χαίρω, cognate with χάρις—it may give Athena’s eyes and the honour and pride she may experience as its recipient. As gold beautifies the beast for the deity’s aesthetic pleasure, the passage recalls Athena’s beautification of Odysseus when she pours χάρις on him like a craftsman pouring gold on silver in the creation of ‘pleasing works’.⁹⁵

The description of Odysseus’ ‘shining brooch’, which Penelope gave to him ‘to be an *agalma*’, similarly instantiates forms and affects common to other Homeric terms and expressions for beauty.⁹⁶ Not just golden and radiant, it is also δαίδαλον, ‘cunningly wrought’, depicting a ‘dappled fawn’ (ποικίλον ἔλλον), and inspires the ‘wonder’ of all onlookers (τὸ δὲ θαυμάζεσκον ἅπαντες).⁹⁷ The beautiful visual properties of the brooch are instrumental to its status as an ἄγαλμα, ‘an object of delight’, ‘a pride and joy’, for Odysseus.

⁹⁴ Hom. *Od.* 3.438.

⁹⁵ Hom. *Od.* 6.232–5. On the relationship between ἄγαλμα and χάρις, see N. Lanérés, ‘La notion d’*agalma* dans les inscriptions grecques, des origines à la fin du classicisme’, *Métis* 10 (2012), 135–171, at 160–3. On beautifying the beast in Greek sacrifice, see F.T. Van Straten, *Hiera Kala: Images of Animal Sacrifice in Archaic and Classical Greece* (Leiden, 1995), 43–6; cf. F. Naiden, ‘Sacrifice’, in E. Eidinow and J. Kindt (edd.), *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Greek Religion* (Oxford, 2015), 463–75.

⁹⁶ Hom. *Od.* 19.256–7.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 226–31.

It is noteworthy that the brooch is an ἄγαλμα specifically for Odysseus, not his admiring onlookers. In other words, an ἄγαλμα is a *possession*, whether of gods or humans.⁹⁸ This sense is clear when Homer envisages a woman who ‘stains ivory with crimson dye... to make a cheekpiece for horses; it is kept in a chamber, and many horsemen pray to wear it. But it is kept there as an *agalma* for the king, both an ornament [κόσμος] for a horse and an honour [κῦδος] for the rider’.⁹⁹ The ἄγαλμα is an ‘ornament’, ‘adornment’ (κόσμος) for a horse by enhancing its attractiveness, and confers ‘honour’, ‘glory’ (κῦδος) on its owner because of its attractive appearance and the admiration it inspires. It is fair to say then that the noun ἄγαλμα makes its own peculiar contribution to Homer’s terminology for beauty: it denotes an object that by virtue of its beautiful visual properties is a source of pride, pleasure and delight for its owner, and is therefore invested in the social dynamics of honour mediated by desirable material possessions.¹⁰⁰

Without this notion of ownership, the ἄγαλμα of the ivory cheekpiece would be simply a κόσμος, an ‘ornament’, ‘adornment’, as it is for the horse. κόσμος, then, is something that enhances physical attractiveness, as does Hera’s κόσμος in her seduction of Zeus. The scene of Hera’s toilette is perhaps the most emphatic representation of any character’s beauty in Homer. This is conveyed not just by the repetition of καλός four times in short succession—her skin, hair, veil and sandals

⁹⁸ Cf. Alc. fr. 1.67–9.

⁹⁹ Hom. *Il.* 4.141–5.

¹⁰⁰ Compare the role of beautiful objects in the customs of Homeric guest-friendship. Menelaus gives Telemachus his ‘most beautiful’ (κάλλιστος) and ‘most valuable’ (τιμηέστατος) treasure—a silver mixing-bowl with gold rims (Hom. *Od.* 4.614–19); the object’s beauty is integral to its material and social value in managing a pleasing relationship of χάρις. Cf. *Od.* 1.309–13. Cf. N. Himmelmann, ‘The Plastic Arts in Homeric Society’, in W. Childs (ed.), *Reading Greek Art: Essays by Nikolaus Himmelmann* (Princeton, 1998), 25–66, at 43–4: ‘a remarkable aspect of the Homeric work of art... [is] its role as a *possession*’.

are all ‘beautiful’—and the fact that ‘great beauty [χάρις] shone from’ her earrings, but also by the appearance of some familiar physical properties: her hair, veil and feet are radiant; her dress is decorated with ‘many cunning embellishments’ (δαίδαλα πολλά); the pins fastening her dress are golden.¹⁰¹ The sum total of these beautiful adornments is πάντα... κόσμον, ‘all her finery’—fit for seducing and deceiving Zeus, just as Aphrodite’s ‘beautiful, golden’ and radiant κόσμος seduces Anchises in her *Homeric Hymn*.¹⁰²

The examples of Hera and the horse suggest that κόσμος is more than conceptually contiguous with other terms and expressions for beauty: it denotes material adornment that has a beautifying effect. For the majority of its occurrences in Homer, however, κόσμος is used in adverbial expressions to mean ‘in order’, either in a physical sense of orderly formation and arrangement, or an abstract sense of what is right and proper.¹⁰³ The semantic range of κόσμος, from ‘proper order’ to ‘adornment’, bears a telling resemblance to the semantic range of καλός, which also embraces everything from beautiful appearances to appropriate behaviour.¹⁰⁴ This semantic parallel is reaffirmed by their implicit assimilation in Odysseus’ response to Euryalus’ derisive comments. Odysseus tells Euryalus that he has ‘not spoken well’ (οὐ καλὸν εἶπες), gives him a lecture on the different blessings of eloquence and physical appearance, then reasserts that Euryalus has ‘spoken in no due order’, ‘out of order’ (εἰπὼν οὐ κατὰ κόσμον).¹⁰⁵ Like καλός, the semantic range of

¹⁰¹ Hom. *Il.* 14.175–86.

¹⁰² Hom. *Il.* 14.187; *Hom. Hy.* 5.79–90, 162–6. Cf. *Hom. Hy.* 27.17.

¹⁰³ E.g. Hom. *Il.* 2.214, 10.472; *Od.* 8.489, 13.77. In Homer, the cognate verb κοσμέω is only used to mean ‘to order, arrange’; cf. *Hom. Hy.* 5.65 where it used to mean ‘adorn’.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. *Lfgre*: s.v. καλός (B); J.D. Mikalson, *New Aspects of Religion in Ancient Athens: Honors, Authorities, Esthetics, and Society* (Leiden, 2016), 253–64, who notes the mutual aesthetic significance of καλός and κόσμος in descriptions of religious ritual.

¹⁰⁵ Hom. *Od.* 8.166, 179.

κόσμος echoes the slippery and complex relationship between what is beautiful in appearance and what is right, proper and good.

Such semantic range may suggest the slippage between these qualities but poetic narrative problematises their relationship, at least for human beauty: Nireus is ‘most beautiful’, but also ‘weak’ and a leader of few.¹⁰⁶ Euryalus is another prime example of the potential dissonance between physical beauty and excellence of character. In his lecture to Euryalus, Odysseus imagines two hypothetical men: ‘one man is weaker in appearance [εἶδος ἀκιδνότερος], but god crowns his words with shapeliness [μορφήν]’; ‘the other is like the immortals in appearance [εἶδος... ἀλίγκιος ἀθανάτοισιν], but beauty [χάρις] does not crown his words’.¹⁰⁷ Euryalus is like the latter, blessed in looks but deficient in mind and eloquence: ‘so too’, Odysseus concedes, ‘your appearance is outstanding [εἶδος μὲν ἀριπρεπές]... but your mind is empty [ἀποφώλιος]’.¹⁰⁸

The words of the second man lack ‘beauty’ (χάρις), unlike the words of the first man which possess μορφή. For its only other appearance in Homer, the noun μορφή is again a quality of words: namely, it signifies the ‘shapeliness’ of Odysseus’ words according to Alcinous.¹⁰⁹ Although in later use μορφή can mean simply ‘form’, ‘shape’, for both its appearances in Homer it has a positive aesthetic sense: not the ‘form’ of words, but ‘the beauty of their form’, their ‘shapeliness’.¹¹⁰ The use of μορφή and χάρις together, moreover, exemplifies a familiar trope in Homer’s aesthetic terminology: the use of discrete but conceptually interconnected and mutually supportive terms to

¹⁰⁶ So, too, Hera’s κόσμος is hardly good or proper in a moral sense (at least as far as Zeus is concerned); it is her weapon of deception. On ‘the problem of female beauty’ in Greek culture, see R. Blondell, *Helen of Troy: Beauty, Myth, Devastation* (Oxford, 2013), 1–23.

¹⁰⁷ Hom. *Od.* 8.169–70; 174–5.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. 8.176–7.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 11.367.

¹¹⁰ Cf. *Lfgre*: s.v. μορφή.

convey beauty. The same is true for the expression of physical beauty in the passage: Euryalus' 'outstanding appearance' is assimilated with his hypothetical counterpart who is 'like the immortals in appearance'. Here, then, we have two more common Homeric methods of expressing human beauty. We will return to divine analogy shortly. First, let us explore the use of phrases with the physical properties εἶδος, δέμας, μέγεθος and φυή.

Piqued by Odysseus' endless desire for his wife Penelope, the nymph Calypso points out that she can 'claim to be no worse than her, neither in form nor build'.¹¹¹ Calypso asserts her superior beauty according to a common Homeric formula: by combining an adjective—'worse' (χερείων)—with a word or words denoting general aspects of physical appearance—'form' (δέμας) and 'build' (φυή). In his reply, Odysseus adopts the same idiom, adding two further terms to the list: he acknowledges that Penelope is 'weaker in appearance and size' (εἶδος ἀκιδνοτέρη μέγεθός τ'). But Odysseus' desire 'to go home' and reunite with his wife exceeds the seductive allure of Calypso's physical beauty.¹¹² Much like his tearful response to Demodocus' song, Odysseus' personal story defies the expected response to beauty, in this case the goddess' superior appearance, size, form and build.

These four physical properties provide the basic standards by which Homeric individuals are physically differentiated: εἶδος ('appearance', 'looks'); δέμας ('form', 'shape'); μέγεθος ('size', 'height'); φυή ('form', 'build').¹¹³ Though inherently neutral terms, when combined with various adjectives like 'better' (ἀμείνων), 'best' (ἄριστος), and 'admirable' (ἀγητός), they are used to de-

¹¹¹ Hom. *Od.* 5.211–12.

¹¹² Ibid. 217–20.

¹¹³ On the absence of a single word for 'body' in Homer, see J. Redfield, 'Le sentiment homérique du Moi', *Le genre humain* 12 (1985), 93–111; J.-P. Vernant, 'Mortals and immortals: the body of the divine', in F.I. Zeitlin (ed.), *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays* (Princeton, 1991), 27–49, at 29–31.

note positive aspects of appearance.¹¹⁴ But is a ‘best appearance’ a beautiful one in Homer? The potential ambiguity of such phrases is mitigated by their common appearance alongside other expressions for beauty. In *Iliad* 3, for instance, Paris has a ‘beautiful appearance’ (καλὸν εἶδος), ‘glistens with beauty’ (κάλλει... στίλβων), and is ‘best in looks’ (εἶδος ἄριστε).¹¹⁵

Perhaps the best example of how Homer layers these various terms and expressions for beauty is in the episode with Penelope and the suitors. Enchanted by the sight of Penelope endowed with ‘immortal *kallos*’, Eurymachus exclaims, ‘you excel all women in appearance and height’ (περίεσοι γυναικῶν | εἶδος τε μέγεθός τε).¹¹⁶ Yet Penelope rejects his praise with the same idiom she used to convey her loss of ἀγλαΐη: ‘Eurymachus, the immortals destroyed my excellence in appearance and form [ἐμήν ἀρετὴν εἶδος τε δέμας τε], when the Argives made for Ilium’.¹¹⁷ In a single sequence, therefore, the poet uses four distinct yet overlapping expressions for Penelope’s beauty. Whether its the moralising tone of ‘excellence in appearance and form’, the relativising formula of excelling ‘all women in appearance and height’, the erotic lure of κάλλος, or the glamour of ἀγλαΐη, each expression brings its connotations to bear in this nuanced portrait of Penelope’s beauty.

¹¹⁴ Cf. εὐειδής (Hom. *Il.* 3.48), ‘of fair appearance’, ‘beautiful’; εὐφυής (*Il.* 4.147, 21.243), ‘shapely’. εἶδος sometimes appears unqualified in an implicitly positive sense, as when Hector refers to Paris’ ‘gifts of Aphrodite’: ἦ τε κόμη τό τε εἶδος, ‘your hair and your looks’ (*Il.* 3.54–5). εἶδος is often translated therefore as ‘beauty’, e.g. Blondell (n. 106), 5. We should beware making this leap, however, because εἶδος can be combined with a negative adjective to express ugliness: Dolon ‘was bad in appearance’ (εἶδος... ἔην κακός) (*Il.* 10.316).

¹¹⁵ Hom. *Il.* 3.39, 44–5, 392. Cf. 24.347, 376.

¹¹⁶ Hom. *Od.* 18.248–9.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* 251–3. Cf. 19.124–6.

In addition to this layering effect, phrases with εἶδος, δέμας, μέγεθος and φυή stand out as Homer's favourite way of defining relative beauty. More often than he employs a word for 'beauty' or 'beautiful', Homer compares how beautiful people are in terms of their 'appearance', 'form', 'height' and 'build'.¹¹⁸ Penelope excels 'all women in appearance and height', just as Calypso knows she must be no worse than Penelope in 'neither form nor build'. As the standard criteria by which people are physically differentiated in the Homeric poems, it makes perfect sense that these four properties also provide the physical criteria by which the relative beauty of people (and gods) is assessed, calibrated and understood. The earliest evidence for Greek beauty contests reaffirms this tendency outside Homeric epic: Alcaeus refers to women on Lesbos κριννόμεναι φύαν, 'being judged in form'.¹¹⁹ Likewise in Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women*, phrases with εἶδος are both a pervasive means of expressing and relativising beauty: this past age abounded with women 'lovely in appearance', who 'rivalled the immortal goddesses in appearance'.¹²⁰

As in the *Catalogue*, so in Homeric epic, the gods are paradigms of anthropomorphic beauty. Calypso clearly articulates this assumption when she points out that 'it would by no means be right

¹¹⁸ Comparisons with καλλίων: Hom. *Od.* 10.396; with κάλλιστος: *Il.* 2.673, 9.140, 9.282; with κάλλος: *Il.* 9.389, 13.432; with ἀγλαΐη: *Od.* 19.81–2. Comparisons with εἶδος, δέμας etc.: *Il.* 1.114–15, 2.715, 3.124, 6.252, 13.365–6, 13.378–9; *Od.* 5.211–12, 5.217, 7.57, 8.116–17, 8.169, 14.176–7, 18.248–9, 20.70–1, 24.369–74.

¹¹⁹ Alc. fr. 130B.17. On Greek beauty contests, see F. Gherchanoc, *Concours de beauté et beautés du corps en Grèce ancienne: discours et pratiques* (Bordeaux, 2016).

¹²⁰ E.g. Hes. *Cat.* 10. 32: κούρας πολυήρ]ατον εἶδος ἐχούσας; e.g. 19.10: Φυλο[νόην θ' ἢ εἶδος ἐρήριστ' ἄθαν]άτησι. Cf. 13.7; 33.12; 182.14. On female beauty in the *Catalogue*, see R. Osborne, 'Ordering women in Hesiod's *Catalogue*', in R. Hunter (ed.), *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women: Constructions and Reconstructions* (Cambridge, 2005), 5–24. Cf. Hes. [*Sc.*] 4–5.

for mortal women to rival immortal goddesses in form and appearance'.¹²¹ Gods are more beautiful than humans, and it is for this reason that divine analogy provides a common method of expressing beauty. Of course, not every comparison of a human to a god emphasises beauty. Exceptional strength, power and wits also assimilate humans to gods, but physical beauty has an important place in this catalogue of godlike attributes as it represents the outstanding difference between human and divine appearance.¹²² Generalised comparisons are prolific: phrases such as 'godlike in appearance' (θεοειδής), 'resembling a god' (θεῶν ἐναλίγκιος), 'looking like the goddesses' (ἐϊκυῖα θεῶν), and 'in form like the immortals' (δέμας ἀθανάτοισιν ὁμοῖος) emphasise both the beauty of Homer's heroes and heroines and their remarkable proximity with the gods.¹²³

And just as these general comparisons highlight a defining feature of Homer's mythical world—the proximity of gods and heroes—so comparisons with specific deities highlight defining features of particular individuals at the same time as emphasising their beauty. Homer expresses Nausicaa's beauty in various ways: she is both 'like the immortal goddesses in form and appearance' (ἀθανάτησι φυὴν καὶ εἶδος ὁμοίη) and 'has beauty from the gods' (θεῶν ἄπο κάλλος).¹²⁴ Her lengthy comparison to Artemis elaborates and refines the portrait of her beauty. She is likened to Artemis roving the mountains in pursuit of wild beasts, accompanied by her nymphs: 'high above them all [Artemis] holds her head and brow, and easily is she recognised [ἀριγνώτη], though all [the nymphs] are beautiful [καλαί]. Just so did the unmarried maiden [παρθένος ἀδμής] stand out amid her handmaids'.¹²⁵ Nausicaa is distinguished by her height and

¹²¹ Hom. *Od.* 5.212–13: ἐπεὶ οὐ πῶς οὐδὲ ἔοικεν | θνητὰς ἀθανάτησι δέμας καὶ εἶδος ἐρίζειν.

¹²² On the similarity and difference between Homeric gods and heroes, see J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death* (Oxford, 1980), esp. 144–204.

¹²³ E.g. Hom. *Il.* 3.158, 8.305, 11.638, 24.630 etc.; *Od.* 2.5, 3.468, 6.16, 6.243, 7.5, 8.14 etc.

¹²⁴ Hom. *Od.* 6.16; 8.457.

¹²⁵ Hom. *Od.* 6.107–9.

beauty like Artemis, whose appearance in this wild guise mirrors Nausicaa's pre-marital status, as she too is ἄδμῆς, 'untamed', 'unmarried'. But the simile also suggests Nausicaa's desirability as a bride by highlighting her outstanding beauty. The analogy thus helps define Nausicaa's peculiar social position in the epic: unwed though ready for marriage.¹²⁶

Similarly, Penelope's appearance 'like Artemis or golden Aphrodite', tells us something special about her.¹²⁷ Like Artemis, she is a model of chaste female beauty, renowned for her fidelity in her husband's twenty-year absence.¹²⁸ Yet she is also desirable like Aphrodite, drawing a host of suitors to her door.¹²⁹ In these specific divine analogies, Homer draws on his audience's knowledge of clearly differentiated divinities to enrich his mortal characters at the same time as illustrating their beauty.¹³⁰

Like all Homeric terms and expressions for beauty, therefore, divine analogy is distinguished by certain uses, connotations and implications which the poet harnesses for particular effects. Nowhere is this clearer than when Priam and Achilles are reconciled through their common mortality and suffering, which defines humans in contrast to the gods, who, Achilles says, 'are free from sorrow'.¹³¹ Yet even in this moment of intense grief, Achilles and Priam are able to appreciate one another's beauty: 'Priam wondered [θαύμαζ'] at Achilles, so big and such as he was; for he was like the gods to look at [θεοῖσι γὰρ ἄντα ἐζῶκει]. And Achilles wondered [θαύμαζεν] at Dardanian Priam... and

¹²⁶ For this aspect of Nausicaa's portrayal, see Hom. *Od.* 6.25–35, 57–67, 158–9, 239–46, 273–88; 7.311–14.

¹²⁷ Hom. *Od.* 17.37; 19.54. Cf. J. Russo, M. Fernández-Galiano, and A. Heubeck, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey, Volume III, Books xvii–xxiv* (Oxford, 1992), 21.

¹²⁸ See Hom. *Od.* 1.343–4, 19.130–58, 24.194–8.

¹²⁹ See Hom. *Od.* 18.187–249, esp. 212–13.

¹³⁰ Cf. Hom. *Od.* 4.121–2.

¹³¹ Hom. *Il.* 24.525–6.

when they had taken pleasure [τάρπησαν] in looking at one another, the old man Priam, godlike in appearance [θεοειδής], spoke to him'.¹³²

At once indicative of his characteristic sensitivity to beauty, the passage demonstrates how Homer creatively exploits the particular connotations of divine analogy as a way to express beauty.¹³³ Achilles and Priam may both look beautiful like gods, but this physical similarity only serves to underscore their essential difference from the gods which has framed their reconciliation. For unlike gods, suffering and death await them both; yet it is from this sad fact that compassion between two mortal enemies may emerge. The divine assimilation of Achilles and Priam simultaneously conveys their beauty and intensifies the poignancy of their realisation of common suffering and humanity.

III. PHYSICAL PROPERTIES AND AFFECTS

In addition to a cluster of words for 'beauty' and 'beautiful', therefore, the Homeric lexicon contains a variety of implicit expressions of beauty. And like the various words for 'beauty' and 'beautiful', these implicit expressions are conceptually interconnected but marked by certain individual uses and connotations. Testimony to that interconnection is their common application to single objects: Homer frequently layers multiple terms and expressions for beauty, both for emphasis and variety. Yet the particular connotations of these various terms and phrases also allow the poet to enrich his representations of beauty with great subtlety and depth of nuance.

All very well, the reader may think, but is it not problematic to bring diverse ancient terms and phrases together under the modern conceptual umbrella of *beauty*? Does that not smack of

¹³² Hom. *Il.* 24.629–34.

¹³³ On the sensitivity to beauty in this passage and its thematic significance, see J. Griffin, *Homer* (Oxford, 1980), 39.

anachronism? To group these diverse terms and phrases together is not to efface their differences or force them into a modern mould of beauty. Rather, it is to show that they share conceptual common-ground both with each other and, in various ways, with modern ideas about beauty, however elusive and mutable. What we are dealing with is a series of relationships: relationships between ancient terms; and relationships between ancient and modern ideas.

As for the latter, their inevitable discrepancies make these ‘beautiful things’ even more ‘difficult’ for modern interpreters, surrounded as they are by potential pitfalls of anachronism. Yet it is precisely this complex relationship between ancient and modern aesthetic ideas—their simultaneous similarity and difference—that makes them such intriguing and valuable objects of inquiry.¹³⁴ As for the relationships between ancient terms, these are in part discernible in their mutual association with certain physical properties and affects that have recurred throughout this paper. In other words, the expression of beauty in Homer is tied to a spectrum of affects—notably, desire, wonder, admiration, and pleasure—and a catalogue of physical properties—notably, radiance, bigness, skilful manufacture and precious materiality, especially gold and silver.

The final part of this paper argues that such physical properties and affects can in themselves evoke a sense of beauty. Divine analogy works in a similar way: the representation of beauty by divine comparison is entirely oblique; the audience infers the mortal analogue’s beauty because gods are known to be exceptionally beautiful. Likewise, their connection with beauty is such that at times these physical properties and affects can convey beauty too.

A simple example is the epithet ‘white-armed’ (λευκώλενος) for women and goddesses.¹³⁵ That the epithet suggests female beauty is indicated by Athena’s beautification of Penelope, when

¹³⁴ See P. Destrée and P. Murray (n. 3), 1–13; M. Squire, ‘Conceptualizing the (visual) “arts”’, in P. Destrée and P. Murray (n. 3), 307–326.

¹³⁵ E.g. Hom. *Il.* 1.55, 3.121 etc.; *Od.* 6.101, 7.233 etc.

she makes her ‘bigger and fuller in appearance and whiter than sawn ivory’.¹³⁶ Of course, it does not follow that everything white is beautiful; it is the aesthetic significance of whiteness for women in particular that gives the epithet its meaning.

But this is a quite specific case, and for others the sense may be less clear. Just because, say, bigness and wonder are often associated with beauty does not mean everything big and wonderful is beautiful: Polyphemos ‘was a massive wonder’ (θαῦμ’ ἐτέτυκτο πελώριον), but hardly beautiful.¹³⁷ ‘Wonder’ in Homer is not an exclusive response to beauty; surprising and lamentable things are also ‘wonders’, and it seems that for Polyphemos, the latter sense prevails.¹³⁸ Sensitivity to context is therefore essential. For in another instance, a ‘wonder’ appears synonymous with ‘beauty’: Neleus’ daughter, Pero, was ‘a wonder to mortals, whom all the men in the neighbourhood courted’ (θαῦμα βροτοῖσι, | τὴν πάντες μνῶοντο περικτίται), much like her mother, ‘most beautiful [περικαλλέα] Chloris, whom Neleus married on account of her beauty [κάλλος]’.¹³⁹ In the context of courtship, then, the ‘wonder’ inspired by Pero is indicative of her beauty. Similarly, when eros and wonder combine in the representation of Aphrodite’s ‘lovely/desirable clothes, a wonder to behold’ (εἴματα... ἐπήρατα, θαῦμα ιδέσθαι), we can be fairly confident this expresses their beauty.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Hom. *Od.* 18.195–6. Cf. *Il.* 5.314; *Od.* 23.240. See M. Treu, *Von Homer zur Lyrik* (München, 1968), 51–2.

¹³⁷ Hom. *Od.* 9.190; cf. 256–7.

¹³⁸ For surprising and lamentable wonders, see Hom. *Il.* 13.286, 20.344; *Od.* 10.326. On Greek aesthetics of wonder, see Prier (n. 22); Neer (n. 22); C. Hunzinger, ‘Wonder’, in P. Destrée and P. Murray (n. 3), 422–37.

¹³⁹ Hom. *Od.* 11.281–2, 287–8.

¹⁴⁰ Hom. *Od.* 8.366.

Desire may be a common response to beauty but this does not mean that every appearance of a word for ‘lovely’ or ‘desirable’—such as ἐπήρατος, ἐρατεινός, πολυήρατος and ἱμερόεις—evokes beauty. Yet it is important to acknowledge that on occasion they do—like Aphrodite’s ‘lovely clothes’—and that they therefore have a place in Homer’s terminology for beauty alongside words like χάρις and ἄγαλμα that also have the effect of beauty (pleasure and delight respectively) written into their semantics. The characterisation of Hermione as Helen’s ‘desirable daughter’ (παῖδ’ ἐρατεινήν), for instance, underlines the peculiar nature of her beauty, which is also implied by her assimilation to ‘golden Aphrodite’.¹⁴¹ Beauty and desirability often appear as two sides of the same coin in Homer.¹⁴² In some contexts, therefore, the former can be inferred from the latter: the ‘desirable dance’ (χορὸν ἱμερόεντα) of the Charites testifies to its beauty, just as in Alcman’s choral lyric, the erotic impact of Astymeloisa is testimony to hers.¹⁴³

The appearance of Hagesichora in Alcman’s first *Partheneion* echoes another familiar Homeric *topos* of aestheticisation: Hagesichora’s hair ‘blossoms like undefiled gold, her face like silver’ (ἐπανθεῖ | χρυσὸς [ὦ]ς ἀκήρατος· | τό τ’ ἀργύριον πρόσωπον).¹⁴⁴ So, too, Rhesus’ ‘chariot well worked [εὖ ἤσκηται] with gold and silver’ suggests its beauty by virtue of the aesthet-

¹⁴¹ Hom. *Od.* 4.13–14. Cf. *Il.* 6.156.

¹⁴² See esp. section on κάλλος above and Konstan (n. 6).

¹⁴³ Hom. *Od.* 18.194. Cf. *Il.* 3.396–7, 14.170. See Alcman fr. 3.61–4. Cf. Hes. *Theog.* 907–111; Sappho fr. 31; Thgn. 1365; Pind. fr. 123; Pl. *Phdr.* 251A–252B. On eroticisation as a formulaic means of expressing beauty in Alcman and Sappho, see G. Most, ‘Greek lyric poets’, in Luce (ed.), *Ancient Writers: Greece and Roman* (New York, 1982), 75–98, esp. 97; A. Lardinois, ‘Keening Sappho: female speech genres in Sappho’s poetry’, in A. Lardinois and L. McClure (eds.), *Making Silence Speak: Women’s Voices in Greek Literature and Society* (Princeton and Oxford 2001), 75–92.

¹⁴⁴ Alcman fr. 1.53–5. Cf. Alcman 5 (2 col. ii); Hom. *Il.* 17.51–60.

ic connotations of gold, silver and skilful manufacture.¹⁴⁵ His ‘golden, massive armour, a wonder to behold’ (τεύχεα δὲ χρύσεια πελώρια θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι) demonstrates the same technique: the association of gold, bigness and wonder with material beauty is such that their depiction together aestheticises Rhesus’ armour.¹⁴⁶

Dolon’s comment that it is only appropriate for gods to wear such armour underscores this impression; such heights of beauty and magnificence are a divine preserve. No wonder, then, that gold is the divine material *par excellence*.¹⁴⁷ But more than any other deity, gold is associated with Aphrodite: her most common Homeric epithet is ‘golden’.¹⁴⁸ Is it coincidence that she is also distinguished by her beauty? And it is perhaps down to more than chance or the demands of versification that whenever she is compared with mortal women to emphasise their beauty she appears as ‘golden Aphrodite’: Hermione had ‘the looks of golden Aphrodite’ (ἧ εἶδος ἔχε χρυσῆς Ἀφροδίτης), while Achilles would not marry Agamemnon’s daughter ‘even if she rivalled golden Aphrodite in beauty’ (οὐδ’ εἰ χρυσεῖη Ἀφροδίτη κάλλος ἐρίζοι).¹⁴⁹

As far as physical properties are concerned, only radiance can claim a stronger connection with Homeric beauty than gold: the beauties of κάλλος and χάρις are themselves forms of radiance.¹⁵⁰ When gold and radiance appear together, therefore, the inference of beauty is hard to resist, let alone if skilful craftsmanship is added to the list: ‘expertly crafted... golden, strung with amber beads, like the sun’ (πολυδαίδαλον... χρύσειον, ἠλέκτροισιν ἐερμένον, ἠέλιον ὥς)—the physical properties of the necklace Eurymachus gives Penelope are all evocative of its beauty.¹⁵¹ For the aes-

¹⁴⁵ Hom. *Il.* 10.438.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 439.

¹⁴⁷ See e.g. Hom. *Il.* 5.722–31, 8.41–5, 13.23–6.

¹⁴⁸ ‘Golden Aphrodite’ appears eleven times.

¹⁴⁹ Hom. *Od.* 4.14; *Il.* 9.389. Cf. *Il.* 19.282, 24.699; *Od.* 17.37, 19.54.

¹⁵⁰ See n. 69.

¹⁵¹ Hom. *Od.* 18.295–6.

theticisation of Odysseus' tunic, by contrast, radiance combines with a common affect of beauty— aesthetic admiration—denoted by the verb *θηέομαι*: his 'glittering tunic... was soft, and radiant like the sun; many women marvelled at it' (*χιτῶν'... σιγαλόεντα... ἔην μαλακός, λαμπρός δ' ἦν ἠέλιος ὤς. | ἦ μὲν πολλαί γ' αὐτὸν ἐθηήσαντο γυναῖκες*).¹⁵²

Radiance is fundamental to beauty in Homer, as it is in much Archaic poetry.¹⁵³ Aphrodite's 'immortal beauty' (*κάλλος... ἄμβροτον*) shines from her cheeks in her *Homeric Hymn*;¹⁵⁴ to 'have the sparkle of the Charites' (*Χαρίτων ἀμαρύγματ' ἔχο[υσαν]*) is a recurrent formula for female beauty in the *Catalogue of Women*;¹⁵⁵ the 'bright sparkle' (*κάμαρυχμα λάμπρον*) of Anactoria's face is a mark of the beauty Sappho's speaker loves and longs for.¹⁵⁶ So where do we draw the line? Does everything radiant in Homer connote beauty?

Achilles is a case in point. The sight of Achilles, radiant in his armour like the star Orion—the 'brightest' (*λαμπρότατος*) star, an 'evil sign' (*κακὸν... σῆμα*) to mortals—terrifies Priam, who fears for his son's life.¹⁵⁷ Achilles' ominous radiance recalls Athena's descent from heaven 'like a

¹⁵² Hom. *Od.* 19.232–5. Cf. *Od.* 8.264–5; Anac. fr. 444.

¹⁵³ See n. 22.

¹⁵⁴ Hom. *Hy.* 5.174–5; cf. 84–90; Hom. *Hy.* 2.275–80.

¹⁵⁵ Hes. *Cat.* 41.38; 47.3; 123.20; 154a.6.

¹⁵⁶ Sapph. fr. 16.18. Cf. Hdt. 1.30.4–5: Tellus had *τελευτή τοῦ βίου λαμπροτάτη* and *ἀπέθανε κάλλιστα*.

¹⁵⁷ Hom. *Il.* 22.25–33. Cf. *Il.* 5.4–7, 11.61–6, 13.240–5. See C. Moulton, *Similes in the Homeric Poems* (Göttingen, 1977), 26–7, 80–1.

star... a shining portent [τέρας... λαμπρόν] to sailors or a large army of people'.¹⁵⁸ And when Hector sees Achilles in his brazen armour shining 'like the light of blazing fire or the rising sun', he is overcome with 'trembling'; the death and destruction presaged by Achilles' godlike radiance is aimed squarely at him.¹⁵⁹ Ominous, godlike and terrifying, Achilles' radiance is a far cry from the seductive sight of Paris or Odysseus 'glistening with beauty'.¹⁶⁰ Perhaps it would be safer, then, to set Achilles' brightness outside the realm of Homeric beauty.

Yet the culmination in this series of radiant apparitions should make us think twice.¹⁶¹ At precisely the moment when he is at his most deadly and terrifying—in his final encounter with Hector—Homer emphasises Achilles' radiant beauty in arms: his shield is 'beautiful, cunningly-wrought' (καλὸν δαιδάλεον); the plumes of his 'shining helmet' are 'beautiful... golden' (καλαί... χρύσειαι); and most striking of all, his spear, with which he is about to kill Hector, is 'like the evening star, the most beautiful star in heaven' (οἶος δ' ἀστήρ... ἔσπερος, ὃς κάλλιστος ἐν οὐρανῷ... ἀστήρ).¹⁶² Reminiscent of Demeter and Aphrodite's epiphanies in their *Homeric*

¹⁵⁸ Hom. *Il.* 4.75–7. For more divine radiance, see e.g. Hom. *Il.* 1.199–200, 3.397; *Od.* 19.34–6; S. Constantinidou, 'The light imagery of divine manifestation in Homer', in M. Christopoulos, E.D. Karakantza, O. Levaniouk (edd.), *Light and Darkness in Ancient Greek Myth and Religion* (Lanham, 2010), 91–109.

¹⁵⁹ Hom. *Il.* 22.134–6.

¹⁶⁰ Hom. *Il.* 3.392; *Od.* 6.237.

¹⁶¹ The first in this series, which charts Achilles' return to the fighting, is at Hom. *Il.* 18.205–214, where Athena manifests a golden, radiant cloud around Achilles' head.

¹⁶² Hom. *Il.* 22.314–18.

Hymns, Achilles' radiance here is godlike, terrifying *and* beautiful—no less than sublime.¹⁶³ The passage therefore invites the possibility that his radiant manifestations leading up to this climactic moment similarly connote a sense of terrifying divine beauty.

Achilles is a good example, then, of the challenges we face in attempting to access that peculiarly Homeric sense of beauty. Bound to a culture of visual theology foreign to our own, the representation of Achilles' terrifying divine beauty may seem alien to modern aesthetic expectations.¹⁶⁴ More than that, this series of apparitions highlights how the lines between what is radiant and what is beautiful are not always clearly drawn. Nor are those between what is beautiful and what is wonderful, desirable, or admirable. Sensitivity to context is therefore essential for determining where the outer boundaries of Homeric beauty lie. They may be more fluid and less clear than perhaps we would like, but this kind of complication does not mean we should ignore all those cases where things radiant, wonderful, desirable, or admirable are expressive of beauty.¹⁶⁵ For however hermeneutically challenging, they have an integral place in the broad semantic field of Homeric beauty.

¹⁶³ Cf. *Hom. Hy.* 2.275–83; *Hom. Hy.* 5.173–90. On the relation between the beautiful and the sublime in antiquity, see J.I. Porter, 'The sublime', in P. Destrée and P. Murray (n. 3), 393–405, at 402; J.I. Porter, *The Sublime in Antiquity* (Cambridge 2015), *passim* esp. 566–9; see 542–7 on sublimity and divinity in Homer.

¹⁶⁴ On visual theology in Archaic Greece, see Vernant (n. 113); V. Platt, *Facing the Gods: Epiphany and Representation in Graeco-Roman Art, Literature and Religion* (Cambridge, 2011), esp. 31–123; G. Petridou, *Divine Epiphany in Greek Literature and Culture* (Oxford, 2015), esp. 29–105.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Pl. *Hip. mai.* 304e where Socrates comes to appreciate the proverb χαλεπὰ τὰ καλὰ after failing to define clearly the boundaries of καλός. Cf. E. Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London, 1776), 108: 'a clear idea is... another name for a little idea'.

When the common physical properties and affects of Homeric beauty converge, then we are on firmer ground.¹⁶⁶ The choral scene of boys and girls on Achilles' shield offers a well-known example. The rare use of the verb ποικίλλω to signify Hephaestus' skilful and intricate manufacture of the image; the radiance of the boys' 'tunics glistening with oil' (στίλβοντας ἐλαίῳ); their gold and silver daggers and baldrics; the 'beautiful garlands' (καλὰς στεφάνας) of the girls; the description of the audience 'taking pleasure in the desirable chorus' (ἰμερόεντα χορὸν... τερπόμενοι): the aesthetic connotations of these physical properties and affects work together to conjure an atmosphere of choral beauty.¹⁶⁷

In short, the common ingredients of Homeric beauty—its physical properties and affects—have an aestheticising power of their own. This has two important consequences for our understanding of beauty in Homer. The first effect is a significant expansion of the semantic field of Homeric beauty; the second, more challenging effect, is that Homeric beauty appears more nebulous, therefore underlining the necessity of attentiveness to context and contingency in clarifying 'the shade, the fine distinction' of aesthetic and semantic meaning.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Hom. *Od.* 4.43–8, 71–8, where the beauty of Menelaus' palace is conveyed by an abundance of gold, silver, electrum, ivory and radiance that inspire Telemachus' aesthetic admiration, wonder, awe and delight.

¹⁶⁷ Hom. *Il.* 18.590–604. Note the description of the maidens as ἀλφεισίβοιαι (593), 'bringing in oxen', in the sense of 'who yield their parents many oxen as presents from their suitors', i.e. 'much-courted' (LSJ). Since beauty and skilful handiwork are the two outstanding qualities for which Homeric women are courted, it seems this adjective joins the list of implicit expressions of beauty. Cf. *Il.* 9.128–30, 388–90, 13.428–33; *Od.* 11.281–82, 18.187–303. On the visual aesthetics of this scene, see J. Carruesco, 'Choral performance and geometric patterns in epic poetry and iconographic representations', in V. Cazzato and A. Lardinois (edd.), *The Look of Lyric: Greek Song and the Visual* (Leiden and Boston, 2016), 69–107, at 71–5.

The terminology for beauty in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is profoundly rich: the expression of beauty is bound to a plethora terms and phrases, physical properties and affects. Any reader of Homer will know that hardly ten verses go by without the appearance of one or other of these words or phrases. It is true that there is a danger in over-expanding the reach of beauty; the challenge for us is to be sensitive to ancient modes of aesthetic expression, interrogate their relationships with one another, and to pursue their consequences for understanding ideas about beauty foreign to our own. For there is also a danger in shying away from beauty's potential vastness and complexity in Homer. The poet envisages a world where beauty matters: the aestheticisation of everything from people and gods to household objects and natural phenomena is an essential element of what elevates Homer's mythical past above and beyond the historical present of the poem's performance and reception.