



Amber, Oil and Fire: Greek Sculpture beyond Bodies

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... and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire.
(Revelation 10:1)

What happens to an ‘embodied object’ when the body in question is incorporeal, like a tongue of flame, a beam of light or a wisp of smoke? How can we talk about embodiment – or, more expansively, about ‘materiality’ – when the items under discussion exceed or fail to attain that category? Such questions may seem remote from classical art history, with its corpora of marble statues, ruined temples and potsherds. But they become acute when we turn to images made of oil and smoke, amber and fire; ‘small-finds’ like lamps, pendants, instruments and armour ask us to recalibrate concepts like medium and material and even, perhaps, object and body. Fire, says Aristotle, is ‘certainly the most bodiless of elements’ – an ambiguous phrase that only sharpens the questions: is there such a thing as fire made flesh?¹ Can light and heat be material culture? ‘Embodied’, as opposed to what?

The problem of the excessive or inadequate object is as old as aesthetics itself. Kant, for instance, concluded his ‘Analytic of the Beautiful’ with a discussion of ‘the changing figures of a fire in a hearth or of a rippling brook’.² These flickering figures, Kant argued, are not formally cognizable as objects at all, but are ‘strictly speaking fantasies with which the mind entertains itself while it is being continuously aroused by the manifold that strikes the eye’.³ The figures dancing in a fireplace are so variable, so indistinct, that they do not conform to the ordinary criteria of objecthood: what is fire, anyway? Kant, as it happens, wrote his Master’s thesis on this very topic: the *Exposition of Some Meditations on Fire (Meditationem quarandum de igne succincta delineatio, 1755)* offered a physicalist explanation for the phenomenon.⁴ By 1790, however, the *pre-critical* question of fire’s material cause had become the *critical* question of its subjective formalization: whatever fire may turn out to be, the flickering, transitory shapes in the hearth are mere inventions of the subject. As such, fire-figures are not even candidates for beauty: although the sight, or *Anblick*, of them may strike some as beautiful, the shapes are so ephemeral and insubstantial that there is no determinate basis for that sharing in perception, that potential normativity, that is at the core of Kant’s aesthetic. For Kant, the inadequate or excessive object is not strictly an object at all, but a way to segue between the judgement of comprehensible *beauties* that both secure and attest to intersubjective agreement and freedom, and the judgement of incomprehensible *sublimities* that exceed the limits of the faculties and thereby attest to shared finitude. Fire-figures flicker between the Analytics, between

**Detail of amber pendant
in the form of a maiden
(korê): unilluminated state.
Photo: Getty Open Content
Program (plate 1).**

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Beautiful and Sublime. Modern commentators are predictably dissatisfied; for the philosopher Paul Crowther, the remarks on fire are ‘wretched’ and ‘completely at odds with the dominant thrust of Kant’s own account of beauty’.⁵

What has this to do with Greek art – that is, with what Hesiod would have called ‘matters of oak and stone’?⁶ Nothing, save by way of contrast. The Greeks were relatively untroubled by ontological chimeras; they made room for entities that are constitutively betwixt and between, that might seem to us not quite subjects and not quite objects, both more and less. They knew such entities as ‘wonders’ and ‘graces’, *thaumata* and *charites*. The salient point is that wonders and graces do not represent aberrant cases, but a distinct category of being; they are neither inadequate nor excessive, but they are not quite objects, either. They are, therefore, not easy to talk about, at any rate in a critical discourse that aspires to any sort of clarity.

From Homer onward, a praiseworthy work of craft, be it a figural representation or anything else, should be a *thauma idesthai*, ‘a wonder to behold for itself and oneself’.⁷ There are certain qualities that wonders tend to have in early Greece: they are dazzlingly bright, they appear suddenly or are very swift, they produce an effect of uncanny presence while being conspicuously works of craft and skill. A good example comes from the nineteenth book of the *Odyssey*, in which the poet describes a brooch belonging to Odysseus:⁸

The front part of it was artful: a hound held a dappled fawn in his forepaws, preying on it as it struggled; and all were wonderstruck at how, although they were golden, the hound preyed on the fawn and strangled it, and the fawn struggled with his feet as he tried to escape.

What induces wonder is neither illusion nor fidelity to appearances but the combination of vivid, lifelike effect with an awareness of the material support of the image (in this case, gold). Odysseus’ brooch is, in this regard, exemplary. Its exploitation of what has been called the ‘twofoldness’ of depiction is essential to the Greek experience of wonder before works of art.⁹

Closely linked to wonder is grace – what in ancient Greek was called *charis*.¹⁰ This term characterizes relations of felicitous gift-exchange. In religion, for instance, animal sacrifice established ‘graceful’ reciprocity between mortals and gods, blessings in exchange for blood and smoke; this function survives in the word ‘eucharist’, the Christian successor to ancient blood sacrifice. *Charis* could also be a visible property of the units of such exchange: it could radiate from a gifted object like a bright light, rendering it ‘charismatic’.¹¹ For instance, when the gods give Pandora as a gift to men, they adorn her with a crown decorated with figurines: ‘On it were many cunning works of craft, a wonder to see for itself and oneself [*thauma idesthai*]; for of the many creatures which the land and sea rear up, he put most upon it, wonderful things [*thaumasia*], like living beings with voices: and great grace [*charis*] shone all around from it.’¹² Something of the sort was discovered in 1991 at Metaponto in southern Italy: a tall cylinder of gold and silver, adorned with gleaming youths, maidens, rams, horses and flowers.¹³ Like wonder, grace is essentially duplex: it radiates from an entity that is ‘neither here nor there’, a gift proffered but not yet accepted or reciprocated, suspended in the indefinite term of an ongoing cycle of transactions.

Raymond Prier has traced this quality of in-between-ness back to the very grammar of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.¹⁴ The word *thauma* does not name simply a class of object, but also a state of mind: in Greek as in English, one wonders at wonders. The very noun shuttles between beholder and beheld, the wonder that you see and the wonder that you feel or, better, that lays hold of you. This indeterminacy is

important, because Homer employs the metrical formula *thauma idesthai*, ‘a wonder to behold for itself and oneself’, exclusively to describe crafted objects, like the spinning wheel of Hera’s chariot or the shining armour of a king.¹⁵ These artefacts are themselves strangely betwixt and between: they partake of a dazzling and radiant otherness even as they are mere possessions, things to hold and use. The Shield of Heracles is a useful tool even as it strikes terror; Pandora is at once inviting and radiant, a gift and a snare. The phrase *thauma idesthai* brings out the point. The verb *idesthai*, ‘to behold’, is an infinitive of the middle voice, for which there is no equivalent in English. Neither active nor passive, the middle voice usually indicates that the grammatical subject is acting on itself or for itself. An infinitive, however, does not have a well-defined grammatical subject (it is technically a verbal noun) – which means that in the phrase *thauma idesthai* the subject could be either the wonder itself or the beholder. Hence the laborious translation, ‘a wonder to see for itself and oneself’, which makes the duality explicit. A *thauma idesthai* exists in the grammatical middle even as it occupies a phenomenological ‘middle’ between the beholding eye ‘over here’ and the radiant object ‘over there’.

In short, if a wonder is a twofold or doubling sight, then by the same token wonder itself is a twofold or doubling experience, named with a twofold or doubling word. Like Kant’s figures in the hearth, a Greek *thauma* is not quite an object, but neither is it merely a fantasy or subjective invention: it is, rather, a distinct category of being.

Of particular importance for present purposes is the radiance that characterizes both graces and wonders. The bright shining work of craft is conspicuous and draws the eye, making itself the basic point of reference for spatial relations in its ambience; at the same time it collapses distance, because brilliance can strike the eye and bedazzle from a long way off. Brightness is locative and bright things are ‘topopoetic’, that is, they constitute otherwise nondescript extensions of space as *places*, the way that a lighthouse will position everything in its landscape relative to its flashing beacon.¹⁶ What this means is that sculpture of this sort functions a good deal like architecture: space is part of its plastic medium, so to speak.

Amber

Pliny, in Book 37 of his *Natural History*, records several different stories about the origins of amber, citing a variety of sources of varying antiquity. The extant Greek texts, however, are generally of the opinion that it came from the far north and west, by the banks of the river Eridanus, which seems to have been the Po – a terminus of the Baltic amber route.¹⁷ From Hesiod through Aeschylus to Euripides and Apollonius of Rhodes (that is, from around the seventh to the third centuries BCE), the consensus was that amber represents the congealed tears of the Heliades, the Daughters of the Sun, which they shed when they saw their brother Phaëthon, ‘the Shining One’, tumble out of the sky.¹⁸ The girls were turned into poplars and continued to weep forever after, which may reflect the intuition that amber has something to do with tree resin. But their main association is with sunlight; Pliny (*Natural History* 37.31), Hesychius (s.v. *êlektôr*) and others give the folk etymology that amber is called *electrum* because the sun is called *êlektôr*: it is ‘sun-bright stuff’. Thus, as the chorus sings in Euripides’ *Hippolytus*:¹⁹

O that I could live in the secret clefts of the mountains, and that there a god might make me a winged bird amid the flying flocks! O that I could soar aloft over the sea swell to the shore of the Adriatic and the waters of Eridanus, where into the deep-blue wave the luckless girls, in grief for Phaëthon, drop the amber gleaming sunlight of their tears!

That last phrase, ‘the amber gleaming sunlight of their tears’, is crucial, for it emphasizes that the daughters of the Sun shed tears that are themselves as radiant as the sunbeam. Just so, Apollonius Rhodius (4.605–6) speaks of the ‘shining drops of amber’ that the maidens shed as they mourn their radiant brother. These tears of light congeal when they fall into water and wash up on the seashore as amber: ‘as they wept,’ says the poet, ‘their tears were borne along the waters like drops of oil’, that is, like liquid that can burn.²⁰

The gist of the story remains constant even if the cast of characters does not. After giving the conventional account, for instance, Apollonius adds a variant that he attributes to the Celts. In this version, it was actually Apollo himself who shed the amber tears, grieving not for Phaëthon but for Asclepius, blasted by the thunderbolt.²¹ In these mythic etiologies, the specific personages can come and go; what remains



1 Amber pendant in the form of a maiden (*korê*): unilluminated state, probably of Ionian manufacture in Italy, c. 525–500 BCE. Height: 6.7 cm. Malibu, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum (76.AO.77). Photo: Getty Open Content Program.

2 Amber pendant in the form of a maiden (*korē*): illuminated state. Photo: Getty Open Content Program.



constant are certain core elements: death, fire, tears and solid light.²² Amber could even dissipate into the fire whence it came: it could be burnt as incense, with seductive effect. Thus Pindar can address courtesans as attendants of the goddess Persuasion who 'burn red tears of fresh incense', the tears in question being those of the Heliades.²³

Amber's association with radiance and fire pretty obviously has to do with the translucent character of the material itself.²⁴ The look of the thing is primary: amber, especially in large chunks, can have a rather dull appearance, but can seem to smoulder when held to the light (plate 1 and plate 2). Properly manipulated, amber is *lamprotaton* and *phaeinon*, 'most brilliant' and 'radiant'. But it is more than that: amber is also a wonder or marvel. In *Odyssey* 4, it is one of an array of splendid treasures in

the palace of Menelaos that provoke *sebas*, reverent awe, in Telemachus. He says to Peisistratos:²⁵

Son of Nestor, you who grace my heart, only look at the gleaming [*steropê*] of the bronze all through these echoing mansions, and of gold and amber, of silver and of ivory. Surely the court of Zeus on Olympos is of this sort on the inside, such abundance there is of everything. Awe [*sebas*] takes me as I look on it.

Here it is the congeries of radiance and a quasi-divine presence that induces the effect: amber and the other precious goods combine to displace the beholder, if only fleetingly, from Sparta to Olympos itself, so that Telemachus experiences the *sebas*, the reverential awe, appropriate to one approaching divinity. In this case, *sebas* is an external force that seizes the youth ('wonder takes me as I look at it'), as though the gleaming's visceral impact had been nominalized, anthropomorphized: the gleam, *steropê*, strikes the eye – the awe, *sebas*, seizes the beholder, each from the outside, from the spacious 'echoing mansions'.

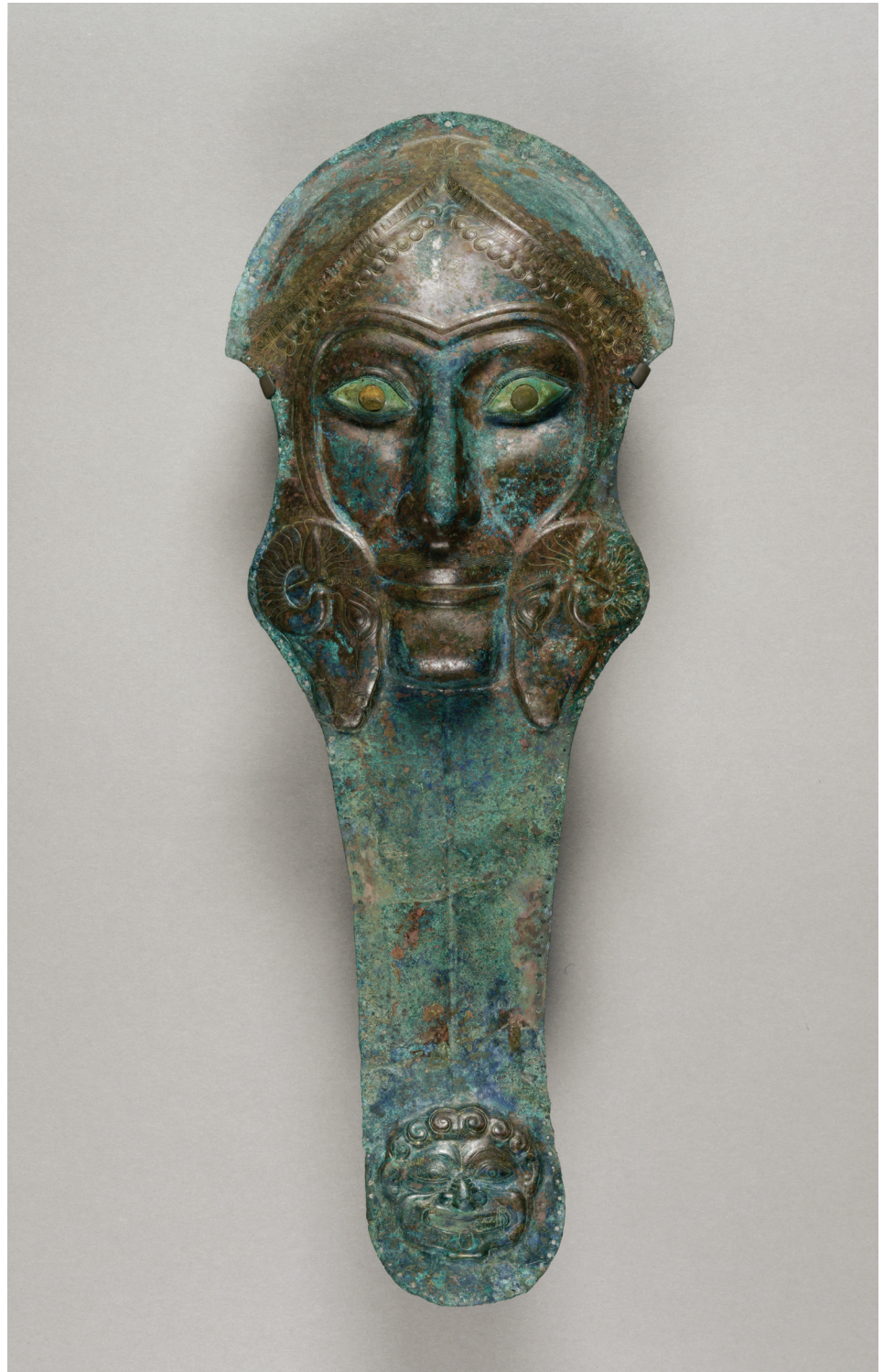
A true wonder, however, is a *thauma idesthai*, 'a wonder to see for itself and oneself'. An archetypical example is the Shield of Heracles (Ps.-Hesiod, *Shield* 139–44), and this, too, involves amber.²⁶

In his hands [Heracles] took his shield, all-glittering [*panaiolon*]: no one ever broke it with a blow or crushed it. And it was a wonder to see for itself and oneself [*thauma idesthai*]; for its whole circuit shimmered [*hypolampês*] with white gypsum and ivory and amber, and it glowed [*lampomenon*] with shining gold [*chrusô te phaeinô*]; and there were folds of blue inlay upon it. In the centre was Fear worked in adamant, unspeakable, staring back with eyes that glowed with fire [*puri lampomenoisi*].

It might be objected that *êlektron* here may refer not to amber but to the alloy of gold and silver, which the Greeks called with the same name (modern *electrum*).²⁷ Deciding between the two can be difficult, but Louis Deroy and Robert Halleux have shown that early texts consistently use *êlektron* to refer to amber; only from the fifth century does the word refer to the alloy, and then only by extension (its first appearance, for instance, is in Sophocles, *Antigone* 1037–8, where the alloy is called 'Sardian amber', *Sardeôn êlektron*, which seems a sort of nickname).²⁸ In the present case, amber goes nicely with gypsum, adamant, Egyptian blue and ivory as a specifically non-metallic Schmuckstein on an otherwise golden shield.

More to the point, amber inlays are well documented for the Archaic period, particularly in the luxury goods of Ionia and southern Italy.²⁹ Amber can be used, moreover, to represent something that early authors describe as bright: the flashing eye of a crafted face.³⁰ For example, a frontlet for a horse (*prometopidion*) of c. 480 BCE combines inlay, amber, ivory, armour and a confrontational stare; it is one of a pair now in the Getty Museum in Malibu (plate 3).³¹ Items of this type were produced in Apulia, probably near Ruvo, although there is lively debate about whether the craftsmen were Greeks, Hellenized locals (*Peuketioi*) or itinerant Etruscans.³² The Getty examples are decorated in *repoussé* with the face of a mustachioed male, partially hidden by a helmet; the cheek-pieces terminate in rams' heads and lead to a Gorgoneion at the base.³³ The man's eyes, and his alone, are inlaid of ivory and amber and face directly forward. To appreciate the full effect of this stare, it is necessary to place the frontlet on a living horse (plate 4). When thus 'installed', no fewer than six eyes cluster at the upper end of

the mask, setting up a complex interplay of gazes: two for the man, two for the horse and one for each ram. Equine eyes, living but dumb, align with human ones, inert but vivid, in a rhythm that a subtle pattern of matching contours enhances. The rams' heads flare outward and have the same basic shape as the horse's eye – a broad upper edge tapering to a narrow base – while the converging, catenary arcs of the man's hairline and helmet prolong the bony ridges above each equine eye. Down at the base, flaring nostrils flank the circular gorgon-face, with which they seem to share a continuous,



3 Bronze frontlet for a horse, with eyes of amber and ivory, from south Italy, c. 480 BCE. 45 × 17.2 cm. Malibu, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum (83.AC.7.1). Photo: Getty Open Content Program.

undulating upper edge. These visual affinities between equine anatomy and figured bronze knit artwork and animal together, so that the play of similarity and difference in their respective gazes becomes so conspicuous as to be disconcerting. In this situation, the frontlet, like the Shield itself, makes the very idea of a material seem moot. It is not just that the piece combines bronze, ivory and amber. To be complete, it requires a horse as well; its décor seems almost to conflate the two, while yet keeping them obviously, unambiguously distinct. The work of craft exceeds the ‘embodied object’.

A face like this one, with eyes of congealed fire, would certainly merit Ps.-Hesiod’s description of the Fear on Heracles’ shield, ‘staring back with eyes that glowed with fire’; this smouldering gaze was presumably the intended effect.³⁴ In short, the radiance of amber can be confrontational, as though light itself were somewhat aggressive. This combination of brilliance and radical ‘otherness’ is a hallmark of the *thauma idesthai*. It is as though two epic formulae had coincided: on the one hand, *thauma idesthai* (‘a wonder to behold for itself and oneself’); on the other, *eis opa idesthai* (‘to look so-and-so in the face’).³⁵ What is specifically wonderful here is the relation between these two senses, between looking at the work of supreme craft, burning with amber and flashing with bronze, and looking at a face.

It is not certain that the Getty frontlets are of Greek manufacture, nor is it quite clear what ‘Greek’ would have meant in Early Classical Apulia.³⁶ Elite tombs in the region can be a mixed bag: the so-called Tomba del Principe, excavated near Ruvo in 1833, contained Attic pottery alongside armour very like the material in the Getty.³⁷ Most amber finds in Apulia come from indigenous contexts, and much of the amber production in southern Italy seems to be the work of non-Greek craftsmen, yet the fact that nearly all the finds come from rural tombs may skew the data considerably. Although it can be easy enough to recognize imports from mainland Greece, and to recognize the highly distinctive products of certain non-Greek communities, it is probably fruitless to discriminate between local products made under Greek influence and local products made by self-identified Greek artisans.

Amber’s luminosity plays against its power to retain a static charge. Rub it against wool or fur or skin (but not against wood or metal) and it will attract bits of dust and the like. As Plutarch puts it, ‘amber moves and attracts all light things, except basil and whatever is wet with oil.’³⁸ This invisible power puts amber in the category of the wonderful; Plato (*Timaeus* 80c), refers disparagingly to ‘the wonders [*thaumazomena*] concerning the attraction of amber and of the Heracleian stone’, as usual distinguishing between wonder as the origin of philosophy, and a philosophical reflection that is supposed to transcend that origin. Historically, the first so-called philosopher, Thales of Miletos, will have had ample opportunity to study amber: his city played an important role in the trade via its outposts on the Black

4 Composite image of horse and bronze frontlet, with eyes of amber and ivory. Photomontage: Author.



Sea, and was a centre for the production of luxury ‘electro-elephantine’ furniture.³⁹ From amber’s attractive charge Thales inferred that it must have an animating force, according to Diogenes Laertius: ‘Aristotle and Hippias affirm that [Thales] gave inanimate [*apsuchoi*] things a share in animacy [*psychê*], calling to witness the magnetic stone and amber.’⁴⁰ The operative word is *psychê*: although it is usually translated as ‘soul’, Jonathan Barnes argues that it should be understood more in a mechanical sense than a theological one.⁴¹ Significantly, Thales’ claim (via Diogenes) is not that amber simply has a soul but that it has a share in being en-souled, an altogether more ambivalent phrasing.⁴² It is precisely this ambivalence that makes these items wonderful: lots of things have souls without being wonders thereby, but the combination or juxtaposition of causal efficacy and inert equipment produces wonder.

Electromagnetism, in turn, gave amber amuletic powers. Pliny the Elder (first century CE) details these magical properties, but the early Greek sources hardly mention them at all.⁴³ It would not be surprising if the Archaic Greeks attributed medicinal properties to amber; most amber survives in the form of small beads and decorations on fibulae, which seem admirably suited to such a function. Many even show signs of wear, as though rubbed. The problem is the familiar one of retrojecting Hellenistic and Roman sources into earlier periods, or exporting Greek myths to Italic peoples. For this reason, the magical efficacy of Greek amber seems a less promising topic than its visual impact. As we have seen, the look of the thing is primary: amber is fiery because it glows like a burning coal. How does amber draw the eye, and what does this specifically visual attraction have to do with what amber objects look like?

Two examples provide a clue. The first is an Archaic pendant in the Getty Museum, of unknown provenance but doubtless from a tomb in southern Italy, in the form of a standing female of the *korê* type (see plate 1 and plate 2).⁴⁴ It is one of eleven such figures known, all in the form of pendants, distributed as far as Bulgaria. Stylistically the present example has more in common with East Greek figurines than with local Italic or Etruscan production, and Faya Causey has argued plausibly that it was made by one of the many East Greek artisans who fled to Italy after the fall of Sardis in 547/546 BCE – perhaps a Milesian, given that city’s known expertise in amber crafting.⁴⁵ She may be a goddess, but is more likely a votary, in so far as she lacks any iconographic attributes beyond a fairly generic Ionian attire.⁴⁶ The basic conceit on offer is of a *korê* made utterly radiant, a girl made of light: the very emblem of radiance, *aglaia*.⁴⁷ As such, she is a literary topos made visible, for the radiant girl recurs frequently in Archaic poetry. A good example is Alcman’s *Parthenion* or ‘Maiden Song’ (seventh century BCE): the singer praises ‘the lightbeam of Agidô’, remarks that ‘the hair of my cousin Hagêsichora has the bloom of undefiled gold, and her silver face ...’, and so on.⁴⁸ Alcman’s dancers are brilliant and as such attract the admiring gaze of the speaker, who calls herself to witness the spectacle (ll. 40–1). In so far as the Getty pendant is a radiant girl, and electrically attractive to its ancient beholders to boot, it is analogous to Alcman’s maidens. If the Shield of Heracles presents glittering ‘otherness’ as terrifying or aggressive, then the amber *korê* enacts it as an eye-catching spectacle. This imagery is, of course, consonant with its function as an adornment or *kosmêsis* of the body; it is, after all, a piece of jewellery. As often in early Greece, the image performs its own iconography: just as an offering can show a person making an offering, so an accessory that makes a young woman glow is itself a glowing woman.

Even with jewellery, however, there can be danger to amber’s fascination. In *Odyssey* 15.459–65, a gold and amber necklace figures in Odysseus’ admittedly false story of being kidnapped as a boy by Phoenician traders. It was an inside job: while his mother was distracted by the necklace, his nursemaid led him off to sea.⁴⁹

There came a man, well versed in guile, to my father's house with a necklace of gold, and with amber beads was it strung between. The maidens in the hall and my honoured mother were touching it with their hands and gazing at it with their eyes, and were offering him their price; but he nodded to the woman in silence. Then you may be sure when he had nodded to her, he went his way to the hollow ship, but she took me by the hand, and led me forth from the house.

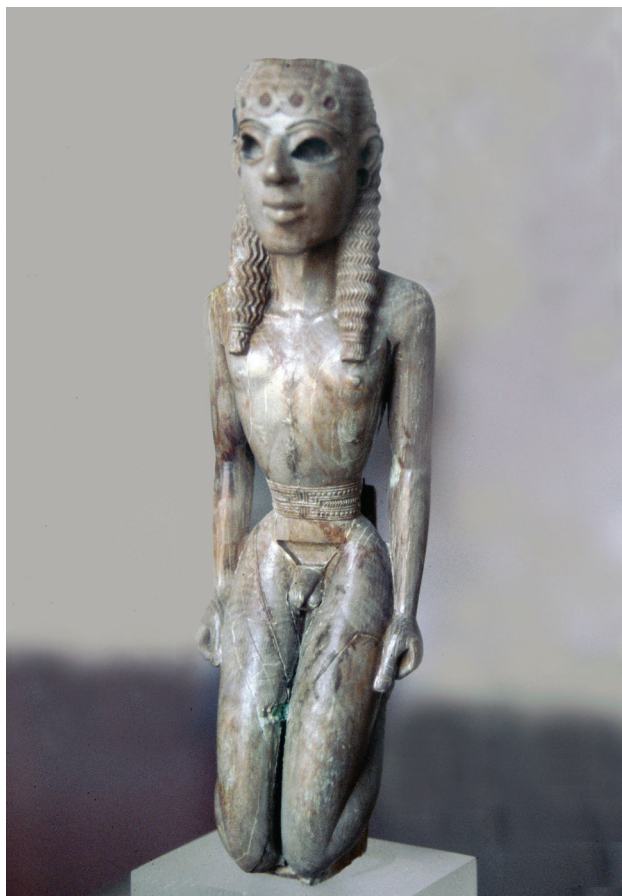
Here the magic of amber turns sinister, a sort of bewitchment or *thelxis*. Homer is clear that what one does with such a necklace is both visual and tactile: the ladies are 'touching it with their hands and gazing at it with their eyes' (in Roman times, at least, women would rub amber vigorously to obtain a resinous perfume).⁵⁰ But in this case the absorption is so intense that the mother does not notice the loss of her own son. That is exactly *not* what happens with Penelope, the archetypal good wife and mother. In the eighteenth book of the *Odyssey*, Eurymachus tempts her with a gold and amber chain: 'And a chain did another quickly bring for Eurymachus, one cunningly wrought of gold, strung with ambers, bright as the sun.'⁵¹ Penelope, however, has not forgotten Telemachus: she turns her back and goes upstairs. The attraction of amber, which can be literal when it comes to lightweight things, can require all the intricate wiles of Penelope to resist.

The little amber *korê* partakes of all this. It is easy to see, based on the iconography, how it might charm and attract, have magical efficacy, perhaps with an erotic charge – an instance of Greek love-magic.⁵² The maiden is one of Pindar's seductive 'red tears', cast in human form instead of burnt into smoke. But scale and light exceed these terms. Even from a distance the pendant is a busy little piece, with a lot of detail that would

seem to repay inspection. But those details are hard to get into focus – shades of red on red, orange on orange – and they appear to change depending on the light; small ambers seem always to teeter on the verge of illegibility or incomprehensibility, especially when they glow (see plate 1).⁵³ Kant would say that they are difficult to cognize, like one of the flickering shapes in a hearth. The fact is that amber does not take fine carving especially well – details are difficult to achieve and the coloration makes them hard to discern – so the glyptic work always threatens to revert to mere lumpen stuff. Finework, when it appears, calls out for touching, as the details can often be felt more easily than seen; the ridges of carved drapery can be difficult to see but feel crisp and hard under the thumb (recall Homer's maidens 'touching it with their hands and gazing at it with their eyes'). These physical properties mean that illuminated amber requires scrutiny to be comprehensible; one must look closely, as though staring into a fire to see dancing figures.

In short, the amorphousness of amber sculpture brings out that doubleness or twofoldness in seeing – a simultaneous awareness of depictive content and material support – the amplification of which is essentially wonderful, *thaumastos*. With these pendants, neither radiance nor material is adequate; as Walter Benjamin once said of children's books, 'Their magic

5 Ivory and amber dancer, part of a lyre or kithara, from the sanctuary of Hera, Samos, late-seventh century BCE. Height: 14.5 cm. Samos: Archaeological Museum. Photo: HIP/Art Resource, NY.



lies not in the colored thing or in the mere dead color, but in the colored glow, the colored brilliance, the ray of colored light.⁵⁴

The second example is an ivory youth from a votive deposit in the Samian Heraion, one of the best-known pieces of early Greek sculpture (plate 5 and plate 6).⁵⁵ A luxury good of the mid-seventh century BCE, it originally served as the upright to a kind of lyre called a *kithara* or *phorminx*; it will have formed a pair with another figure, now lost.⁵⁶ A beardless youth, clad only in a belt, earrings and a crown, leaps with legs folded and arms by the sides. Eyes, brows, earrings and pubic hair were all inlaid with some bright material; only four discs of amber survive, decorating his crown. The place of manufacture remains uncertain, although the nudity indicates unambiguously that the piece is Greek. Stylistically it is eclectic, combining Phoenician, North Syrian and Laconian elements, and Jane Carter has argued plausibly that it is Laconian work.⁵⁷

Erika Simon was the first to observe that the dancer's move – leaping with legs folded – appears on several Archaic vases.⁵⁸ The example here is Athenian work of the late Archaic period (plate 7). Simon argued that these dancers allude directly to epic poetry. Pairs of leaping dancers appear on three separate occasions in Homer; the word in question is *kubistêtêr*, usually translated as 'acrobat' or 'tumbler', but Simon's *Springtänzer* seems more apt. These people are not mere saltimbanques, but *premiers danseurs* who make bold leaps.

Homer's first pair appears on the great shield of Achilles, where they lead a chorus of metal youths and maidens, and round off the description of the ideal city: 'And around the lovely chorus of dancers stood a great multitude happily watching, while among the dancers two leapers led the measures of song and dance revolving among them.'⁵⁹ In this case the dancers are not flesh and blood but, like the Samian versions, works of craft: *thaumata* in the most paradigmatic sense, works of Hephaestus himself.

The next leaping dancers come from the *Odyssey*, where they perform for Telemachus and Peisistratus, again as leaders of a troupe. Accompanying the dancers this time, however, is a man singing to the *phorminx*, that is, a lyre with a sounding-box, the very sort of instrument that the Samian figures adorned (*Odyssey* 4.15–19, trans. Lattimore, modified):⁶⁰

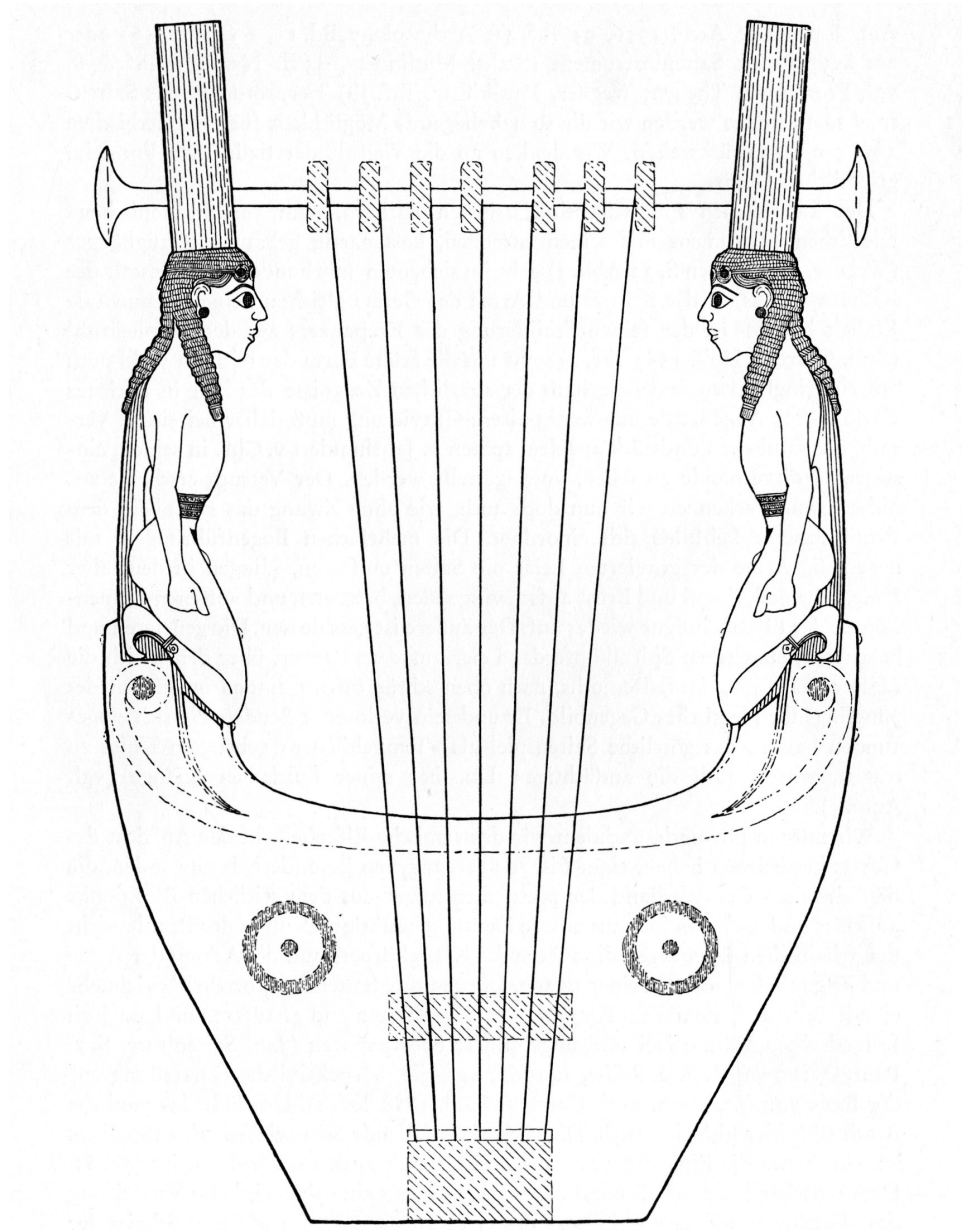
So these neighbours and townsmen of glorious Menelaos were at their feasting all about the great house with the high roof, and taking their ease, and among them stepped an inspired singer playing the *phorminx*, while among the dancers two leapers led the measures of song and dance, revolving among them.

The last two lines are a formula, repeated nearly verbatim from the *Iliad* and securing a connection between the two passages. Finally, at *Odyssey* 8.370–80, another pair of leaping dancers stands out before the chorus in the palace of Alcinoos. They toss a purple-red ball about – could it have been made of amber? – and then dance (*Odyssey* 8.377–80, trans. Lattimore):

Then after they had played their game with the ball thrown upward, these two performed a dance on the generous earth, with rapid interchange of position, and the rest of the young men standing about the field stamped out the time, and a great sound rose up.

This last spectacle produces the predictable reaction: 'Awe [*sebas*] takes me as I look upon them', says Odysseus (v. 384). Like Telemachus before the ivory and amber of

6 Reconstruction of lyre or kithara, from the sanctuary of Hera on Samos. Drawing: Dieter Ohly, 'Zur Rekonstruktion des samischen Gerätes mit dem elfenbein Jüngling', *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung*, 74, 1959, 54.



Menelaos, Odysseus finds himself seized, caught up, by *sebas* at the sight of the dancers. In this case, it is the 'rapid interchange of position', whether of the purple-red ball or the young men or both, that seems particularly to induce the effect.

The lyre from Samos, like the vessel in Boston, depicts two dancers, but they may stand metonymically for a larger group, just as the pairs in Homer are all members of a chorus even as they perform *pas de deux*. There may be an analogy to this abbreviation in the pairs of caryatids that stood before the Siphnian and Knidian treasuries at Delphi, which Timothy Power has persuasively associated with choral performance, a troupe reduced by synecdoche to a duo.⁶¹ But if ivory or stone can become somehow like a dancer, so choral groups, as Leslie Kurke and others have recently argued, can be like works of craft.⁶² In particular, the swift interchange of dancing feet reads, to Greek eyes, as a glimmer or shimmer, hence can be wonderful. In the *Odyssey*, for instance, Odysseus admires the feet of the Phaiakian youths as they dance before him: 'Odysseus fixed his gaze at the gleaming

of their feet, and he felt wonder [*thauma*] in his heart' (8.264–5). The boys are gleaming, *marmarugas*, as though made of marble (which the Greeks called *marmaros*, 'flashing stone') or of bronze. Again (cribbing Power's examples), Bacchylides describes a chorus of sea-maidens dancing beneath the waves as strangely fiery: 'From their brilliant limbs a radiance shone like that of fire' (103–5). This underwater fire is as uncanny as the 'shining drops of amber' that the Argonauts witness floating past them and burning like oil in the water. That is perhaps why the same poet can describe the hymns of boys as 'burning', like a sacrifice: the very words combust.⁶³

Particularly apt to the present example is the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, in which the god appears as chorus leader of the Graces, the Seasons and the gods. 'He plays the kithara,' says the poet, 'stepping high and handsomely, and a radiance shines about him, even the gleaming of his feet and well-spun chiton' (200–3). Power



7 Attic red-figured pelike, assigned to the Pioneer Group, with dancers and piper, late-sixth century BCE. Clay, 31.1 (height) × 24.4 (maximum diameter) cm. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts (1973.88 [Beazley Archive Database Number 4437]). Photograph: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

draws attention to the word *marmaros*, which he connects specifically with marble: 'the rhapsode trains the spotlight on Apollo as if he were a marble statue of the divine citharode rather than the incarnate god himself.'⁶⁴ But this limitation seems unnecessary: the term applies to many other materials.⁶⁵ Marble is *marmaros* because it is bright, not the other way around: what matters is not the stone but the effect. It seems legitimate, therefore, to extend Power's argument and suggest that the ivory lyre might evoke a splendour similar to that of Apollo's *kithara*. Essential to this brilliance is the amber circlet, giving each youth a crown of fire – not unlike Apollo himself in the same hymn, when he appears 'bright as a star at noonday' (441), in the form of 'a man, brisk and sturdy, in the prime of his youth, while his broad shoulders were covered with his hair' (449–59).

The Samian dancer is a *thauma idesthai* if ever there was one. He evokes splendour twice over, reduplicating the wonderful brilliance of the gleaming chorus on the very instrument that will lead a choral dance. Unavoidably, the amber-ivory, 'electro-elephantine' lyre will move as it is played: 'Among [the dancers] stepped a divinely-inspired phorminx-player', says the poet (*Odyssey* 4.17–18), which means, of course, that his lyre was mobile as well. When, as here, the instrument itself bears crafted dancers upon it, then those ivory youths will also sway as the musician strums and picks. In this way, real bodies assimilate to elaborate works of craft, the musical instrument to its own chorus, and conversely: flesh is like ivory, ivory like flesh, both activated by the body of the inspired singer. The ivory dancers represent young men wholly in the grip of the Muse, so that when the instrument sways, so do they, in perfect time: they are, in this sense, rather like the automata and puppets, the *thaumata*, that, as Kurke has shown, haunt Greek thinking about choral dance.⁶⁶

The amber crown is crucial to all this, for it provides the gleam, the *steropê*, requisite to an assimilation of inanimate to animate.⁶⁷ In this way, Homer's 'rapid interchange of positions' exceeds choreography to become a phenomenological description of the *thauma idesthai* itself. The wonder, in the end, is not an object at all but a relation, which presents as an ongoing assimilation and discrimination of flesh and ivory, dance and song, movement and stasis. This wonderful relationality involves seeing ivory as ivory, amber as amber, and yet, in the same glance, seeing in those materials a jumping youth and a burning crown. But it also involves seeing images out of epic song in the actual present – and, furthermore, seeing the analogy between those two relations, between figural representation and poetic allusion. Perhaps, for the dancers who stepped to this lyre's music, performed the high-jumps that it represents, it might even have involved *becoming* such an image, for a little while, becoming a *thauma idesthai* oneself as one leaped and swayed and sang. Who can tell the dancer from the dance?

Various Small Fires

The dancer's radiant crown brings me to the second half of this paper: oil and fire. For Xenophon (*Symposium* 7.4), the humble oil-lamp is an everyday wonder. Socrates says (trans. Loeb, modified):

It is of course no rare event to chance upon wonders, if that is what you want; in fact you can wonder at what's right in front of you now – for instance, why the lamp gives light by having a bright flame while its bronze reflector, likewise bright, doesn't produce light but instead reflects other things that appear in it. Or how it is that olive oil, though wet, makes the flame higher, while water, because it is wet, puts the fire out.

Philosophy begins in wonder of this sort, and one of the functions of figural décor is to bring out and amplify such effects.⁶⁸ A figured or sculpted lamp, then, will be yet more wonderful still.⁶⁹ Perhaps the most splendid lamps of early Greece are a small class of marble examples, dating from the seventh and sixth centuries BCE. Best-known is an example from Selinous, one of three found at the extra-urban sanctuary of Demeter Malophoros ('the Apple- or Sheep-Bearer') just to the west of the town proper (plate 8 and plate 9).⁷⁰ It exemplifies a small but intriguing category of fancy marble lamps with figural decoration. The basic study of this class was undertaken by Sir John Beazley; more recently, Donald Bailey, Marcus Hermanns, Stephanie Böhm, Vasiliki Barlou and others have added to the list and clarified issues of provenance and distribution.⁷¹ Beazley divided the corpus into two parts: a more or less homogeneous class made of Island marble that he thought had probably been produced on Paros, and a more disparate class of 'everything else', comprising sundry lamps of marble, limestone, steatite and other stones, and one Etruscan version in bronze (to which I shall return). All of these lamps are variations on the same theme. Each consists of a shallow basin for holding oil, with one or more bosses on the exterior, drilled to hold wicks. Sometimes the bosses are plain; sometimes they have been worked up into protomes (plate 10). The latter can take the form of Daedalic heads, alternating with stylized bundles or with the protomes of rams. Within this broad parameter there is room for variation, notably in the number of heads and the number of wicks; usually the human protomes hold the wicks, but the rams can do so as well. There is variation also in the basic plan view of the lamp: some are circular, some semi-circular; the basin for the oil can be subdivided so each wick gets its own supply, or all three can share a common source, and so on. Some lamps have a central perforation as if for a suspension chain, but for the most part they seem simply to have rested on flat surfaces. Many are scorched, showing that they were functional albeit out of the ordinary. The marble lamps disappear in the Classical period but their imagery lives on, as a splendid bronze example from Phagres may attest.⁷²



8 Marble lamp from the sanctuary of Demeter Malophoros, Selinous, mid-seventh century BCE. 21.7 (width of front) × 7.2 (height) cm. Palermo: Museo Archeologico (3892). Photo: DeAgostini Picture Library/ Art Resource, NY.

All these lamps are small works of sculpture, intended for use. They are, if not exactly lightweight, at any rate far more easily portable than most stone sculpture in early Greece, which Archaic poets often tell us was supposed to stand immobile for all time. Beazley, sensibly enough, speaks of them as marble lamps: lamps, that is, made of what the Greeks called *marmaros*, ‘shining stone’. But is that all there is to it? The heavy, carved stone – and, more specifically, the carved protomes – relate closely to the flame when lit. Crudely, the flame comes out of a person’s head, and this ensemble is the *agalma* in its fully operational mode (plate 10). In other words, the medium here is not just marble or bronze, not just shining stone or gleaming metal, but also fire and light and smoke and even, arguably, the oil that feeds the flame and the wick that the flame burns. You have to turn this object ‘on’, kindle it, to make it work.

Such holism may sound forced. It seems far more natural to dissociate the head from the flame, and to cast the one as the support for the other: a decorative element on a functional object. Indeed, that is just what all previous commentators have done. Yet these lamps lend themselves to a perfectly orthodox iconographic analysis: the image of fire leaping from the crown of a person’s head is prominent in epic. In the fifth book of the *Iliad*, for instance, Athena kindles fire from the head of Diomedes, already bright by virtue of his helmet. ‘She kindled from out of both the helmet and shield an unwearying flame [*akamaton pur*] like a star at harvest time that appears especially bright everywhere, having bathed in the streams of Ocean. Such a flame did she kindle from his head and shoulders.’⁷³ This transformation marks the beginning of Diomedes’ *aristeia*, that is, the account of his deeds of glory. Immediately thereafter, Hephaestus rescues one of his first victims, Idaeus, by shrouding him in darkness (5.22–4); later, Aphrodite will rescue Aeneas, hiding him in ‘a fold of her bright garment’ (5.315). Thus Diomedes, with his flaming head, stands out as a highly visible beacon between an obscuring darkness and an excessive brilliance.

Diomedes, of course, is not the best, or even the second-best, of the Achaeans (despite what Pandarus says at 5.103). The best is Achilles who, appropriately enough, outdoes him in this regard. In the eighteenth book of the *Iliad*, Athena kindles fire



9 Marble lamp with conical projections from the Temple of Artemis, Ephesos, c. 625–575 BCE. 22.7 (length) × 18.5 (diameter of body) cm. London: British Museum (Q3960). Photo: Trustees of the British Museum.



10 Composite image of marble lamp from the sanctuary of Demeter Malophoros, Selinous, as though in use. Photomontage: Author.

around his head as he finally sets out to retrieve the body of Patroclus, in one of the poem's most dramatic moments. Iris – the rainbow, daughter of *Thaumas*, 'Wonder', and *Elektra*, 'Brilliance' or 'Amber' – departs, and the hero finally goes into action (*Iliad* 18.196–214, trans. Lattimore, modified).⁷⁴

So speaking Iris of the swift feet went away from him; but Achilles, the beloved of Zeus, rose up, and Athena swept about his powerful shoulders the fluttering aegis; and she, divine among goddesses, about his head circled a golden cloud, and kindled from it a flame far-shining. As when a flare goes up into the high air from a city on an island far away, with enemies fighting about it who all day long are in the hateful division of Ares fighting from their own city, but as the sun goes down signal fires blaze out one after another, so that the glare goes pulsing high for men of the neighbouring islands to see it, in case they might come over in ships to fend off the enemy; so from the head of Achilles the blaze shot into the bright aither.

This brilliance is no dead metaphor: the poet wants us to understand that the fire is literally shooting from the hero's head. The Trojans see it and react with *ekplexis*, astonishment: 'The charioteers were dumbfounded when they saw the unwearied dangerous fire blazing above the head of great-hearted Peleion kindled by the goddess gray-eyed Athena.'⁷⁵

In these two passages, the image is of flame seen from a distance: either a star, or a beacon on a neighbouring island. The hero functions as a 'placeholder' in the most literal sense: when kindled, he becomes the basic point of reference for spatial relations in the vicinity, the latter defined as the range within which the flame can be seen. Everything appears relative to the bright hero, as when the poet focalizes his description of Achilles through the eyes of people watching 'from an island far away'.

This spatial effect is clear when, in the twenty-second book, the poet likens Achilles himself to the harvest star (*Iliad* 22.25–32, trans. Lattimore, modified):

The old man Priam was first to see him with his eyes, as he sped all-gleaming over the plain like the star that comes up at harvest time, and brightly do its rays shine among the many stars in the dead of night, the star that men call by name the Dog of Orion. Brightest of all is he, yet he is a sign [sēma] of evil, and brings much fever on wretched mortals. So did the bronze gleam on the breast of Achilles as he ran.

Priam reads the sign correctly and proceeds to prophesize the fall of Troy in a reverie on destruction that extends for some forty lines (*Iliad* 22.38–77).

Later, when Achilles perishes, he will continue to exist as a brilliant sign, this time a tomb. As Odysseus recounts in *Odyssey* 24, ‘Over their bodies [of Achilles and Patroclus] we the sacred army of the Argive spearmen piled up a huge and perfect mound, on a jutting headland, by the wide Hellespont, so that it might be bright from afar [tēlephanēs] for men coming from the sea, both those who are now and those who will be in the future.’⁷⁶ Gregory Nagy observes that ‘the future of the narrative is the here-and-now of the Homeric audience’, that is, we ourselves are the viewers that Odysseus envisions; the beacon for ships at sea shines, as it were, from the past into the present, and the tomb becomes ‘a focal point for the heroic essence of Achilles’ and, indeed, for all the other Greeks at Troy, a poetic and conceptual landmark no less than a maritime one.⁷⁷

Characteristically, however, the *Odyssey* also ironizes this way of seeing. When the suitor Eurymachus – the same one who offered Penelope the amber necklace – first looks upon the disguised Odysseus, he remarks, ‘Nevertheless it seems to me that the ray of torches comes from him, from his head, since there is not a trace of hair upon it.’⁷⁸ The suitor mocks the disguised Odysseus with the suggestion that he is radiant – and not in any especially wonderful way, but merely by virtue of baldness. The irony comes from the fact that Odysseus actually is a bright hero and possessed of a full head of hair. Even at his nadir, shipwrecked on Phaeacia and appearing naked before Nausikaa, he is still ‘well-coiffed’ (*Odyssey* 6.135). But when Eurymachus sees him, Odysseus is in disguise: Athena has ‘ruined the brown hair on his head’ and ‘dimmed’ his eyes (13.399, 13.431). So Eurymachus is not making a mistake: he sees a bald pate, just as the goddess intended. Rather, the phrase ‘it appears to me’, *moi dokei*, bespeaks a curious negative vision. For in seeing the light, and mocking it, Eurymachus is failing to see the true shining of things: Odysseus is, as it were, a veiled lamp. It is as though vision itself had been ironized.

This imagery survives antiquity in the tale of Pentecost, when the divine flame descended upon the Apostles: ‘And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them’ (Acts 2:3) (plate 11). This tale is conventionally rendered, from late antiquity onward, by showing the saints with tongues of flame hovering above their heads, as in the Rabbula Gospels of the late sixth century CE. Thus sensuous ancient radiance becomes Christian miracle, and Archaic *charis* becomes a state of grace.

In short, the image of a head emitting a tongue of fire was well established in seventh-century BCE Greece. The amber crown of the Samian dancer may well allude to such imagery; one might equally compare the grace radiating from the crown of Pandora in Hesiod’s *Theogony*, or the gleaming, golden



II Illumination of Pentecost, from *The Rabbula Gospels*, f. 14v, c. 586 CE. Tempera on parchment, 33.7 cm. × 26.7 cm. Florence: Laurentian Library (cod. Plut. I, 56). Photo: Alinari/Art Resource, NY.

headdress from Metaponto described earlier. In the case of the lamps, however, these analogues suggest that it is at the very least unnecessary, and probably a mistake, to separate form and function: to dissociate the figural sculpture (the art) from the fire (the tool). The category of the ‘decorative’ is one of the ways in which modern scholarship manages this distinction. On the one hand, there is a sculpted head; on the other hand, there is fire; if these elements seem incongruous then we call the head ‘decorative’ to keep things distinct. That is, the category of the decorative allows us to keep the depictive content of the sculpture (a head) separate from the function of the object (the fire). It saves us from the seemingly over-literal interpretation of the lamp as representing a head with flame shooting out of its crown. But that, I suggest, is exactly what it does represent. The Homeric analogues are good evidence that the flame is part of the iconography: these are not decorative heads

that serve as supports for wicks; they are representations of people with fire coming out of their heads.

Instead of explaining away the incongruity with the label ‘decorative’, in other words, we might acknowledge it as a theme. The fire is part of the diegetic world, the depictive content, of the sculpture, even as it is, literally, fire; unlike the painted or sculpted kind, it will burn you if you touch it. So the fire is at once virtual and actual, it literally flickers between two ontologies. ‘Brightest of all is he,’ says Homer, ‘and yet he is a sign’, and this doubleness seems exactly apt to the case of the lamp. Eurymachus is a negative exemplar of how to see such a thing: to explain radiance as a function of some silly, prosaic cause like baldness or flammable oil. The correct reaction to such a spectacle is, Homer tells us, *ekplexis*, ‘astonishment’, or the wise reading that Priam provides.⁷⁹

It does not follow, however, that these lamps allude to the Homeric poems. In fact, the reverse may be the case. Given that most of these lamps date to the seventh century BCE, are of island manufacture and were widely distributed – hence are contemporary with the ongoing elaboration of the Homeric epics – it might be possible that they are the real source of the bizarre imagery. When Homer says that Athena ‘kindled’ flame from the heads of Achilles and Diomedes – repeating the verb *daiō*, ‘to kindle’, no fewer than four times (*Iliad* 5.4, 5.7, 18.206, 18.227) – he impels his auditors to envision the concrete, literal activity of striking a fire. To kindle a head seems a strange thing to do, and it may be worth wondering whether the poet’s imagery might have been inspired by contemporary Ionian lamps that actually did require one do just that. If so, then the poems would be something like a contemporary gloss on the objects. But this theory goes well beyond the evidence – after all, Homer compares Diomedes and Achilles to stars and beacons, not votive lamps – and must remain speculation.

Here another wrinkle arises. The fifth-century BCE lamp from Phagres features unambiguously masculine heads, but the gender of the earlier Daedalic examples is less clear. Figures in this style are so stereotyped that males and females often wear identical hairstyles and ornament. Do these lamps really represent masculine heroes of the sort that Homer describes, or might they be feminine?

The imagery of fire remains pertinent either way. As we have seen, the first woman, Pandora, radiated grace (*charis*) from her head, albeit from a glorious crown and not a flame. Yet this archetypal female has a permanent connection with fire in the Greek imagination and, specifically, in the context of a religious offering. For Pandora was given to men in retribution for the theft of fire by Prometheus: woman, as Hesiod puts it, was contrived *anti pyros*, ‘as a counterpart to fire’ (Hesiod, *Works and Days* 57; *Theogony* 570). Jean-Pierre Vernant has shown how this myth connects to, and glosses, the accompanying myth of the institution of sacrifice by that same Prometheus: if fire burns animals for the gods to re-establish felicitous exchange after the theft of flame, then the baleful gift of woman is a requisite, negative counterpart to the act of piety.⁸⁰ Pandora’s radiance is part of this system, a crafted version of fire’s elemental brilliance. Thus the sacrificial lamp fuses the three elemental motifs of Greek religion’s own etiological myth: the woman, the victim and the fire, each the figure of the other. A woman, like a man, can wear a crown of fire, and cast the light of grace.

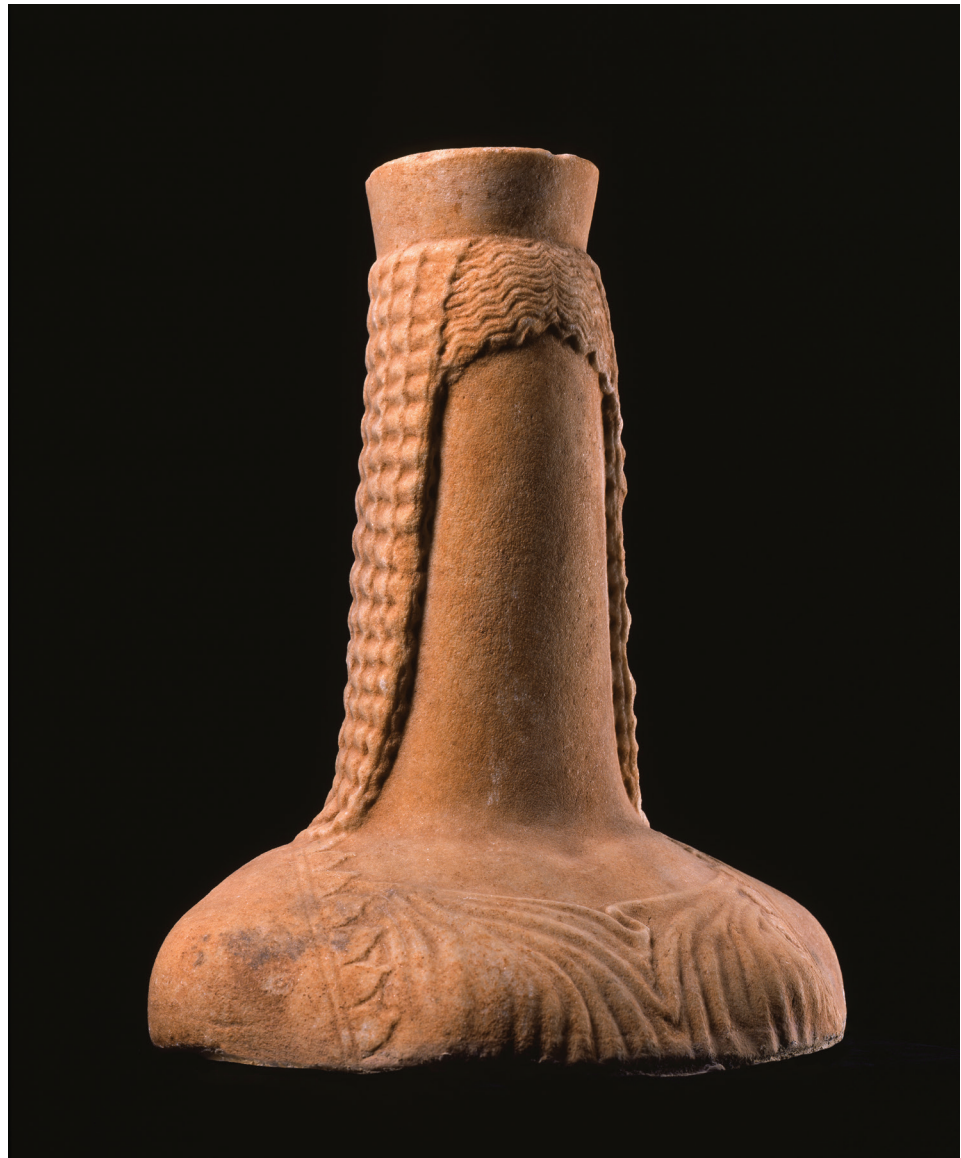
Three claims, at any rate, seem warranted: first, the importance of a holistic view that acknowledges the fire as part of the iconography, and not as a functional supplement to a work of sculpture; second, the resulting *doubleness* of the flame, at once a literal presence and a poetic conceit; third, the *normative* contrast between the mockery of Eurymachus on the one hand, and the wholly correct reactions of the Trojans, variously astonishment and hermeneutics, on the other. For these three terms – holism, doubleness and normativity – help us to make some sense of a strange, and final, subset of the class of marble lamps.

Beazley notes that two of the lamps replace the human face with a simple aniconic boss, flanked by locks of hair; an effect he likens to the famous goddess busts from Cyrene (plate 12).⁸¹ One of these lamps was in Berlin, and came from Ionia, but it seems to have been lost. Beazley recorded no inventory number for it and it does not appear in any of the catalogues; in fact I can find no reference to it anywhere outside of Beazley’s own article, which was published in 1940 and must have been written before the war. Unfortunately he did not illustrate it, so his description will have to suffice – with the irony in being unable to represent an aniconic work being duly noted. ‘The rounded side-pieces of the nozzles’, we are told, ‘stop before reaching the bottom, and look – must be intended to look – like locks of hair framing a blank face: they recall the “unknown divinities” from Cyrenaica.’⁸² It is not difficult to get a sense of this lamp’s appearance. Where the lamp in plate 8 has a fully sculpted protome, the one in plate 9 has just a blank, conical projection; the lost Ionian piece will have been intermediate between these two extremes, aniconic like plate 9, but with the coiffure of a fully anthropomorphic protome like plate 8.

The result is only a particularly pronounced example of the general thematic of the Archaic marble lamp. The shining face of stone – in this case, aniconic – and the flickering fire *dissociate* or *analyse* what the amber *korê* combined or *synthesized*: the amber is congealed fire teetering at the edge of iconicity; the lamp, bisected between hard stone below and bright fire above, is *potentially* representational and for that reason fascinating.⁸³ The second aniconic lamp gives some sense of the effect; made of bronze and presumably Etruscan, Beazley compared it to the marble one (plate 13).⁸⁴ In this case, the entire face is replaced with a wick-holder, so that the flame would burn directly between the locks of hair: a face of fire. Perhaps betraying the prejudices of his time, Beazley considered this conceit to have been inspired by Greek prototypes, as opposed to an Etruscan invention. In Greek terms, at any rate,

this burning face, literally shimmering between the iconic and the non-figural, is a perfect *thuma*, neither embodied nor disembodied, neither material nor immaterial, unresolvable.

At once dangerous and illuminating, conspicuous and deceptive, fire haunted the early Greek imagination. Heraclitus spoke of the 'tropes of fire' (*pyros tropai*), seeing in the flickering impermanence of the flame a figure for the universal changeability of all things.⁸⁵ Fire becomes water and hot air, which in turn combust into fire; the principle of constant change entails a recurrent conflagration or *ekpyrosis* of the totality.⁸⁶ The point is not that fire is some universal essence but that, by virtue of its endless changeability, it epitomizes the flux that Heraclitus saw as the ineffable basis of all being.⁸⁷ In a more worldly vein, the opening of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (458 BCE) is, among other things, a sustained meditation on the mysteries of fire, as two soldiers study distant beacons: 'We shall soon know', they say, 'about the beacon-watches and fire-relays of the travelling light-signals, whether they are indeed telling the truth or whether the coming of this joyful light has beguiled our minds like a dream.'⁸⁸ These lines, and the tragedy's subsequent elaboration of them, make a sort of reader's guide



12 Limestone semi-iconic bust of the 'unknown divinity', from Cyrene, fifth century BCE. Height: 47 cm. Cyrene: Archaeological Museum (11.002). Photo: Gilles Mehmet/Art Resource, NY.

13 Bronze lamp, of Etruscan manufacture, mid-sixth century BCE. Diameter: 14.9 cm. Height: 3.6 cm. Berlin: Antikensammlung (30921). Photo: J. Beazley, 'A Marble Lamp', *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 60, 1940, 47.



to sculptural radiance no less than to literal bonfires. Does fire deliver truth or does it beguile? By the end of the tragedy the very distinction will seem inapt, for both answers are right and both are wrong: the fires do signal Agamemnon's homecoming but also the death that will befall him at the hands of his wife, Clytemnestra. Marble lamps and amber pendants may seem trivial by comparison to the grandeur of tragedy, but in their own way they effect the same meditation on mutability, the same dialectic of legibility and obscurity.

In his last book, *La flamme d'une chandelle*, Gaston Bachelard contemplated the familiar phenomenon of fascination by the light of a candle or a lamp. 'Of all the objects in the world that invoke reverie,' he suggested, 'a flame calls forth images more readily than any other': 'it compels us to imagine; when one dreams before a flame, what is perceived is nothing compared to what is imagined.'⁸⁹ Unlike electric light, candles and lamps leave a great deal in shadow, and for just that reason are provocations to a specifically imagistic absorption:⁹⁰

The disequilibrium between what is perceived and what is imagined quickly reaches its limits. The flame is no longer an *object of perception*. It has become a *philosophical object*.

This view is the opposite of Kant's, which saw the shapes in fire as mere fantasy. For Bachelard, a flame can be an object of absorbed contemplation even as it is a prosaic, everyday piece of equipment for illuminating the world. In the study of lamps and candles – and, more specifically, their flickering lights – one might, as Bachelard puts it, 'hope to attain a concrete aesthetics, an aesthetics that would not proceed by philosophical polemic, an aesthetics that would not be rationalized by facile "general ideas"': 'the flame, the flame alone, can concretize the being of all its images, the being of all its phantoms.'⁹¹

What Bachelard was after here, and what Kant denied, was the flame's curious insubstantiality, in tandem with its capacity to establish material conditions of visibility, to draw the eye, and provoke contemplation. This suggests a different, non-polemical conception of philosophy. For a truly 'concrete' aesthetics, one that really could respect the being of phantoms, one might do worse than to excavate the older Greek practices of wonder and delight, amber and fire.

Materiality, then, as opposed to what? Concreteness is not to be sought in things, or in objects, or in the disinterested, theoretical contemplation of the Kantian aesthetic, but in the intense absorption that attends staring into a flame, or the burning eyes of Fear; in playing or dancing to an 'electro-elephantine' lyre; in the interface between 'most-incorporeal' fire and the shining stone of a lamp; or in the figure in the flame that, while literally marginal to modern aesthetics, could, in antiquity, be the very face of God.

Notes

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- 1 Aristotle, *On the Soul* 405a7 (author’s translation).
- 2 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Cambridge, 2000, 127 (translation modified). I am grateful to Jordan Schonig for an illuminating discussion of this passage.
- 3 Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 127 (modified).
- 4 Immanuel Kant, *Natural Science*, Cambridge, 2012, 209–226.
- 5 Paul Crowther, *The Kantian Aesthetic*, Oxford, 2010, 79.
- 6 Hesiod, *Theogony* 35; cf. Homer, *Iliad* 22.126–8; *Odyssey* 19.163.
- 7 On *thauima* see Raymond Prier, *Thauima Idesthai: The Phenomenology of Sight and Appearance in Archaic Greek*, Tallahassee, 1989; Christine Hunzinger, ‘Le plaisir esthétique dans l’épopée archaïque: les mots de la famille de *thauima*’, *Bulletin de l’Association Guillaume Budé*, 1994, 4–30; Christine Hunzinger, ‘La perception du merveilleux: *thauimazō* et *théōimoi*’, *Études sur la vision dans l’Antiquité classique*, Rouen, 2005, 29–38; Christine Hunzinger, ‘Wonder’, in Penelope Murray and Pierre Destrée, eds, *A Companion to Ancient Aesthetics*, Malden, 2015, 422–437. On its relation to art see Hanna Philipp, *Tektonon Daidala*, Berlin, 1968, 8–10; Monica Pugliara, *Il mirabile e l’artifici*, Rome, 2002, 8–12, 62–66; Deborah Steiner, ‘Greek and Roman Theories of Art’, in Clemente Marconi, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Art and Architecture*, Oxford, 2014, 21–40. The discussion of *thauima* and *charis* over the next few paragraphs borrows freely from Richard Neer, *The Emergence of the Classical Style in Greek Sculpture*, Chicago, 2010; Richard Neer, ‘Classical Sculpture’, in Michael Kelly, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, 2nd edition, Oxford, 2014, vol. 5: 522–525.
- 8 Homer, *Odyssey* 19.225–31, trans. Lattimore.
- 9 Twofoldness: Richard Wollheim, ‘On Pictorial Representation’, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 56: 3, 1998, 217–226.
- 10 On *charis* and sculpture see Joseph Day, *Archaic Greek Epigram and Dedication*, Cambridge, 2010, 232–280. For an overview of Greek literary descriptions of *charis* see Bonnie MacLachlan, *The Age of Grace*, Princeton, 1993. On the interplay of *charis*, light, poetry and craft see Anne Carson, ‘The Burners: A Reading of Bacchylides’ Third Epinician Ode’, *Phoenix*, 38: 2, 1984, 111–119.
- 11 On radiance and *charis* see Day, *Archaic Greek Epigram and Dedication*, 91–92.
- 12 Hesiod, *Theogony* 581–4, trans. Loeb. On Pandora and *charis* see Daniel Saintillan, ‘Du festin à l’échange: les Graces de Pandore’, *Le Métier du mythe*, Lille, 1996, 315–348; Jean-Pierre Vernant, ‘Semblances of Pandora: Imitation and Identity’, *Critical Inquiry*, 37: 3, 2011, 404–418.
- 13 Pier Giovanni Guzzo, ‘Oreficerie ornamentali dalla tomba 238 in località Crucinia’, *Bollettino d’Arte*, 143, 2008, 15–26.
- 14 Prier, *Thauima Idesthai* 97–108.
- 15 Homer, *Iliad* 5.722–9 (chariot wheel), 10.449–51 (Rhesos), 18.82–5 (armour of Peleus), 18.373–8 (tripods of Hephaestus); Homer, *Odyssey* 6.305–7 (yarn of Arete), 7.43–5 (walls of Phaeacia), 8.364–6 (garments of Aphrodite), 13.102–12 (weaving of Naiads at Ithaka).
- 16 ‘Topopoetic’ was coined in Edward Casey, *Representing Place*, Minneapolis, 2002. Casey, however, uses the term to refer to the depictive content of pictures, a very different sense from the one in use here. For the latter see Richard Neer and Leslie Kurke, ‘Pindar Fr. 75 SM and the Politics of Athenian Space’, *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 54: 4, 2014, 527–579; Richard Neer and Leslie Kurke, *Pindar’s Sites*, Baltimore, forthcoming.
- 17 For useful overviews of the literature on amber see Attilio Mastrocinque, *L’ambra e l’Eridano*, Este, 1991 (myths); Maria Luisa Nava and Antonio Salerno, eds, *Ambre. trasparenze dell’antico*, Milan, 2007; Maria Cecilia d’Ercole, *Ambres gravés du Département des Monnaies, Médailles et Antiques*, Paris, 2008; Faya Causey, *Amber and the Ancient World*, Los Angeles, 2012; Faya Causey, *Ancient Carved Ambers in the J. Paul Getty Museum*, Los Angeles, 2012; Simonetta Massimi and Maria Letizia Arancio, *Ambra, dalle rive del Baltico all’Etruria*, Rome, 2012; Maria Cecilia d’Ercole, *Ambres gravés. La collection du département des Antiquités grecques, étrusques et romaines du musée du Louvre*, Paris, 2013; Alessandro Naso, ‘Amber for Artemis: Preliminary Report on the Amber Finds from the Sanctuary of Artemis at Ephesus’, *Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts in Wien*, 82, 2013, 259–278. Donald Strong, *Catalogue of the Carved Amber in the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, London, 1966, remains an essential resource. Doubting the existence of a Bronze Age amber route: Aleksandar Palavestra, ‘Was There an Amber Route?’, in Ioanna Galanaki, Yannis Galanakis and Robert Laffineur, eds, *Between the Aegean and the Baltic Seas*, Liège, 2007, 349–355. Recent scholarship on the route is collected in P. Cellarosi et al., eds, *The Amber Roads*, Rome, 2016.
- 18 Cf. Hesiod, fr. 98.23–4 Most (=150 M-W), 262a–b Most (=311 M-W); Aeschylus, fr. 71–73a; Euripides, *Hippolytus* 732–41, *Phaethon* test. iv; Ps-Aristotle, *On Marvelous Things Heard* 81, 836A24; Apollonius of Rhodes, *Argonautica* 4.603–6; Polybius 2.16.13; Diodorus 5.23; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 11.364–5; Pliny, *Natural History* 37.31–2; Dionysius Periegetes 292–3; Quintus Smyrnaeus, 5.625–630; Claudian, 7.124–5, 12.14, 40.11; Nonnus, 23.92–3. On the myth see Frederick Ahl, ‘Amber, Avallon, and Apollo’s Singing Swan’, *American Journal of Philology*, 103: 4, 1982, 373–411; Attilio Mastrocinque, ‘Miti greci e ambre figurate’, in *Ambra, dalle rive del Baltico all’Etruria*, Rome, 2012, 35–37.
- 19 Euripides, *Hippolytus* 732–41 (trans. Loeb, modified).
- 20 Apollonius of Rhodes, *Argonautica* 4.625–6, trans. Loeb.
- 21 Apollonius of Rhodes, *Argonautica* 4.611–18.
- 22 Some authors are more sceptical. Herodotus knew that amber really came from somewhere much further north than the Po, and associated it with the Hyperboreans (‘Dwellers beyond the North Wind’); he implied that it was the substance of mysterious gifts that these same Hyperboreans sent wrapped in straw to Delos by way of the Adriatic and Epirus (Herodotus 4.32–6 and 3.115; see Roger Dion, ‘La notion d’Hyperboréens: ses vicissitudes au cours de l’antiquité’, *Bulletin de l’Association Guillaume Budé*, 2, 1976, 144; Jan Bouzek, ‘The Amber Route, Apollo and the Hyperboreans’, in Ioanna Galanaki et al., eds, *Between the Aegean and the Baltic Seas*, 357–362; Barbara Kowalzig, *Singing for the Gods*, Oxford, 2007, 118–123). In fact, Mycenaean amber has been found re-used in the foundation deposit near the temple of Artemis on Delos. Diodorus Siculus (*Library* 5.23), on the other hand, insisted that amber had nothing to do with congealed tears of sunlight, but came from an island in the Baltic. Lucian’s *Amber, or the Swans* describes the disappointment of a tourist to the Po who, on arrival, finds that there are no weeping poplars after all.
- 23 Pindar fr. 122.2–3 S-M. See Leslie Kurke, ‘Pindar and the Prostitutes, or Reading Ancient “Pornography”’, *Arion*, 4:2, 1996, 49–75.
- 24 On amber’s colour and brilliance see Faya Causey with J. Shepherd, ‘Amber’, in Liza Cleland, Karen Stears and Glenys Davies, eds, *Colour in the Ancient Mediterranean World*, Oxford, 2004, 70–72.
- 25 Homer, *Odyssey* 4.71–5, trans. Lattimore, modified.
- 26 On the shield’s striking material qualities see Carlo Russo, *Hesiodi Scutum*, Florence, 1965, 24–25. On its relation to archaeological corpora see Sara Chiarini, *L’archeologia dello Scutum Herculis*, Rome, 2012, 49–61.
- 27 Chiarini, *L’archeologia dello Scutum*, 53 n. 20; compare Pausanias, *Description* 5.12.7.
- 28 Louis Deroy and Robert Halleux, ‘À propos du grec *ēlektron* “amber” et “or blanc”’, *Glotta*, 53, 1974, 36–52. I refer here only to their demonstration that *ēlektron* in early Greek texts signifies amber and not the alloy of gold and silver. The authors’ larger arguments, and to the effect that amber was not considered bright in early Greece and was originally used as an exchange token, are less convincing. This latter portion of the argument leads Chiarini (*L’archeologia dello Scutum*, 53 n. 20) to conclude that the *ēlektron* on the shield must be metallic, not resinous. But the philological argument that the use of *ēlektron* for metal is late should trump the merely subjective notion that amber does not merit the term *hypolampēs*, ‘shining with inferior lustre’. For the Greeks, amber could glow, as befits congealed fire; that modern scholars may find it insufficiently shimmery is as irrelevant to an historical understanding as the fact that amber is not really congealed sunlight but the preserved resin of Eocene conifers.

- 29 For overviews of the use of amber inlay in furniture of the period see Elspeth Duisinberre, 'An Excavated Ivory from Kerkenes Dağ, Turkey: Transcultural Fluidities, Significations of Collective Identity, and the Problem of Median Art', *Ars Orientalis*, 32, 2002, 17–54; Naso, 'Amber for Artemis'; Elizabeth Baughan, *Couched in Death*, Madison, WI, 2013, 61–65. For an amber and ivory couch from the Kerameikos cemetery in Athens, see Ursula Knigge, *Kerameikos: Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen*, vol. 9: Der Sudhügel, Berlin, 1976.
- 30 On glowing eyes in Homer see Daniel Turkeltaub, 'The Syntax and Semantics of Homeric Glowing Eyes: *Iliad* 1.200', *American Journal of Philology*, 126, 2005, 157–186.
- 31 Malibu, J. Paul Getty Museum 83.AC.7.1; Hermann Born and Svend Hansen, *Frühgriechische Bronzehelme*, Mainz, 1994, 155.
- 32 On Apulian figured ambers: Andrea Montanaro, *Ambre figurate: amuleti e ornamenti dalla Puglia preromana*, Rome, 2012; Ada Riccardi, 'Ornamenti metallici e in ambra tra VI e IV secolo a.C.', *La Puglia centrale dall'età del Bronzo all'Alto Medioevo*, Rome, 2010, 345–357; Andrea Montanaro, 'Le ambre figurate in area adriatica tra l'Orientalizzante e l'età arcaica', *The Amber Roads*, Rome, 2014, 363–394. General discussions of Greeks, Etruscans and Peuketioi in Apulia: T. Carpenter, K. Lynch and E. Robinson, eds, *The Italic People of Ancient Apulia*, Cambridge, 2014; Andrea Montanaro, *Ornamenti e lusso nell'antica Peucezia*, Rome, 2015. For a wider survey of South Italian production see Nuccia Negroni Catacchio, 'The Production of Amber Figurines in Italy from the 8th to 4th Centuries B.C.', in Curt W. Beck and Jan Jouzek, eds, *Amber in Archaeology: Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Amber in Archaeology*, Prague, 1993, 191–202. Recent exhibitions of Italian amber: Marina Piranamente, ed., *Lacrime d'ambra: ornamenti femminili della Basilicata antica*, Rome, 2002; Attilio Mastrocinque et al., *Magie d'ambra: amuleti e gioielli della Basilicata antica*, Potenza, 2005; Nava and Salerno, *Ambre*; Simonetta Massimi and M. Letizia Arancio, eds, *Ambra: dalle rive del Baltico all'Etruria*, Rome, 2012. On Apulian frontlets, including the Getty example, see Angelo Bottini and Elisabetta Setari, *La necropoli italica di Braida di Vaglio in Basilicata*, Rome, 2003, 101–103; Andrea Montanaro, *Ruvo di Puglia e il suo territorio: le necropoli*, Rome, 2007, 124, 136, 150; Angelo Bottini, 'Eroi armati: gli strumenti della guerra', *Segni del potere*, Venosa, 2013, 145–158. For frontlets at Olympia and elsewhere see Emil Kunze, 'Protometopidia', *Olympiabericht VIII*, Berlin, 1967, 184–195; Mary Littauer and Vassos Karageorghis, 'Note on Prometopidia', *Archäologischer Anzeiger*, 1969, 152–160.
- 33 For helmets with ram's head cheek-pieces see Born and Hansen, *Frühgriechische Bronzehelme*; Mikhail Treister, *Hammering Techniques in Greek and Roman Jewelry and Toreutics*, Leiden, 2001, 36–37.
- 34 Chiarini, *L'archeologia dello Scutum*, 53.
- 35 On a similar play on these formulae see James Porter, *The Origins of Aesthetic Thought in Ancient Greece*, Cambridge, 2010, 159.
- 36 Emphasizing the complexity of Greco-Peuketian interaction: Alastair Small, 'Some Greek Inscriptions on Native Vases from South East Italy', in Kathryn Lomas, ed., *Greek Identity in the Western Mediterranean*, Leiden, 2004, 267–286.
- 37 Montanaro, *Ruvo di Puglia*, 440–488 (discussing Tomba 103).
- 38 Plutarch, *Moralia* 641c (trans. Loeb).
- 39 Baughan, *Couched in Death*, 77–78; Naso, 'Amber for Artemis'.
- 40 Thales fr. A 1 DK (author's translation).
- 41 Jonathan Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, New York, 1982, 4–5.
- 42 'Having a share': the verb is *metadidōmi*.
- 43 See Book 37 of Pliny, *Natural History*.
- 44 Malibu, J. Paul Getty Museum 76.AO.77. Causey, *Ancient Carved Ambers*, cat. 8.
- 45 Causey, 'A Kore in Amber'; Causey, *Ancient Carved Ambers*, cat. no. 8. Arguing for an Etruscan origin under Ionian influence, Montanaro *Ambre figurate*, no. 10.
- 46 The iconography of *korai* is a large and much-discussed topic. For the view that they represent mortal votaries, and with the addition of attributes can represent deities, see (among others) Lambert Schneider, *Zur sozialen Bedeutung der archaischen Korenstatuen*, Hamburg, 1975; Anna Maria d'Onofrio, 'Kouroi e korai classici attici', *Annali del Seminario di studi del mondo classico: sezione di archeologia e storia antica*, 4, 1982, 135–170; Alain Dupluy, *Le prestige des élites*, Paris, 2006; Jürgen Frasnsssen, *Votiv und Repräsentation*, Heidelberg, 2011. For a contrary view, that *korai* can represent specific deities even in the absence of identifying attributes, see Catherine Keesling, *The Votive Statues of the Athenian Acropolis*, Cambridge, 2003; Catherine Keesling, 'Finding the Gods: Greek and Cypriot *Korai* Revisited', *Divine Images and Human Imaginations in Ancient Greece and Rome*, Leiden, 2010, 87–103.
- 47 See Day, *Archaic Greek Epigram and Dedication*, 91–92.
- 48 Alcman fr. 1.40, 51–5. Just these features led Gloria Ferrari to a reading of the poem as an allegory of the stars; see Gloria Ferrari, *Alcman and the Cosmos of Sparta*, Chicago, 2008.
- 49 Homer, *Odyssey* 15.459–65 (trans. Lattimore, modified).
- 50 Patricia Watson, 'Balls of Crystal and Amber: Fact or Fantasy?', *Liverpool Classical Monthly*, 17: 2, 1992, 23–27.
- 51 Homer, *Odyssey* 18.295–6, trans. Loeb, modified.
- 52 Christopher Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love-Magic*, Cambridge, MA, 2001.
- 53 Nearly all amber sculpture is necessarily small, although Pausanias (5.12.7) mentions an amber statue (*eikōn*) of Augustus in the Philippeion at Olympia, which may have been quite large.
- 54 Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, Cambridge, MA, 2008, 234.
- 55 Samos, Museum inv. E 88. Hans Walter, 'Ein samischer elfenbein Jüngling', *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung*, 74, 1959, 43–48; Dieter Ohly, 'Zur Rekonstruktion des samischen Gerätes mit dem elfenbein Jüngling', *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung*, 74, 1959, 48–56. Brigitte Freyer-Schauenburg, *Elfenbeine aus dem samischen Heraion*, Hamburg, 1966, no. 3; A. Lebesse, 'To ελεφάντινο ειδώλιο του νέου από τη Σάμο', *Annuario della Scuola archeologica di Atene e delle Missioni italiane in Oriente*, 61, 1983, 303–322; Jane Carter, *Greek Ivory Carving in the Orientalizing and Archaic Periods*, New York, 1985, 207–213; Christiane Vorster, 'Früharchaische Plastik', *Die Geschichte der antiken Bildhauerkunst*, vol. 1: *Frühgriechische Plastik*, Mainz, 2002, 303.
- 56 On the development of the Greek lyre, see Martha Maas and Jane Snyder, *Stringed Instruments of Ancient Greece*, New Haven, 1989; Martin West, *Early Greek Music*, Oxford, 1992, 328–329. Aristophanes, *Knights* 532–3 compares the poet Kratinos to an old lyre that has lost its tuning, with its 'ambers' (*ēlektrōn*) falling out; usually translated as 'pegs' or 'frets', the term might refer to inlay of the sort seen here.
- 57 Carter, *Greek Ivory-Carving*, 207–213.
- 58 Erika Simon, 'Zwei Springtänzer', *Antike Kunst*, 21: 2, 1978, 66–69. See the Pyrvias aryballos (Corinth C-54-1: Rudolph Wachter, *Non-Attic Greek Vase Inscriptions*, Oxford, 2001, 44–47); a pelike by Euthymides (Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 1973.88: Beazley Archive Database 4437); and an Attic skyphos (Athens, National Museum 20100; Athanasia Malgaridis, 'Deux temps d'une fête athénienne sur un skyphos attique', *Antike Kunst*, 28: 2, 1985, 71–92). The initial publication of the Pyrvias aryballos associated the dance with the *bibasis*, a Spartan dance for boys and girls alike that, according to Pollux (4.102), involved jumping into the air and smacking the buttocks with the soles of the feet; it could be performed singly or in a chorus. This reading has been repeated in the subsequent literature (Martin Robertson, 'Jumpers', *Burlington Magazine*, 119, no. 887, February 1977, 78–88). However, Simon's account of the ivory is compelling and the vase iconography seems to follow suit.
- 59 Homer, *Iliad* 18.605–6, trans. Lattimore, modified. On the dancers in this passage and their likeness to works of craft, see Timothy Power, 'Cyberchorus: Pindar's *Klēdones* and the Aura of the Artificial', *Archaic and Classical Choral Song*, Berlin, 2011, 67–113; Leslie Kurke, 'The Value of Choralit in Ancient Greece', *The Construction of Value in the Ancient World*, Los Angeles, 2012, 218–235; Leslie Kurke, 'Imagining Choralit: Wonder, Plato's Puppets, and Moving Statues', in A.-E. Peponi, ed., *Performance and Culture in Plato's Laws*, Cambridge, 2013, 123–170; Steiner, 'Greek and Roman Theories of Art', 29–32.
- 60 For a related passage in *Iliad* 18 and its attendant textual problems see Martin Revermann, 'The Text of *Iliad* 18.603–6 and the Presence of an *Aoidos* on the Shield of Achilles', *Classical Quarterly*, 48: 1, 1998, 29–38. See also Ps.-Hesiod, *Shield* 201–6.
- 61 Power, 'Cyberchorus'. One might, in fact, imagine these paired females on analogy with the paired youths on the lyre and in the poems, especially in light of the way that Alcman fr. 1.57–77 pairs two maidens – Agido and Hagesichora – against the rest of the choral troupe; see Charles Segal, *Aglaiā*, Lanham, 1998, 28–30.
- 62 Power, 'Cyberchorus'; Kurke, 'The Value of Choralit'; Kurke, 'Imagining Choralit'; Steiner, 'Greek and Roman Theories of Art', 29–31.

- 63 Bacchylides fr. 4.80.
- 64 Power, 'Cyberchorus', 70.
- 65 Neer, *Emergence of the Classical Style*, 73–74, 76–77.
- 66 Kurke, 'The Value of Choralit'; Kurke, 'Imagining Choralit'. The famous Homeric pun on *elephas*, 'ivory', and *elephairomai*, 'to deceive', which motivates Penelope's description of the Gates of Horn and Ivory at *Odyssey*, 19.560–9, may be relevant here as well: the ivory dancer, ambient thanks to the musician, is uncannily lifelike, hence 'deceptive' according to Greek thinking.
- 67 In related vein, see Joseph Day's remarks about the crown of the Mantiklos Apollo in Boston: Day, *Archaic Greek Epigram and Dedication*, 258. On the terms *apsychon* and *empsychon* applied to statuary: Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1411b10 (discussion in Neer, *Emergence of the Classical Style*, 32).
- 68 Cf. Plato, *Theaetetus* 155d3; Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 982b, 983a12.
- 69 On lamps and light and Greek religion see William Furley, *Studies in the Use of Fire in Ancient Greek Religion*, New York, 1981; Eva Parisinou, *The Light of the Gods*, London, 2000; Menelaos Christopoulos, Efimia Karakantza and Olga Levaniouk, eds, *Light and Darkness in Ancient Greek Myth and Religion*, Lexington, 2010. For lamps in daily life the most directly pertinent study is Marcus Hermanns, *Licht und Lampen im westgriechischen Alltag*, Rahden, 2004.
- 70 Palermo, Museo Archeologico Regionale 'Antonio Salinas', inv. no. 273; London, British Museum Q3960 (Donald Bailey, *Catalogue of Lamps in the British Museum IV*, London, 1996, 118).
- 71 John Beazley, 'A Marble Lamp', *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 60, 1940, 22–49. See also A. Curcio, 'Nuove lucerne cicladiche dalla Sicilia orientale', *Sicilia Archeologica*, 7, 1974, 79–84; Bailey, *Catalogue of Lamps*, 117–119; Hermanns, *Licht und Lampen*; Stephanie Böhm, *Dädalische Kunst Siziliens*, Würzburg, 2007, 51–56; Vasiliki Barlou, *Die archaische Bildhauerkunst von Paros*, Wiesbaden, 2014, 18–20. Online see Vasiliki Barlou, 'Marmorlampe' (arachne.dainst.org/entity/1188365) and 'Fragment einer Marmorlampe mit menschlicher Protome' (arachne.dainst.org/entity/1121559), accessed 29 October 2017.
- 72 Kavala, Archaeological Museum. Maria Nikolaïdou-Patera, 'Excavations at Ancient Phagres', "Ανασκαφικές έρευνες στον αρχαίο Φάγηρητα", *Το αρχαιολογικό έργο στη Μακεδονία και Θράκη* 7 (1993 [1997]), 499–503. I am grateful to J. Michael Padgett for bringing this lamp to my attention.
- 73 Homer, *Iliad* 5.4–7 (see also 13.132, 13.265, 16.216, 17.269, 19.359).
- 74 Iris's parentage is given in Hesiod, *Theogony* 265–9, 780.
- 75 Homer, *Iliad* 18.225–7; trans. Lattimore, modified.
- 76 Homer, *Odyssey* 24.80–4, trans. Nagy, modified.
- 77 Gregory Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans*, Baltimore, 1979, 342–343.
- 78 Homer, *Odyssey* 18.354–5, trans. Lattimore, modified.
- 79 Reading: see Gregory Nagy, *Greek Mythology and Poetics*, Ithaca, 1990, 202–223. On ancient ideas of 'ornament', see now the essays in Verity Platt and Michael Squire, eds, *The Frame in Classical Art: A Cultural History*, Cambridge, 2017, and Nikolaus Dietrich and Michael Squire, eds, *Ornament and Figure in Graeco-Roman Art: Rethinking Visual Ontologies in Classical Antiquity*, Berlin, 2018.
- 80 Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*, New York, 1990, 183–202; Vernant, 'Semblances of Pandora'. See also Saintillan, 'Du festin à l'échange'.
- 81 Beazley, 'A Marble Lamp', 32. On Greek aniconism see Milette Gaifman, *Aniconism in Greek Antiquity*, Oxford, 2012. On the Cyrenean busts see, most recently, the superb discussion in Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux, 'Visages invisibles. Retour à Cyrène', *Métis*, 14, 2016, 245–265. The basic study remains L. Beschi, 'Divinità funerarie cirenaiche', *Annuario della Scuola Archeologica di Atene e delle Missioni Italiane in Oriente*, 47/48, 1969/1970, 133–341.
- 82 Beazley, 'A Marble Lamp', 32.
- 83 Compare Empedocles (B85), for whom the human eye was itself like an oil lamp, 'primeval fire confined within membranes and delicate garments'. On this passage see Porter, *Origins of Aesthetic Thought*, 155–156.
- 84 Berlin, Antikensammlung, inv. 30921; Beazley, 'A Marble Lamp', 46.
- 85 Heraclitus fr. D31a DK: 'The tropes of fire are, first, sea; of sea half is earth and half is lightning storm.'
- 86 For a recent and very thorough discussion of the vexed question of Heraclitus' account of fire and *ekpyrosis*, see Aryeh Finkelberg, 'On Cosmogony and *Ecpyrosis* in Heraclitus', *American Journal of Philology*, 119: 2, 1998, 195–222.
- 87 Daniel Graham, *Explaining the Cosmos*, Princeton, 2006, 127.
- 88 Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 489–92, trans. Loeb. On this passage see Stephen Tracy, 'Darkness from Light: The Beacon Fire in the *Agamemnon*', *Classical Quarterly*, 36: 1, 1986, 257–260.
- 89 Gaston Bachelard, *La Flamme d'une chandelle*, Paris, 1961, 11 (author's translation). I am grateful to Bill Brown for discussing this book with me.
- 90 Bachelard, *La Flamme*, 32 (author's translation; italics added).
- 91 Bachelard, *La Flamme*, 14 (author's translation).