

AN AESCHYLEAN PROBLEM

HEATHER WHITE -GIUSEPPE GIANGRANDE

In Aesch. *Suppl.* 28 2f. we read:

Κύπριος χαρακτήρ τ' ἐν γυναικείους τύποις
εἰκῶς πέπληκται τεκτόνων πρὸς ἀρσένων.

The much debated problem presented by these two lines has been extensively discussed in recent publications.¹ None of the ingenious hypotheses suggested in the above quoted Πρακτικὰ seems satisfactory.² The solution to the *vexata quaestio* is, we believe, simple. Whilst, as everybody who has-read Jaxt knows, the complexion of Greek girls was a mixture of white and pink, the Danaids (cf. Tucker *ad loc.*) were not "black", but "dusky", i.e. light brown, like the Λιβυστικάι γυναῖκες mentioned in lines 279f. and the Amazons (line 287), who were notorious for their sun-tan, acquired by living in the open air.

We can enter the way leading to the elucidation of the enigma by

1. Πρακτικά του Δευτέρου Διεθνούς Κυπριολογικοῦ Συνεδρίου". Τόμος Α, Λευκωσία 1985, Πρακτικά τοῦ Β' Τοπικοῦ Συνεδρίου Ἀργολικῶν Σπουδῶν, Παράρτημα 14. Ἀθήναι 1989.
2. It is impossible to read (with Hatzioannou) κύπριος, "made of copper", because this adjective, attested in *Pap. Gr. Mag.* I, p.130, is borrowed from late Latin (*cyprius* = κύπριος); it is unwarranted to alter (with Hetzistefanou) κύπριας into καὶ πρὸς because the particle τε in line 282 does not permit such a textual change; the hypothesis of an interpolation (suggested by Johansen and Whittle) has not convinced anybody, as far as we know; if as all the critics seem to agree, it were true that Κύπριος χαρακτήρ refers to the inhabitants of Cyprus, one could not maintain (with Hatzistyllis) that Pelasgos refers only to the skin-colour of the Danaids and not to that of the Cypriots. The old hypothesis favoured by Paley (*ad loc.*) is not tenable, because Pelasgos explicitly uses the word Κύπριος, and cannot therefore refer to a settlement of "Ethiopians" in Cyprus instead of to the Cypriots who inhabited the island.

recalling that the famous fellow-king of Pelasgos, the Cypriot King Pygmalion, had sculpted a beautiful ivory statue of a girl, of which he became enamoured. Ivory is at first white (*niveum sculpsit-ebur*, *Ov. Metam.* X 243ff.), but it becomes light brown with the passage of time (cf. *Mart.* IV 62, VII 13, VIII 28; *Sil. Ital.* XII 229; *Prop.* IV 7, 82 *pallet ebur*). The word *χαρακτήρ* can mean "facial appearance", "aspect", and *τύπος* can signify "a figure in statuary", "statue" (on all this cf. Paley and Tucker *ad loc.*; *Thes.*, s.v. *χαρακτήρ* and *τύπος*). It is agreed that Pelasgos uses a "metaphor" based on such meanings³ (cf. Tucker *ad loc.*).

The upshot of all this is that the sense of the words uttered by Pelasgos is literally "and a Cyprian (*κύπριος* is used in *enallage adjectivi*, insofar as the statue and its face were created by the Cyprian sculptor Pygmalion) facial appearance (*χαρακτήρ*) like yours (*εἰκῶς*⁴: that is to say, light brown) has been chiselled (*πέπληκται*) into female statues (*ἐν γυναικείοις τύποις*) by male sculptors (*τεκτόνων πρὸς ἀρσένων*: i.e., by the Cypriot King Pygmalion)". King Pelasgos, delicately alluding to his colleague Pygmalion's well-known but abnormal love, uses the *pluralis poeticus* *τύποις* and *τεκτόνων*⁵ in reference respectively to the statue created by Pygmalion and to Pygmalion; the pointed words *ἀρσένων* and *γυναικείοις* overtly refer to the famous erotic story of the *one* amorous male sculptor Pygmalion who fell in love with the *one* statue of a female. The perfect *πέπληκται* indicates that Pygmalion had sculpted the statue a while before Pelasgos speaks, and was still in possession of

3. The meaning of *χαρακτήρ* = "impress stamped on the unmarked metal form by the coiner", and of *τύπος* = "unmarked metal form" (cf. Tucker and Paley, *ad loc.*) can hardly be at the basis of Pelasgos's metaphor, because *γυναικείοις τύποις* can certainly denote the statue of a female, but cannot designate metal coins struck by the coiner. Moreover, *τέκτων* can mean "sculptor" in Greek, but cannot signify "coiner": this difficulty did not escape Tucker, as is evident from his note on p. 32 (those who struck the die with a hammer did not create any "important works of art", because the design of the coins was not of their making: they were called *χαρακτῆρες*, i.e. "strickers", not *τέκτονες*).

4. After previously stating (lines 279-80) that the Danaids' faces are "dark complexioned," "light brown" as those of the Libyan women, Pelasgos employs *εἰκῶς* in the sense "like your just mentioned faces": such absolute use of *εἰκῶς* to denote similarity to something just mentioned is perfectly normal in Greek (as well - as in other languages, cf. e. g. Engl. "similar").

5. Cf. Eur. *Alc.* 348 f. σοφῆ δὲ χειρὶ τεκτόνων δέμας τὸ σὸν / εἰκασθέν.

it, by which time the statue had become light brown in colour (Pelagos had either seen the light brown statue on a visit to his fellow -king Pygmalion, or heard (cf. ἀκούων 1. 284) that it had become light brown owing to the passage of time). The verb πέπληκται (liter. "has been struck, hit") is as Tucker has understood (he translates "has been stamped"), used in the so-called "resultativ" sense (cf. Schwyzer, *Griech. Gramm.* II, p.74) and means, therefore "has been produced by hitting" (i.e. by chiselling).

Conclusion: *enallage adjectivi*, although lamentably unknown to many would-be classical scholars (cf. H.White, *Myrtia* 2000, XV, p.56), is extremely common in Greek Tragedy, as e.g. Paley, Lewis Campbell and Breitenbach (with his excellent bibliography) have emphasized: Κύπριος as used by Aeschylus in *Suppl.* 282 is a perfectly normal case in point. The skin-colour of the inhabitants of Cyprus has absolutely nothing to do with the passage in question. We hope to have conclusively illustrated Aeschylus' words⁶.

6. A few minor details. The anapaest at the beginning of line 282 does not surprise editors and critics (Paley, Tucker, Murray, Page, West, Mazon, etc.) because the said feature occurs in Tragedy, especially with *Eigennamen* such as Κύπριος is. Our explanation of lines 282f. entails the solution of the problem which the perfect tense πέπληκται presented to scholars (cf. Tucker *ad loc.*; Mazon, in his Budé edition, evasively transforais the perfect into the present "frappent"). The opposition between γυναικείος and ἄρσένων, which would be nonsensical if referred to bronze coinage, proves contextually and grammatically apposite in the light of our demonstration. The mediaeval scholiast, who knew nothing about *enallage adjectivi* and Pygmalion, suggested (cf. Tucker *ad loc.*) that γυναικείος τύποις meant "uterus", but this is contradicted by the perfect tense (πέπληκται cannot mean "frappent" as Mazon translates it). In line 284, ἀκούων could well be a "*participium pro verbo finito*".