

At *Supplices* 277-90, Pelasgus is astonished by the Danaids' claim to Argive descent and compares them to a number of foreign peoples. One of the passage's most puzzling elements is lines 282-3: Κύπριος χαρακτήρ τ' ἐν γυναικείοις τύποις/ εἰκῶς πέπληκται τεκτόνων πρὸς ἀρσένων. Friis Johansen and Whittle (1980: ii.223) translate thus: "and similar is the Cyprian impress stamped on women's forms by male artificers." They take the main point at issue to be the Danaids' looks, ostensibly acquired from their fathers. FJW further claim fifth-century Cyprus had a high percentage of Greek inhabitants and that "the selection of Cypriot girls to illustrate the definitely non-Greek impression which the Danaids make . . . is therefore baffling." They conclude the lines should be excised.

Sommerstein (1977: 69-71) however rejects the obelus. Relegating Cyprus to the periphery of the Greek world, he emphasizes the lines' metaphor rather than their geography. Where FJW (ii.223) detect a reference to "the hammering of bronze plates on to a wooden image," Sommerstein sees instead the minting of coins. χαρακτήρ is often used of a die (LSJ s.v.). While τεκτόνων commonly refers to carpenters and joiners, it can also refer to craftsmen in general, including metalworkers (LSJ s.v. I.2; Eur. *Alc.* 5). The basic meaning of πλήττω ("strike, smite") is *a propos*. And τύπος might refer to a die, the symbol it contained, or the impression it left on struck coins. Sommerstein thus argues (71) that the Danaids are being likened to "coins struck off by male moneyers (their fathers) on female dies (their mothers) and having a distinctive appearance that 'stamps' them as Cyprian." Moreover, he sees a clear link between the metaphor's language and the process of sexual reproduction.

Two further considerations support Sommerstein's interpretation. First, Aeschylus' metaphor may derive from his firsthand familiarity with specific coins. Several Cypriot *poleis* minted issues with likenesses of Aphrodite during the fifth and fourth centuries. The so-called Citium hoard contains a number of staters from Lapethus with a head of Aphrodite on the obverse (Kraay 1976: 301-3). Its deposit date ca. 480 suggests that coins from Cyprus stamped with Aphrodite's image circulated in the Athenian sphere of interest during the 460s, when *Supplices* was produced.

Second, in other contexts the adjective Κύπριος frequently denotes not just the island, but its famous goddess as well (LSJ s.v. I.2). Here in *Supplices* the supplemental chorus of Argive men refer to Aphrodite as Κύπρις and suggest she will yet exert her influence over the Danaids (1034). They further note (1050-1) that in the past marriage has come to most women. By comparing the Danaids to coins stamped with a Κύπριος χαρακτήρ, Pelasgus thus hints at their propensity for Aphrodite and her ways.

This coinage metaphor has important implications for our understanding of the trilogy as a whole. The Danaids' numismatic contours anchor them in the broader matrix of economic and sexual activity obtaining in ancient Greece, where (e.g. Wohl 1998: xxvi-xxviii) women circulated among users and regulated exchange relations between men. Kurke (1999) in particular has argued that coinage and πορναί were similar, democratic phenomena that emerged against the older backdrop of aristocratic gift-exchange and ἑταῖροι. Now Aeschylus' Danaids are certainly not common prostitutes. Nevertheless, *Supplices* establishes them as potential sexual partners for a variety of men. Their father compares them (997-1005) to ripe fruit and stresses the tug of their charms on all men (πᾶς τις, 1004). The play's *exodos* resembles a hymeneal song in several regards (Seaford 1987: 114, Swift 2006: 136-7). And in the course of the trilogy the women in fact pass from their Aegyptid cousins to the citizen men of a distinctly democratic Argos (Bakewell 1997: 209-10). *Supplices*' metaphor of Cypriot coinage thus shows that the Danaids' fortunes, function, and fate are all stamped with the enduring imprint of their sexuality.