

particular as evidence for hostile emotional or intellectual states. When raised, they signal self-importance (Ar. *Ach.* 1069–70; Cratin. fr. 348; Alex. fr. 16 with Arnott on 16.1–2; 121.5–7; Amphis fr. 13; Men. *Sik.* 160 with Gomme-Sandbach *ad loc.*; fr. 34; 395.1–2 Koerte; Bato fr. 5.13; cf. D. 19.314). When brought together in a scowl, they indicate anger or disgust (Ar. *Nu.* 582; *Pl.* 756; fr. 688; cf. *Lys.* 7–8).⁶ When Aristophanes' Euripides wants to characterize the monstrous words used by Aeschylus in his tragedies as pretentious and over-full of martial sentiment, therefore, he refers to them as ὀφρύς ἔχοντα καὶ λόφους (*Ra.* 925), just as the chorus at *Pax* 395 ask the goddess to heed their appeal if she feels disgust at Πεισάνδρου . . . τοὺς λόφους καὶ τὰς ὀφρύς. Their point, of course, is not that Peisander has ugly eyebrows, but that he behaves in a haughty fashion and (not incidentally) shows no interest in bringing about an end to the war.

The interpretation of Cratinus fr. 228 offered by Σ^{TV} Luc. *Tim.* 30 and adopted by Welsh is thus very easily explained as a literal-minded ancient commentator's misunderstanding of a text that made some allusion to the demagogue's habitual glower or sneer. Further support for this thesis can be found in the fact that no mention is made of Kleon's eyebrows by Aristophanes, who clearly hated the man and who offers a detailed and extremely hostile account of his personal appearance at *V.* 1030–5 ~ *Pax* 754–8. There Kleon is said to have (*inter alia*) jagged teeth, burning eyes, a voice like a torrent-stream, a foul stench, unwashed testicles, and a camel's anus, but nothing is said of his eyebrows. Although this is negative evidence, it is still difficult to believe that Kleon had a physical trait that left him open to comic ridicule but that Aristophanes failed to refer to that trait either in these verses or anywhere else that we know of in his plays.

Kleon may well have been a repulsive figure, at least in the eyes of those who disagreed with him politically (esp. Th. 4. 28. 5; [Arist.] *Ath.* 28. 3). Cratinus fr. 228, however, is most easily interpreted as suggesting only that he (like, allegedly, at least one other prominent contemporary Athenian politician) had a penchant for glaring at others—presumably those who disagreed with him—or for staring down his nose at them.⁷ That his eyebrows were extraordinarily ugly, and that that fact in turn shows that portrait-masks may have been common on the late 5th-century comic stage, is not suggested by the evidence and seems on all counts quite unlikely.⁸

University of Minnesota

S. DOUGLAS OLSON

⁶ Cf. the Homeric ὑπόδρα ἰδών (e.g. *Il.* 1.148), with the observations of J. P. Holoka, 'Looking darkly (*ΥΠΟΔΡΑ* *ΙΔΩΝ*): reflections on status and decorum in Homer', *TAPA* 113 (1983), 1–16; Lateiner (n. 4, above), pp. 12–13, 88–90.

⁷ Cf. Σ^E *Nu.* 582 (glossing τὰς ὀφρύς συνήγομεν) ἐπεὶ καὶ ὁ Κλέων τοιοῦτος. εἶπε δὲ ἀνωτέρω (i.e. at 348–55) ὅτι πάντας μιμοῦνται.

⁸ Thanks are due an anonymous referee for his comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

LACHES AT ACANTHUS: ARISTOPHANES, *WASPS* 968–9*

The purpose of this short note is to explain a joke in Aristophanes, *Wasps*. If the explanation is accepted, our knowledge of Athenian political and military history in the later 420s is enhanced.

First, the joke. The scene is the famous trial of the dog Labes. That the dog is a

* This note has benefited from much sage advice. Amongst others, I am especially grateful to J. Marr, S. D. Olson, P. J. Rhodes, J. Wilkins, and, in particular, D. M. MacDowell. All responsibility is mine, of course.

comic substitute for Laches, the Athenian politician and general, now requires no argument.¹ The dog Labes is accused (comically, by a canine Cleon) of having consumed much Sicilian cheese in the dark, without sharing it. He is further charged on the grounds that 'having sailed around the mortar in a circle, he took the rind from the cities' (*Wasps* 924–5). In Labes' defence, Bdelycleon first calls a cheese-grater, who was treasurer and who confirms that he grated out the cheese/booty to the soldiers. The nature of the rebuttal is clear enough: Labes/Laches did not monopolize what was acquired in Sicily, as charged, but instead shared it out.

The defence proceeds as follows (*Wasps* 967–72):²

Βδ. ὦ δαιμόνι' ἐλέει ταλαιπωρουμένους.
οὗτος γὰρ ὁ Λάβης καὶ τραχήλι' ἐσθίει
καὶ τὰς ἄκανθας, κοῦδέποτε' ἐν ταύτῳ μένει.
ὁ δ' ἕτερος οἶος ἐστὶν οἰκουρὸς μόνον.
αὐτοῦ μένων γὰρ ἅπτ' ἂν εἴσω τις φέρῃ
τούτων μεταίτεϊ τὸ μέρος· εἰ δὲ μή· δάκνει.

The nature of this defence repays attention. The key contrast between Labes/Laches and Cyon/Cleon, his opponent, is readily elucidated in outline: the former is always on the move and lives off scraps, while the latter is always at home and demands some of whatever anyone brings—or bites those who bring him nothing. His bite is verbal, including formal prosecution no doubt. While Labes/Laches is an austere hard worker, Cyon/Cleon is lazy, selfish, and greedy, with a vicious streak (cf. *Wasps* 1112–21 for much the same contrast later in the play).

However, although the contrast is clear enough in outline, the detail remains to be explained. In particular, though modern commentators seem not to have been troubled by the terms, we may wonder why Aristophanes specifies *τραχήλια* and *ἄκανθαι*. Since they occur in the immediate context of a pun on Sicily, we may be encouraged to consider the possibility that they too are puns on places. A clue is provided by a fragment of Amphis, preserved at the beginning of Athenaeus' *Deipnosophists* (1. 30e):³

ἐπαινεῖ Ἀμφίς καὶ τὸν ἐξ Ἀκάνθου πόλεως οἶνον λέγων·
Α. ποδαπὸς εἶ; φράσον.
Β. Ἀκάνθιος. Α. εἴτα πρὸς θεῶν
οἶνον πολίτης ὦν κρατίστου στρυφνὸς εἶ
καὶ τοῦνομ' αὐτὸ τῆς πατρίδος ἐν τοῖς τρόποις
ἔχεις, τὰ δ' ἥθη τῶν πολιτῶν οὐκ ἔχεις;

Amphis is deriving humour from the name of the city of Acanthus, which suggests that an Acanthian might be a rough individual, despite the fineness of Acanthus' wine and the actual good manners of its citizens. The joke depends upon

¹ See D. M. MacDowell, *Aristophanes and Athens* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 167–9; S. D. Olson, 'Politics and poetry in Aristophanes' *Wasps*', *TAPhA* 126 (1996), 129–50, esp. 138–42 for a valuable analysis of the dog-trial scene.

² 'Good Sir, have pity on the distressed! For this Labes eats both scraps and prickly bones, and never stays in the same place. But the other, what a sort he is—only a stay-at-home! For he stays here; and if someone brings things, he demands his share of them; if he doesn't get, he bites.'

³ 'Amphis also praises the wine from the city of Acanthus: A. Where are you from? Tell me. B. From Acanthus. A. Then by the gods, while a citizen of the finest wine, are you not rough and bear the very name of your city in your habits, but do not have the manners of its citizens?'

Note also *ἄκανθαι* in a phrase, apparently proverbial (and opaque to the scholiast), mentioned elsewhere in Aristophanes (fr. 499 K-A).

the evocations of Acanthus in Greek as a thorny plant (ἄκανθος) or prickly bones (ἄκανθαί), which, by contrast with fine wine, would scratch the throat.

It can hardly be coincidence that the city of Acanthus was very much in the news at Athens in the later 420s. Thucydides first mentions it in his narrative of events in summer 424. And he makes much of it. Acanthus is the first city to which Brasidas comes, marching from Thessaly (it should be noted) to campaign in Thrace. In Acanthus, Thucydides gives Brasidas a substantial speech, making the case for the city joining the Spartan side in (so-called) liberation (Thuc. 4.84–8). For Thucydides, Acanthus sets a pattern, repeated, speech and all, at Torone (4.114). And in view of its significance, we should not be surprised to find Acanthus specified in the terms of the Peace of Nicias (Thuc. 5.18). It would seem to follow that, given the prominence of Acanthus in the Thraceward region, which was now the principal theatre of fighting, a reference to the city in the *Wasps* of 422 (Lenaea) would not tax the geographical knowledge and awareness of an Athenian audience. Particularly so when the audience of *Wasps* has already been prepared for a geographical reference by the earlier mention of the Sicilian cheese.

In fact, Thrace bulks large in Aristophanes' earlier plays, not least with reference to Athenian diplomacy there.⁴ And Thrace recurs throughout *Wasps*. At 209–10 Bdelycleon compares his guarding of his father with the (easier) task of guarding Scione (cf. 207–9). At 474–6 the Chorus accuses Bdelycleon of being an associate of Brasidas (cited as a commonplace charge against wealthy allies at *Peace* 639–40); though Thrace is not named, mention of Brasidas suggested as much at this date. Indeed, Thrace is mentioned precisely in such a context at 286–90, where a wealthy ally is accused of betraying matters in Thrace. Further, the Chorus recalls its experience in the north, albeit in the north-east at Byzantium (236) and in the Hellespont (308). An allusion to Acanthus would not be out of place in a play which also mentions not only Thrace in general, but also Scione, Brasidas, and Byzantium in particular.

If there is indeed an allusion to Acanthus at *Wasps* 968–9, we are left to consider τραχήλια. That too may be suggestive of a place. There seems no candidate in Thrace. Conceivably, Thrace itself (Θράκις) is the allusion.⁵ However, in Thessaly there is the region of Trachis. Moreover, Thessaly occurs elsewhere in the play (1243–7, 1271–4). Trachis was of significance especially with the foundation in 426 of a Spartan settlement there as the city of Heraclea: Thucydides observes the significance of its location as being useful for passage to Thrace (Thuc. 3.92). As we have seen, Brasidas set off from Trachis through Thessaly to Acanthus in 424 (cf. also Thuc. 5.12).⁶ On its own, the allusion in *Wasps* to Trachis might be difficult for an audience to catch, even

⁴ E.g. *Ach.* 134–54; cf. *Wasps* 42, 599, 1220, with Z. H. Archibald, *The Odrysian Kingdom of Thrace* (Oxford, 1998).

⁵ On places in Thrace (including Acanthus), see M. Zahrt, *Olynth und die Chalkidier* (Munich, 1971). As for possible wordplay on Thrace, compare the shift of aspirate in χρυσόιν/κρύσθον at *Ar. Birds* 670: N. Dunbar, *Aristophanes' Birds* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 422–3.

⁶ See S. Hornblower, 'The religious dimension to the Peloponnesian War, or, what Thucydides does not tell us', *HSCPh* 94 (1992), 169–97, esp. 181–90, who rightly notes that the people of Trachis are said by Thucydides to have considered an appeal to Athens too, not only Sparta. If we take Thucydides at his word, there was evidently an opening for Athenian diplomacy in Trachis, whether by Laches or not. The Spartan involvement did not last long (Thuc. 3.93; 5.52). See also I. Malkin, *Myth and Territory in the Spartan Mediterranean* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 219–35, esp. p. 224 on Brasidas and Heraclea.

Of course, Sophocles, *Trachiniae* had put the region on the Athenian stage: its date remains

allowing for its knowledge of contemporary events, but any difficulty would have been eased considerably by the immediate addition of an allusion to Acanthus. Labes the dog dines on scraps and prickly bones; Laches the human is active towards and in the Thraceward region, around Trachis and Acanthus. Labes/ Laches is always on the move, eating what he can find, while Cyon/Cleon stays at home, no doubt eating well and waiting to pounce.⁷

It remains to consider the date and nature of Laches' activity in the Thraceward region, which is otherwise unattested. It must be stressed that *Wasps* is designed to be funny: to press details very hard may be unwise. In particular, allusions to Acanthus and Trachis might indicate nothing more specific than activity in the broad area of Thessaly and Thrace, though the more specific interpretation remains possible. As to Laches' office, a further caveat must be that an Athenian did not need to hold the post of general to lead Athenian forces.⁸ However, Laches had been general in Sicily in 426/5. In 425/4 Laches was not one of the three generals reported in the northern Aegean (Thuc. 4.75), though he may have been there nevertheless. In 424 he was at Delium.⁹ In 423, he was in Athens to propose the acceptance of the truce between Athens and Sparta (Thuc. 4.118), but we do not know what else he did in that year. In summer 423 both Nicias and Nicostratus were campaigning in Chalcidice against Mende and Scione: conceivably Laches was with them at some stage.¹⁰ Ultimately, the date and nature of Laches' northern activities must remain uncertain, but our knowledge is such that there is room to accommodate them in any of the years between his return from Sicily and the performance of *Wasps*, particularly in view of his apparently energetic movement. Ultimately, the purpose(s) of his northern activities is a matter of speculation: collecting money, diplomacy, and actual campaigning are among the immediate possibilities. Although we may perhaps hesitate to press *Wasps* 968–9 to argue that Laches was active precisely in Acanthus and (more difficult) in Trachis, we seem to have a strong indication in Aristophanes' puns that Laches was active in the north before early 422.

elusive, but seems to have been before 422: see P. E. Easterling, *Sophocles: Trachiniae* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 19–23, preferring a date between 457 and c. 430; cf. Athen. 11.461e with D. Asheri, 'Eracle, Eraclea e i Cylicranes: mitologia e decolonizzazione nella Grecia del IV sec. a. C.', *Ancient Society* 6 (1975), 33–50, esp. 35.

⁷ The appropriate food for dogs was an issue (of morality, practicality, and humour) in Comedy and beyond, whether revolting scraps (e.g. Aristophanes, *Plutus* 293), quality scraps (e.g. Arrian, *Cyneg.* 13.1–3), or absurd luxury (e.g. Eubulus, fr. 90 = Athenaeus, 12.553a–b); see further the wealth of evidence gathered in D. Woysch-Méautis, *La représentation des animaux et des êtres fabuleux sur les monuments funéraires grecques de l'époque archaïque à la fin du IV^e siècle* (Lausanne, 1982). I am grateful to Diane Braund for these references.

⁸ C. W. Fornara, *The Athenian Board of Generals from 501 to 404*. *Historia Einzelschrift* 16 (Wiesbaden, 1971), p. 75 makes the point.

⁹ Plato, *Laches* 181b with R. Develin, *Athenian Officials, 684–321 B.C.* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 133; cf. L.G. Mitchell, *Greeks Bearing Gifts: the Public Use of Private Relationships in the Greek World* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 199. There is no real evidence that Laches was prosecuted upon his return from Sicily, beyond inferences from *Wasps* (A. W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides* 2 [Oxford, 1956], pp. 430–1 is properly sceptical on the play and its ancient commentators), which have encouraged the view that Laches was not re-elected general in the years that followed (notably, D. M. Lewis, 'Double representation in the strategía', *JHS* 81 [1961], 118–23, esp. 119–20; cf. S. Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides* 1 [Oxford, 1991], pp. 491–2). Clearly, Laches suffered criticism, but he was still very prominent and active in Athenian politics through the late 420s, with the truce of 423 and the Peace of Nicias.

¹⁰ Develin (n. 9), p. 136.

In summer 422, a few months after the performance of *Wasps*, Cleon himself sailed to Chalcidice, 'having persuaded the Athenians' (Thuc. 5.2). One wonders how long Cleon had been pressing for the expedition. If the present interpretation of *Wasps* 967–72 is correct, Cleon (Cyon) may well have attacked Laches (Labes) not only for his behaviour in Sicily but also for his activities towards Thrace.¹¹ It seems that Laches had come home from the north to Athens and Cleon had attacked (or, as Cyon, had bitten) him.

Some light may thus be shed on the obscure, but significant, problem of the prosecution of Laches (in his own person) that is expected earlier in the play, evidently for embezzlement (*Wasps* 240–1). It has always proved difficult to understand why a prosecution of Laches might be envisaged in 422 with regard to his conduct in Sicily some years before, which ended in winter 426. As MacDowell properly observes, 'it would be surprising if the object of his [sc. Aristophanes'] satire were not more up-to-date than that. . . . If Cleon prosecuted Laches in 423/2, it must have been on some different charge, not for embezzlement of public funds as a general in Sicily; yet *Wasps* contains no suggestion of any different charge'.¹² He further notes and rejects Mastromarco's suggestion that Thrace may have been relevant, with the objection that 'Thrace is not mentioned in the trial of the dog, whereas Sicily is'.¹³

If the scraps and prickly bones with which Labes busies himself in *Wasps* are indeed allusions to places towards and in the Thraceward region, as argued above, then MacDowell's objection to Mastromarco's suggestion loses something of its force. Not Thrace perhaps, but the Thraceward region is mentioned. Yet MacDowell is right that Thrace does not occur as part of the prosecution case (which stresses Sicily). Acanthus and Trachis are introduced in defence of Laches/Labes, apparently in mitigation before his offspring are paraded for pity. It may be that an actual prosecution was threatened in terms of Sicily, but had been inspired by (or was said to have been inspired by) Laches' more recent actions in the north. Laches' response to the charge was first to stress his propriety in Sicily and second to suggest that Cleon's complaints about his energetic actions in the north were motivated by Cleon's stay-at-home greed and Laches' refusal to satisfy it (*Wasps* 972). In the event, Cleon's complaints against Laches (rather as earlier his complaints with regard to Pylos¹⁴) led to his own appointment and despatch to the region in question, where he shortly met his death, the bitter bit.

University of Exeter

DAVID BRAUND

<d.c.braund@exeter.ac.uk>

¹¹ Indeed, though the language of cheese and rind (as it seems to be) suggests otherwise, is it possible that the cities of *Wasps* 924–5 might be cities of the north, not of Sicily, with the mortar as Thrace? At *Peace* 228ff. we find the mortar of war, with Cleon and Brasidas in Thrace as pestles.

¹² MacDowell (n. 1), p. 168. Cf. also P. J. Rhodes, *Thucydides: History* iii (Warminster, 1994), p. 268.

¹³ G. Mastromarco, *Storia di una commedia di Atene* (Florence, 1974), pp. 47–64, with MacDowell (n. 1), p. 168 n. 29. On Mastromarco's attempt to separate various drafts of *Wasps*, I share MacDowell's critical perspective: *CR* 26 (1976), 170–1.

¹⁴ R. Meiggs, *The Athenian Empire* (Oxford, 1972), p. 338 was sensitive to such a parallel.