

# KLEON'S EYEBROWS (CRATIN. FR. 228 K-A) AND LATE 5TH-CENTURY COMIC PORTRAIT-MASKS

At Aristophanes, *Equites* 230–2, one of the slaves who speak the prologue informs the audience that, when the Paphlagonian (i.e. Kleon) appears onstage, his mask will not resemble him, for the *σκευοποιοί* ('stage-property manufacturers' *vel sim.*) were afraid to make one that depicted him accurately. In an important article, K. J. Dover argued that it must in fact have been very difficult to create easily recognizable portrait-masks, and suggested that the joke in *Eq.* 230–2 may be that the Paphlagonian's mask is horribly ugly but allegedly still nowhere near ugly enough.<sup>1</sup> In response, D. Welsh, following an anonymous ancient commentator on Lucian, argued that Cratinus fr. 228 K-A shows that the historical Kleon had strikingly unattractive eyebrows. Had anyone wished to caricature the demagogue's physical appearance, therefore, he could easily have done so, and portrait-masks may not have been so uncommon after all.<sup>2</sup> Welsh's argument is at first glance quite appealing, and has been endorsed without further comment or argument by Sommerstein and Storey.<sup>3</sup> I suggest, however, that the ancient commentator was confused, and that Cratinus' remark is much more easily explained by reference to what is known about the use of facial expression as a communicative strategy in classical and early Hellenistic Athens, particularly as it appears in the comic poets.<sup>4</sup> Kleon's eyebrows were probably no more ugly than those of anyone else, although he may have used them in an offensive way, and as Dover saw long ago, *Eq.* 230–2 cannot be taken as evidence for the use of portrait-masks on the late 5th-century comic stage.

Cratinus fr. 228 K-A (from *Σερίφιοι*) is preserved by Σ<sup>RV</sup> Luc. *Tim.* 30, which observes in regard to Kleon that τὰ δὲ ὑπὸ τὴν ὄψιν ἦν ἀργαλέος καὶ μάλιστα τὰς ὀφρύς. ὡς Κρατίνος Σεριφίους.<sup>5</sup> Welsh assumes that the passage to which the scholium refers asserted that Kleon was permanently 'unpleasant as regards his appearance', i.e. that he was a generally ugly man with very ugly eyebrows. As Welsh himself notes, however, 'It is not easy to see how a man's eyebrows can be repulsive' (214), and I suggest that Cratinus may just as well have observed only that Kleon was fond of using his to make unpleasant or intimidating faces at others. Two arguments support this alternative interpretation of the passage. First, Aristophanes routinely comments on 'sour' or 'bitter' facial expressions of all sorts (e.g. Ar. *Ach.* 254; *Eq.* 631; V. 455; *Pax* 1184), and the comic poets generally treat the position of the eyebrows in

<sup>1</sup> K. J. Dover, 'Portrait-masks in Aristophanes', in *Komoidotragemata: Studia Aristophanea viri Aristophanei W. J. W. Koster in honorem* (Amsterdam, 1967), pp. 16–28; reprinted in *Greek and the Greeks: Collected Papers*, Vol. I: *Language, Poetry, Drama* (Oxford and New York, 1987), pp. 267–78. The fact that real Athenians represented onstage in Aristophanes' comedies are generally identified by name just as they appear suggests that they would not be recognized otherwise, and thus lends some further support to the thesis that portrait-masks were not in common use in the late 5th century; cf. S. D. Olson, 'Names and naming in Aristophanic comedy', *CQ* 42 (1992), 316–18.

<sup>2</sup> D. Welsh, 'Knights 230–3 and Cleon's eyebrows', *CQ* 29 (1979), 214–15. E. L. Brown, 'Cleon caricatured on a Corinthian cup', *JHS* 94 (1974), 168, makes a similar point in passing.

<sup>3</sup> A. H. Sommerstein (ed. and trans.), *The Comedies of Aristophanes*, Vol. 2: *Knights* (Warminster, 1981), on 231–3; I. C. Storey, 'Wasps 1284–91 and the portrait of Kleon in *Wasps*', *Scholion* 4 (1995), 17.

<sup>4</sup> D. Lateiner, *Sardonic Smile: Nonverbal Behavior in Homeric Epic* (Ann Arbor, 1995), pp. 3–17, offers a useful introduction to the subject, although with an emphasis on somewhat earlier material.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Σ<sup>V</sup> Ar. V. 36 ὁ Κλέων ἐχρήτο φωνῇ χαλεπῇ. καθάπερ καὶ ἐτέρωθι. [V. 1034]. ἦν δὲ καὶ τὴν ὄψιν ἀργαλέος.

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).<sup>6</sup> 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<sup>TV</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> 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.

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

<sup>8</sup> 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

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