

Architecture of a Kiss: The Vocabulary of καταγλωττίσματα in Attic Old Comedy

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IN THE EXODUS OF ARISTOPHANES' *Acharnians* Dicaeopolis, enjoying the fruits of his private peace, enters between two courtesans, whom he bids (1200f)

φιλήσατόν με μαλθακῶς, ὦ χρυσίω,
τὸ περιπεταστόν κάπιμανδαλωτόν.

The scholiast says that line 1201 describes εἶδη φιλημάτων ἐρωτικῶν, ἐν οἷς δεῖ τὴν γλῶτταν τοὺς φιλοῦντας λείχειν. In similar words at *Thesm.* 130ff Mnesilochus describes a lascivious song as a μέλος ... κατεγλωττισμένον καὶ μανδαλωτόν. As a μάνδαλος (more commonly called a βάλανος, *Ar. Vesp.* 155, 200) is the bolt-pin of a door (*Zeno Med. ap. Erotianus s.v. ἄμβην; Artem* 2.10 [=p.116 Pack]), scholars have compared (ἐπι)μανδαλωτός with Teleclides' image of a γίγγλυμωτόν φίλημα (fr.*14 *PCG*; cf. *Hesychius s.v. γίγγλυμος*), which is formed from γίγγλυμος, the pivot or gudgeon on which a door turns (also called the θαιρός, περόνη, or στρόφιγξ).¹ The line from *Thesm.* quoted above and the scholiast's comment on the passage from *Acharnians* have led scholars most plausibly to conclude that the kisses described metaphorically as "spread," "with the door-bolt pinned," and "pivot-like" are what are literally called καταγλωττίσματα (*Ar. Nub.* 51, *Them.* 1192). Ancient descriptions (*Automedon, Anth. Pal.* 5.129 [128].7; *Philodemus, Anth. Pal.* 5.132 [131].6; *Achilles Tatius* 2.37.8) show that these are what English speakers call "French kisses,"² in which one inserts the tongue in another's mouth. Except in the case of *Philocleon*, who allows his daughter to fish his three-obol

¹ J. Taillardat, *Les images d'Aristophane* (Paris 1965) 17.9, 104.195; J. Henderson, *The Maculate Muse*² (New York 1991) 182.370.

² W. Young, *Eros Denied: Sex in Western Society* (New York 1964) 321.

juror's pay out of his mouth with her tongue (Ar. *Vesp.* 609), such kisses occur only in sexual contexts.³

Taillardat (*supra* n.1: 17.9) characterizes γίγγλυμος as “une manière de ‘synonyme’” for μάνδαλος, but a brief consideration of the mechanics of ancient doors will show that we are hardly dealing with synonyms. The μάνδαλος is part of the mechanism of a Spartan lock (Ar. *Thesm.* 423; Aristophon fr. 7.4 *PCG*; Men. *Mis.* fr. 10 Koerte=8 Sandbach; Plaut. *Mostell.* 404; other kinds of locks were known).⁴ This consisted of a bolt (μόχλος, ὀχεύς, or κλειθρον) on the inside of the door sliding freely in brackets (ἐμμόχλια) attached to the door and, when the door is closed, into a socket in the doorpost. Above this bar sat a box (βαλανοδόκη) containing a number of pins. When the bolt was shot into the locked position, these pins fell by gravity into corresponding holes (τρυπήματα) in the bolt, thus locking the door. The door could be unlocked only by a thin plank fitted at right angles with dowels (γομφίοι) in the same pattern as the box and bolt. There was a transverse slot in the bolt directly under the pin-holes and a corresponding, although longer, slot in the door directly under the box of pins. The ‘key’, when slid into place through these two slots and lifted straight up, dislodged the pins so that the bolt could be pulled back by means of a rope or leather strap (ιμάς) that passed through a separate slot and hung outside the door. The γίγγλυμοι, by contrast, were part of the hinging mechanism of the door, being dowels fitted into the cross-braces (ζυγά) at the top and bottom of the door and playing freely in sockets (στροφεῖς or σύριγγες) in the lintel and threshold. It is clear from this account that (ἐπι)μανδαλωτός and γίγγλυμωτός are words related not by synonymity but by participation in the vocabulary proper to doors.⁵ When the matter is considered in this light, we see

³ This may not be an exception if K. J. Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy* (Berkeley 1972) 127, correctly suggests that “the passage is the only one in comedy which dares to hint at the enjoyment of incestuous contacts.”

⁴ H. Diels, *Antike Technik*³ (Stuttgart 1924) 52–55; S. A. Handford, “The Evidence of Aeneas Tacticus on the ΒΑΛΑΝΟΣ and ΒΑΛΑΝΑΓΡΑ,” *JHS* 46 (1926) 181–84.

⁵ They are further similar in that they, like the teeth of the key, are treenails or dowels (τύλοι). This may be the link that connects the door metaphor to the other image of the tongue as instrument, for Aristophanes thinks of song and speech as being bored with an auger (τόρευε πᾶσαν ᾠδὴν, *Thesm.* 986; τετορήσω ταῦτα [= τὸ κήρυγμα], *Pax* 381) and joined with dowels (ρήματα γομποπαγή, *Ran.* 824; cf. σωκρατογόμφοις, Teleclides fr. 2 *PCG*). See E. Vermeule, *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry* (Berkeley 1979) 198.

immediately that περιπεταστός, which keeps close company with ἐπιμανδαλωτός at *Ach.* 1201 and which effectively describes the parting of the lips involved in French kissing (*cf.* ἀνοίγων τὰ φιλήματα, Achilles Tatius 2.37.8) is also a door metaphor.⁶ (Ἄνα)πετάννυμι, like Latin *pateo*, is so often said of opening doors (*Il.* 12.122, *etc.*) that it can be used alone, with the word for door in ellipse (*Theoc. Id.* 16.6).

It is no accident that Old Comedy described kisses involving the tongue using door vocabulary, for Greeks since Homer have viewed the tongue as a door.⁷ I have argued elsewhere that Homer's phrase στρεπτή δὲ γλῶσσ' ἐστὶ βροτῶν (*Il.* 20.248) pictures the tongue as the door to the cage of the teeth (ἔρκος ὀδόντων, *Il.* 4.350, *etc.*) capable of pivoting noisily on its hinge to allow the winged words (ἔπεα πτερόεντα, *Il.* 1.201, *etc.*) within to escape.⁸ Subsequent Greek authors, and in particular Aristophanes, elaborated upon this idea. The mouth ought to have a door or gate (*cf.* ἀθύρωτον στόμα, *Ran.* 838 RMs^b with schol. vet. A K; ἀπύλ-, *Ran.* 838 V, Gell. *NA* 1.15.19, Eust. *Il.* 2.619.7),⁹ namely the tongue. The tongue pivots (*Nub.* 792, *Ran.* 892) and has a key (Aesch. fr. 316 *TrGF*; Soph. *OC* 1052) whereby to lock the mouth (κλείειν στόμα, *Eq.* 1316, *Thesm.* 40). When not locked with a key, the tongue, like a door (*cf.* *Thesm.* 421–27),¹⁰ may be sealed (Critias fr. 5.3 West; Timotheus 791.148 *PMG*; Lucian, *Anth. Pal.* 10.42.1). The basis for the equation of tongue and door is apparently the noisiness of the pivot-and-socket mechanism (*Thesm.* 487f). The *vox propria* for this noise is ψόφος (*cf.* ψοφέω with LSJ *s.v.* II); someone sneaking into a

⁶ A. H. Sommerstein, *Aristophanes, Acharnians* (Warminster 1980) 213 *ad* 1201: "broad: lit. 'spread,' i.e., with spread lips."

⁷ Door imagery depicts other aspects of sexual congress beside kissing. The door is used metaphorically of the vagina (*Ar. Vesp.* 768, *Thesm.* 424, *Eccl.* 962, 990; Eupolis fr. 236 *PCG*) and anus (Semon. fr. 17 West; Hipponax fr. 92.14 West; *Ar. Eccl.* 316–71; Eur. *Cyc.* 502), and penis and vagina may be depicted respectively by βάλανος (*Ar. Lys.* 407–13, with a surface meaning of "jewelry-clasp" rather than, as elsewhere, "door bolt") and τρύπημα (*Eccl.* 624). Timocles describes intercourse as bolting the tongue box, with reference to the box in which oboe reeds (literally "tongues") were kept (καὶ τὸ γλωττόκομον βαλανεύσατε, fr. 2 *PCG*).

⁸ "A Homeric Metaphor Cluster Describing Words, Tongue and Teeth," *AJP* 116 (1995) 1–5.

⁹ As the mouth has a door in Hebrew thought: Job 41:14, Qoheleth 12:4, Micah 7:5.

¹⁰ For a seal on the door see J. Diggle, *Euripides: Phaethon* (Cambridge 1970) 145f *ad* 223.

house seeks to do so ἀποφητί (Lucian *Dial. Meret.* 12.3 [314]).¹¹ Metaphorically, the bombastic Aeschylus is ψόφου πλέων (*Nub.* 1367) and Pluto's doorkeeper, Aeacus, terrifies callers with ὁ ψόφος τῶν ῥημάτων (*Ran.* 492). Knocking is another kind of door noise and it is a cliché of comic doorway scenes¹² that knocking, however timid, is always too loud (*Nub.* 136, *Av.* 53–56, *Ran.* 39, *Plut.* 1097–1102). In Aristophanic parlance, the door, when knocked on by an unseen person, is “speaking” for itself (φθέγγεσθαι, *Plut.* 1097).¹³

The equation of tongue and door is actualized in courting ritual. According to custom, the *exclusus amator* passes the night on the doorstep of his beloved, singing παρακλαυσίθυρα,¹⁴ as the young man does at *Eccl.* 962ff.¹⁵ The lover accompanies his song with various gestures, which include kissing his beloved's door, doorpost, or doorstep (Callim. *Epigr.* 43.5f; Theoc. *Id.* 23.16; Lucr. 4.1179; Prop. 1.16.42).¹⁶ It

¹¹ The classic discussion of door noises is W. W. Mooney, *The House Door on the Ancient Stage* (Baltimore 1914) 19–41. See also H. Petersmann, “Philologische Untersuchungen zur antiken Bühnentür,” *WS N.F.* 5 (1971) 91–109.

¹² The doorway scene provides comic effects in both comedy and tragedy from Aesch. *Cho.* 653 to Shakespeare, *Macbeth* II.iii. see E. H. Haight, *The Symbolism of the House Door in Classical Poetry* (New York 1950) 37–91; O. Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus* (Oxford 1977) 340ff.

¹³ Personification of the door is at home in comedy (as here and at Plaut. *Stich.* 312), in divine epiphanies (Pind. *Nem.* 1.41, on which see H. Herter, “Ein neues Türwunder,” *RhM* 83 [1940] 152–57; Callim. *Ap.* 6; Eur. *Bacch.* 443–48; Verg. *Aen.* 6.81), and under the influence of black magic (Apul. *Met.* 1.14). In general see K. J. McKay, “Door Magic and the Epiphany Hymn,” *CQ NS.* 17 (1967) 184–94.

¹⁴ This is a popular genre of unknown antiquity. It makes its debut in the surviving literature at Eur. *Cyc.* 483–518; see R. A. S. Seaford, *Euripides, Cyclops* (Oxford 1988) 195 *ad loc.*, quoting L. E. Rossi, “Il Ciclope di Euripide come κῶμος mancato,” *Maia* 23 (1971) 10–38 at 21. In general see F. O. Copley, *Exclusus Amator* (Madison 1956) 1–27.

¹⁵ W. Headlam and A. D. Knox, *Herodas: The Mimes and Fragments* (Cambridge 1922) 83 *ad* Herod. 2.34–37 pace R. G. Ussher, *Aristophanes: Ecclesiazusae* (Oxford 1973) 210 *ad* 960–63. The men's attack on the Propylaea in *Lys.* 254–466 makes much verbal and scenic use of the imagery of gates and penetration in an early variation on the *exclusus amator* motif; see C. H. Whitman, *Aristophanes and the Comic Hero* (= *Martin Classical Lectures* 19 [Cambridge (Mass.) 1964]) 203.

¹⁶ Doorposts are also traditionally kissed in farewell (Ap. Rhod. 4.26f; Verg. *Aen.* 2.490; Valerius Flaccus 2.168f). There is a similar ambiguity with kisses that are said to suck forth the soul, an expression used either of passionate sexual kisses (Plato, *Anth. Pal.* 5.78 [=D.L. 3.32]; Achilles Tatius 2.8.2; cf. Marlowe, *Faustus* V.i.100) or of the last kiss to the dying (Cic. *Verr.* 5.118; Verg. *Aen.* 4.684).

consoles him that the door barring him from the object of his desire nonetheless, if only metaphorically, affords the kisses that he hopes to encounter within. In the passage from *Ecclesiastusae* the impediment is not the door but the old woman who opens it. This is one impediment, however, to which the youth refuses to προσάγειν τὸ στόμα (993f).¹⁷

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¹⁷ The material for this note was gathered in the course of preparing a glossary of early Greek anatomical terms. I am grateful to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for their generous support of that project and to an anonymous referee for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this note.