

of blessed women. Having thus assured him that their purpose has been served, Cynthia might well bid Propertius to offer to her shade the verses dedicated to winning her love and loyalty while she lived: "et quoscumque meo fecisti nomine versus, / ure mihi: laudes desine habere meas" (77–78). Along with the poetic burial, this burning of the poems will be a token, albeit late, of the *fides* which, after all,

will unite them still. Other themes as well as other loves may occupy him now; their union in the afterlife is already assured. "Nunc te possideant aliae: mox sola tenebo: / mecum eris, et mixtis ossibus ossa teram" (93–94).²⁶

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26. I owe thanks to Professor J. H. Bishop who read a draft of this article.

A NOTE ON ARISTOPHANES *ACHARNIANS* 834–35

The starving Megarian, who in the course of a rather extended scene (*Ach.* 729–835) manages to sell his twin daughters to Dicaeopolis as sacrificial piglets, closes the episode with the following exhortation: ὦ χοιρίδια, πειρήσθε κᾶνις τῷ πατρὸς / παίειν ἐφ' ἄλι τὰν μᾶδδαν, αἶ κά τις διδῶ.¹ Despite the doubts of some commentators,² it is all but certain that *παίειν* here means *avide vorare*:³ not only is there the testimony of the scholiast,⁴ Hesychius,⁵ and Photius,⁶ but there are other words, similar in meaning to *παίειν*, which seem also to have been used in the sense of "eat avidly." These are (1) *ἐρείδειν*, "to set violently to work on," used of the ravenous dung-beetle at *Pax* 31 (cf. 25);⁷ (2) *κόπτειν*, "to peck, gnaw, or chew," used usually of animals;⁸ (3) *σποδεῖν*, "to batter with one's jaws," used of vehement eating at the banquet of *Pax* 1306;⁹ and (4) *φλάν*, "to crush with the teeth," as often in comedy: e.g., *Ar. Pax* 1306, *Plut.* 694; *Antiph.* 190. 19; *Men.* 607.

The real problem concerns the phrase ἐφ' ἄλι. It has long been realized that ἐπί in the idiom φαγεῖν ἐπὶ τινι designates the main dish, not the condiment or side dish. A

few examples from Aristophanes alone will suffice to demonstrate the pattern: *Ach.* 967, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ ταρίχει τοὺς λόφους κραδαινέτω; *Pax* 123, ἔξετ' ἐν ὥρᾳ / κόλλυραν μεγάλην καὶ κόνδυλον ὄψον ἐπ' αὐτῇ; *Frag.* 630, ἐπὶ τῷ ταρίχει τὸν γέλωτα κατέδομαι, and so forth.¹⁰ Thus, in the abnormal logic of our passage, the girls are being asked to "bang down the bread with their salt." Moreover, the singular ἄλις is most unusual in Attic in the meaning "salt"; the normal Attic usage was the plural, οἱ ἄλεις.¹¹ In the face of these difficulties, it has always seemed that our only alternatives are either to call the lines *verba obscura*¹² and leave it at that, or to try to force a joke out of them, a "Megarian" reversal of the usual order of things: salt would be the main article of the diet, bread the relish.¹³ Unfortunately for the latter interpretation, we must note that Aristophanes' Megarians needed salt as desperately as any other necessity of life (see *Ach.* 811 ff.).

It may be possible to account for the oddities of these lines without strain if we keep in mind that in Aristophanes peculiarities of grammar and syntax, outlandish diction,

1. I follow the Budé text of V. Coulon, *Aristophane*, I⁷ (Paris, 1960).

2. For example J. van Leeuwen, *Aristophanis Acharnenses* (Leyden, 1901).

3. So F. Blaydes, *Aristophanis Comoediae*, VII (Halle, 1887).

4. ἐσθίειν μετὰ τῶν ἄλιν τὸν ἄρτον διὰ τὸ ἀπορεῖν προσφαγίου.

5. παίει' τύπτει, πλήττει, κρούει, δέρει' ἢ ἐσθίει.

6. παίειν' ἐσθίειν.

7. LSJ s.v. ἐρείδω II. 2 cites *Ar. Frag.* 493, in which ἐρείδεται appears to have nothing to do with eating. (All

fragments of Attic comedy cited in this article refer to the edition of T. Kock.)

8. LSJ s.v., I. 10.

9. LSJ cites *Pherecr.* 55 ὡλέν' ὀβελίαν σποδεῖν, where the meaning is at least problematical.

10. Further citations are given by Blaydes (n. 3).

11. See Van Leeuwen, *ad loc.*; LSJ s.v. ἄλις; and cf. *Ach.* 814.

12. Van Leeuwen, *ad loc.*

13. So, e.g., W. Rennie, *Acharnians* (London, 1909), *ad loc.*

neologisms, and similar surprises are often introduced for the purpose of making puns. Such puns are so numerous that quotation of examples is unnecessary: one need only consult the lengthy list compiled by W. Starkie in his *Acharnians* (London, 1909), pp. lvi ff. Since the entire Megarian scene is but a series of obscene puns built around the central *double-entendre* χοῖρος = piggie/*cunnus*,¹⁴ and since our lines are the last of the scene,¹⁵ we should naturally expect to find some final (obscene) joke in them.

Accordingly, I suggest that παίειν, in the strange meaning "to eat," the unusual reversals of idiom in ἐφ' ἀλί, and the word μάδδαν, were all chosen by the poet for their obscene double meanings. παίειν can have an obscene meaning similar to English "bang": the image is of the violent motion of sexual intercourse. Thus, at *Pax* 873 f. we have αὐτὴ Θεωρία 'στίν, ἦν ἡμεῖς ποτε / ἐπαίομεν Βραυρωνάδ' ὑποπεπωκότες; and again of Theoria in 897 f., καὶ παγκράτιόν γ' ὑπαλειψαμένοις νεανικῶς / παίειν, ὀρύττειν, πῦξ ὁμοῦ καὶ τῷ πέει. Note also the pun in the name of Myrrhine's ithyphallic husband at *Lys.* 852, Παιονίδης Κινησίας. The object of παίειν is μάδδαν, which must refer to the *cunnus*:¹⁶ compare the puns surrounding such words for pastry as ἐλατήρ (a broad, flat cake [Hesychius]) at *Ach.* 246;¹⁷ πλακοῦς (another kind of flat cake) at *Pax* 869, *Plut.* 995, *Frag.* 202; and μυστίλη (a pastry boat for gravy) at *Eq.* 1168 ff.¹⁸ And finally, ἐφ' ἀλί, far from having anything to do with salt, is simply an auditory allusion to φαλλός, an allusion which could easily have been

emphasized by the Megarian's stage gestures and intonation.¹⁹ We may note that puns on φαλλός are hardly uncommon in Aristophanes: in the new kingdom of birds the φαληρίς will receive Aphrodite's old hegemony in sacrifice (*Av.* 565); Hermes is τρικέφαλος (*Frag.* 553); the swinish and illiterate sons of Hippocrates are "procephalous" (*Frag.* 557); and Alcibiades was supposedly born in the archonship of "Phalenias" (*Frag.* 554), an allusion to that young man's dissolute habits. In *Frag.* 320, a list of women's paraphernalia, we find κεκρύφαλον (line 6), which is both "girdle" and "secret phallus" (cf. the ὄλισβος of line 13). Finally, we may cite a kindred segmentation-pun from Sophron *Frag.* 39 Olivieri,²⁰ which can be read either as ἃ δ' ἄμφ' ἄλητα κυπτάζει ("she works attentively over her meal") or ἃ δ' ἄμ' φάλητα κυπτάζει ("she bends down to work at the phallus" = *fellat*; cf. *Lys.* 17).

Such a joke, combining as it does references to food and to sexual intercourse simultaneously, is entirely harmonious with the humor of the Megarian scene as a whole, since this scene derives its comedy and its momentum solely from comical allusions to food and sex. Our passage would thus read, "My little piggies, even without your father you must try (1) to bang down some bread with your salt, if anyone should give you (any); (2) to bang your *cunnus* against the phallus, in case someone should give (it) to you."

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14. See now the detailed commentary of K. J. Dover *Aristophanic Comedy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1972), pp. 63 ff.

15. The remarks of Starkie, *op. cit.*, at line 835 are tentative but sensible.

16. Again, see Starkie (as in n. 15).

17. Probably with further play on ἔντος = *secreta muliebria*, (as at *Lys.* 1061, *Eccl.* 845); cf. also ζωμός at *Pax* 716, 885.

18. Cleon announces that he brings Demos pastry boats molded and graved by the ivory hand of the goddess; the mischievous Demos remarks that the goddess must have had a big finger (μέγαν δάκτυλον). The joke lies (1) in the *double-entendre* δάκτυλος = phallus (as at *Lys.* 365, where the chorus of women dare the men to touch Stratyllis "even with the finger"; the surrounding threats and oaths all contain explicit references to the sexual organs, and thus it is highly probable that here, too, we are meant to take δάκτυλος *sensu obsceno*); and (2) in the common Aristophanic comparison of the female

member to various pastries. There is a further allusion to the female *secreta*, elsewhere compared (cf. n. 17) with soup and gravy. Demos means to say that only a large (i.e., hugely erect; see W. M. Calder, "An Unnoticed Obscenity in Aristophanes," *CP*, LXV [1970], 257, on this meaning of μέγας) phallus could have resulted in so well-gravied a *cunnus*. For ἔχειν meaning "to accommodate a penis in coitu" cf. *Ach.* 787. Eubulus (*Frag.* 75. 10 ff.) has a very similar but much more elaborate joke in which the pastry is further personified as "Pluto's Spouse" and the phallic finger compared to the ramming beak of a trireme (compare Pisthetaerus' trireme-like erection at *Av.* 1256).

19. Note the remarks of Starkie, *op. cit.*, p. lvii.

20. See A. Olivieri, *Frammenti della Commedia Greca e del mimo nella Sicilia e nella Magna Grecia* (Naples, 1930), p. 193, and the earlier remarks of A. Nauck, "Sophron," *Philologus*, IV (1849), 265.