267 Kiss (*Osculum*)

Sometimes a kiss is given as a cause of adulation, as is evident in 2 Kings 19[:39] concerning Absalom who drew men to his side by kisses as he reigned. And Eccli. 29[:5] it is said “Till they receive, they kiss the hands of the lender.” Sometimes a kiss is given as a cause of betrayal, as 2 Kings 20[:9] where Joab holding the chin of Amasa as if to kiss and he stabbed him. In this way Judas kissed Christ, Matt. 26[:48]. Sometimes a cause of fornication is given, as is treated in Prov. 7[:13]: “catching the young man, she kisses him.” On account of this Claudius prohibited kisses to take place in the city of Rome, as Eutropius says in *Historia Romana*.[[1]](#endnote-1)

¶ For although kisses of themselves were not evil, however they are incentives and occasions of evils, particularly to the frail bodies and weak minds, just as the Philosopher says, *De animalibus*,[[2]](#endnote-2) some animals kiss each other, but however they do not conceive by the mouth as the common people think of the ravens and doves. Some however by kissing themselves conceive as serpents. So certain men conceive nothing evil by kisses, but snake-like men conceive evil.

¶ Fourth, sometimes a kiss is given as a cause of love, just as Paul says writing to the Romans and to the Corinthians: “Salute one another with a holy kiss” of peace, Rom. last chapter [16:16] and to [1] Cor. last chapter [16:20]. Wherefore Ambrose in the *Hexameron*,[[3]](#endnote-3) what shall I say about the kiss of the mouth, which is a pledge of piety and love. Wherefore it is said in Can. 1[:1]: “Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth.” Doves kiss each other, but something to the human loveliness of the kiss by which it shines forth in a sign of friendship. Wherefore Christ says [Luke 22:48]: “Judas, do you betray the Son of man with a kiss?” as if saying, you have converted the sign of love to a sign indicative of betrayal. A pledge of peace and truth you have used in the office of cruelty. These things from Ambrose. Therefore, that is verified from Prov. 27[:6]: “Better are the wounds of a friend, than the deceitful kisses of an enemy.” The female viper kills the male when they go together by kissing, according Isidore, *Etymologiae*, book 12, chapter 27.[[4]](#endnote-4)

¶ Fifth, a kiss is given as reconciliation, as it is said in Luke 25[:20] about the prodigal son returning because the father kissed him. So, David kissed Solomon after the killing of his brother, 2 Kings 14[:33]. The soul desires such a kiss, Can. 8[:1]: “Who shall give you alone to me that I may find you without, and kiss you, and now no man may despise me.” And it is significant that he says you alone because as commonly Christ the spouse does not kiss the soul unless when they are alone with each other.

1. Eutropius, cf. Suetonius, *The Life of Claudius* 5.26 (LCL 38:54-55): Verum inlecebris Agrippinae, Germanici fratris sui filiae, per ius osculi et blanditiarum occasiones pellectus in amorem, subornavit proximo senatu qui censerent, cogendum se ad ducendum eam uxorem, quasi rei p. maxime interesset, dandamque ceteris veniam talium coniugiorum, quae ad id tempus incesta habebantur. Ac vix uno interposito die confecit nuptias, non repertis qui sequerentur exemplum, excepto libertino quodam et altero primipilari, cuius nuptiarum officium et ipse cum Agrippina celebravit.

But his affections were ensnared by the wiles of Agrippina, daughter of his brother Germanicus, aided by the right of exchanging kisses and the opportunities for endearments offered by their relationship; and at the next meeting of the senate he induced some of the members to propose that he be compelled to marry Agrippina, on the ground that it was for the interest of the State; also that others be allowed to contract similar marriages, which up to that time had been regarded as incestuous. And he married her with hardly a single day's delay; but none were found to follow his example save a freedman and a chief centurion, whose marriage ceremony he himself attended with Agrippina. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Aristotle, *History of Animals* 6.2 560b25-561a1 (Barnes 1:882-883): A singular phenomenon is observed in pigeons with regard to pairing: that is, they kiss one another just when the male is on the point of mounting the female, and without this preliminary the male would decline to perform his function. With the older males the preliminary kiss is only given to begin with, and subsequently sequently he mounts without previously kissing; with younger males the preliminary is never omitted. Another singularity in these birds is that the hens tread one another when a cock is not forthcoming, after kissing one another just as takes place in the normal pairing. Though they do not impregnate one another they lay more eggs under these than under ordinary circumstances; no chicks, however, result therefrom, but all such eggs are wind-eggs. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Ambrose, *Hexameron* 6.9.68 (PL 14:269-270): Quid autem loquar de osculo oris, quod pietatis et charitatis est pignus? Osculantur se et columbae, [Col.0270A] sed quid ad humani osculi venustatem, quo amicitiae insigne humanitatisque praefulget, in quo plenae charitatis fidelis exprimitur affectus? Unde et Dominus velut prodigii genus in proditore condemnans ait: Juda, osculo Filium hominis tradis (Luc. XXII, 48)? hoc est charitatis insigne convertis ad signum proditionis et infidelitatis indicium? Pacis hoc pignore uteris ad officium crudelitatis? Bestiali igitur oris obsequio inferentem potius necem, quam charitatis foedera deferentem divinae arguit vocis oraculo. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 12.4.10-11 (PL 82:443): Vipera dicta, quod vi pariat. Nam cum venter ejus ad partum ingemuerit, catuli non exspectantes naturae maturam solutionem, corrosis ejus lateribus, vi erumpunt cum matris interitu. Lucanus:

Viperei coeunt abrupto corpore nodi. Fertur autem quod masculus, ore inserto viperae, semen exspuat. Illa autem, ex voluptate libidinis, in rabiem versa, caput maris ore receptum praecidat; ita fit ut parens uterque pereat, masculus dum coit, femina dum parturit. Ex vipera autem pastilli fiunt, [Col.0443C] qui θηριακοὶ vocantur a Graecis. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)