

Κόλασαι τοὺς ἡμᾶς τοιούτους ἡδέως βλέποντες
‘Punish those who rejoice in our misery’:
On curse texts and *Schadenfreude*¹

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Beware God’s anger and men’s gossip.
Theognis 1298

1. *Two defixiones concerning derision*

ONE OF THE most fascinating and instructive texts in the whole dossier of *defixiones* is a curse copied from an opisthographic lead tablet found in 1899 near Arkesine on Amorgos but now lost.² It has been assigned to the 2nd century of our era by Th. Homolle, to the 1st by F. Bömer, and to c. 200 BC by J. Zingerle. The curse is prompted by the evil practices of ‘a certain Epaphroditos,’³ who is accused of having incited the slaves of the writer to flee. Here is the translation of the text:

A: Lady Demeter, Queen, as your suppliant, your slave, I fall at your feet (Κυρία Δημήτηρ, βασίλισσα, ἱκέτης σου, προσπίπτω δὲ ὁ δοῦλός σου). He has taken off my slaves, has led them into evil ways, indoctrinated them, advised them, misled them, he

- 1 As is apparent from this title I shall quote Greek inscriptions in their own spelling, despite their orthographic or grammatical oddities, unless this seriously affects their intelligibility. I am grateful to David Jordan for his corrections of my English and many other helpful comments. Thanks also to Alice van Harten who, in an earlier stage, scrutinized the text for flaws and errors.
- 2 Homolle 1901:412–30, *IG XII* (7) p.1, SGD 60; cf. Wunsch 1905:1081, Latte 1920:81 n.54, Zingerle 1926, Björck 1938:129–31, Versnel 1981b:32, Pleket 1981:189–92, Versnel 1985.
- 3 In a letter David Jordan suggests to me that perhaps *epaphroditos* should not be capitalized but rather interpreted as ‘a certain charming fellow.’ This may well be true. Names of thieves and the like are mentioned if known, but the curse is usually the specific refuge for those who do *not* know their opponents, which might explain the indefinite pronoun *τις*. On the other hand, the target seems to be perfectly familiar to the author. Moreover, Epaphroditos is one of the most current Greek names in inscriptions of the Roman period, and is especially at home in Crete, the Cyclades and not least on Amorgos, where the *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names I* (1987) mentions five persons of that name, including one from Arkesine, where the tablet was found.

rejoiced (in my misery) (κατέχαρε), he has them wandering round the market place, he persuaded them to run away. This is what a certain Epaphroditos has done. The same man has bewitched my handmaid so that he could take her as his wife against my wishes. And for this reason he had her flee together with the others. Lady Demeter, this is what I have been through. Being bereft I seek refuge in you. Be merciful to me and grant me my rights (ἐγὼ ὡ ταῦτα παθὼν ἔρημος ἐὼν ἐπὶ σε καταφεύγω σοῦ εὐγυλάτου τυχεῖν καὶ ποῖσαί με τοῦ δικαίου τυχεῖν). Grant that the man who has treated me thus shall have satisfaction neither in rest nor in motion, neither in body nor in soul; that he may not be served by slave or by handmaid, by the great or the small. If he undertakes something, may he be unable to complete it. May his house be stricken by the curse for ever. May no child cry (to him), may he never lay a joyful table; may no dog bark and no cock crow; may he sow but not reap; ... (?); may neither earth nor sea bear him any fruit; may he know no blessed joy; may he come to an evil end together with all that belongs to him.

B: Lady Demeter, I supplicate you because I have suffered injustice: hear me, goddess, and pass a just sentence (λίτανεύω σε παθὼν ἄδικα, ἐπάκουσον, θεά, καὶ κρίναι τὸ δίκαιον). For those who have cherished such thoughts against us and who have joyfully prepared sorrows (τοὺς τοιαῦτα ἐνθυμούμενους καὶ καταχαίροντε(ς) καὶ λύπας ἐπιθε(ί)ναι) for my wife Epiktesis and me, and who hate us (μισοῦσιν ἡμᾶς), prepare the worst and most painful horrors. O Queen, hear us who suffer and punish those who rejoice in our misery (ἐπάκουσον ἡμῖν παθοῦσι, κόλασαι τοὺς ἡμᾶς τοιούτους ἡδέως βλέποντες).

Defixiones are generally defined as thin lead sheets inscribed with maledictions intended to negatively influence the actions or welfare of persons (or animals). Whenever a motive is mentioned it generally refers to competition especially in the fields of sports and (amphi)theatre, litigation, love, and commerce. Practically without exception these texts are anonymous and lack argumentation or references to a deserved punishment of the cursed person(s). In contradistinction, the present text presents a humble supplication from a submissive mortal ('your slave') to a sovereign goddess ('Queen'), who is asked to show her 'mercy' and to 'hear' the suppliant by avenging him and by punishing the culprit. Although the suggested punishments are phrased in the form of curses, these curses are not of the type that we normally encounter in the *defixio*, but they belong to a large category of well-known conditional self-curses and, more especially, of imprecations against potential grave desecrators.⁴ In general, the punishment serves as satisfaction for the sense of justice of the injured person. For these and other reasons, I have proposed to distinguish this genre, comprising a considerable number of

4 Among the many curses of this type collected at Kakridis 1929, Parrot 1939, Robert 1978, Strubbe 1991, 1997, the closest parallel that I know of is a sepulchral execration from Salamis in Cyprus (1^P-11^P), SEG 6.802; see Watson 1991:111ff., 30-8, on standardization of curse formulas in general.

curses, from the *defixio* in the usual sense of that term and to label it 'prayer for justice' or 'judicial/vindictive prayer'.⁵

With respect to the issue that I wish to discuss in the present paper another remarkable aspect requires our attention. Although it is true that the target must be persecuted primarily for his evil deeds, this is by no means the sole cause of the author's rage. An important additional motif—if it may be called additional—is his suspicion that people rejoice in his misery. In fact, this concern seems to be so dominant that it recurs no fewer than three times, once on side A and twice on side B. Quite some emphasis indeed on an aspect that, compared to the loss of a number of slaves, including a handmaid, might be rated as being of minor importance. At any rate in the eyes of a Dutch observer.

Before attacking this problem by investigating whether there are more expressions of this suspicion, it may be expedient to point out a few further peculiarities of the prayer under discussion. First, while on side A the charge is levelled at one person mentioned by name and including an enumeration of detailed offences, the other side is definitely less definite. First, it gives the impression that Epaphrodeitos' action is the result of a conspiracy by a number of anonymous enemies. The final line, on the other hand, presents a picture of gloating and chuckling onlookers who are not actively involved in the evil action. Incidentally, probably the whole text of side B has been literally copied from a model, as the peculiar curse formula of side A certainly was. We shall see that these variations on the theme of *Schadenfreude* also prevail in other texts that I shall present. For here we encounter the subject of this paper: the occurrence of *Schadenfreude* or malicious laughter in, and more especially its meaning and relevance for, *defixiones* and other curse texts.

Once more returning to our text I would like to draw attention to the specific nature of the complaint, which to my knowledge is unique in the whole dossier of *defixiones*. The escape of slaves does not occur in any other of the curse texts known to us,⁶ although it was a current concern in ancient sources⁷ and we do find instructions to prevent or retrieve the damage in the magical papyri.⁸ In order to appreciate the special nature of our present text we must realize that being deserted by one's slaves is—especially in the context of a face-to-face society—both a very

⁵ Versnel 1991, pointing out its similarity with petitions of the Egyptian ἔντευξις type. At Versnel 1985 I discuss the expression 'may he never lay a joyful table.'

⁶ Interestingly, we do have a parallel case. On the accusation of Demosthenes, Theoris from Lemnos was sentenced to death on the charge of practising magic and *teaching slaves how to deceive their masters* (Plut. *Dem.* 14, *Dem. Aristog.* 1, 79; Philochoros *ap.* Harpokration s.v. Θεωρίης).

⁷ Bellen 1971, Bradley 1989:1–45, 53–5, 71–3, 1994:107–31, Daube 1952.

⁸ *SupplMag* 56, introd., n.6 has a survey of prayers and charms to force a fugitive slave to return. Interestingly, there exists also a charm to cause a slave to run away: Delatte 1927:615.13–6; cf. also *supra* n.6.

public (in the sense of conspicuous) event and a grievous attack on the victim's dignity. Presumably so too (or worse) is the downright rebellion of a slave maid against her master's preference concerning the choice of a husband. All this suggests a rather peculiar social position and a perhaps even more peculiar weakness of character or status of the author. How else should we explain that his slaves could 'walk around the marketplace' while their master obviously is unable to force them to return back home?⁹ Altogether the impression forces itself upon us that the tragic protagonist of this text indeed had quite some reason to fear the malicious laughter of both the offender and those who may have instigated him to his action or at least derived delight from the spectacle. This may put us on the track when we now pursue our investigation.

A remarkable though among students of Graeco-Roman antiquity largely ignored curse text offers both a summary and a further substantiation of what we have just seen in the Amorgos text. Written in the Punic language¹⁰ on a lead tablet found in a necropolis not far from Carthage it can be dated to the 3rd century BC. It has drawn considerable attention among the specialists in Punic/Phoenician culture, especially for its linguistic aspects.¹¹ The text is not without difficulties but can be translated roughly as follows:

Lady Hawwat Elat (or: goddess). This is an operation of melting. I, Maslih, I make Emashtart melt, the place where he lives (or: and Amrit) and all his belongings, because he has (or they have) rejoiced at my expense about the money that I have completely lost. May¹² everyone who rejoices at my expense about the loss of my money, become like this lead which is now being melted.

The most remarkable aspect of this text is that it does *not* curse either the thieves or 'those who may have found the money but do not want to give it back,' formulas which occur in large numbers and great variety in Greek and Roman judicial prayers of later periods. Instead, the curse is exclusively focused on the person or persons who rejoice in the misery of the author. Incidentally, there is an interesting mixture of a prayer for justice to an avenging goddess¹³ on the one hand, and what

9 David Bain reminds me of an interesting parallel to the walking slaves. In his *De agricultura* Cato twice warns against ambulant slaves. At 5.2 he prescribes *vilicus ne sit ambulator* and likewise at 143 requires of the bailiff's wife *ne sit ambulatrix*. Most illuminating for our text is Bain 1986:131: 'In these examples we have *ambulatio* applied to a slave's deserting his or her task and putting his own interests before those of his or her master.'

10 CIS I 6068, best available as Donner and Röllig 1968, no. 89.

11 Levi della Vida 1933, Ferron 1967. I have based my discussion on Ribichini 1976.

12 For reasons not comprehensible to me Ribichini here suggests the addition: '(That the goddess may make?).'

13 The nature of the goddess is debated since she is known from only one other inscription. Ribichini's argument for a chthonic nature, though not impossible, is not compelling.

is generally called sympathetic magic in the action of melting on the other. Melting wax or metal especially in the context of oath-taking or execration are typical of Near Eastern ritual. Aramaic, Hittite and Assyro-Babylonian texts, especially the well-known Maqlû (lit.: ‘burning’) incantations¹⁴ provide close analogies to our Carthaginian *defixio*. Here is one example from these Maqlû texts, which are predominantly concerned with counter-magic: ‘Just as these figurines melt, run and flow away, so may sorcerer and sorceress melt, run and flow away’ (Maqlû 2.146–57). But the practice is also attested in Greek ritual.¹⁵ To our topic, however, the text is relevant above all for its emphatic and *exclusive* plea for punishment of one or more persons who have mocked the author in his misery.

To the best of my knowledge these two texts exhaust the number of prayers for revenge that explicitly refer to derision on lead tablets, but we shall find more evidence if we turn to other types of inscriptions. Also, there are more types of reference to derision or *Schadenfreude* in curse texts besides requests for revenge. I shall discuss these other expressions later and shall now first cast a glance at the plea for justice in a different type of epigraphical curses.

2. Two funerary curses concerning unholy glee

The Amorgos text presented two expressions for (malicious) joy over the misery of another person: ἡδέως βλέποντες (once) and καταχαίρω (twice). It is this verb χαίρω, twice in its more adequate form ἐπιχαίρω, that we find more often in another type of curse texts, which can with equal right be labelled *prayers for revenge*. I have in mind those funerary inscriptions which implore a god to punish (or which simply call down a curse upon) the villain who has caused the death of the deceased or has inflicted any kind of injury during his lifetime. Best known are the ones marked by a stereotyped couple of features—the Sun as avenger and the symbol of the raised hands—which F. Cumont took as standard characteristics for his collections of 1923 and 1933, adopted and supplemented by G. Björck in 1938.¹⁶ Many new testimonia have come to light since.¹⁷

14 Meier 1937 (text and translation), Reiner 1958, Bottéro 1985:163–219, Abusch 1974:251–62, 1987:13–41.

15 Faraone 1993:62–5; cf. 1989a. On a very interesting recent inscription from Ephesos, containing a melting ritual against a sorcerer, see Graf 1992.

16 The main collections and discussions are: Cumont 1923, 1926f., 1933, Björck 1938:24ff.; cf. also Sanders 1960:264ff., Bömer 1963:201–5. On the symbol of the raised hands see Strubbe 1991:42.

17 *BullÉp* 1965:335, 1968:535, Pippidi 1976f., Jordan 1979. But these do not exhaust the list, e.g. recently Riel 1994.

Most telling for our purpose is a funerary inscription from Alexandria (11^p, SB 1323; Cumont 1923, no.22; Björck 1938, no.11):

Θεῷ ὑψίστῳ καὶ πάντων ἐπόπτῃ καὶ Ἡλίῳ καὶ Νεμέσεσι αἶρει Ἀρσινόῃ ἄωρος τὰς χεῖρας. Εἴ τις αὐτῇ φάρμακα ἐποίησε ἢ καὶ ἐπέχαρ'ε τις αὐτῆς τῷ θανάτῳ ἢ ἐπιχαρεῖ, μετέλθετε αὐτούς.

To God Most High and to the Sun and the Nemeseis Arsinoe, who died before her time, raises her hands. If anybody poisoned/bewitched her or if anybody rejoiced in her death or will rejoice, do persecute them.

Just as in the Amorgos curse, there is a double focus. First on the person who is supposed to have intentionally caused her death by poison (or black magic) and secondly also on the one who gloats over her death or may do so in the future. Nor is this all. Just as in the Amorgos texts there are two possibilities: the one who is rejoicing in her death may be the murderer himself, but the reference to the future in the subsequent enunciation clearly suggests another person or persons. So once more it appears that both first-hand and subsidiary involvement may be implied in the notion of *Schadenfreude*. And again influence from formulaic models should be taken into account.¹⁸ We have a closely related formula in another funerary inscription from Amisos (Dain 1933, no. 34).

εἰ δέ τις ἠδίκησε αὐτὸν ἢ ἐπέχαρη, ἥτε γυνὴ ἥτε ἀνὴρ, χεῖρονα πάθοιτο αὐτοῦ.

If anyone has injured him or rejoiced in the event, either woman or man, may he suffer worse inflictions than the deceased.

Again we observe two by now well-known causes for revenge: the damage itself and the *Schadenfreude*, here phrased in an optional disjunctive expression.¹⁹

3. *Dolos*: an excursus on poison, black magic, slander, gossip and mocking

Two *defixiones*, two funerary curses, the former presenting everyday tragedies of loss and bereavement, the latter the great tragedy of life and death—*unnatural* death. All four are marked by the suspicion (or the awareness) either that the act

18 Björck notes that the two texts share the thematic 2nd aorist of χαίρω, but, of course, they are not alone in this.

19 Although I would surmise that there exist many more of these curses they are not easy to find, e.g. Bernand 1992: no. 98 (a reference, which, like so many others, I owe to one of the invaluable surveys by A. Chaniotis, *EBGR* 1992, *Kernos* 9 [1996] no. 12) is a funerary curse with the wish that the sky will punish those who rejoice over the death of the deceased (ὁ περριέχων μετελεύσει-ται τοὺς ἐπειχάραντές σοι), which once more underlines the formulaic nature of these curses. M. Maas (1903) has argued, not very compellingly, that this was a 'jüdisches Rachegebet.'

may have been committed by a person who gloats over the misery he inflicted, or that others may be watching the misfortune with gleeful satisfaction.²⁰ That, by the way, the latter category is not necessarily restricted to people who are familiar with the deceased or belong to the same group or community is illustrated by Plutarch in his essay *Περὶ πολυπραγμοσύνης* (*De curiositate*), in which he censures people who want to know everything that is concealed, unpleasant or depraved. More especially those who take delight in reading inscriptions on tombs are accused of ἐπιχαιρεκακία ‘malice, *Schadenfreude*,’ or ἡδονὴ ἐπὶ ἀλλοτρίοις κακοῖς ‘joy at another’s misfortune’ (Plut. *Mor.* 518C; cf. Helttula 1995:146). Even so, *Schadenfreude* flourishes best in the context of personal relationships, good or bad, sharing this preference with an extended conglomerate of malicious affections or expressions. We shall now first cast a glance into this shady realm of surreptitious malice, where gossip, slander, derision, magic and poison also belong. It is a realm of secrecy.

The Sun, considered the most qualified avenger,²¹ and other superior and all-seeing gods²² such as Hypsistos Theos (‘the Highest God’) are specifically invoked in funerary texts in cases of uncertainty about the cause of death or disease. As noted earlier, these texts are frequently concerned with abnormal and hence puzzling death,²³ the deceased being referred to as an ἄωρος or βιαιοθάνατος, i.e. someone who has died ‘before his fated time.’ As is typical in traditional, premodern societies, the inexplicable death, for example by a lingering illness, is frequently attributed to the evil practices of unknown enemies (Meuli 1975:439–44). Both the suspicion and the uncertainty concerning the precise cause of the adversity are expressed in typically ‘conditional’ or ‘optional’ formulas. Here are a few examples.

Δόλος, often more specifically δόλος πονηρός (see Robert 1977:49), is the most comprehensive and a very common term for the entire complex of undefinable causes of death. For instance, in two sepulchral stelae, εἰ δὲ δόλος με [δάμασσε], θεῖον φῶος ἔκδικον ἔστω ‘if a cunning scheme killed me, may the divine light avenge me’ (Cumont 1923, no. 15, Björck 1938, no. 2) and εἰ μὲν ἰδίᾳ μοίρῃ, ὥφειλεν, εἰ δὲ χερσὶ δολοποιῶις, Ἥλιε, βλέπε ‘if by my own fate, it had to be so, but if by cunning hands, Sun, keep watch’ (Cumont 1923, no. 12, Björck 1938, no. 3). Greek δόλος has its pendant in the Latin term *dolus* or *dolus malus*, a common

20 If the laughter of one’s enemies is worse than death (Eur. *HF* 285f.), worst of all is the fear of such mockery *after* one’s death: Halliwell 1991b:286, with testimonia in n.22.

21 Dölger 1919:90ff. Cumont 1922:133ff., Bidez 1932, Pettazzoni 1949, Fauth 1995:189–202.

22 In the collection at Björck 1938:24–45: Serapis (no. 1), Theos Hypsistos (11, 12), Hosios Dikaios (13), Hagne Thea (14), *Manes vel Di Caelestes* (16), οἱ θεοί (17); cf. *IKyzikos* 522 for Δίκη καὶ Ζεῦ Πανεπόψειε.

23 For instance, of the 22 pagan Greek and Latin texts collected by Björck all but three request revenge for manslaughter.

legal expression.²⁴ Occasionally it can be found in prayers for justice as well, for instance one found at Uley, written by a certain Dicilinus (Hassall and Tomlin 1989:329) against persons *qui pecori meo dolum malum intulerunt* 'who cunningly inflicted evil harm on my cattle.' 'The harm done is not specified but was presumably an ailment blamed on persons known to bear Dicilinus a grudge whether it was thought to be due to poison or to witchcraft': thus the comment of its editor, R.S.O. Tomlin. This assessment is directly relevant to our issue in several respects. First, there is the question concerning the identity of the offender; it is by no means easy,²⁵ as the following funerary inscription from Pessinous (Lambrechts and Bogaert 1969, *BullÉp* 1968:535, 1970:600) may show: ὃς ἂν ἐνεχίρησε Μηνოდώρῳ χωρὶς θεοῦ βίας, 'Ἡλι Κύρι, μή σ' ὀρέσι 'whoever may have laid violent hands on Menodoros, unless it was performed by the power of a god, must be displeasing to you, Helios Kyrios.' The problem is that it is by definition impossible to decide whether it is god, fate or human malice that should be blamed, as Greek archaic poetry and tragedy were well aware. Of course, firm characters may take the risk: ... *manus lebo contra deum qui me innocentem sustulit* 'I raise my hands against the god who, innocent as I am, took me away' (*CIL* VI 25075, Cumont 1923:11 5). But wavering ones—a majority—have to make do with vague or dubitative expressions such as ὁ ἐπίβουλος (Björck 1938, no. 5); *quisquis ei laesit aut nocuit* (whoever hurt or injured him, (*loc.cit.* no. 10) and a lavish variety of terms with the stem ἄδικ- and the like:²⁶ τὶς αὐτὸν ἠδίκησε τῷ ἡ αἵμ[α] 'whoever wronged him: blood over him!' (Rosanova 1955:174–6); τὶς δὲ τούτους ἠδίκησε, ἐνκεχαρισμένος ἦτω εἰς αὐτὰ τὰ νέκυεια 'whoever wronged him, may he be welcome to the dead' (*MAMA* 7.402); τὶς [ποτε? τοῦτ]ον ἠδίκησεν, ἔστα[ι αὐ]τῷ πρὸς [τὸ]ν Θεό[ν] (7.360.5–9); τὶς κακῶς ἐποίησεν, ἔσται αὐτῷ [π]ρὸς τὸν Θεόν (7.276c.2–4)

24 *Vocabularium Iurisprudentiae Romanae* (1933) s.v. *dolus*.

25 Of course, the perpetrator is not always anonymous. In cases of violent death, for instance, he may have been observed *in flagranti*. Kajanto 1968:185f.: 'In many an epitaph the cause of death was stated in terms which nowadays would amount to libel,' with the evidence. More examples: Veyne 1983. However, it is striking to read (*CIL* VI 2.12649, Björck 1938, no.20, Rome) that a father, mourning his daughter who passed away after a lingering illness, adds: *Atimeto liberto, cuius dolo filiam amisi, restem et clavom unde sibi collum alliget* 'For Atimetos the freedman, whose evil schemes made me lose my daughter, rope and nail, in order that he may hang himself.' He seems to be sure of both cause (no doubt poison or magic) and identity of the culprit. The same in *CIL* VI 20905 (Björck 1938, no.21, Rome), a curse against *Acte libertae, venerariae et perfidae, dolosae, duri pectoris* 'Upon Acte the freedwoman, treacherous poison monger, crafty and cruel.' *DTAud* 1, quoted *infra* p.134, gives a good insight into the background of these suspicions; it squares nicely with *DTAud* 4, a case of suspicion of poisoning, where I suggest that in 'the curse against the one who has written against me or who gave the instruction' refers to an accusation on a lead tablet like the ones that have come down to us at Knidos. See below.

26 I am indebted to my colleague Johan Strubbe for allowing me to inspect, before its publication, his recent book on funerary curses (1997).

‘whoever wronged him, he will render account to God,’ εἴ τις ἡ[δίκη]σεν αὐτή, [ἔ]ξι <π>ρὸ<ς> τὸν Θεόν [ὅς]τις κρεῖνι δ[ικαίους καὶ ἀδίκους] ‘if anybody wronged her, he will render account to the God who judges the righteous and the unrighteous’ (*ib.* 6–10). Apparently, in the context of death the notions ‘mysterious’ and ‘malicious’ are near equivalents, as are ‘uncertainty’ and ‘suspicion.’

Nor is this the only dilemma. Sixty years ago Louis Robert wrote: ‘Poison and magic played an important part both in reality and in the imagination. It might be interesting to trace its attestations in the Greek epitaphs.’²⁷ He mentioned a few examples to which, indeed, many more could be added. But, as Tomlin, quoted above, implied, the expression ‘poison *and* magic,’ might be better replaced by ‘poison *or* magic’ or, better still, ‘poison, *in other words* magic,’ since Greeks and Romans did not make a clear distinction between the two.²⁸ Suffice it to illustrate this well-known ambivalence with the fact that *venenum* in Roman law may imply both forms of *dolus*, just as Greek *pharmakon* does.²⁹

In sum, uncertainty in various degrees and in different respects appears to be a central characteristic of these pleas for justice and revenge. By way of illustration I quote two texts that exemplarily display the rich vocabulary of doubt and suspicion. The first is one of the the best-known funerary pleas for justice, voicing the charge of φαρμακεύειν and professing desperate doubts about both motive and identity of the offender. Preserved in two identical inscriptions from Rheneia the formulas display overt Old Testament reminiscences and are generally ascribed to a Jewish or Samaritan ambience.³⁰ In Gager’s translation:

27 My translation of Robert 1936:55f.: ‘Poison et magie jouaient un grand rôle et en fait et dans les imaginations. Il serait intéressant d’en relever les traces dans les épitaphes grecques,’ *cf.* also Zingerle 1926:18f., Latte 1920:68 n.18.

28 Sometimes the intended meaning is beyond doubt, *e.g.* *nutritus veneno* (*CIL* ix 3030). Less unequivocal, but probably referring to poison is SGD p.158: ‘whoever gave a φάρμακον to Hyakinthos,’ Solin 1981:105f.: *L. Al(l)ius C.f. an(n)orum natus xxv mortu(u)s est vevene (= veneno) quia suas iniurias defendebat. Alias C.f. fecerunt.* But what exactly does φάρμακα δηλητήρια mean in the oldest formulas of the *Dirae Teiae*? Nilsson, *GGR* i 803: ‘... worunter Zaubermittel zu verstehen sind; denn ein ganzes Volk vergiftet man nicht.’ Unfortunately, attempts of this kind have been made, or at least feared: the Athenians believed that the Spartans φάρμακα ἐσβεβλήκοτεν ἐς τὰ φρέατα ‘had thrown poison into the wells’ and thus caused the plague (*Thuc.* 2.48).

29 Particularly interesting is Plato, *Leg.* 11.933, with its distinction between two techniques. One concerns ‘injuries done by bodies to bodies according to nature’s laws’ (referring to poison). The other is the type that causes injuries through μαγανείαις τέ τισι καὶ ἐπωδαῖς καὶ καταδέσει ‘certain magical tricks, charms, and curses,’ *i.e.* magic. Significantly, both are listed under the heading *pharmakeiai*. For a full discussion I may refer to Graf 1994:31–73, ch. 2, ‘Vocabulaire et réflexions des anciens,’ *cf.* Graf 1992:276f. on the double meaning of φάρμακον in an oracle inscription from Ephesos, and also Latte 1920:68 n.18, Zingerle 1926:18f. Anthropology informs us that often there is uncertainty about the precise ways of witchcraft attacks. Sometimes they are imagined as missiles coming from without, other times the harm comes from within: Evans-Pritchard 1937:38, Malinowski 1950 (= 1922):242.

30 Cumont 1923, 19–20, Gager 1992:185–7, no.87, with bibliography. Their cultural setting: White 1987.

I call upon and beseech the highest god, Lord of the spirits and of all flesh, against those who by deceit murdered or bewitched/poisoned (ἐπὶ τοὺς δόλοι φονεύσαντας ἢ φαρμακεύσαντας) miserable Heraklea, untimely dead, causing her to spill her innocent blood in unjust fashion (ἀδίκως). Let the same happen to those who murdered or bewitched/poisoned her and also to their children. Lord, who oversees all things and angels of God, before whom on this day every soul humbles itself, may you avenge this innocent blood and seek (justice) speedily (ἵνα ἐγδικήσῃς τὸ αἷμα τὸ ἀναίτιον ζητήσεις καὶ τὴν ταχίστην).

The second is a self-execration found at Knidos (*DTAud* 1, discussed *infra*), in which the author denies under oath any malice or evil intent against another named person. Again an alleged manipulation of a φάρμακον plays a central role:

... εἰ μὲν ἐγὼ φάρμακον Ἀσκλη[α]πιάδαι ἢ ἔδ[ω]κα ἢ ἐνεθυμήθ[η]ν κατὰ ψ[υ]χὴν κακόν τι [α]ὐτῷ ποῖσαι, ἢ ἐκάλεσα γυναῖκα ἐπὶ τὸ ἱερὸν τρία ἡμιμναῖα διδοῦσα ἵνα αὐτὸν ἐκ τῶν ζώντων ἄρῃ

... if I have given a *pharmakon* to Asklepiadas or contrived in my soul to do him harm in any way, or if I summoned a (wise) woman to the temple paying her three half mina's in order that she remove him from the realm of the living ...

Together these two texts provide a most instructive insight into the idiom of suspicion. In the first the death may have been caused by murder, more particularly a deceitful, mysterious form of murder: δόλος. This expression cannot, however, be sharply distinguished from the subsequent verb: φαρμακεύειν, and this term, in its turn, may harbour two intertwined meanings: poison, especially through a *philtron*, and black magic, which may—but need not—be contrived by material means. Finally, the whole complex is summarized in the term ἀδίκως, thus paving the way for the logical request for retaliation: ἐγδικήσῃς, ζητήσεις.³¹ The second text presents a similar spectrum, varying from administering poison (or practicing magic?), via nourishing negative feelings against the target, to commissioning manslaughter to a wise woman (who no doubt is expected to apply the same surreptitious techniques as detailed earlier in the curse).³²

Curiously, it is as if the mere nourishing of evil thoughts against a person suffices to automatically produce miserable effects. The Amorgos text, for instance, requires punishment 'for those who have nourished such thoughts against us (τοὺς τοιαῦτα ἐνθυμούμενους) and who have joyfully prepared sorrows (καὶ καταχαίροντες) καὶ λύπας ἐπιθε(ῖ)ναι), and other texts provide a rich variety of similar suggestions. It is in fact exactly the same surreptitious manner in which envy, as-

31 The two terms are current in biblical language but are also in use in pagan inscriptions: Versnel 1991:65–79.

32 Note that expressions comparable to ἐκ τῶν ζώντων ἄρῃ occur in another *defixio* (SGD 131, Wunsch 1909:41–5) as well as in literature (e.g. Mt. 24:39, Jn. 19:15).

sisted by her henchmen gossip and slander, and often reified or personified as the evil eye, is supposed to work.³³ The semantic field of βασκανία/βασκαινεῖν, for instance, unites a seamless range of denotations such as: bewitch (with the evil eye)—malign, slander—envy, grudge.³⁴

'No family can stand to see another prosper without feeling envy and wishing the other harm,' writes the anthropologist E.G. Banfield on a modern community in South Italy.³⁵ Hence the extreme mistrust and secretiveness of the family in its eternal competition against other families and groups, all permanently engaged in attempting to discredit one another, so as to rise, if only temporarily, in the social scale (so Du Boulay 1976:389–406). The practical effects of these envious thoughts can be represented in two different manners, remarkably analogous to the ambivalence of the concept of *pharmakon*. Banfield records several stories in which poison is the most natural and self-evident instrument used by the envious person, and of course there are other instrumental courses of action. On the other hand, mere (fear of) envy³⁶ or gossip may suffice to make its target sick. The same ambivalence between an instrumental and a direct, immaterial working of envy and hate can again be observed in the modern discussion on the function and effects of ancient satire and libel. Some scholars claim to have discovered 'evidence of Greek opinion that the imprecations of Archilochus and Hipponax were not merely scurrilous malediction, but were conceived of as carrying a certain supernatural potency to harm, analogous to the ancient curses of tragedy.'³⁷ According to this view, ancient satire is comparable to the magical curse poetry of ancient Ireland, which was assumed to be capable of killing animals and men, more precisely: rats and kings (so e.g. Elliot 1972). However, other scholars argue for a clear distinction between the alleged independent, direct effects of magical satire, working like a spell, and the social effects of grief and shame, which can lead to death for a victim who can no longer face a society which is aware of the dishonourable ridicule to

33 The dark and silent workings of malicious talk and envy and their cooperation in ancient literature: Hubbard 1990:348. The close connections of scornful or insulting laughter with envy and *Schadenfreude*: Halliwell 1991b:289.

34 Cf. the well-known accusations against βασκανία and φθόνος in funerary inscriptions: Aalders 1979:4–6. On the expression τις ἂν προσοίσει χεῖρα τὴν βαρύφθονον 'une main à la lourde envie': Robert 1978:259ff. Generally: Schlesier 1994.

35 Banfield 1958:115. Consequently, Greeks, ancient and modern, are 'caught in a system in which lying, quarreling, gossiping, envy, jealousy, and hatred seem to a large extent to be inevitable,' according to Du Boulay 1974:173.

36 Envy and the evil eye in the modern Mediterranean: e.g. Arnaud 1912:385ff., Schmidt 1913, Dionysopoulos-Mass 1976, Herzfeld 1980b, Galt 1982. Generally: Dundes 1981. Ancient Greece: the literature cited *infra* n.41.

37 Hendrickson 1925:117. The relationship of libelling and cursing: Radermacher 1908; cf. also Speyer 1969:1214f.

which he has been subjected.³⁸ Notorious is the case of Archilochus and the Lycambids, at least according to later Greek authors. However, caution is called for. Exactly the same discussion developed concerning the 'genuine' or 'correct' meaning of the (*malum*) *carmen* that was censured by the Laws of the Twelve Tables: injurious verse or magical spell?³⁹ Here, too, the dispute is far from being settled, and, in my view, cannot be settled because the dilemma is posed in the wrong terms.

It seems to me that here as well as with respect to the other concepts just mentioned, modern attempts to draw sharp boundaries betray a serious misunderstanding of the way Greeks and Romans understood (and sometimes still understand) the mechanisms of envy, evil-eye, gossip, mockery and magic. It appears that word and action are widely regarded as either parallel or subsequent, but always inseparable and often intertwined forms of expression. To put it differently, cause and effect cannot always be clearly distinguished.⁴⁰ Hate *involves* harmful effects, envy *implies* injury, very much like the Irish Athirne's satires addressed at Lady Luaine, who had rejected his advances, spontaneously generated three blemishes 'Reproach, (Bad) Repute, and Disgrace' on her face, and thus provoked her death of shame. For antiquity this suggestion is confirmed by a massive evidence on envy and its effects, collected in well-known works by Walcot and others.⁴¹ Significantly, Aristotle, *EN* 1131a9 and *Pol.* 1262a27, includes defamation and abuse in a list of acts of violence, together with assault, murder and robbery. This is a clear corroboration of the fact that ridicule can function as an act of aggression and can be identified with inflicting physical injury.⁴²

Envy breeds gossip. Exemplarily Pindar *Pyth.* 11.28ff. relates κακολόγοι πολῖται 'slandering citizens' directly with ἴσχει γὰρ ὄλβος οὐ μείονα φθόνον 'for good fortune raises equal envy' (see Hubbard 1990). Gossip, in its turn, generates evil fame. Hesiod, *Catalogue of Women* fr.67, puts it very bluntly: 'And Aphrodite felt jealous (ἠγάσθη) when she looked on the daughters of Tyndareus and cast

38 H.D. Rankin (1974:11) forcefully defends the second option in the case of Lycambes' supposed death as a result of Archilochus' scurrilous verses: 'This was because of the injury that their honour suffered from the diffusion of his ridicule throughout an honour-orientated or 'shame' society rather than because they were placed under a spell by magical words;' cf. Rankin 1977:50-6. Latin invective and its consequences: e.g. Koster 1980, Veyne 1983.

39 Verse: Cicero *ap.* Aug. *CD* 2.9, Cic. *Rep.* 4.12. Spell: Plin. *NH* 28.17. Modern discussion: Marmoreale 1950:53ff., Tupet 1976:166-8.

40 For an exemplary demonstration of similar intertwining of external and internal causes of injury in archaic and classical Greece I refer to Padel 1992, 1995. Especially in the context of sorcery this double focus is well-known in anthropological literature: *supra* n.29.

41 Jahn 1855, Kötting 1954, Moreau 1976f., Walcot 1978, Dickie 1987, 1992, Yatromanolakis 1988, Schlesier 1994.

42 As seen by Halliwell 1991b:287f., who adds much interesting evidence.

them into evil report (κακῇ δέ σφ' ἔμβαλε φήμη),⁴³ which brings us back to the two notions more directly relevant to our issue: gossip and its corollary mockery. Evidence of their social functions and mutual interconnectedness in Greek society, ancient and modern, abounds. I am fully aware of recent mistrust (esp. Herzfeld 1980a, 1987) concerning both the rationale of 'the Mediterranean' as an all-embracing and coherent concept and its relevance to the conceptual framework of ancient Greek culture. For brevity's sake I refer to the sensible reply by David Cohen (1991:38–41), which I fully endorse. Despite many differences, he argues, there are typical patterns of social practices that characterise a wide range of Mediterranean communities, and which display a considerable similarity in the underlying normative structure. Asked why we should select the Mediterranean as an exemplary model (not, to be sure, as a case of proved historical continuity), he answers: 'The main reason is that there is no other group of well-documented societies which manifest the same patterns of social practices.' So back to our issue now.

The fear of gossip and ridicule is closely related to the two concepts of self-regard and shame. The prestige of an individual, or family, is constantly being evaluated and reevaluated in the community through gossip (...). To be gossiped about is in most cases to be criticized adversely, and since people enjoy this recreation they laugh and they ridicule the object of their discussion. The knowledge, or the imagining, of this ridicule and laughter is an important element in a man's feelings of shame. For if the outside world judges him to be a failure he has also failed to live up to his own ideal image of himself which depends on success.

Thus a perfect summary of the issue at stake by J.K. Campbell in his ground-breaking work on the Sarakatsani (1964:312). It may serve as a most illuminating diagnosis of the frame of mind of the author of the Amorgos tablet: failure or mishap provokes gossip and unholy glee, followed by ridicule. The effect on the target is shame, entailing loss of self-regard and social prestige. In the next section, dealing with the role of malicious laughter in ancient Greek literature, we shall encounter similar sequences of action, reaction and effect. The emphasis on imagination, expectation and suspicion, central in the above curse texts *and* in Campbell's description also prevails in the literary evidence. For, indeed, the favourite ambush of gossip and mockery is located behind the target's back.⁴⁴

43 The same poet in his 'Counsels of Wisdom' in *Erga* 760ff., is exemplary in his advice: 'Do as I say and try to avoid being the object of men's evil rumour (φήμη). Rumour is a dangerous thing.'

44 The connection of gossip and hatred/hostility (μῖσος, the same word as used in the Amorgos text): Du Boulay 1974:201–29, ch. 9 on gossip, esp. 209. The social functions of gossip: Gluckman 1963, Paine 1967, Handelman 1974, Bleek 1976, Spacks 1985, Brisson 1992. Two excellent recent studies on ancient Greece, especially Athens: Cohen 1991 (see index s.v.) and Hunter 1990:299–315 (revised as 1994:96–118). Privileged targets of gossip: Winkler 1990:58–64.

The modern Greek expression 'the world laughs' (ὁ κόσμος γέλαει) accurately reflects such ancient expressions as: δι' ἅστεος πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις γέλως 'all over the city everybody laughs' (Semonides 7.74 W.); νῦν δὲ δὴ πολὺς ἀστοῖσι φαίνειαι γέλως 'now you will be the laughing-stock of your fellow townsmen' (Archil. *Ep.* 172); γείτοσι χάρμ' ἔσομαι 'I will make myself a joke to my neighbours' (169a); οἱ δὲ γείτονες χαίρουσ' ὀρῶντες καὶ τόν, ὥς ἀμαρτάνει 'and the neighbours will rejoice seeing him, how he fails' (Semonides 7.110f.); μὴ γείτοσι χάρματα γήμης 'in order that your marriage will not be a joke to the neighbours' (Hesiod. *Erga* 701). Incidentally, all these quotations pertain to women who make their husbands laughing-stocks. Now, as M.L. West *ad loc.* laconically comments: 'The idea of being laughed at or of giving unsympathetic persons cause for rejoicing is abominable to the Greek.'⁴⁵ Not only to the Greek. Horace *Epod.* 11.7 gladly imitates Archilochos' Neoboule epode (see Henrichs 1980:17): *heu me per urbem fabula quanta fui* 'Oh, what a story I was all over town.' Revealing to the close connection of gossip and ridicule are also Hor. *Epist.* 1.13.9f., *paternum cognomen vertas in risum et fabulas fias* 'that you do not turn your father's cognomen into a laughing-stock and so become the talk of the town,' and Prop. 3.25.1, *risus eram positus inter convivia mensis et de me poterat quilibet esse loquax* 'I was the joke of the dining room and whoever wanted could talk about me.'

These examples from the ancient world anticipate the observation of Du Boulay (1974:201) that 'gossip is both the means of mockery and the mockery itself, although it is not only these.' The close interrelation, if not equation, of these two expressions of malicious intent is also in agreement with a statement by Campbell (1964:313) that 'the ridicule which a man suffers or imagines he is suffering is seldom crudely inflicted to his face.'⁴⁶ The target will sense or suspect a change in looks and behaviour of his social environment. Accordingly, nicknames, which are usually ironic, if not insulting, are used mainly to refer to a person not present. People are not meant to be aware of their own nicknames, and use of the nickname in direct address is a form of affront (Campbell 1964:315, McDowell 1981, Stewart 1991:57). Likewise, satirical songs are as a rule not sung into the victim's face, but he will learn of it, and be bitterly ashamed (Campbell 1964:314). Of course, there are again noticeable exceptions: downright vilification (λοιδορία) and public name-calling was permitted and lavishly applied in the courts of ancient Athens.⁴⁷

45 'In such a society, anything, which exposes a man to the contempt or ridicule of his fellows, which causes him to "lose face," is felt as unbearable' (Dodds 1951:18); cf. also Gouldner 1965:81–6, Dover 1974:236–42.

46 Du Boulay 1974:202: 'Because gossip is against the interests of those talked about, it naturally takes place behind their backs;' cf. Hubbard 1990:348.

47 Hunter 1994:101. So were vilification and mockery in the streets and markets of Athens: Halliwell 1991b:286f. The public aspects of the court: Chaniotis 1992.

However, for reasons of space I cannot expand on the public function of ancient satire and curse poetry beyond the few observations given above.

Altogether we may conclude that gossip and mockery have a twofold effect, an internalized and an outward one: they generate feelings of shame in the target and loss of face before the outer world. In other words, they affect both his self-respect and his reputation. Especially the latter involves an emphasis on public aspects. P.M. Spacks (1985:4), for instance, lists as purposes of gossip to damage competitors or enemies, to gratify envy and rage by diminishing another, to generate an immediately satisfying sense of power. 'Private as its subject may appear, gossip requires a public setting to be effective. For gossip is about reputation. While asserting the common values of the group, it holds up to criticism, ridicule, or abuse those who flout society's or the community's accepted rules,' thus Hunter 1994:96, on ancient Athens, also adding (116): 'Yet this is the very aim and effect of gossip itself, to submit its target to public mockery.' In Athens gossip played an important part in political competition, for instance in the *dokimasiai rhetoron* exactly because the speakers 'featured players in the public spotlight—star performers on the political stage' (Winkler 1990:59). Accordingly, Aeschines writes (1.127): 'Attaching itself to men's life and conduct, talk travels unerringly and spontaneously throughout the city, like a messenger proclaiming to the public at large details of men's private behaviour' (further testimonia: Hunter 1994:99). In a society that values honour and shame as perhaps the most fundamental elements of its cultural identity and hence as primary incentives to social action, this is indeed the worst thing that can happen. And this is the way our wronged slave-owner of Amorgos must have felt it.

The main objectives of this section were, first, to present a brief gamut of the secret weapons of maliciousness serving as a mental background to our own issue. Secondly, it provides an impression of the characteristic gnawing uncertainty concerning the evil motives and the identity of persons who are suspected of hostile feelings. Thirdly and more especially, it focused the attention on the roles of gossip and mockery in this context. In his recent book on magic Fritz Graf has rightly emphasized the element of crisis as an important incentive to the application of *defixiones*. We shall keep this in mind when we pursue our enquiry in the role of malicious delight or *Schadenfreude*. But before casting a glance into the relevant ancient Greek literature, I will now briefly discuss a few sometimes rather obscure expressions in curses that have not been satisfactorily understood so far and may perhaps find a niche if viewed from the common perspective evoked by our discussion.

4. *New light on some obscure expressions in curse texts*

In *Papyrus Upsaliensis* 8 (the one that inspired Björck to make a collection of funerary pleas for revenge) a certain Sabinus curses two persons (including his daughter) for having wronged him. He refers to them as τῶν καλυψάντων τὴν ἡμετέραν αἰδῶ. Björck rather reluctantly suggests that it must mean something like: ‘those who have covered (that is effaced) my honour.’⁴⁸ In view of the above bouquet of malice I have no doubt that this is the correct interpretation. The author of the papyrus has been brought into a shameful position. In this connection it is remarkable how often the authors of judicial prayers refer to their own desolated positions with terms like ‘poor,’ ‘bereft,’ ἔρημος in the Amorgos tablet; ΔΑΓΙΝΑΓΑΡΙΜΕ φίλων πάντων καὶ ἐρήμος in a new curse from Macedonia,⁴⁹ where, not without hesitation, I have proposed to read ταπ(ε)ινὰ γάρ ἡμε [= εἶμαι?];⁵⁰ miserable (ταλαίπωρος) is especially frequent in Coptic curses, where it may be an Oriental heritage.

Furthermore, various references to different kinds of injury may be elucidated in the light of what we have so far discovered. For instance, a Coptic prayer for revenge (Björck 1938, no. 28) mentions that people καταφρονεῖν ‘despise’ the author, while the female writer of a tablet from Nabataea (no. 17) prays that οἱ θεοὶ ἐκδικήσειαν ὑπὸ τῶν κακολογούντων αὐτήν ‘the gods may exact vengeance from those who speak ill of/abuse/curse⁵¹ her.’ The verb δείρω in no. 18 (Cumont 1926f., no. 10b, from Philippiopolis) ἐκ τῶν δειράντων με ἐκδίκησον (from those who ‘skinned’ me, exact vengeance) may be explained as a ‘catch-all term,’ referring to similar acts of abuse. A curse from Claudiopoliis,⁵² though clearly forensic, may have elements that belong in a similar context: πάντες οὗτοι ἔ[στ]ωσαν κατα[δε]δεμένοι μὴ ἀντιλέγοντες [μὴ] λαλοῦντες μὴ ἐνβλέποντες. Cormack translates: ‘let them not speak against, let them not utter a word, let them not spy

48 Björck 1938:72: ‘Jedoch ruht, was ich mir nicht verhehle, die Erklärung dieses ganzen wichtigen Passus auf unsicherem Grunde.’

49 The text has now been published with a circumstantial commentary by Emmanuel Voutiras (1998), to whom I am indebted for having sent me a draft of his forthcoming book. See also Dubois 1995 and Voutiras’ reaction: 1996: 678–82.

50 In a letter of September 16, 1991, as acknowledged by Voutiras *op.cit.* (previous note), whose objections I share but do not consider insurmountable. I am gratified to see that, independently, Dubois now proposes the same conjecture. He also points out that the combination of ταπεινός and ἔρημος is well documented in Greek literature, *e.g.* Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.23, as is the expression φίλων ἔρημος (more instances in Voutiras 681 n.14). David Jordan suggests to me *exempli gratia* another possibility, ἀλγ(ε)ινά.

51 Λοιδορέομαι, κακῶς λέγω, and *maledico* can all mean ‘curse’ as well as ‘abuse.’ Watson 1991:46; *cf.* Hunter 1994:221 n.14. Κακηγορεῖν: *esp.* Halliwell 1991a:49–54.

52 Cormack 1951, SGD 169, Gager 1992:137, no. 47.

on Capetolinus.' The first word seems to belong to the ambience of the court. The second term, λαλεῖν, is a normal word for 'speaking' but may have a connotation of 'chattering,' 'being talkative.' Finally, ἐνβλέπειν is simply 'to look (at)'. But the jargon considerably differs from the usual language of forensic curses and may well imply aspects of sneaky ways of talking and looking. A very interesting inscription from Delos contains an accusation by Theogenes against a woman who has cheated him concerning a deposit. Now he prays that she will not escape the power of the goddess ('Αγνή θεά, the Dea Syria) and demands all *therapeutai* (no doubt the group of those devoted to the goddess, including the sacred personnel of the temple) to slander/calumniate (βλασφημεῖν) her καθ' ὥραν.⁵³ The term βλασφημεῖν again belongs to the idiom of gossip and malignity, more especially to its public employment well known from the Athenian court (Hunter 1994:102, 221 n.14). Finally, in an unpublished tablet from the sanctuary of Demeter at Corinth,⁵⁴ a woman commits another woman to the Moirai Praxidikai and asks them to avenge her for τὰς ὕβρις{ι}εις. If, later in the curse, she also asks them καρπίσαι με (to make me fertile), a tragedy seems to surface. In view of the extremely common equation of derision and ὕβρις,⁵⁵ I guess that the author has been insulted or derided by another woman on account of her barrenness and now resorts to the application of an old proverb ἀδικούμενος διαλάσσουν· ὕβριζόμενος τιμωροῦ 'if wronged reciprocate, if injured avenge yourself' (Chilon *ap.* Stob. 3.118.1–2H).

5. The theme of Schadenfreude in Greek literature

In the 'Homeric' epigram generally referred to as 'The Oven' (v^a?), preserved in Ps.-Herodotus, *Life of Homer* 32,⁵⁶ the poet promises to sing a prayer to Athena for the potters and to ask that she protect the kiln and provide a large production. The condition is that they will give him a reward. If, however, they turn shameless and

53 *IDélos* 2531; Cumont 1923, no. 8, after Hauvette-Besnault 1882:500 n.24, read καθ' ἰ[ε]ράν in the ultimate line. The reading καθ' ὥραν (Durrbach 1904:152), adopted by Roussel in *IDélos*, is no doubt correct, although its meaning 'at the right time' (?) is not entirely transparent in the context.

54 E.g. Stroud 1973, SGD p.66, Bookidis and Stroud 1987. I am very grateful to Ronald Stroud for granting me the opportunity to inspect these unpublished texts.

55 Literature: *infra* n.63. MacDowell 1976:20: 'hybris and hybrizein are often used of a person who taunts another, laughs at him, makes a joke about him;' (21) 'it often has a sense not just of mocking but of triumphing and crowning over someone else's misfortunes.' Very to the point are Aristotle's remarks, *Rhet.* 1378b23–9, 1374a13–5: 'behaviour intended to produce dishonour or shame to others, on the part of those who derive pleasure from such behaviour,' discussed in detail at Fisher 1976.

56 Cf. Suidas s.v. Ὀμῆρος, Merkelbach and West 1967:155f. Discussions: Markwald 1986:219ff., Watson 1991:69–74, Gager 1992:153f.

make false promises, the poet will summon the fearful demons that destroy the forge—probable his own comic creations—Smasher, Crasher, Unquenchable, Ill-moulder, and Spoiler. They are assisted by the witch Circe and the centaur Chiron accompanied by the other Centaurs, and instructed to ‘make sad havoc of the pots and overthrow the kiln, and let the potters see the mischief and be grieved; but I shall rejoice to see their craft overtaken with disaster. And if anyone of them stoops to peer in, let all his face be burned up, that all men may learn to deal honestly.’

γηθήσω δ' ὀρόων αὐτῶν κακοδαίμονα τέχνην
ὅς δέ χ' ὑπερκύψῃ, πυρὶ τοῦτου πᾶν τὸ πρόσσωπον
φλεχθεῖη ὥς πάντες ἐπίστωντ' αἴσιμα ῥέζειν.

Potters are a superstitious lot, no doubt due to the precarious nature of their craft (Noble 1965:72–83). One never knows if the ceramics will come out in good shape. If they don't, the blame, of course, should be diverted from the maker and either hung on harmful demons or on black magic contrived by an envious neighbour or any other malicious person. Combinations occur, as in our poem. It is very likely that this little poem is inspired by existing curses against the kiln of potters.⁵⁷ Pliny, *HN* 28.4.19, observes that ‘many people believe that the products of potters’ shops can be crushed by this means (*i.e.* curse tablets),’ while Pollux 7.108 reports that bronze-workers used to display apotropaic amulets (βασκάνιον ἐπικάμινον) to protect themselves against envy. Together they document a double strategy. First, on a purely practical level they represent an instrument in a veritable struggle for life involving both aggressive and defensive magical techniques added to the craftsmanship required. Secondly, from a more functionalistic point of view, they display an ideal device to explain—and be excused for—failure or mishap.⁵⁸

57 As J.G. Gager (1992:153) supposes in his discussion of the magical evidence concerning potters. Although modern scholarship likes to explain the use of *defixiones* as inspired by competition and envy, so far only one curse (Attica, IV^a), published by David Jordan elsewhere in this volume (his no. 1), has contained an explicit reference to envy.

58 The two sides were already signalized by Plato, *Leg.* 11.933, censuring the type of magic ‘that convinces not only those who attempt to cause injury that they really can do so, but also their victims that they certainly are being injured by those who possess the power of bewitchment,’ and referring to ‘viewing another with dark suspicion if one finds magical material at his door.’ On witchcraft as an explanation for otherwise unexplained calamity the groundbreaking and still fundamental study is Evans-Pritchard 1937, esp. chs. 2f. His theory has been elaborated and refined in a great number of later studies, for instance several papers in Marwick 1982, esp. Gluckman 1982:443–51, and Needham 1978:23–50. Ancient Near East: Thomsen 1987:9–14. Ancient Egypt: Borghouts 1980:1137–51. On the other hand, being too successful inevitably provokes the suspicion (and accusation) of magical practices: Pliny, *NH* 18.41–3 after Calpurnius Piso, records a process against a person who constantly reaped richer harvests than his neighbours and was accused on the grounds that he *fruges alienas perliceret veneficiis*, in agreement with the law of the Twelve Tables *neve alienam segetem pellexeris*. The socio-psychological motives involved: Graf 1994:76ff.

To our issue, however, the little poem is particularly instructive in its combination of two aspects: the picture of the punisher rejoicing over the discomfiture of his victim's work—the *Schadenfreude* we encountered in surviving *defixiones* and other curse texts—and the idea that the punishment functions as a warning for other potential offenders. The latter motif will be further explored in the next section. We shall now first pursue our enquiry into the occurrence of *Schadenfreude* in the more elevated forms of Greek literature, where the poem has taken us. For it has been noticed by many a commentator that the poet's malicious glee is mirrored in other literary genres, for instance in the Strasbourg epode (often ascribed to Hipponax, e.g. West 1971:150f., Watson 1991:56–62), which ends with the wish: ταῦτ' ἐθέλοιμ' ἄν ἰδεῖν, ὅς μ' ἠδίκησε ... 'I would love to see him in that abominable misery [detailed earlier in the epode], the one who wronged me.'

'There is nothing funny about laughter in tragedy,' thus the appropriate opening line of an article by Matthew Dillon (1991), whose finds I summarize. The nature and function of Greek laughter, especially in Homer and Herodotus,⁵⁹ has received quite some attention in recent scholarship. Whether in tragedy, epic or historiography, everywhere laughter is equally cheerless if we may believe Donald Lateiner, who entitled an article on Herodotus on laughter 'No Laughing Matter.' 'Sinister, dark connotations'—that is what M. Colakis found in Homer's descriptions of laughter and it is even worse in tragedy: in approximately 70 of the 80 extant examples from tragedy, laughter may be characterized as malevolent in the extreme, as Dillon found.

The majority of examples of laughter pertain to outright mockery, and often the relationship involved is strictly hostile, as indicated, for instance, by the prevalence of words like ἐχθρός in the immediate context. *Schadenfreude* finds its most poignant expression in the most poignant tragedy, Sophocles' *Ajax*, when Athena asks Odysseus about the sight of the crazed Ajax (79): 'Is not the sweetest laughter to laugh at enemies?'⁶⁰ Malicious laughter is the corollary of enmity. Numerous are such utterances as 'my enemies gloating with laughter,' as Electra says (Soph. *El.* 1153). Other notions often paired with derision are *hybris* and revenge, as well as brutal violence, culminating for instance in the Furies' utterance: Aesch. *Eum.* 253: 'The smell of human bloodshed makes me laugh.' Besides triumph over an enemy, it is especially conspicuous failure in general that may be a source of ridicule. Again there are numerous instances including a god's desire to see a human 'as the laughing-stock of his fellow humans' (Eur. *Ba.* 854).

59 Homer: D.B. Levine in a long series of articles, e.g. 1982, 1983; cf. also Colakis 1986, Golden 1990. Herodotus: Lateiner 1977, Flory 1978. For an excellent general discussion of laughter in Greek culture, see Halliwell 1991; cf. also Lateiner 1995 (index s.v. laughter).

60 Accordingly, it is only natural that the *Ajax*, the tragedy about loss of face, provides easily the largest number of references to laughter of all Sophocles' tragedies: Grossmann 1968.

The issue at stake in most of these cases is loss of face, fear of which is most operative amongst close relatives and the direct social environment on the one hand and enemies on the other. Unfortunately, the tragic reality of the Greek—ancient and modern—is that these two categories are not mutually exclusive, despite the truly Greek device of ‘helping friends and harming enemies’ (Blundell 1989). Naturally there are always two parties involved, the subject and the object of ridicule: gloating pleasure in an enemy’s misfortune, especially prominent in Sophocles’ *Ajax*, is taken for granted both by tormentors expressing their glee and by victims complaining of it. ‘When Ajax is mad he enjoys torturing his enemies (105, 303; cf. 52, 114, 272); when sane he dreads their mockery (367, 382, 454),’ thus too Mary Blundell (*ib.* 62).⁶¹ In tragedy, however, the passive aspect prevails.⁶² In the majority of instances the malicious laughter is not real, but anticipated, or rather dreaded. ‘Its power is such that while many fear its use hypothetically, few truly employ it, and then often in contexts of *hybris* or madness.’ (Dillon 1991:348)⁶³ While active gloating laughter does occur in Homer and Herodotus, even there it is often censured as an expression of maniacal or megalomaniacal characters such as the suitors or Cambyeses.

In the curses cited above—and compare another striking instance in the next section—we have seen a similar emphasis on the suspicion of being laughed at and the ensuing loss of face. For it is loss of face that it is all about. The taints of disgrace by being ruled out by a rival or defeated by an enemy, or of simply having failed in the daily struggle for survival are all equally unbearable in the basically competitive society that was and is Greece. Malicious laughter is a marker of superiority of the subject creating a hierarchical distance to the scoffed person. ‘He laughs that wins,’ wrote Shakespeare, unanimously followed by modern theorists.⁶⁴ As such the gloating laugh is only surpassed by such images as the defeated enemy being literally trampled under the feet of the victor.⁶⁵

Active ridicule, which we shall also encounter in the *defixio*, though very rare in tragedy, does occur in a uniquely challenging form in Euripides’ *Bacchae*. Blind-

61 This is nicely reflected in the ambivalence of ‘this search for laughter and the search to avoid being laughed at,’ which modern anthropology has discovered: Du Boulay 1974:187.

62 As the examples mentioned *supra* p.138 illustrate there is a kind of gnomic substrate in the recurrent expressions, already present in Homer *Il.* 10.193 μή χάριμα γενώμεθα δυσμενέεσσι, an expression which is copied verbatim in magical texts: *PGM* iv 469f., 831f., 824.

63 The ‘extremely common equation, in every kind of source, between derision and *hybris*’ Halliwell 1991b:287. The combination in Sophocles’ *Ajax*: Fisher 1979:33ff. D.L. Cairns (1993:228–41) very correctly notes (230): ‘It therefore seems likely that mockery of the disgrace of enemies is more likely to be termed *hybris* when it is the mockery of *them* against *us*...’

64 See esp. Levine 1982, on superiority and laughter in Homer.

65 Sittl 1890:106–8; many examples from magical papyri: *SupplMag* II p. 23.

ed by his own *hybris* Pentheus laughs at Teiresias and Cadmus, the Maenads, the Dionysiac rituals and even at the god himself. Thus he is preparing his own downfall by the hands of the god, who will smile in turn while hunting his human victim (1021). This cheerless altercation in malicious laughter, human and divine, forms a perfect *trait d'union* with our next section, in which we shall return to the epigraphic evidence of curse and vindictive prayer.

6. *I warn you not to trifle with the god!*

Deep concerns and beliefs that help to construct the identity of a civilization tend to be mirrored in the imagery of and the communication with the divine world. With respect to the issue under discussion we encounter a curious instance of such a projection in a unique prayer for justice written on a bronze tablet. Its provenance is unknown but probably is Asia Minor. The tablet, which has been assigned to anywhere between 100 BC and AD 200, has a round hole in the middle of the top edge presumably for attaching it to a surface for public display. I give the text and translation including a few suggestions I made in a previous study:⁶⁶

- 1 ἀνατίθημι μητρὶ {σ} θεῶν
- 2 χρυσᾶ ἀπ<ώ>λεσα πάντα ὥ-
- 3 στε ἀναζητῆσ<α>ι αὐτ-
- 4 ἦν καὶ ἐς μέσον ἐνε-
- 5 κκεῖν πάντα καὶ τοὺς
- 6 ἔχοντες κολάσεσθα-
- 7 ι ἀξίως τῆς αὐτῆς δυνά-
- 8 με<ω>ς καὶ μήτε αὐτ[ῆν]
- 9 καταγέλαστον ἔσεσθ[αι].

I consecrate to the mother of the gods the gold pieces which I have lost, all of them, so that the goddess will track them down and bring everything to light and will punish the guilty in accordance with her power and in this way will not be made a laughing-stock.

The stolen object is consecrated or assigned to the goddess, who has to 'track it down' and punish the guilty. At first sight it betrays a similarity with the above curse from Carthage since it displays a similar concatenation of lost money and derision. However, there is a fundamental difference. This time it is not the human victim who suffers derision, but it is the goddess, who, in case of failure to retrieve the money, will herself be the laughing-stock. As I said, this is an absolutely unique formulation in this type of texts, and if I had not been able to adduce a clarifying

66 Versnel 1991:74. The *ed.pr.* is Dunant 1978; *BullÉp* 1980:45 has several suggestions that I cannot accept.

parallel I would not be so certain about the correctness of this interpretation. This parallel can be found in a clearly related genre of inscriptions that is at home in parts of Lydia and Phrygia. First of all, these inscriptions share an appeal to the miraculous power of a superior god, which we already encountered in some prayers of revenge and in the tablet from Delos cited above. Especially the notion of miracle or power (= ἀρετή) mentioned in the Delos inscription returns as a fixed characteristic in these inscriptions from Asia Minor though mostly in its variant δύναμις. It is even so pronounced in these texts that they are sometimes referred to as 'aretalogies.'⁶⁷

I am of course referring to the Lydian and Phrygian steles, from the 2nd and 3rd century of our era, generally referred to as 'confession steles' because they contain a kind of confession of guilt.⁶⁸ A very current sequence of events recorded in the inscriptions is as follows. First there is an acclamation of the type: 'Great (is) Men' or: 'Great (is) Anaeitis,' etc. Then there may follow a confession of guilt, (ὁμολογέω or ἐξομολογέω) to which the author has been forced by the punishing intervention of the deity (κολάζω, κόλασις), often manifested by illness or accident. By his confession and eventual reparation of the wrong the culprit has appeased the god (ἰλάσκομαι or ἐξιλάσκομαι). The god therefore reveals his *dynamis* by both the punishment and the cure of the victim, and as homage to the god the story of the miracle is now written on a stele (στηλογραφέω), sometimes, but not necessarily, at the command of the god. The text often ends with a clear profession of faith: 'And from now on I praise the god' (καὶ ἀπὸ νῦν εὐλογῶ) or, especially in Phrygia, with a warning: 'I warn all mankind not to hold the gods in contempt, for they (*i.e.* mankind) will have this stele as an admonition' (παραγγέλλω πᾶσιν μηδὲν καταφρονεῖν τῶν θεῶν ἐπεὶ ἔξει τὴν στήλην ἐξενπλᾶριον). Note that the author of the bronze tablet just quoted obviously asks the goddess to do exactly what the confession *stelai* praise their gods for *having* done: exposing the crime, tracing and punishing the culprit, and thus manifesting their miraculous power. The wish that by doing so she will not be made a laughing-stock, then, is, in the confession texts, precisely reflected by the admonition not to hold the god in contempt.⁶⁹

67 For this reason V. Longo (1969:158–66) included five confession texts in his collection. The term most commonly used is δύναμις or δυνάμεις. Further discussion: Versnel 1991:75–9 and literature in the following note.

68 The texts collected by Steinleiter 1913, supplemented with all the confession texts published since, have been republished with an ample commentary by Petzl 1994. The quotation here is from his no. 111.

69 There are a few examples in which a mortal did venture to hold a god in contempt, Petzl 1994, no. 59, where a person is punished because 'she had tried to conceal (περικρυβούσης) the power of the god.'

Disdaining or even deriding a god is a topic that clearly fascinated both Greek and other ancient cultures. Especially in magical papyri we find the themes exploited in the so-called ritual *diabole*.⁷⁰ In this type of 'slander spells' the author accuses his opponent of sometimes extremely abstruse ritual violations against a god, who then is expected to punish the culprit. *SupplMag* 79 ἀντίδικ[ός ἐστι] τοῦ [θ]εοῦ, or *PGM* iv 2341f. ἐχθρὸς τῶν ἐν οὐρανῷ θεῶν, or *DTAud* 155a 31f. τοῦτον τὸν δυσσεβήν,⁷¹ are supposedly the most concise expressions of such types of alleged blasphemy. They reflect the well-known predicates of the great blasphemer Satan, who owes his Greek name Diabolos to his rôle as slanderer (*DDD* s.v. 'Devil'). The accusation that the target is ἄνομος καὶ ἄσεβής is often substantiated with detailed arguments, as for instance in *DTAud* 188: 'because he has burnt the papyrus of Osiris and eaten the flesh of sacred fishes.'⁷² A 'slander spell' addressing Selene (*PGM* iv 2572–92), detailing *inter multa alia* that the target pretends that she has seen the goddess drinking (human) blood (and committing even more shameful deeds), is the most elaborate one.⁷³ Indeed there is no limit to the range of variations, witness the instruction: 'Of all unlawful things that she has said against the goddess detail as many as you want.' This then may result in such accusations as: 'She has slanderously brought your holy mysteries to the knowledge of men.' However, less baroque charges of derision and blasphemy,⁷⁴ which the bronze tablet quoted above tries to prevent and the confession stelai warned against, occur as well. Some are miracles of creativeness: 'Iaô does not have ribs,' or 'Adonai was violently beaten by Jacob' (*PGM* vii 605f., with Eitrem's beautiful emendation.) Finally, a very relevant example in *DTAud* 140, a so-called Sethianic curse. The author tries to win Typhon's sympathy by accusing his target of scorn against the demon: *si forte te contempserit patiatur febris, frigus et [si] forte te seducat per aliqua [?artifici]a et rideat de te et exsultetur tibi, vince peroccide* 'in case he has held you in contempt, let him suffer from fever, cold shivers ... and if

70 Generally: Eitrem 1924. It is no doubt an Egyptian heritage: Lexa 1925:56–8. Note however that both the application itself and the accusation of applying *diabole* were rife in forensic pleas in classical Athens: Halliwell 1991b:292f., Hunter 1994:102.

71 In *defixiones* slander formulas do not abound. Besides the ones cited in the text, there is *DTAud* 295 (Hadrumetum): *tibi commendo quoniam maledixit partourientem* (probably Persephone or Hekate). A *defixio* from Corsica (Solin 1981:121f.) has:]ule (probably the name of a god) *vindica te. Qui tibi male f[ecit] ... vindica te ..*

72 See Jordan 1994:123 n.22 for the English translation of a fuller, unpublished, transcription of the tablet.

73 iv 2474–90 is a brief summary of this long spell, and there it is phrased as a counter-spell: Eitrem 1924:49ff.: 'She, NN, is the one who says that I have said that ...'

74 Note that there are numerous attestations of curses, insults and threats addressed to gods: Eitrem 1924:47–9, Versnel 1981b:37–42.

perhaps he misleads you by means of some artifices and laughs at you and exults over you, defeat, kill him.'

This curse is a perfect summary of the present argument: 'holding in contempt' is clearly understood as being on a par with 'laughing at' and 'rejoicing over.' Both gods and men may fall prey to these types of debasement. Both, too, on the other hand, can make their opponents a victim of public derision as we shall now see in our final section.

7. Some inferences for the meaning of *defixio*

The evidence of *Schadenfreude* in magical context is significant though not overwhelming. However, we should realize that derision can go disguised in a variety of forms beyond the gloating laugh. By way of conclusion I here offer a few suggestions, which may serve to create a better insight into the functions and goals of the *defixio* or at least of some types of *defixiones*. If fear of malice and mockery, especially *Schadenfreude*, is so prominent a feature in Greek (and Roman) society as we have discovered, and accordingly plays a part in curse texts of various types, even affecting the gods, this insight may stimulate a fresh reflection on a few features in especially the *defixiones*, which so far have been too easily taken for granted.

Take for instance a *defixio* found at Rom (Poitiers) in France.⁷⁵ It is one of the few *defixiones* from the world of the theatre. It curses a mime actor, wishing that he should suffer delirium, fever, pain, and torments, all of them convenient wishes against a successful colleague. But it also includes more specified wishes, for instance that the actor may not be able to play various roles and, best of all, *loqui nequeat* 'that he may not be able to speak,' which, it should be remembered, was definitely more fatal to an ancient Roman mime than to a modern one. In this perspective, as a technical device, the curse is ingenious, but it acquires a surplus value through its side-effects on the theatrical performance. On the stage loss of speech means loss of face. This is no less true for the forensic *defixiones*,⁷⁶ which try to prevent the opponent from pleading his case or accusing the author by chilling, laming, twisting or pinning his tongue, making him voiceless, dumbstruck, unable to find or recall words, losing his memory and so on and so forth. For instance in a *defixio* from Istanbul: ποιήσατε ... ἀντιδίκους ... μήτε φροντίζειν, μήτε μνημονεύειν, καὶ καταψύξατε αὐτῶν τὸν νοῦν, τὴν ψυχὴν 'make my opponents neither reflect nor recall, and chill their mind, their soul.'⁷⁷ Surely the primary function

75 Texts and discussion in Versnel 1985:247–69, Gager 1992:74f., no. 16.

76 This special subcategory of curses: Moraux 1960, Gager 1992:116–50, Faraone 1985, 1989.

77 Moraux 1960:12, lines 4 ff. In the 2nd century of our era Galen (xii, p.251 Kuhn), professor of medicine, scorns people who use spells such as: 'I will bind my opponents so that they will be incapable of saying anything during the trial.'

again is a purely instrumental one serving an obvious, direct and concrete goal: to win the case and prevent the opponent from doing so. But, once more, what is the very welcome excess value if it is successful? Fortunately, this is not a rhetorical question for we have picturesque descriptions of such scenes (collected and discussed at Faraone 1989b), which suggest an answer to the question.

A late 3rd-century BC inscription from Delos, *IG XI 1299* (see now Engelmann 1975) relates the miracle story of a priest of Sarapis who built a temple for his god but omitted to obtain official permission. He got involved in a lawsuit, which he won. Not, however, thanks to his superior forensic rhetoric. We are told that when a great crowd had gathered and the opponents were preparing to read their charges, their tongues were 'tied by the god'—as in the best tradition in binding magic. 'Struck by the god (θεοπλήξ) they stood dumbfounded like stone images.'⁷⁸ Convenient and effective, no doubt, but this was not the end of it: 'The whole crowd stood in amazement over this great feat (ἄρετή) of the god.' So here is an explicit reference to a concomitant, but more important, effect: the defendant, *i.e.* the god, is elated, while the plaintiffs are humiliated and degraded. The most obvious—though not the only—quality actors and advocates have in common is the fear of being struck dumb during their performance *en plein public*. The effects are fatal. According to Aristophanes (*Vesp.* 946–8 and scholia) this happened to the famous orator Thucydides, who lost his case and was ostracized. Pliny, *Ep.* 6.2.2, tells us about a lawyer who used to paint a black circle round one eye (thus creating an evil eye) in order to confuse his opponent (see Heurgon 1968), and, indeed, Cicero tells us that one of his opponents, the elder Curio, in the middle of a trial *subito totam causam oblitus est idque veneficiis et cantionibus Titiniae factum esse dicebat* 'suddenly forgot his plea and blamed this on the sorcery and charms of Titinia' (*Brut.* 217; *cf.* *Orat.* 129). And he adds explicitly, what in the other accounts may be implied, that Curio's sudden dumbness 'roused fits of laughter of those who scorned him' (*cachinnos inridentium commovebat*).

This should suffice as an evocation of the drastic effects of such sudden deficiencies. For the victim it is not only a matter of losing his case but also of losing his face, and one may well wonder which of the two mattered most. As there are two parties involved, there are two sides of the medal. To quote Juliet du Boulay (1974:76), 'to "make a fool of" someone is an effective way of enhancing one's own ego and of damaging that of another, a fact which creates a situation in which everyone is continually on the look-out against a possible cheat or leg-pull.'⁷⁹

78 'What, may we ask, was the real reason for Apollonius' acquittal? We cannot be sure:' thus Engelmann 1975:54, and with the inference that the presence of numerous strangers may have intimidated the accusers. He has Euripides (*CAF* fr. 67) on his side: 'Whenever anyone stands opposite in the debate and is about to speak at a trial for homicide, fear paralyzes the mouth of men and prevents the mind from saying what it wants to say.'

79 *Cf.* 182: 'The motivation behind mockery is chiefly the desire to increase personal reputation, and a sense of self-esteem, at the expense of another's.'

Precisely this mentality, but entailing more fatal effects, finally, is the one implied in curses against *venatores*, *gladiatores*, *athletes* and *jockeys*, including their horses. Detailed lists of limbs that must be broken, sinews that must be twisted, added to a rich repertoire of stumbling, falling, being dragged, being bitten, are of course very convenient tools to secure the victory of the authors and prevent that of their opponents. But here too there is an additional effect: the flagrant humiliation of the rival before a large audience, which, like modern soccer fanatics, was yearning for loss of limbs *and* face.⁸⁰ Again *Schadenfreude* seems to be naturally involved. And I am happy to be able to substantiate these at first sight perhaps somewhat suggestive and presumptive evocations. For everything that I have been suggesting so far is expressed in a most explicit manner in a series of curses from the Agora at Athens from the mid-3rd century AD. It is a group of nine curses, published by David Jordan (1985),⁸¹ the first five concerning wrestlers, the sixth a runner, and the remaining three—a bit out of character here—pairs of lovers. Seven of them contain (different variants of) a formula directly relevant to our issue.

No. 1: 'I deliver to you Eutychianos (names of Demons) destroy the wrestling that he is about to do ... And if he does wrestle, I hand it over to you (names of Demons) in order that he may fall down and disgrace himself' (ἐὰν δὲ κα[ὶ] παλαίῃ, ἵνα ἐκπέσῃ καὶ ἀσχημονήσῃ). Large parts of this curse, including ἐκπέσῃ καὶ ἀσχημονήσῃ, are formulaic since they return in nos. 2, 3, 5, and even in the erotic 'Trennungszauber' no. 7, where the male partner 'must fall and disgrace himself'—which, despite the evidence brought together by Jordan, cannot *easily* be associated with the erotic context—and no. 9, which has only 'disgrace themselves.' No. 6 against a runner presents a nice variant: 'That he may not pass the starting line and that if he does he may veer off the course and disgrace himself' (ἐὰν δὲ κὲ ἐξέρχηται, ἵνα ἀπ[ο]κάμψῃ καὶ ἀσχη[μονήσῃ]).

Here, then, we have in explicit wording what, as I have argued, may have been commonly implied as a hidden agenda behind the stereotyped wishes that rivals in the amphitheatre may fall or veer off (in the very same terms as we have just quoted). The opponent must 'make a fool of himself' and thus suffer humiliation in his sad rôle as a laughing-stock of the public. As a matter of fact, in the curses belonging to amphitheatre and circus the detailed wishes of what must happen to the targets give the impression of a prolonged panning shot⁸² with a theatrical effect. The

80 For besides the 'egoistic' motive of derision, there is another, simply put by Du Boulay's informants (182): ὁ κόσμος θέλει να γελάει 'people like to amuse themselves,' especially at the expense of another.

81 Gager (1992:50f.) quotes the first (his no. 3) in translation, rendering ἀσχημονήσῃ even more emphatically as 'let him make a fool of himself.'

82 I am using here an expression introduced by Richard Gordon in his forthcoming book, *Spells of Wisdom*. See also his contribution to the present volume.

cumulation of cruel mishaps and physical inflictions staged as a delightful public display cannot but call to mind the gladiatorial shows and public executions, especially those staged as theatrical performances, so characteristic of Roman penal practice of later antiquity. The *damnatio ad bestias* is a source of undisguised *Schadenfreude*, so for instance when the martyr Satyrus in the *Passio Perpet. et Fel.* 21 bleeds profusely, it elicits the valediction commonly given in the baths, *salve lotum* 'well washed.' So intense was the desire for *Schadenfreude* that the crowd in defiance of normal procedure demanded that 'the bodies of the martyrs be brought out in the open, so that their eyes could share the killing as the sword entered their flesh.' How much ancient people savoured brutal cruelty is attested in scenes from the amphitheatre in floor mosaics (in dining rooms!) and in the literary evidence. Nor did Christians keep aloof. In the final chapter (30) of his *De spectaculis*—a candidly sadistic evocation—Tertullian pictures his future joy and exultation at the sight of pagan kings, philosophers, actors and jockeys all being burnt in one eternal fire on Judgement Day: ... *cum tanta saeculi vetustas et tot eius nativitates uno igni haurientur. Quae tunc spectaculi latitudo! Quid admirer? Quid rideam? Ubi gaud-eam, ubi exultem, tot spectans reges ... in imis tenebris congemiscentes?* '... when so many nations from all the past will be consumed in one fire. What a magnificent spectacle. How shall I gape in admiration? How shall I rejoice? Where shall I enjoy myself and exult, when I see so many kings ... groaning in the place of deepest darkness.'⁸³

This element of collective derision has not gone unnoticed in recent scholarship. It is generally acknowledged that public punishment had a strong function of humiliation and derogation throughout antiquity.⁸⁴ In various studies George Ville has demonstrated that condemnations to the arena and the beasts were essentially intended as a *ludibrium*, a term which Paul Veyne translates as 'sarcasme': 'supplices infligés par une collectivité qui rit à la figure du malheureux qu'elle lynche: ils sont sarcastiques; *le sarcasme accompagne ou constitue la punition*'⁸⁵ (my italics). These punishments combine in a monstrous blow-up the two aspects distinguished by Antonie Wlosok (1980) as the domains of 'Zorn' (anger) and 'Scham' (shame) in criminal law, the first applied in punishment as revenge, the second as punishment for infringements of the common code of behaviour. The latter involved what Cicero once characterized as the sole effect of the *nota censoria: nihil fere damnato obfert nisi ruborem* 'the main effect on the victim is a blush of shame' (*Rep.* 4.6).

83 I owe this reference to Johan Schreiner.

84 Usener 1900, Latte 1931:155ff., with examples of shameful pillory-punishment, and Fraenkel 1961.

85 Veyne 1983:16, cf. 21, with references to the work of Ville. Note that just as *ludere* means both 'to play' and 'to mock,' its Greek equivalent, παίζω, means 'to play' and 'to laugh.' Halliwell 1991b:282ff.

P. Veyne (1983) has collected a mass of evidence on these types of (public) censure, invective, blame-ritual, and charivari, often used as an instrument of or a defense against *invidia*. Graffiti, *carmina*, *libelli*, *convicium* were all embedded in an old tradition: as we saw, *mala carmina* were already forbidden by the Laws of the Twelve Tables.⁸⁶ He interprets this type of punishment (1983:16) as a demonstrative, collective, and above all sarcastic act of vituperation against the one who fancied that he could 'défier la conscience publique,' 'challenge the collective conscience.' More recently, Katherine M. Coleman (1990), to whom this paragraph owes much, has analyzed the penal functions of the Roman executions staged as public performances, referred to them as 'Fatal Charades:' besides retribution, correction, prevention and deterrence, humiliation has pride of place. She emphasizes the element of mockery in these forms of public punishment,⁸⁷ claiming that one purpose of humiliation was to alienate the victim from his entire social context, so that the spectators, regardless of class, were united in a feeling of superiority as they ridiculed the miscreant.⁸⁸

In my opinion, all this is highly relevant with respect to the reactions of the audience at the discomfiture of the losers in circus and amphitheatre and also it may help to clarify a somewhat neglected aspect of the *defixiones* discussed in the beginning of my paper. As we have seen above, curses that wish harm to an evil-doer often express the wish that the author may *watch* the punishment being executed. For instance, the Strasbourg epode cited earlier ends with the wish ταῦτ' (*i.e.* in that abominable misery that I wish him) ἐθέλοιμ' ἄν ἰδεῖν, ὅς μ' ἡδίκησε. I would suggest that this is one of the motives (at any rate one of the effects) of a curious ritual at Knidos (Karia) as attested in a series of some dozen judicial prayers⁸⁹ by which thieves or other wrong-doers are subjected to divine punishment (κόλασις, τιμωρία), torments (βάσανοι), and are specifically inflicted with being πεπρημένοι 'burnt by fever.'⁹⁰ It is requested that 'the thief should return the stolen object (or that the slanderer should go up) to the temple of Demeter

86 Tupet 1976:166–8, with a discussion of how they worked.

87 As well as in permanently visible marks in the form of a tattoo: Jones 1987.

88 She aptly refers to the soldiers' mockery of Jesus as the best-known example. Synnøve des Bouvrie reminds me of the ludicrous passage in Apuleius' *Golden Ass* (2.32–3.12) where Lucius is deceived and led to think that he has killed three persons, after which he is publicly sentenced in the great theatre. It all appears to be a play of deception at the occasion of the festival for the god Risus. Yet the continuous roars of laughter of the public do evoke the realistic analogues in penal practice.

89 *DTAud* 1–13, *IKnidos* I 147–59 (II–I^a?). Gager (1992:188–90, no. 89) quotes *DTAud* 1, 4 and 13 in translation. For an extensive discussion and interpretation of the series, see Versnel 1991, 1994.

90 For this interpretation—as against the certainly mistaken 'sold into temple slavery' as suggested by Newton and others—and its implications in the context of the Knidian curses see Versnel 1994.

ἐξαγορεύων,⁹¹ i.e. 'publicly confessing (his/her sin).' Here follows a relevant passage from *DTAud* 1 (19–28):

ἀναβαῖ Ἀντιγόνη πὰ Δάματρα πεπρημένα ἐξομολο<γο>ῦσ[α] καὶ μ[ὴ] γένοιτο εὐειλάτ[ου] τυχεῖν Δάματρο[ς,] ἀλλὰ μεγάλας βασάνους βασανιζομένα.

'may Antigone, burnt by fire/fever, go up to Demeter and make confession, and may she not find Demeter merciful but instead suffer great torments.'

It appears that the public confession is at least as important as (probably more important than) the recuperation of the stolen object. The demand that the object be returned to the temple—not to the injured party—mirrors a closely related temple-ritual in tablets from England,⁹² where it is often specified that the proprietor cedes to the deity his claims to property stolen from him. Obviously the chief desire is to see the culprit pilloried by his public confession in word and deed. This is further substantiated by the stipulation in one of the Knidian tablets (*DTAud* 4) that a slanderer must go up to the temple to confess his sin not alone but accompanied by all his relatives (μετὰ τῶν αὐτοῦ ἰδίων πάντων).⁹³

I do not wish to question the fact that the whole ritual is also and not in the last place intended as a demonstration of the goddess's superior power, which one should not trifle with, as readers were warned in the confession *stelai*. As such it functioned as a deterrent *exemplum* and indeed was referred to in these very terms. But at the same time and through the very same procedure the sinner himself is publicly pilloried. His confession implies that he erred twice, not only by committing a crime against a fellow human but also by his lack of insight and faith in the nature of divine power. In the words of Apuleius *Met.* 11.15: *Videant irreligiosi, videant et errorem suam recognoscant* (Let the unfaithful see, let them see and admit their error). In a Greek 'translation,' this is precisely what the god Dionysos intended by leading the transvestite Pentheus through the streets of Thebes: χρήζω δέ νιν γέλωτα Θηβαίοις ὀφλεῖν 'I wish to make him the laughing-stock of the Thebans,' (Eur. *Ba.* 854). It is also precisely the humiliation that 'a certain Euphronius' was lucky enough to escape. Aelian (fr. 92i Domingo-Forasté, 89 Hercher)⁹⁴ tells us that

91 Once (in the curse quoted in the text) instead of ἐξαγορεύων we read ἐξομολο<γο>ῦσ[α] in the same sense.

92 Roger Tomlin (*TSMB*) has published 130 tablets from Bath and has collected thirty more from elsewhere in Britain (60f.). Moreover, there are about 140 unpublished curse tablets from Uley, many of them still rolled or fragmentary and likely to remain illegible, but surely of the same type. New findings continue to be published in the journal *Britannia*. Examples from Italy and Asia Minor: Versnel 1991:77–9, 83f.

93 Another interesting illustration is a judicial prayer from Bath, *TSMB* 114f., no.5, where it is wished that punishment in the form of damage to mind and eyes (*ut mentes sua(s) perd[at] et oculos su[o(s)]*) will occur 'in the temple' (*in fano ubi detina(t)*); cf. also 146f., no.31.

94 Cited at MacMullen 1997:79f.; my thanks to the author for permitting me to read the book before its publication.

this atheist was so severely ill that no physician could help. His friends took him to Asclepius, by whose advice he burned his atheistical books and applied the ashes to his chest. He was cured and 'his friends were instantly filled with great joy because he had not ended up made a fool of and dishonoured by the god' (τῷ μὴ ἐκφρησθῆναι ἐκφανλισθέντα καὶ ἀτιμασθέντα ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ αὐτόν). Here then we recognize the same atmosphere as in the confession texts, and I have argued elsewhere that these last are precisely the type of public confessions that the injured authors of the Knidian tablets demand from their targets.⁹⁵ Incidentally, I would not be surprised if the *rubor* (blush of shame) that Cicero explained as the kernel of a certain kind of punishment may also glimmer through in πεπρημένος, the state of the culprits of the Knidian tablets when they publicly confessed their misdeed. Does 'being burned,' besides referring to a feverish ordeal inflicted by the god, also imply 'burning in shame,' a connotation which Latin *flagrare* certainly can have?⁹⁶

The relationship of judicial prayers and confession texts is so close that elements intermingle, converging precisely in the common notion of exemplary punishment. A lead tablet, found in a well at Baelo, Spain, provides a splendid instance of judicial prayer (Bonneville, Dardaine, and LeRoux 1988, *AE* 1988:727):

- 1 *Isis muromem*
- 2 *tibi commendo*
- 3 *furtu(m) meu(m) mi fac-*
- 4 *tu{t}o numini maes-*
- 5 *tati exemplaria*
- 6 *ut tu evide<s>? immedi*
- 7 *o qui fecit autulit*
- 8 *aut (h)eres opertoru(m)*
- 9 *albu(m) nou(um) stragulu(m)*
- 10 *nou(um) iodices duas me<o?>*
- 11 *usu rogo domina*
- 12 *per maiestate(m) tua(m)*
- 13 *ut (h)oc furtu(m) repri-*
- 14 *ndas.*

The writer invokes the goddess Isis Myrionymos (? *Muromem*) and 'commits a theft to her' (*tibi commendo furtum*). She is addressed as 'mistress' (*domina*) and asked *per maiestate(m) tua(m)* to pass sentence (*reprindere* for *reprehendere* 'to convict, pass judgement on') on this theft. All this is clearly in accordance with the

95 The juridical aspects: esp. Chaniotis 1997.

96 *Flagrare* in this sense: *LS flagro* 11.B; *flagrans* B; *flagrantia* 11; *OLD flagro* 5, *flagrantia* 3. Though *flagitium*, 'shame, disgrace, disgraceful act,' is very often associated with *flagrare* in Latin literature (see especially Usener 1900), they are not etymologically related: Walde Hofmann, s.v.

usual practice in judicial prayers and is closely similar to the prayer in the Amorgos curse, with which we opened this paper. However, one phrase is unique among the entire Latin evidence: *fac tuo*⁹⁷ *numini maestati exemplaria*. It is paradoxical that the term *exemplarium* does not occur in any other Latin judicial prayer, but rather as a loanword in the Greek confession inscriptions from Asia Minor in the formula discussed above: 'I warn all not to disdain the gods, for he shall have the stele as warning (ἐξενπλάριον).' Moreover, the phrase *ut tu evide<s> immedio qui fecit autulit* 'that you publicly reveal (?) whoever did it, [whoever] stole it' recalls the phrase ἐς μέσον ἐνεκκεῖν in the text from Asia Minor that we have also discussed. This expression means 'to bring forward publicly' (*LSJ*) which fits in with the whole atmosphere of these texts, including the 'exemplary' function of the public exposure of crime and culprit. Incidentally, the term *exemplum* does occur once in a so-called Sethianic *defixio* (*DTAud* 142) which, however, is so mutilated that we do not know what the final line refers to: *ut omnes cog[n]osc[ant] exempl[um] e]or[um]*.

In sum, public exposure of a sin or misdeed by divine or human agencies naturally involves the humiliation and derision of the culprit, and sometimes this is emphasized in an explicit formulation. In one of the 4th-century epigraphical miracle stories of Epidaurian Asclepius (no. 4 Herzog) the god orders an unbeliever to sacrifice a silver sow as 'a testimony of her stupidity' (ὕπόμναμα τῆς ἀμαθίας), in another (no. 3 Herzog) a person who has mocked the ἰάματα of the god is first punished for his ἀπιστία by an illness which is only cured after his 'conversion.' However, henceforth his name will be Apistos. The notion ἀμαθία, for that matter, is a current term used to censure stupid unbelievers, nor are these the only Epidaurian inscriptions that punish sceptics with penalties that make them ridiculous.⁹⁸

In the sphere of competition, derision plays an equally conspicuous role. The credo of a famous American base-ball coach, 'winning isn't everything, it's the *only* thing,'⁹⁹ is perhaps the most perfect translation of the famous Greek motto αἰὲν ἀριστεύειν καὶ ὑπείροχον ἔμμεναι ἄλλων 'always be the very best and superior to everyone else' (*Il.* 6.208, 11.784). Equally, in Greece the loser had a 'hateful homecoming, disgrace, and secrecy' (*Pind. Ol.* 8). 'He slinks in back alleys, shunning enemy eyes and nursing pain' (*Pyth.* 8). No wonder the loser is ridiculed in satirical literature, e.g. *AP* 11.82, 85.

97 The text has *tuto*, which according to P. Le Roux 'insiste sur la divinité à l'abri des maux et sur la croyance en sa perfection.' I cannot believe this is the correct interpretation, since *maiestas tua* is formulaic.

98 The material is collected at Versnel 1990:197 ff.; see also now LiDonnici 1995.

99 Vince Lombardi, as I learn from Segal 1984, where I found the other examples cited in this paragraph. However, it was not as bad as Lombardi might have it: B. Crowther (1992) gives a survey of *agones* where places other than the first were recorded and sometimes awarded prizes.

Deservedly or not, people exposed to public discomfiture and humiliation are by definition laughing-stocks. If the chief ingredient of malicious laughter is lack of respect, as Mediterranean anthropology abundantly shows, it is no less true that, according to a modern Greek expression, 'people like to laugh.' This implies that the mishap of another, especially if due to his own stupidity, is just in itself reason enough for a big laugh, quite irrespective of hidden social intentions. Demosthenes, 18.138, refers to the overt delight of Athenian juries in forensic vituperation. Numerous passages confirm that such delight was regularly expressed in outright γέλως (Halliwell 1991:293). In all we have now sketched a background against which we can get a deeper insight into the two major aspects of derogation discussed in this paper. The first represents the passive expectation expressed in the fear of being the target of derision as it was voiced in the curses that we discussed in the first part, including the appeal to gods not to tolerate that they will be made a laughing-stock themselves. The second concerns its active counterpart, namely the desire, be it inspired by lust for revenge or by motives of competition, to see another person manoeuvred into a disgraceful, hence ridiculous, position. Here the fruit of our enquiry may be that several types of *defixio*, correctly explained as basically agonistic in recent research, are even better understood if we also pay attention to the additional value of their (intended) effects. What the author of the Amorgos curse *feared* is now redirected into an additional objective of the curse: the rejoicing over the public misery of the opponent. Admittedly, in the earliest (5th- and 4th-century) Attic *defixiones*, displaying mere lists of names and simple instructions to bind the opponent, there is hardly a trace of a derisive overtone. Yet in the same period, Athenian courts roared with laughter at the discomfiture of litigants or their advocates, as we have seen. In the course of time, especially in the Roman period, the curses became more and more explicit, detailed and picturesque. And it is as if the motif of derision, implicit or explicit, increased in accordance. In the view of E.R. Dodds (1951:58; cf. n.45 *supra*), early Greek society valued honour and shame more than anything else; it was a society in which 'anything, which exposes a man to the contempt or ridicule of his fellows, which causes him to "lose face," is felt as unbearable.' However, in the fifty years since the publication of his seminal study we have learned that this mentality is by no means restricted to archaic Greece, but is typical of both Greece and Rome (and other Mediterranean cultures), ancient and modern. The author of a recent book (Lendon 1997) even qualifies imperial Rome as an 'Empire of Honour.' From this perspective, then, the line of interpretation suggested in the present paper may deserve some consideration.

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