

# ARES, APHRODITE, AND THE LAUGHTER OF THE GODS

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THE DISPUTE BETWEEN Odysseus and Euryalus in the court of the Phaeacians prompts Alcinous to call for a song from Demodocus. The bard sings the celebrated song of the adultery of Ares and Aphrodite (*Od.* 8.266–369). The tale is well known: Hephaestus learns of the adultery and seeks vengeance by means of his τέχνη. With a trap he catches the lovers in flagrante and summons the other gods. Ares is forced to pay a monetary penalty (μοιχαγρία, 332; cf. 348 ff.);<sup>1</sup> Aphrodite, it seems, is threatened with divorce.<sup>2</sup>

References to the *Odyssey* follow A. Heubeck et al., *Omero: Odissea* (Milan 1981–1986); Hainsworth's commentary on Book 8 is cited from the revised English edition (Oxford 1988). Also of central importance to the present discussion are W. Burkert, "Das Lied von Ares und Aphrodite," *RhM* 103 (1960) 130–144, and B. K. Braswell, "The Song of Ares and Aphrodite: Theme and Relevance to *Odyssey* 8," *Hermes* 110 (1982) 129–137. These papers will be cited by author's name.

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<sup>1</sup>There is evidence for this sort of practice in classical Athens: see Dem. 49.64, Lys. 1.25; cf. Callias fr. 1 *PCG* (with the apparatus of Kassel and Austin).

<sup>2</sup>This seems to be the implication of lines 318–320: ἀλλά σφωε δόλος καὶ δεσμός ἐρύξει, / εἰς ὃ κέ μοι μάλα πάντα πατήρ ἀποδοῖσιν ἔδνα, / ὅσσα οἱ ἐγγυάλιξα κυνώπιδος εἵνεκα κούρης, / οὐνέκα οἱ καλὴ θυγάτηρ, ἀτὰρ οὐκ ἐχέθυμος. Although the precise significance of ἔδνα in this passage is the source of considerable uncertainty (cf. W. K. Lacey, "Homeric ἔδνα and Penelope's κύριος," *JHS* 86 [1966] 55–68), Hephaestus seems to demand a dissolution of the agreement represented by his marriage. The grounds for divorce are the sexual incontinence of his wife: though beautiful, she is not ἐχέθυμος (320). I remain unpersuaded by Braswell's argument that the term should, on analogy with words like ἐχέφρων, mean "possessing reason" (133, n. 12). Rather, it seems to mean "restraining/controlling passion" (so Hainsworth, and H. W. Nordheider, *Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos* s.v.; cf. Burkert 142, with n. 23); for θυμός used in Homer with reference to sexual desire, cf. *Od.* 5.126, ὃ θυμῷ εἴτασα (of Demeter yielding to desire for Iasion). See J. Bremmer, *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul* (Princeton 1983) 54 f., for the semantic range of Homeric θυμός. It may be significant in this regard that Philo pairs ἐχεθυμία with σωφροσύνη (*De sacr.* 27.2).

It is interesting to note that the marriage of Hephaestus and Aphrodite is not well attested outside the present passage and works influenced by it (cf. Burkert 133, n. 7, and Braswell 135 f.), and so may well be an *ad hoc* invention by the poet. If this is correct, it is striking to find that in developing this passage the poet both creates the marriage and apparently annuls it.

Demodocus' song has proved to be a problematic passage. There are a number of unusual linguistic features.<sup>3</sup> While these are most likely a reflection of the unusual subject-matter, they have fueled the suspicions of analysts, who have been eager to pronounce the song an independent piece grafted onto Book 8 (see Burkert 132, n. 3). Yet, even in antiquity, it was recognized that the story of adultery bore a special relevance to Odysseus, a man who was aware, as he sat in the court of Alcinous, that the fidelity of Penelope was threatened by the presence of the suitors.<sup>4</sup> Recent scholarship, moreover, has tended to see the song as part of the fabric of the book. In particular, Braswell has advanced the interesting argument that the conflict between Hephaestus and Ares reflects the dispute between Odysseus and Euryalus.

This sort of view is attractive. Not only would the song possess a general thematic relevance to the poem as a whole, but it would also function in an important way in the narrower context of Book 8. Yet there is a difficulty. When the gods arrive and view the handiwork of Hephaestus, they laugh (326 f.). Does this laughter in any way compromise Hephaestus' victory? This is a pertinent question, especially if Hephaestus is, at least on one level, a figure who occupies a position analogous to that of Odysseus (see Braswell 134 f.). If the gods fail to take Hephaestus' victory seriously, what does this tell us of Odysseus' victory over Euryalus? The Phaeacians certainly do not make light of Odysseus' throw with the discus; and Euryalus is ultimately ordered by Alcinous to atone (ἀρεσσάσθω, a strong word) for his inappropriate language (396 f.). How then should we understand the laughter of the gods in Demodocus' song?

In what follows I shall argue that the ἄσβεστος γέλως of the gods is laughter of a serious sort, and, moreover, that this laughter is clearly the response desired by Hephaestus. The gods direct their laughter at the adulterous pair in mockery, an action which can only be understood properly within the context of early Greek shame-culture.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup>See the convenient list in Hainsworth's introductory note (on 266–369).

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Athen. 5.192d. These parallels have been developed by G. P. Rose, *The Song of Ares and Aphrodite: Recurrent Motifs in Homer's Odyssey* (diss., University of California, Berkeley 1969): see the summary in DA 31 (1971) 738A–739A.

<sup>5</sup>That the ἄσβεστος γέλως indicates mockery of the pair has been noted before (e.g., by J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death* [Oxford 1980] 200); but the social setting of the action has not, so far as I have been able to discover, been explored. For the concept of early Greek shame-culture, see the classic statement by E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley 1951) 28 ff.; cf. A. W. H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility* (Oxford 1960) 48 f., 154–156; K. J. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality* (Oxford 1974) 236–242; A. W. Gouldner, *Enter Plato* (New York 1965) 81–87; J. Gould, review of Dover, *Greek Popular Morality*, CR 28 (1978) 285–287, at 287. On the persistence of such attitudes, see P. Walcot, *Greek Peasants: Ancient and Modern* (Manchester 1970) 57–93. In recognizing the importance of shame in early Greek society, I do not subscribe fully to

Let us look more closely at the text. With the lovers in his trap, Hephaestus calls the other gods (306–311):

Ζεῦ πάτερ ἦδ' ἄλλοι μάκαρες θεοὶ αἰὲν ἔόντες,  
 δεῦθ', ἵνα ἔργα γελαστά καὶ οὐκ ἐπιεικτὰ ἴδῃσθε,  
 ὥς ἐμὲ χωλὸν ἔοντα Διὸς θυγάτηρ Ἀφροδίτη  
 αἰὲν ἀτιμάζει, φιλέει δ' αἰδήλον Ἄρηα,  
 οὔνεχ' ὁ μὲν καλὸς τε καὶ ἀρτίπος, αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ γε  
 ἠπεδανὸς γενόμεν.

The lame god invites the others to come and look upon ἔργα γελαστά καὶ οὐκ ἐπιεικτὰ. The reference of ἔργα is probably to the adultery of Ares and Aphrodite. γελαστά has caused some disquiet among commentators: there is an ancient variant, ἔργ' ἀγέλαστα, which has been preferred by some earlier editors (notably P. von der Mühl). With this text it becomes very difficult to see how Demodocus' song coheres with the larger context of Book 8, for the gods respond to Hephaestus' summons with laughter (325 ff.), and this would clearly compromise Hephaestus' victory.

This variant is probably an ancient emendation prompted by moral scruples, something which has bedevilled interpretation of this episode as a whole: the song of Demodocus has troubled ancient scholars and many of their modern successors because of its apparent amorality.<sup>6</sup> What these commentators fail to realize is that the episode is highly moral in its account of adultery exposed and punished. οὐκ ἐπιεικτὰ means that the adultery is intolerable, and, consequently, Hephaestus has sought revenge. γελαστά means that the adulterers are deserving of γέλως.<sup>7</sup> Recent commentators

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the view that there was a radical move away from shame values to the values of a guilt culture that culminated in the fourth century. For criticism of this view (largely that of Dodds and Adkins), see H. Lloyd-Jones, *The Justice of Zeus*<sup>2</sup> (Berkeley 1983) 24–26; Dover, *op. cit.* 220; R. Parker, *Miasma* (Oxford 1983) 251, with n. 90.

<sup>6</sup>This sort of reaction to the story may occur as early as Xenophanes (fr. 15 Gentili-Prato = 21 B 11 VS); Plato censures the episode explicitly (*Resp.* 3.390c). For references to later passages, see Burkert 137, n. 16. W. E. Gladstone, *Studies on Homer and the Homeric Age* 2 (Oxford 1858) 462 f., argues that the poet has lowered himself to gratify the vulgar tastes of his audience.

<sup>7</sup>As Hainsworth notes, γελαστός is virtually a ἄπαξ. Even the correctness of the formation is a matter of dispute: H. Frisk, *Über den Gebrauch des Privativpräfixes im indogermanischen Adjektiv* (Göteborg 1941, Göteborgs högsk. Årssk. 47.11) 18 (= *Kl. Schr.* 183–229, at 200, n. 1), rejects it and endorses the alternative ἔργ' ἀγέλαστα (also accepted by J. Nachelmanns, *Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos* s.v. ἀγέλαστος B 1); more recently, however, E. Risch, *Die Wortbildung der homerischen Sprache*<sup>2</sup> (Berlin 1974) 20 f., accepts γελαστά. Elsewhere the word exists by conjecture only in Babr. 45.12 Luzzatto-La Penna. This passage may be instructive. It concerns a goatherd who loses all of his animals through greed: ὁ δ' αἰπόλος γελαστός ἤλθεν εἰς οἴκους / αἰγῶν ἔρημος (12). In this line the paradosis reads γελάσας; Baiter emended to γελαστός. The transmitted text is certainly difficult: the participle is metrically impossible (though Bergk thought that

(notably Stanford and Hainsworth) see irony in γελαστά; this seems to me to be a misjudgment, as an examination of the passage will show.

The laughter implicit in γελαστά occurs when the gods arrive and look upon the trapped couple (325–327):

ἔσταν δ' ἐν προθύροισι θεοί, δωτῆρες ἑάων·  
ἄσβεστος δ' ἄρ' ἐνώρτο γέλως μακάρεσσι θεοῖσι  
τέχνας εἰσορόωσι πολύφρονος Ἥφαιστοιο.

Laughter arises as the gods look upon the τέχνη of Hephaestus. It is tempting to see the participial phrase as providing an explanation of the laughter, but the force of εἰσορόωσι cannot be determined with precision; it could be either causal or temporal.<sup>8</sup> The meaning in such cases, therefore, must be derived from the context, and the setting here suggests that the reference of εἰσορόωσι is temporal.<sup>9</sup>

The gods stand ἐν προθύροισι. Those scholars with a special interest in *Realien* have been troubled by this (cf. Hainsworth on 304): did the front-door afford direct access to the bedroom? What does this tell us of the physical layout of houses on Olympus? I regard this detail as important, but would treat it more symbolically. ἐν προθύροισι denotes the space where the public and the inner world of the οἶκος meet.<sup>10</sup> Although the situation concerns Hephaestus' οἶκος, the laughter of the gods is public.

Laughter is difficult to pin down: it ranges broadly from good-natured to cruel. In early Greek literature it seems more often to be of the latter sort. The implications of the word γέλως are determined by context. This is an important point, for I suspect that a passage from the *Iliad*—not the

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it might stand), and it is hard to imagine that the goatherd could find humour in the loss of his herd (and doubtless his livelihood). It is through his own folly that the goats died; accordingly, he deserves scorn. γελαστός (printed by Perry) is thus both attractive from the point of view of sense and close to the *ductus litterarum*. Luzzatto and La Penna, however, the most recent editors of Babrius, print Lachmann's γελοῖος, rejecting γελαστός because of their belief that Babrius avoids oxytone words at the hephthemimeral caesura. But this rule may be too rigid: there are fourteen examples, of which only four can be removed through emendation or re-accentuation (cf. their edition, p. CI). And, moreover, the corruption posited is difficult to explain.

<sup>8</sup>The same problem exists with the ὥς clause in *Il.* 1.600 (quoted below); cf. *H. Herm.* 389, Ζεὺς δὲ μέγ' ἐξεγέλασεν ἰδὼν κακομηδέα παῖδα (the participle is probably temporal), and *Eur. IT* 1274, where the reason for the laughter is made clear, (of Zeus) γέλασε δ' ὅτι τέκος ἄφαρ ἔβα / πολύχρυσά θέλων λατρεύματα σχεῖν.

<sup>9</sup>It is worth noting that even if the participle is judged to be causal, the reading of the passage that I am proposing is not necessarily threatened, for τέχνη can be understood as referring broadly to the entrapment, not narrowly to the trap. Consequently, the cause of the laughter would be the sight of the ensnared lovers.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. Pindar *Nem.* 1.19, ἔσταν δ' ἐπ' ἀλκείαις θύραις; see L. Woodbury, "The Gratitude of the Locrian Maiden: Pindar, *Pyth.* 2.18–20," *TAPA* 108 (1978) 285–299, at 297, n. 35, on Pindar *Pyth.* 2.18, πρὸ δόμων / Λοκρὶς παρθένος ἀπύει.

immediate context—has determined the way in which the γέλως of the gods has been understood in the present passage. And this is a risky practice; for the moral character of the two poems is different in important ways. The *Odyssey* seems to be much more preoccupied with the question of justice than the *Iliad*;<sup>11</sup> and it is striking that adultery occupies a paradigmatic position in Zeus' programmatic speech in Book 1 (35 ff.).<sup>12</sup>

At the close of *Iliad* 1 Hephaestus defuses the tension between Zeus and Hera by acting as cup-bearer. The language of this passage (599–600) is formally similar to *Od.* 8.326 f.:

ἄσβεστος δ' ἄρ' ἐνῶρτο γέλως μακάρεσσι θεοῖσιν,  
ὥς ἴδον Ἥφαιστον διὰ δώματα ποιπυρόντα.

However close the verbal parallel here, it should not be allowed to obscure the important differences between the two passages.<sup>13</sup> In *Iliad* 1 it is Hephaestus himself who excites the laughter, but in the passage under discussion it is the ἔργα that are γελαστά. Moreover, the laughter is indeed good humoured in the Iliadic scene, for as Hephaestus himself makes clear, he is trying to preserve the pleasure of the Olympian feast (cf. 575 ff.). In *Odyssey* 8 the laughter of the gods is the result of Hephaestus' impassioned denunciation of the adulterous pair and is followed closely by a moral judgment (οὐκ ἀρετῇ κακὰ ἔργα, 329).<sup>14</sup> Rather than expressing amusement, this is the laughter of mockery. Adultery was a serious offence: it was not simply

<sup>11</sup>In spite of H. Lloyd-Jones' passionate arguments to the contrary (above, n. 5, 1–27), Dodds (above n. 5, 32) seems fundamentally correct in writing "... I find no indication in the narrative of the *Iliad* that Zeus is concerned with justice as such."

<sup>12</sup>For the use of the exemplar of Aegisthus in the poem, see J. March, *The Creative Poet* (London 1987, *BICS* Supp. 49) 84–86.

<sup>13</sup>It is remarkable that W. Burkert, *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche* (Stuttgart 1977) 262 (= 168, Eng. ed.), can say simply "Auch das andere 'homerische Gelächter' der Götter in der Odyssee geht auf seine Kosten ..." (see his earlier article, 135 ff., for his view of the relationship between the two passages). This sort of view has recently been developed by G. E. Dimock, *The Unity of the Odyssey* (Amherst 1989) 100 f., who writes: "Laughter of this sort insists that what is before us is not serious; it does not matter; it does not count." It should be noted that the notion of close interrelation of the two passages, established through verbal parallels, is made unnecessary by oral theory.

<sup>14</sup>The importance of this statement has recently been noted by U. Hölscher, *Die Odyssee: Epos zwischen Märchen und Roman* (Munich 1988) 270 f. The phrase κακὰ ἔργα occurs in a number of other interesting contexts in the poem. Perhaps the most relevant to the passage under discussion is 24.199, where it is used of the designs of Clytemnestra (for the importance of this myth, see above, n. 12); it is also used of the actions of Polyphemus (9.477) and of the behaviour of the Suitors (17.158, 20.16, 23.64, 24.326; especially, 16.380, with reference to their plot to kill Telemachus). More generally, κακὰ ἔργα are punished by the gods (2.67, 14.284; cf. 23.64). It is interesting to note that the occurrences of the phrase in the *Iliad* (9.595, 15.97, 21.19, 23.176) seem to bear little of the moral weight borne by the *Odyssean* passages.

a private, domestic issue. It was an act that undermined the integrity of the household, which, in turn, threatened the stability of the community.<sup>15</sup> In Classical times, it was clearly regarded as a shameful act, punishable by severe penalties.<sup>16</sup> In addition, the wronged husband himself would be subject to ridicule, if he did not seek revenge and so restore his honour.<sup>17</sup>

The idea that public γέλως is an important manifestation of shame is supported by a number of passages. Public γέλως seems to have been central to Archilochus' celebrated attack on Lycambes (fr. 172 West):<sup>18</sup>

πάτερ Λυκάμβρα, ποῖον ἐφράσω τόδε;  
τίς σὰς παρήειρε φρένας  
ἦς τὸ πρὶν ἡρήρησθα; νῦν δὲ δὴ πολλὸς  
ἄστοισι φαίνειαι γέλως.

We often find it said that, in view of the reputation for invective that Archilochus enjoyed later in antiquity, the remains of this epode seem remarkably mild.<sup>19</sup> And yet it is important to realize that this poetry is a product of early Greek shame-culture; Archilochus is pronouncing a negative, public evaluation of Lycambes. For our present purposes it is enough to remark the terms in which this judgment is set: Lycambes is revealed as a γέλως to his fellow-townsmen (ἄστοισι).<sup>20</sup> The reason for this seems to

<sup>15</sup>For Hesiod (*Erga* 182) one of the signs of the breakdown of society is a failure of correspondence between father and sons, οὐδὲ πατὴρ παῖδεσσιν ὁμοίως οὐδέ τι παῖδες (on the meaning of ὁμοίως, see West *ad loc.* and A. Athanassakis, "The Etymology and Meaning of ὁμοίως," *RhM* 119 [1976] 4–7). It seems likely that this state of affairs is brought about by marital infidelity.

<sup>16</sup>Cf. *Diss. Log.* 2.5 (Diels-Kranz, *Vors.* 6 2.407–408): καὶ τῷ μὲν αὐτῶς συνίμεν ἀνδρὶ καλόν, ἄλλοτριῷ δὲ αἰσχιστον. καὶ τῷ γ' ἀνδρὶ τῷ μὲν ἐαυτῷ γυναικὶ συνίμεν καλόν, ἄλλοτριῷ δὲ αἰσχρόν. Penalties for the adulterer could be as severe as death (Lys. 1), injury, and physical abuse (Ar. *Nubes* 1083 with Dover's note; cf. Kroll on Catullus 15.18). On the question of adultery in Classical Athens (our best source of information), see W. K. Lacey, *The Family in Classical Athens* (London 1968) 113–116; Dover (above, n. 5) 209 f.

<sup>17</sup>Cf. Hesiod's advice (*Erga* 701) μὴ γέιτοσι χάρματα γήμης (see West *ad loc.* for further passages and interpretation; for a different view, see H. Lloyd-Jones, *Females of the Species* [London 1974] 90), and Arch. fr. 196A.34 West, *Delectus*, γέιτοσι χάρμ' ἔσομαι. For vengeance as a means of restoring honour in the face of sexual insult, see B. M. Lavelle, "The Nature of Hipparchus' Insult to Harmodius," *AJP* 107 (1986) 318–331, at 323 ff.

<sup>18</sup>I propose to discuss Archilochus' poetry against Lycambes in a forthcoming monograph.

<sup>19</sup>A. J. Podlecki, *The Early Greek Poets and their Times* (Vancouver 1984) 49, remarks of fr. 172, "This seems rather mild for one who had a reputation of being 'harsh-tongued'." A. P. Burnett, *Three Archaic Poets* (Cambridge, Mass. 1983) 64, sees little that is abusive in the fragments of the poem and believes that "The only possible conclusion is that direct personal abuse was never a part of the poet's true purpose here."

<sup>20</sup>Cf. Semonides' ape-woman who goes δι' ἄστεος πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις γέλως (fr. 7.74 West). She is an object of mockery owing to her appearance. Yet more repulsive than that, it seems, is the fact that she is indifferent to the laughter (οὐδέ οἱ γέλως μέλει, 79).

be the course of action represented by ἐφράσω. Again I stress that, as in the case of Hephaestus' vengeance, Archilochus' attack is set clearly within the context of the community; and this is indeed noteworthy, especially when the cause of the feud between Archilochus and Lycambes given by the tradition is generally regarded as personal in nature (*viz.*, the broken betrothal).

Perhaps the most revealing passages are to be found in Sophocles' *Ajax*.<sup>21</sup> This play has been cogently interpreted, on one level at least, as a conflict between the values of the Archaic period (represented essentially by Ajax) and those of the fifth century (embodied in the other characters, especially Odysseus).<sup>22</sup> In this play Ajax is moved to end his own life because of the shame that resulted from his madness. Ajax particularizes his shame in an external form: the γέλως of his enemies.<sup>23</sup> Fear of γέλως also moves Medea to murder and infanticide in Euripides' play.<sup>24</sup> The passages here surveyed constitute some of the more striking instances of the motif; the list could be much extended.<sup>25</sup>

The story of Hephaestus' revenge through public shame finds an interesting parallel in an Aesopic fable, which was given early treatment by Archilochus in an epode (frs. 185–187 West). The fable goes as follows in the conventional prose version (81 Perry):<sup>26</sup>

ἐν συνόδῳ τῶν ἀλόγων ζῴων πίθηκος εὐδοκιμήσας βασιλεὺς ὑπ' αὐτῶν ἐχειροτονήθη. ἀλώπηξ δὲ αὐτῷ φθονήσασα, ὡς ἐθεάσατο ἔν τινι πάγῃ κρέας κείμενον, ἀγαγούσα αὐτὸν ἐνταῦθα ἔλεγεν ὡς εὐροῦσα θησαυρόν, αὐτὴ μὲν οὐκ ἐχρήσατο, γέρας δὲ αὐτῷ τῆς βασιλείας τετήρηκε, καὶ παρήνει αὐτῷ λαμβάνειν. τοῦ δὲ ἀμελήτως ἐπελθόντος καὶ ὑπὸ τῆς πάγης συλληφθέντος, αἰτιωμένου τε τὴν ἀλώπεκα ὡς ἐνεδρεύσασαν αὐτῷ, ἐκείνη ἔφη "ὦ πίθηκε, σὺ δὲ τοιαύτην πυγὴν ἔχων τῶν ἀλόγων ζῴων βασιλεύεις;"

<sup>21</sup>Perhaps the earliest extant play (possibly as early as the 450s); see Kamerbeek's edition (Leiden 1963<sup>2</sup>) 15–17; A. Lesky, *Die tragische Dichtung der Hellenen*<sup>3</sup> (Göttingen 1972) 180, n. 2 (= Eng. ed., tr. M. Dillon, 438, n. 2).

<sup>22</sup>See B. M. W. Knox, "The Ajax of Sophocles," *HSCP* 65 (1961) 1–37 = *Word and Action* (Baltimore 1979) 125–160.

<sup>23</sup>Cf. lines 79, 367, 382, 955–957. The theme of laughter in the play has been studied by G. Grossmann, "Das Lachen des Aias," *MusHelv* 25 (1968) 65–85, who argues that Sophocles developed a motif from the *Ilias parva*.

<sup>24</sup>Cf. Eur. Med. 381–383, 1049–1050, especially 797, οὐ γὰρ γελάσθαι τλητὸν ἐξ ἐχθρῶν.

<sup>25</sup>Cf. also *Il.* 1.255–257; Hes. *Erga* 701; Thgn. 1107; Aesch. Pers. 1034; Hdt. 1.129.1, 3.29.2, 3.155.1, 7.209.2; Soph. *El.* 1133, 1295, OC 902, 1339, 1423; Eur. fr. 460 Nauck<sup>2</sup>; Ar. Ach. 221–222, 1195–1197 (in both passages ἐγγάσκω is used of strong mockery: see J. Taillardat, *Les Images d'Aristophane*<sup>2</sup> [Paris 1965] 334); Xen. Cyr. 5.5.9; Callim. fr. 194.98 Pfeiffer.

<sup>26</sup>With West (*IEG* 1.71) I print πυγὴν (Buchholtz) in place of what the manuscripts read variously as ψυχὴν, τύχην, μωρίαν, μωρίαν. Buchholtz' emendation brings the passage closer to what appears to have been the Archilochian version of the fable: cf. fr. 187, τοιήνδε δ' ὃ πίθηκε τὴν πυγὴν ἔχων.

It is striking that the means by which the fox attacks the monkey is a trap.<sup>27</sup> In a way that is strongly reminiscent of Hephaestus' remarkable fetters, the trap pins the monkey in such a way that he is subject to ridicule—his πνγή is exposed. The lesson of the fable seems to be that anyone who can be caught in such a compromising position is unfit to rule.<sup>28</sup> Although there is no explicit mention of public mockery in the text of the fable, the words of the fox are suggestive of ridicule; and this is made explicit in the moral appended to the fable (οὕτως οἱ τοῖς πράγμασιν ἀπροσκέπτως ἐπιχειροῦντες ἐπὶ τῷ δυστυχεῖν καὶ γέλωτα ὀφλισκάνουσιν).<sup>29</sup>

In the preceding discussion I have attempted to outline a cultural context for the laughter of the gods at the sight of Hephaestus' trap. In doing so, I have thus far ignored the fact that the gods laugh a second time.

After the gods laugh for the first time and pronounce Hephaestus victorious, we have what was regarded in later antiquity as a celebrated dirty joke (334–343; cf. Luc. *Dial. deor.* 21). Apollo asks Hermes if he would endure such indignity for the privilege of sleeping with Aphrodite; Hermes replies that he would gladly suffer three times the fetters and full public scrutiny by both gods and goddesses alike. Once again the gods laugh (343). It seems to me likely that this passage with its ribald tone has generally influenced the way in which scholars have viewed Demodocus' song as a whole. This is mistaken. The exchange between Apollo and Hermes is in fact an interruption—a parenthesis, as it were. One god, Poseidon, does not laugh, but continues to work to resolve Ares' predicament through negotiation with Hephaestus.<sup>30</sup> The basic seriousness that I see in the situation is maintained (Poseidon was not, it should be noted, exempt from the first instance of laughter).

<sup>27</sup>From fr. 186 (ρόπτρῳ ἐπειδόμενον) it seems reasonably certain that the trap was prominent in the Archilochian epode. ρόπτρον is a term for a part of the trap: for detailed discussion (with some good observations on the text of the Archilochian passage), see Barrett on Eur. *Hipp.* 1172; for a different view of the Euripidean passage, see E. W. Bushala, "The Meaning of ρόπτρον at *Hippolytus* 1172," *AJP* 90 (1969) 437–443. For a description of such a trap, see Babr. *Fab.* 130 Luzzatto-La Penna.

<sup>28</sup>It is unfortunate that nothing is known of the application of the fable in Archilochus' epode. The ancient tradition tells us nothing of Kerykides, the addressee of fr. 185. We might be in a better position to determine the attitude towards him if we understood the implications of fr. 185.2, ἀχνομένη σκυτάλη (or ἀχνομένη σκυτάλη); but the meaning of this phrase was much disputed in antiquity: cf. Ar. Byz. fr. 367 Slater; Ap. Rhod. *apud* Athen. 10.451c; Dicaearchus fr. 99 Wehrli<sup>2</sup>. For discussion, see U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Die Textgeschichte der griechischen Lyriker* (Berlin 1900) 74–76; R. Pfeiffer, *A History of Classical Scholarship* 1 (Oxford 1968) 181; Slater on Ar. Byz., *loc. cit.*; S. R. West, "Archilochus' Message-stick," *CQ* NS 38 (1988) 42–48.

<sup>29</sup>Nothing certain is known of the origins of the various ἐπιμύθια: see B. E. Perry, *Studies in the Text History of the Life and Fables of Aesop* (Haverford 1936) 172. In the present case it may have been influenced by Archilochus' version of the fable.

<sup>30</sup>It may be significant that there is no suggestion that Poseidon was concerned with Aphrodite. As part of Hephaestus' οἶκος, her situation was not Poseidon's affair.



What, then, of the second onset of laughter? It is certainly wrong to suppose that the passage is an interpolation, as was done as recently as Bolling;<sup>31</sup> it cannot be detached readily from its context. And, moreover, I believe that the passage is important, and that its importance lies in its light tone. With this passage we are reminded how often, when seen on their own terms, there is an element of the absurd in the gods of epic. The best example is the battle of the gods in *Iliad* 21. This episode with its many comic scenes impresses on us the great difference between gods and men. The condition of immortality renders the gods immune to the vicissitudes that affect mortal life; the gods are simply unable to feel fully the consequences of actions. And in this way they are set apart from men: there is no tragedy on Olympus.<sup>32</sup>

I suggest that the song of Ares and Aphrodite should be seen in a similar light. The society of the gods here, as often, mirrors the values of human society closely. We see a husband restoring both the integrity of his οἶκος and his own honour by a public act of shaming. Yet, at the same time, the banter of Apollo and Hermes reminds us that this is not human society; the consequences of actions are not as serious. And so we have a subtle contrast with Odysseus, as he sits listening with pleasure to the bard sing, uncertain of the condition of his own οἶκος.<sup>33</sup>

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#### APPENDIX: SOME ROUGH MUSIC

Implicit in my understanding of Demodocus' song is the notion that mockery can serve as a mechanism of popular justice. Accordingly, it might be of interest to note briefly that similar procedures have been so employed at various times in European history. The following discussion is intended to be illustrative, not exhaustive.

In the Greek world there is a good deal of evidence for the presence of αἰσχρολογία in a variety of cults, especially those of Demeter and Dionysus (see the useful collection of material in H. Fluck, *Skurrile Riten im griechischen Kult* [diss. Endingen 1931]; cf. N. J. Richardson, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* [Oxford 1974] 216 f.). Often αἰσχρολογία involved verbal abuse and mockery (a good example can be found in Semus, *FGrHist* 396

<sup>31</sup>G. M. Bolling, *The External Evidence for Interpolation in Homer* (Oxford 1926) 239.

<sup>32</sup>See the remarks of Burkert 140; cf. H. Erbse, *Untersuchungen zur Funktion der Götter im homerischen Epos* (Berlin and New York 1986) 145 f.

<sup>33</sup>On the human level the consequences are indeed more serious in the poem, although the precise details of the situation differ in important ways. When Odysseus brings order to his οἶκος it is through bloodshed.

F 24); these practices are important for our understanding of early ἵαμβος and comedy, genres which both involve public mockery (see M. West, *Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus* [Berlin and New York 1974] 22–39, though some of his conclusions are dubious). From this large body of *testimonia* I single out two examples of public mockery. 1) Aristotle (fr. 558 Rose) relates an incident from Naxos, in which a group of disgruntled young men made a κῶμος to the house of a wealthy individual named Telestagoras and abused (ὑβρίσαν) him and his two marriageable daughters. There followed a riot, which in turn led to the tyranny of Lygdamis. As West (27) notes, the historical details are probably secondary. 2) A number of late sources (conveniently edited by W. J. W. Koster, *Scholia in Aristophanem* 1.1A [Groningen 1975] as *Proleg.* IV 1–11, XVI 1.14 ff., XVIIIa 1–19, XXIa 25–56, XXXIII 2.1–12) preserve an account of the origin of comedy in which farmers who had suffered harm at the hands of some Athenians went about the streets by night near the houses of their persecutors, shouting aloud their sufferings. These farmers were later made to do this again in the theatre, where they preserved their anonymity by covering themselves with wine-lees. In this way comedy began. It is interesting to note that the aim of this public declaration of wrongs was to stop the guilty Athenians by shaming them, and it seems that these farmers were successful (cf. Schol. Dion. Thr. p. 70.17 Koster, ἀνοχή τῶν ἀδικιῶν ἐγένετο τῆς αἰδοῦς ἔτι συνοικουσίας τοῖς ἀνδράσιν).

In Italy there was a tradition of popular justice called *flagitatio* (see H. Usener, "Italische Volksjustiz," *RhM* 56 [1901] 1–28 = *Kl. Schr.* 356–382; cf. J. M. Kelly, *Roman Litigation* [Oxford 1966] 21–23; C. J. Fordyce, *Catullus: A Commentary* [Oxford 1961; repr. 1973] 412 f.; A. J. Marshall, "Cicero, *ad Quintum Fratrem* ii.10.1," *CR* 18 [1968] 16–17). This is a procedure by which a wronged individual could demand settlement from the wrongdoer by a raucous, public demonstration without recourse to formal litigation. Catullus plays on this tradition in Poem 42, where he summons his *hendecasyllabi* to assail with abuse a girl who has both treated him with contempt (*iocum me putat esse*, 3) and refused to return his *pugillaria* (see E. Fraenkel, "Two Poems of Catullus," *JRS* 51 [1961] 46–53 = *Kl. Beitr.* 2.115–129). It is noteworthy in the present context that the object of this playful *flagitatio* is persistently called *moecha*; she seems to have betrayed Catullus sexually.

Another Roman passage of some interest is Tacitus' description of the punishment for adultery among the Germans (*Germ.* 19): *paucissima in tam numerosa gente adulteria, quorum poena praesens et maritis permissa: abscissis crinibus nudatam coram propinquis expellit domo maritus ac per omnem vicum verbere agit*. Although there is no suggestion here that mockery played a role in this procedure (and in fact Tacitus goes on to say, apparently making a comparison with contemporary Rome,

*nemo enim illic vitia ridet, nec corrumpere et corrumpi saeculum vocatur*), the aggrieved husband exacts his vengeance through public humiliation. Some post-classical parallels for Tacitus' account are cited by Fehrle and Hünnerkopf (*ad loc.*).

In modern Europe, right down to the present century, a wide variety of traditions of public mockery and shaming is well attested. Commonly called charivari, skimmington, skimmity ride, rough music, these practices take a diversity of forms with many conventional features, and are employed by communities to address a number of situations. It is outside the scope of the present discussion to treat these traditions at length; I simply cite some recent work where further bibliography can be found: A. W. Smith, "Some Folklore Elements in Movements of Social Protest," *Folklore* 77 (1967) 241-252; E. P. Thompson, "'Rough Music': Le charivari anglais," *Annales (ESC)* 27 (1972) 285-312; N. Z. Davis, "Charivari, Honor, and Community in Seventeenth-Century Lyon and Geneva," *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle*, ed. J. J. MacAloon (Philadelphia 1984) 44-57; M. Ingram, "Ridings, Rough Music, and the 'Reform of Popular Culture' in Early Modern England," *Past and Present* 105 (1984) 79-113. One point worth mentioning in connection with Demodocus' song, however, is the frequency with which adultery is the occasion for such public spectacles (see the general discussion by A. Bricteux, "Le Châtiment populaire de l'infidélité conjugale," *Revue anthropologique* 32 [1922] 323-328).