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BEATING MOTIFS IN THE GREEK DANCE

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none the less, but rather the more, inclined to rent the house, and did so.

"When it began to grow dark, he ordered his bed to be made up in the front of the house, called for writing materials and a light, and sent all the servants within to their quarters. As for himself, he devoted his mind, his eyes, and his hand to the task of writing, for fear that idle thoughts might create for themselves sounds, sights, and groundless terrors. At first, here as everywhere else, the stillness of night prevailed. Then ensued the clanging of metal, the rattling of chains. He did not lift his eyes or raise his pencil, but clung to his purpose and forced his determination to prevail over the evidence of his senses. Then the clangor increased, drew near. To his sense of hearing it was now at the threshold, now within the room. He glanced over his shoulder, saw and recognized the shape that had been described to him. It was standing, beckoning with its index finger, as though summoning him. In reply he indicated by a gesture that it should wait a while, and again bent over his work. The ghost rattled its chains above his head as he wrote. Glancing back once more he beheld it beckoning as before. With no further delay he took up his lamp and followed. The spectre proceeded with measured tread, as though heavily burdened with chains. Finally it turned into the open court of the house and suddenly vanished, deserting its companion. Athenodorus, left alone, scraped together some leaves to mark the spot. The next day he went to the police and advised them to order that the place be dug up. There they found a skeleton imprisoned and fettered with chains. As the body had mouldered away in the earth with age, it had left the bones bare and marred by the chains. These bones were collected and given public burial. Thereafter, the ghost being properly laid, the house was no longer haunted."

Such is the tale. And many another has reëchoed the thought which prompted its recital (as hereinbefore mentioned) by Pliny the Younger, when he wrote that well-known letter (vii, 27) to his friend Licinius Sura in the time of the Roman Emperor Nerva: "Perquam velim scire esse phantasmata . . . putes."



### IMPERIAL DINNERS

To inspire the Romans to economize on food, Tiberius often served left-over and half-eaten foods at formal dinners. Antoninus Geta liked to give dinners made up of foods all beginning with the same letter of the alphabet. Elagabalus gave a "progressive" dinner, with each course served in a different house. It lasted all day. At another dinner Elagabalus served the heads of six hundred ostriches.

## BEATING MOTIFS IN THE GREEK DANCE

By LILLIAN B. LAWLER

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THE MODERN CRYPTOGRAPHER, pondering long and earnestly over an intercepted message in code, has much in common with the student of the Greek dance, laboriously seeking to decipher for his contemporaries the brief and sometimes completely baffling "messages" of his ancient sources.

One such "message" from antiquity concerns a dance figure called by the Greeks *xylou paralepsis*. Pollux (iv, 105), with his customary assumption that his readers know what he is talking about, merely mentions the figure among others of the tragic dance. Athenaeus (xiv, 629 f) includes it in a list of dance figures one of which he documents from comedy, and another of which is known to have characterized the satyr play. Hesychius, frequently useful in matters of dance terminology, is silent on *xylou paralepsis*. Renaissance writers are hardly more helpful than their predecessors in the matter. Musonius does not mention the figure. Meursius (*Orchestra*, s.v.) lists it with tragic figures, and translates it "ligni adsumptio." Scaliger (*De Comoedia et Tragoedia*, 1523F) names the figure in a series: "Et *xylou paralepsis*, cum tollere quippiam volebant." Later (1524 D) he voices his suspicion that even the ancient writers did not know what the figure was like.

Modern scholars seldom treat of the figure beyond a mere mention, or a sentence or two of conjecture. Weege, for example, says that the "Hölzergreifen" was a dance of mimetic character, but that it is scarcely more than a name to us. Latte likewise says that we do not know what it was, but he believes that it was a figure in which the whole of the chorus participated. Crönert thought that the *xyla* mentioned in Delian inscriptions might have something to do with *xylou paralepsis* in the dance; but his conjecture has not been generally accepted, perhaps because scholars prefer to see in *xyla* a reference to fuel for the altars. Vuillier says the figure was performed with a club in the hand of the dancer. Wright calls it "Touch-wood." Gulick, in his translation of Athenaeus (Harvard University Press, 1930-37), vi, 399 and note k, says that this figure is "quite unknown;" but on the analogy of Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 25 and *Wasps* 90, and *schol.*, where *xylon*, modified by *proton*, denotes the front row of seats in the theater, translates the Greek words "grabbing the front seat." He gives as an alternative interpretation "handing on the

stick," and even suggests a possible emendation of *paralepsis* to *prolepsis*.

In view of the obscurity surrounding the figure, it might seem presumptuous to attempt to clarify it further. However, a close examination of some of the literary, linguistic, and archaeological evidence available, but not yet adduced, might possibly be helpful.

From the language of Pollux and Athenaeus, we may safely assume that our figure was a dramatic one. If that is so, indubitable traces of the figure should appear in extant dramas. We can not be sure whether it was confined to the dancing of the chorus, or whether it was found also in the gestures of an actor; for gesture, *cheironomia*, was regarded in Greek times as a very real phase of dancing. Accordingly, we may consider both as possibilities.

For the moment, let us turn to linguistic evidence. Exactly what could *xylou paralepsis* mean? The word *xylon*, of course, means "wood," in many senses, or, by extension, things made of wood. Perhaps most distinctive of all its meanings, and one common in Greek drama, is "club," "staff," "cudgel." The word *paralepsis*, coming from *lambano*, can imply either an active "taking" or a passive "receiving." It often denotes "making use of." The various forms of *paralambano* are used to denote "take" "seize," or "use." By an odd coincidence, the simple verb, *lambano*, provides us with a significance parallel to our phrase. In describing the *xylokopia*, a form of execution in the Roman army, Polybius (vi, 37, 2) says of the presiding officer, "*labon xylon*—taking a cudgel." I believe, then, that *xylou paralepsis* as a dance figure signifies a gesture of "using a club" (or staff) for mimetic enactment of beating or threatened violence.

Are there in extant Greek plays many characters or choral types who would naturally have the opportunity to brandish a club or staff? Obviously there are, in great numbers, if a real staff is involved. Included among them would be all persons who carry a club or staff as part of their conventional costume—all old men, blind men, seers, wise men, priests, heralds, messengers, suppliants, beggars, shepherds, paedagogi, doctors, generals, poets, bacchants, dignitaries of the state, and even certain deities—an impressive array, indeed. Kings with their scepters, Heracles with his club, even ordinary Greek citizens with walking sticks, might fall into this category. It would be difficult to imagine a Greek play of any of the three genres which would not have in it at least one of the types mentioned. For a character or choreutes actually bearing a staff or club in his hand to brandish it for a mimetic blow during the action of a play would be entirely normal. A mimetic blow with an imaginary staff,

of course, could occur with any type of character or chorus.

But is there in extant Greek drama much opportunity for the staging of a mimetic beating? Oddly enough, Greek drama is amazingly rich in scenes of violence or threatened violence. One has but to recall the *Suppliants*, the *Eumenides*, and the lost *Bassarae* of Aeschylus, the *Oedipus Coloneus* and *Ajax* of Sophocles, the *Heracleidae* and *Iphigenia at Aulis*, of Euripides, and the *Rhesus*, to be assured of this fact. Other instances will immediately come to mind. In the account of a messenger, where the action was mimed during the telling, and in a choral passage, where the real or imaginary brandishing of the club would be rhythmical, the beating would be obviously "dancing." But we must not forget that it was the gestures of the dramatic actors, especially in tragedy, and not those of the chorus, which developed into the pantomimic dances of the Graeco-Roman period.

The satyr play probably made use of the beating motif frequently and with gusto. Hints of this may be gathered from the *Cyclops*, the *Ichneutae*, and fragments of the *Syleus*, the *Heracles*, the *Fight on the Ships*, etc.; and the hints seem to be borne out by the fact that innumerable vase paintings showing Bacchic routs include the figures of satyrs and Maenads swinging thyrsi lustily against fellow revellers.

In Old Comedy, beating and threatening are very common motifs. In fact, beating with a staff is listed in *Clouds* 541-542 among the stock plots of comedy. One recalls the famous *basanos* of *Frogs* 605-673, and other beatings in *Acharnians*, *Thesmophoriazusae*, and *Knights*. In the *Lysistrata* (350-387) there are fights between men and women, in the course of which the weapon is called *xylon* (357). In the *Wasps* there is spirited fighting; cf. especially line 458—"Strike them with your stick (*xylo*)."  
In a choral passage (1325-1328) of the *Birds*, the choreutes suggest that Peisthetaerus stir up his servant, "beating him like this;" quite evidently, while singing they enact a beating, using their wings instead of weapons! Elsewhere the play abounds in beatings.

The beating motif, then, seems to be present in Greek tragedy, satyr play, and comedy. That it persisted into the pantomime of late Greek times—indeed to the days of Justinian—is attested by Procopius' (*Anecdota* ix, 14) detailed account of Theodora's art: "When beaten or struck over the head" (in the pantomime) "she used to improvise a jest and start laughing."

Beating and fighting dances were by no means uncommon in the classical period. We have, for instance, a specific record of a dance called *komastike*, which Pollux (iv, 100) says made use of fight-

## NIHIL EST QUOD LATINE DICI NON POSSIT

By GOODWIN BEACH  
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Quo modo latine dicas?—

1. "It's up to you to begin"—"Tuum est principium."
2. "Thank you heartily"—"Bene benigneque arbitror te facere."
3. "Whenever it is convenient for you"—"Cum erit tuum commodum."
4. "At your convenience"—"Commodo tuo."
5. "It's your choice"—"Optio haec tua est."
6. "By your leave"—"Pace tua."
7. "With your kind permission"—"Bona tua venia."
8. "If you don't mind"—"Si per te licet."
9. "Surely, go ahead"—"Quippini?"
10. "That's good, fine!"—"Bene hercle factum!"
11. "Good for you!" "Well done!"—"Macte virtute esto!"
12. "You really mean it?"—"Veron serio?"
13. "Yes, indeed"—"Maxime gentium."
14. "That's like you, you're so kind!"—"Ita tua est benignitas." "Ea es benigne." "Ea es benigne."
15. "What's the difference?"—"Quid refert?"
16. "Let's forget it!"—"Praeterita omitamus."
17. "Quite so"—"Admodum," "Ita profecto," "Factum."
18. "That's that!"—"Definitum est."
19. "Well, is there anything else?"—"Etiamne est quid porro?"
20. "Anything else? No, that's all!"—"Numquid amplius? Tantum est."

ing (*machen*) and blows (*plegas*). In Xenophon (*Anabasis* vi, 8) there is an account of the *karpaia*, a mimetic dance in which a man sowing his field is accosted by a robber; they fight, and the victor (sometimes the sower, sometimes the robber) binds his adversary. The *komos*, or revel dance, occasionally made use of blows (Scaliger, *De Com. et Trag.* 1533 D). In an ancient dance at Delos the performers were beaten (Callimachus, *Del.* 321; Hesychius, s. v. *Deliakos bomos*) or struck the altar with whips (Schol. Callimach. *Del.* 321). The various armed dances (*kolabrismos*, *enoplion*, *polemike*, *pryllis*, *telesias*, etc., and, of course, the Pyrrhic), while having some elements in common with the dances just mentioned, really form a group apart.

In like manner, dances accompanied by the beating of two sticks, or by the beating of a stick against another inanimate object, to mark the rhythm, form a separate genre. In all of these dances, however, a gesture identical with our *xylo paralepsis* certainly appeared at one time or another.

Peoples in all parts of the world, ancient and modern, have made use of ceremonial beating, to induce fertility, to stimulate the magic powers of life, and to ward off evil; and the Greeks were no exception to the rule. Pausanias (vii, 15, 2-3) tells us of a ritual to Demeter Kidaria at Pheneus in Arcadia, in which the priest, wearing a wooden mask, beat the ground with rods, presumably to arouse it to fertility. The statue of Pan was beaten with leeks by the shepherds of Arcadia (Theocritus vii, 104), perhaps to stimulate the powers of the deity. (We are reminded, of course, of the Lupercalia beatings in Rome.) Cuts and blows in the air with clubs were used to dispose of evil spirits. The *pharmakos* was beaten ceremonially with sticks, to flute-music, in order that the sin, evil, or famine magically put upon him by the worshippers might be expelled from the community. It is possible, then, that the beating and threatening motif in Greek tragedy and in the accompanying dance may be the ultimate descendant of ceremonial rhythmic floggings of great antiquity, designed to stimulate the powers of life and fertility, and to ward off evil. Whether tragedy originated in hero-dances at tombs, as a few scholars maintain, or in rituals to Dionysus as fertility divinity, the more commonly accepted theory, such rhythmical floggings would be eminently appropriate to it in its early phases (cf. British Museum B 80, an archaic patera upon which the figures of two men with clubs appear in what seems definitely a connotation of early tragedy); and refinement of the flogging to a gesture or dance *schema* would represent a normal development in Athenian tragedy.

The ceremonial beatings of boys in the ritual of Artemis Orthia at Sparta have been much discussed. Orthia was certainly a divinity of fertility, and the formal scourging of boys at her altar may have been purely a fertility charm, similar to the beating of the earth at Pheneus. The numerous terracotta masks found in the shrine of Orthia at Sparta are especially interesting, in view of the ritual at Pheneus. Some scholars think they represent wooden originals. Interesting also among the finds in the sanctuary are lead figurines of both male and female types, carrying clubs.

However, there is another, and perhaps far more ancient, ritual of beating in the Orthia cult at Sparta—the ceremonial punishment of thefts of food or drink from sacred spots (Xenophon, *Rep.*

*Lac.* ii, 9; Plato, *Laws* i, 633 B). In this ritual young men attempted to steal food (especially cheese) and drink from an altar; if caught, they were beaten with clubs. Plutarch (*Arist.* 17) calls the ceremony a *Lydon pompe*. He tells a story of its origin—that during the Persian Wars a group of Lydians had tried to steal offerings made by Pausanias to Orthia, but that they had been beaten off with clubs and whips by the Spartans; and that the incident had been perpetuated in ritual. Actually the ceremony, or something like it, may go back to pre-historic times. Apparently this ritual was definitely regarded as a dance; at least, we have specific mention of a "dance of the theft of food" in Pollux (iv, 105), Athenaeus (xiv, 621 D, E and 629 F), and Herodotus (iii, 48, 2), and of a "theft dance" in Hesychius (s. v. *klopeia*).

The theft of food or drink, with accompanying scourging, was also a motif in comedy. It may have been used in connection with Heracles in early Dorian comedies. It was a favorite theme of the Spartan comic actors known as *deikelistai* (Athenaeus xiv, 621 B); Pickard-Cambridge thinks that Athenian comedy borrowed the motif from the Dorians. Schnabel thinks that the performances of the *deikelistai* were burlesques of an old ritual. He suggests that the performances are illustrated on a famous sixth-century Corinthian crater in the Louvre (E 632). Another representation of the food-stealing dance or performance is seen by scholars on a seventh-century Corinthian aryballos in the British Museum (A 1437).

It is odd to notice how often the theft of food or drink is mentioned in extant Greek comedy (e. g., in *Knights* 54-57, 97-101, 417-426, 822; *Frogs* 549-578; *Wasps* 60, where the taking away of food from Heracles is listed among stock themes of comedy; *Peace* 739-751; Epicharmus, fr. 239, Kaibel; etc.). It appears also in the satyr play—cf. *Cyclops* 228-229, and the fragments of the *Syleus* of Euripides (Nauck). Theft in general is very common in Greek comedy, and it has some ritualistic importance as well. It may be significant to note that the statue of Artemis Orthia was reputed to have been the one *stolen* by Orestes and Iphigenia from the land of the Taurians.

I believe, then, that beating motifs played an important part in the dances of tragedy, of the satyr play, and of comedy. I believe that the dramatic beating dance stems from two primitive ancestors — one a dance of the fertility-apotropaic type, the other a dance connected with ritual theft.

(Note: I am indebted to Professor B. L. Ullman, of the University of Chicago,

who checked material on Callimachus scholia for me, and made some helpful suggestions in that connection.)

## BOOK NOTES

Note—Books reviewed here are not sold by the American Classical League. Persons interested in them should communicate directly with the publishers. Only books already published, and only books which have been sent in specifically for review are mentioned in this department.

Adjustment of the College Curriculum to Wartime Conditions and Needs; Report No. 10 (Classical Studies). By a Committee of the American Classical League. Washington, D. C.: U. S. Office of Education, 1943. Pp. 5+3.

This document is one of a series of reports prepared by college and university representatives of various subject matter fields and published by the U. S. Office of Education, which office, however, "does not assume responsibility for statements contained therein." The members of the committee which prepared this report are: George D. Hadzsits, University of Pennsylvania; Walter R. Agard, University of Wisconsin; Mason Hammond, Harvard University; Casper J. Kraemer, New York University; and Louis E. Lord, Oberlin College.

The report consists of a Foreword, Part I ("Linguistic Study") and Part II ("Study of Classical Civilizations," and a "Conclusion"). The authors of the report, while freely admitting the value of most of the other subjects commonly found in college curricula, insist that Greek and Latin should *not* be placed "on an outer periphery, among highly respected cultural studies . . . but . . . thought of as essential, now, in a collegiate education that is being definitely subjected to war needs" (Part I, p. 3).

A majority of the committee affirms its belief that "one year of beginner's Latin should be established without delay as a required subject" for all students who enter college with no or little acquaintance with the language (Part I, p. 3). The reasons given for this recommendation are: (1) the disciplinary value of Latin and (2) its transfer value for the study of other languages, including English.

The committee also recommends the establishment, upon a required basis, of two *year* courses which would deal with various phases of Greek and Roman civilization. The committee insists that such courses are needed in these days of war even more than in days of peace because (1) "a permanent understanding of and successful relations with Italy and Greece are unthinkable without a genuine knowledge on our part . . . of

their civilization" (Part II, p. 1) and (2) "our own Western civilization has been so largely molded by the traditions of Greece and Rome that a knowledge of that inheritance becomes an absolutely essential part in the education of all college students for a proper understanding of our own past, present, and indeed, future" (Part II, p. 2).

In defense of the seeming illiberalism of requiring these two types of course, the committee says (Part II, p. 3): "War imposes sterner necessities upon us than peace, . . . and the only way to bring them (these courses) as a germinating force into the lives of all our college students is to make them obligatory instead of leaving their selection to whims and fancies; . . . the neglect of these two highly historical factors in human civilization will leave our student body an essentially uneducated population."

In the text and footnotes of this brief manifesto the committee has passed a lot of good ammunition to beleaguered teachers of the classics all over the country.

—W. L. C.

Literary England: Photographs of Places Made Memorable in English Literature. Photographs by David E. Scherman and Descriptive Text by Richard Wilcox. With a preface by Christopher Morley. New York: Random House, 1944. Pp. 206 (not numbered). \$4.00.

Random House has given us in this volume simply a lovely picture-book, with just enough text to quicken literary memories. There are fifty well reproduced photographs, each occupying a whole page; facing each is a brief quotation from a writer who mentions the place shown; and preceding that is a paragraph or two of information on the place itself. The pictures range through English literature in roughly chronological sequence—from Tintagel Castle, reputed birthplace of King Arthur, to the site of John Buchan's "Thirty-Nine Steps." Classicists will like especially the photographs of Kirkstone pass "where the Roman general Agricola led one of his columns into Westmoreland"; the Roman ruins at Bath; Stonehenge; and Hadrian's Wall. Most of the photographs were apparently made before the current war, although two or three do show some signs of bombardment. Typographically, the book is a work of art.

—L. B. L.

Greece. With a Foreword by Sarah Elizabeth Freeman. New York: Greek War Relief Association, Inc., 1943. Pp. 56 (unnumbered). \$1.00.

During the month of November, 1943, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, in cooperation with the Greek War Relief Association, featured an exhibition of photographs taken in Greece, many of them by students and