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"EVER DEAR TO US ARE DANCES"

Author(s): Lillian B. Lawler

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ever, we find evolving the complementary attitudes of science on the one hand, and romanticism on the other. Both attitudes dismiss the "logos"; science cannot prove and therefore does not believe that man is a rational being; and romanticism makes of man an intuitive emotional being, "appreciating" artistry but avoiding that which artistry is intended to convey. And whereas in the classroom teachers of the classics readily became scientists of a kind, in their general public approach to the classics they tended, along with humanists in general, to become romanticists—with romanticism defined here as an "appeal to the sentimental intimacy of the isolated individual." What we have been doing, in essence, is to try to support the classics by abandoning the classics.

Significantly, in the nineteenth century there was a trend away from the more uncomfortable intellectual material in the classical tradition. Aristotle was largely forgotten, except for some preposterous metaphysics and some interesting literary criticism (which should not be read until after his political treatises have been read); Epicurus, well known in the late seventeenth and in the early eighteenth century through the work of Gas-sendi, is only now being rediscovered; and Plato and the tragedians became representatives of "the Greek Point of View," a thoroughly romantic concept lately exposed in the *Classical Journal* (March, 1948) by George Boas. In Latin, to match the retreat in Greek from documents of science and logic to emotional and aesthetic material, we have seen the retreat from morality and law—the latter being, as Cicero well said, *summa ratio*. Cicero the Stoic Moralist, Lawyer, and Political Scientist (who was surely one of the Founding Fathers of our own republic) has become merely a rhetorician and essayist on innocuous topics, an advocate of reaction—and a bit of a bore. Lucretius has turned out to be, not the author of one of the most clenching documents in the history of human thought, but a sort of atomistic Keats. More recently, Vergil has been exposed as a propagandist, and Aeneas at the same time has lost something of his stature as the citizen supreme and remains a quasi-romantic hero—a rather stuffy fellow and a bit of a cad for deserting Dido.

As I have suggested, Caesar fits admirably into this picture. The nineteenth-century analytical approach to the language could have found no better author than Caesar, because, as a student of grammar himself, he wrote

a grammarian's delight, a kind of scientific prose. And as befits the scientific approach, the *Commentaries* are by design without intellectual or emotional content (although on rare occasions Caesar did backslide from his design a little); and the morality is largely of the diplomatic, or dubious, variety. With all respect to an extraordinary man and an extraordinary book, it was not the like of Caesar's *Commentaries* that ensured the survival of the best documents of ancient art, thought, and action through the dark periods of history in the West. Can we contribute to the survival of the great classical premises of reason and duty in the gathering darkness of today . . . with such a book?



### SOME MODERN VERSIONS OF ODYSSEUS' TREE BED

BY MORRIS ROSENBLUM  
Samuel J. Tilden High School,  
Brooklyn, N. Y.

"Nothing in all Homer pleases me more than the bedstead of Odysseus," George Gissing wrote in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* ("Winter," XV).

Gissing then translated into English verse lines 190-201 of the twenty-third book of the *Odyssey*, the passage in which Odysseus describes how he trimmed an olive tree and fashioned its trunk into a corner of his bed. Around the tree Odysseus built his bedchamber.

Gissing liked the idea of turning a tree into a bed and building a room around it. He thought that such a room symbolized the sacredness of Home and gave man a feeling of permanence. "Did anyone ever imitate the admirable precedent?" Gissing asked. "Were I a young man, and an owner of land, assuredly I would do so," he declared.

Some fairly recent newspaper and magazine items indicate that Odysseus' "admirable precedent" not only has been imitated but has actually been improved upon.

According to an AP story dated March 30, 1948, Peter Bilecki of Sedro Wooley, Washington, hewed a home in a cedar stump and has been living in it for two years. Bilecki is no longer young, and he has built his unusual home not in poetic mimesis, but out of necessity, to beat the housing shortage.

"The ten-foot high seven-foot thick stump offers Bilecki what he was seeking in a home: a good roof, solitude, and low initial cost and upkeep.

"A built-in slab bunk is his bed and

his chair; a converted milk can is his stove. The stump's heavy sides are cut by two windows and a door . . ."

A more unusual imitation of Odysseus' tree bed is found in an item which appeared in Ripley's "Believe It Or Not!" of April 1, 1948. Ripley illustrated a trailer eighteen feet long and ten feet in diameter hollowed out of a gigantic tree trunk. This trailer, completely furnished, is owned by a farmer named Wade, of Mississippi.

In the South, along the old Spanish Highway, are many structures which are reminiscent of Odysseus' bed. The *Ford Times* of March, 1948, showed on its cover the Tree House of Biloxi, Mississippi, a large elevated veranda encircling a tree. The technical name for this structure is *gazebo* or *belvedere*. Although the gazebo pictured is not exactly a house, it could easily be used as a sleeping porch. The word *gazebo* is of interest to Latinists. Some authorities think it is a Latinized form of *gaze*, formed on the analogy of *videbo* and *lavabo*. Others think it is a corruption of an Oriental word. A gazebo is a summer house or turret from which one can view the surrounding scenery.



### "EVER DEAR TO US ARE DANCES—"

THE DANCE IN THE ODYSSEY  
BY LILLIAN B. LAWLER

Hunter College of the City of New York

"Ever dear to us," says the author of the *Odyssey*, through the mouth of King Alcinous, "are the banquet and the lyre and choral dances" (viii, 248). In the later of the two great epics of the Greeks, dating perhaps from the eighth century B. C., pictures of the dance abound. Some of these are vivid and detailed; others are casual and incidental, or even mere passing references in figures of speech or epithets—as when a land is described as "with broad dancing-places," or "with fair dancing-floors" (xi, 581). Taken together, they furnish us with a considerable body of information on the dance in preclassical Greece.

Most frequently mentioned of all the dances in the *Odyssey* are those which the author calls the "delight of the feast" (i, 150-2; xxi, 428-30)—dances of youths and men, after a banquet. To the accompaniment of song and the lyre, these dances apparently went on for hours. Penelope's suitors, in particular, regularly engage in such dances: "And now, turning to the dance and to

gay song, they enjoyed themselves; and they tarried until evening should come. And as they made merry, dark evening fell. Then they went each to his home, to rest" (i, 421-4; cf. i, 150-2; xvii, 605-6). Sometimes the suitors are reluctant to stop, and even prolong their dance by fire- and torch light after darkness falls (xviii, 304-6). It is with a touch of Odyssean irony that the hero gives Telemachus the signal for the slaying of the suitors in the words, "But now it is time for supper to be prepared for the Achaeans, while it is still daylight, and then for making merry in other ways, with song and dance, and the lyre; for these things are the delight of the feast" (xxi, 428-30).

But it is not only the suitors who engage in after-dinner dances in the *Odyssey*. At the court of King Alcinous the dances are very popular, and are carefully arranged. There are, for instance, nine supervisors, chosen from the people (viii, 258-9), whose task it is, among other things, to mark out the place for the dances, and to level and smooth it off. The dancers are highly skilled; there seems to be keen competition among them, and pride in their achievement is a national emotion (viii, 248-54). Apparently princes dance, along with men of lesser rank; and, as Nausicaa, the princess, says (vi, 63-5), they like to have "newly-washed garments" to wear when they go to take part in the dances.

The after-dinner dances are evidently of varied types. Sometimes the dancers perform individually, sometimes in pairs, sometimes in choral groups. One wonders a little at the thought of strenuous dancing after a Homeric feast! Yet strenuous it certainly was, on occasion, at least. It seems not to have been of the type of the *komos*, the light-hearted drinking and revel dance which overflowed into the streets.

The dances presented for Odysseus by the young men of Alcinous' court seem typical. The king calls for the best dancers to come forward to entertain the visitor (viii, 250-1), and they do so. The musician, Demodocus, steps into the dancing area, and around him gather young boys who are the best of their group (viii, 262-5). As the music begins, these youths start to dance. They seem to dance simultaneously, but as separate individuals. They "smite the ground with their feet," and Odysseus is amazed at the "flashing of their feet." The whole performance seems to be a display of rapid and intricate footwork. It is oddly reminiscent of a

spirited jig or reel, as performed by a group of Irish dancers.

A little later (viii, 370-84) Alcinous calls for a dance of a different sort: "Then Alcinous ordered Halius and Laodamas to dance alone, since no one was a match for them. And so, when they had received in their hands the handsome red ball which wise Polybus had made for them, the one, bending far backward, repeatedly threw it up toward the shadowy clouds, and the other, leaping high from the earth, repeatedly caught it with ease before he touched the ground again with his feet. But when they had 'warmed up' by throwing the ball straight into the air, then they danced closer to the all-nourishing earth, tossing the ball to each other with great rapidity; and the other young men, standing around the dance floor, clapped their hands in time, and as a result a great noise arose." It is a little amusing to the modern reader to make a mental comparison of Homeric ball-playing with the current American version of the sport; but Odysseus is filled with admiration. "Noble Alcinous, most renowned of all men," says the guest to his host, "you did indeed boast that your dancers were the very best, and truly your boasts have become realities; astonishment fills me as I look at them."

Ladies of the court, also, engage in ball-playing dances, out of doors. When Nausicaa and her attendants have done their laundry in the river, and have eaten the picnic lunch which they have brought with them, they lay aside their head-veils, and begin to play ball, rhythmically, singing the while (vi, 99-109). Nausicaa is the leader in the song and the dance, standing out among the others as does Artemis among her nymphs. Later (115-8), it is a ball, thrown by Nausicaa but missed by an attendant, which wakes Odysseus up. Quite appropriately, when Odysseus sees Nausicaa, he tells her that her parents must rejoice when they see her "entering the choral dance, a young twig so fair" (vi, 155-7). Incidentally, we are told (Athenaeus i, 20 F) that, many centuries later, Sophocles, the great dramatist, himself took the part of one of the attendants in his play *Nausicaa*, and danced the ball-dance with consummate skill.

Dancing played an important part in wedding celebrations in the days of the *Odyssey*, as it does among most peoples, everywhere, in all ages. When Telemachus comes to the palace of Menelaus in Sparta, seeking news of his father, he finds a double wedding celebration in progress—in

honor of both the son and the daughter of Menelaus (iv, 17-19). While neighbors and kinsmen feast, a musician moves about, playing the lyre and singing; "and two tumblers whirled in their midst, as he set the measure with his song." This is dancing of a different sort; it even savors a little of entertainment in a modern night club! To the ancients, tumbling, performed rhythmically, to music, was a dance. The Minoan Creteans were believed to have invented it (Athenaeus v, 181 B). Inasmuch as tumbling requires highly specialized skill and rather rigorous training, it may well be that tumblers were the first professional dancers in Greek lands. The passage is reminiscent of one in the *Iliad* (xviii, 590-606); but there the tumbling dance serves as an adjunct to a formal dance of youths and maidens of high birth—a dance that is evidently a ritual of some sort.

A wedding dance of a different type is suggested later in the *Odyssey* (xxiii, 131-47). After the slaying of the suitors, Odysseus bids Telemachus assemble all who are left in the palace, in clean clothing, and have them begin a gay dance, with much noise and stamping and merriment. Both men and handmaidens are to dance and to sing, and the musician is to play his lyre loudly. They obey, and the house resounds with the noise, so that any passerby, says the author, would assume that Penelope had at last married one of the suitors, and that the wedding dance was in progress. Whether women ordinarily took part in the Homeric wedding dance, we do not know. In the wedding dance in the *Iliad* (xviii, 490-6), men seem to be the only performers. It may be that the handmaidens take part in the present instance merely to augment the noise! They dance until night is well advanced, and then go to rest (297-9).

The Homeric Greek believed that many of his divinities, and other supernatural beings as well, were fond of dancing; and he pictured their dances as resembling his own cult dances. Aphrodite, for instance, after anointing herself with ambrosial balm, joins in "the lovely dance of the Graces" (xviii, 193-4). The goddess of the Dawn has her home and her "dancing-floors" on the island of Aeaea (xii, 4). The Nymphs, too, have "dancing-floors" and thrones in large caves on the sea-coast (xii, 317-8)—caves big enough for a ship to be anchored in them. All of these divine dances were probably inspired by ritual dances of real maidens, in sacred places. The cave

dances, around stalagmites suggestive of thrones, are strongly reminiscent of the cave cult of Minoan Crete.

The story of Circe has in it much that is of interest to the student of the dance. She is called a goddess (x, 136 and 503; xi, 8; xii, 155) and *potnia*, "mistress, lady" (viii, 448; x, 394 and 549)—the latter recalling the epithet *potnia theron*, "mistress of animals," used repeatedly of Artemis and other divinities of animal life. She is attended by handmaids who are "born of springs and groves and sacred rivers" (x, 350-1)—apparently Nymphs. Just outside Circe's dwelling are mountain wolves and lions and swine and other animals which had once been men (x, 212-9). They move around Odysseus' followers, "wagging their long tails." The author calls them *pelora* (219), "monsters"; he says they have "the heads and voice and bristles and form" of animals, but the minds of men (239-40). Circe had used drugs to change the men into beasts (214); she kept them in order with a magic wand, *rhabdos* (x, 389), and with sweet song (221, 254). Her name denotes a magic ring or circle. We know that from remote prehistoric times, all around the Mediterranean, divinities of animal life were worshipped with animal mummery and dances, the worshippers frequently wearing animal skins and great masks representing beasts' heads. Statuettes (for instance, those found on the island of Cyprus, and now in the Metropolitan Museum in New York) and other art objects depicting such mummery (for example, the marble drapery offered to Despoina, "the lady," at Lycosura) have been unearthed, and literary sources corroborate their mute testimony. A black-figured Attic cylix now in Boston (cf. Ernst Buschor, *Greek Vase Painting*, London, Chatto & Windus, 1921, Plate L, Fig. 92, facing page 100) shows the victims of Circe as men with animal heads. We know that in rituals to divinities of animal life (for instance, Dionysus), drugs were sometimes used to induce the desired state of ecstasy and communion with the god, and a feeling of oneness with the sacred animals. It is entirely possible that the legend of Circe is a poetized memory of animal mummery in an ecstatic ritual in honor of a very ancient goddess who was *potnia theron*, "mistress of animals"—mummery in which the participants, perhaps drugged, identified themselves with the sacred animals, and acted accordingly.

As in the *Iliad*, there is evidence in the *Odyssey* for funeral dances.

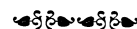
In the realm of the dead, Agamemnon is telling Achilles of the funeral which the Achaeans had given to the latter (xxiv, 68-70). He speaks of the solemn procession around the burning pyre, with much wailing, by men on foot and in chariots. We know that any formal rhythmic procession was likely to be identified with a dance by the Greeks; that the slow, winding funeral procession, even with chariots, was considered a dance is rendered more than probable by the verb used here—*errhosantō*, a word used elsewhere for "dance." Later in the book (85-92) there is mention of the funeral games, some of which passed into the armed dances of classical Greece.

Frequently in the *Odyssey* the word *orchamos* is used, as a complimentary epithet. It means "file-leader," and is from *orchos*, "a row, a file." It is used in subsequent centuries in Attic Greek to denote the leader of a dancing chorus, a coryphaeus. Combined with *andron*, in the sense of "leader of men," it is applied to Eumaeus (xiv, 22 and 121; xv, 351 and 389; xvi, 36; xvii, 184), Pisistratus (iii, 454 and 482), Polites (x, 224), and the cow-herd Philoetius (xx, 185). With *laon*, in the sense of "leader of the people," it is applied to Menelaus (iv, 291 and 316; xv, 64, 86, and 167) and to Odysseus himself (x, 538). The use of the word in this connection recalls a passage in Lucian's treatise *On the Dance* (14): in Thessaly, he says, dancing was so important that magistrates and generals were called "Chief Dancers," and on statues of prominent men the words "Elected Chief Dancer" were often carved.

In the *Odyssey* there is a warning against the dance inspired by too much wine (xiv, 463-6). Odysseus bids Eumaeus and his helpers to listen to his story, "for the wine bids me tell it—crazing wine, which stirs even a wise man to song and to silly laughter, and makes him jump up and dance, and brings out a word which would be better unspoken."

In general, dancing in the *Odyssey* is different from that in the *Iliad*. It is less formal, less ritualistic, less serious. There is a greater emphasis upon the joyous character of the dance; in fact, in the *Odyssey* we find, for the first time in Western literature, a portrayal of the dance as a pure amusement, performed on no special occasion, for no deity, to gain no particular end—merely for fun. In the *Odyssey* we have dancers who derive as much pleasure from their own performances as do the spectators; sometimes there are no specta-

tors at all! It is true that there are some gay dances in the *Iliad*, but even they are rituals, on special occasions sanctified by religion. This fact may be of no significance at all; or it may be due to the circumstance that the *Odyssey* is an epic of peacetime, the *Iliad* of wartime. Some scholars would probably attribute it to the differing tastes of two separate authors! On the other hand, it may indicate a definite cultural change in the period between the composition of the *Iliad* and that of the *Odyssey*.



## NOTES AND NOTICES

The Council of the American Classical League met on December 28, 1948, in St. Louis, Mo.

The eightieth annual meeting of the American Philological Association, in conjunction with the fiftieth general meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America, was held in St. Louis, Mo., December 28, 29, and 30, 1948, on invitation of St. Louis University and Washington University.

Officers of the American Philological Association for the year 1949 are: President, William H. Alexander, of the University of California; First Vice-President, Lucius R. Shero, of Swarthmore College; Second Vice-President, Benjamin Dean Meritt, of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, N. J.; Secretary-Treasurer and Representative to the American Classical League, Howard Comfort, of Haverford College; Editor, John L. Heller, of the University of Minnesota.

## BOOK NOTES

Conception, Birth, and Infancy in Ancient Rome and Modern Italy. By Walton Brooks McDaniel. Privately printed, 1948. Pp. 77. \$1.75, from the author, at "Sunny Rest," Coconut Grove, Florida.

Professor McDaniel needs no introduction to the technical student in the field of Roman life. Readers who have enjoyed his sketch on this topic (*Roman Private Life and Its Survivals*, 1924, printed in the series entitled "Our Debt to Greece and Rome") will greet this new monograph with equal satisfaction. Here again the author utilizes the many