

From 1947 until 1981 Bernice L. Fox, Emerita Professor of Classics, served Monmouth College tirelessly as professor of English, Latin and Greek. In 1956 she founded the Gamma Omicron Chapter of Eta Sigma Phi, the National Classics Honorary Society, and for over a decade was chair of the Department of Classics. She has a special love for the Latin language and is well known for her Latin translations. One of her earliest translations was *Fabula de Quarto Mago* (Van Dyke's *Story of the Other Wise Man*). In 1990 she published *Sex Fabulae Breves*, a collection of six short stories including Maupassant's "The Necklace" and O. Henry's "The Gift of the Magi." In 1991 *Tela Charlottae*, her translation of E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web*, was published by HarperCollins. In 1985 the college named this annual lectureship in her honor, and in 1991 the college awarded her an honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters.

***Previous Fox Lectures***

1985-86	Bernice L. Fox, "Living Latin: Twentieth Century Literature in Latin"
1986-87	Robert Ketterer, "A Monkey on the Roof: Comedy, Rome and Plautus' <i>Boastful Soldier</i> "
1987-88	Mary R. Ryder, "The Universal and True: Myth in Willa Cather's <i>O Pioneers!</i> "
1988-89	Andrew J. Adams, "Off the Beaten Track in Rome"
1989-90	Nelson T. Potter, Jr., "Pirsig's and Plato's <i>Phaedrus</i> "
1990-91	Raymond Den Adel, "Hadrian: Emperor and Builder"
1991-92	Richard Lederer, " <i>Latina Non Mortua Est</i> "
1992-93	Jeremy McNamara, "Ovidius Naso Was the Man: Shakespeare's Debt to Ovid"
1993-94	LeaAnn Osburn, "Classics Across the Curriculum: A Practitioner's View"
1994-95	Thomas H. Watkins, "Imperator Caesar Augustus and Duce Benito Mussolini: Ancient Rome and Fascist Italy"
1994-95	Albert Watanabe, "Into the Woods: The Symbolism of the Forest"



**The Monmouth College**

**Department of Classics**

**presents**

**The Twelfth Annual**

**Bernice L. Fox**

**Classics Lecture**

**Myth, Media, and Culture:  
Odysseus on the Baseball Diamond**

by

**Dr. Deborah Rae Davies**

Thursday, February 27, 1997

7:00 P.M.

Highlander Room

The Stockdale Center

Monmouth College

Monmouth, Illinois

## About the Lecturer:

Born in the Midwest, Dr. Davies grew up in the Boston area, where she attended Wellesley College. At Wellesley she received departmental honors in Greek and was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa. She was graduated from Wellesley in 1986 *magna cum laude* with a B.A. in Greek.

In 1989 she received an A.M. in Classical Studies from the University of Michigan. She was a Mellon Fellow at the University of Michigan in 1991-1992 and, under Dr. Ruth Scodel, wrote a doctoral thesis entitled "Genealogy and Catalogue: Thematic Relevance and Narrative: Elaboration in Homer and Hesiod." She was awarded a Ph.D. in Classical Studies from the University of Michigan in 1992.

In 1992-1993 Dr. Davis was Visiting Assistant Professor of Classics at Monmouth College, where she taught courses in Latin, Mythology, epic, and ancient sports. In the fall of 1993 and the fall of 1994 she taught in the Elementary Latin Program at the University of Michigan, where she also served as visiting assistant professor in 1995-1996. She has also taught at Michigan State University in East Lansing. Dr. Davies currently serves as chair of the ACL/NJCL National Greek Exam sponsored by the American Classical League and the National Junior Classical League.

Dr. Davies has presented papers on Homeric epic at meetings of the Illinois Classical Conference and the Classical Association of the Middle West and South. She is currently working on a teacher's manual for *Greek for Reading* and on a second-year Latin textbook based on the letters of Pliny.

Dr. Davies is an avid quilter, gardener, and cat lover. Dr. Davies and her husband Ken currently reside in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

## About the Lecture:

The focus of this talk is Homer's *Odyssey*, Bernard Malamud's Baseball novel *The Natural*, and Barry Levinson's movie based on the novel. The first is a text based on a long oral tradition, first written down over 2500 years ago in ancient Greece. The second is a book written in 1952 America, and the third is an American movie released in 1984. How is it possible that the latter two items are related in any way to the first? In this talk, Dr. Davies shows not only that the movie is an adaptation of Homer's *Odyssey*, but that Barry Levinson has carefully manipulated Malamud's book in order to strengthen that connection and to make the movie more palatable to late twentieth-century American audiences.

Although *The Odyssey* is a written text, it is based on oral tradition. Various linguistic features, such as an anonymous narrator and extensive repetition on a number of levels, reflect this background. The poem also reflects an amalgamation of ancient Greek society.

Despite the superficial differences, the movie "The Natural" shares many similarities with *The Odyssey*, both in plot and character. More important than these similarities, however, are the differences, which reflect both the different media and the different cultural expectations. An oral poem has a narrator and relies on words for all information. Levinson chooses to have no narrator, but instead uses dialogue, newspaper headlines, and newsreel footage to advance the story. *The Odyssey* contains epic similes, which broaden the scope of the poem. Levinson uses visual imagery, color, and music to increase the emotional impact of his film.

Furthermore, Levinson makes significant changes in the character of Iris and in the ending of the book. Other smaller changes abound, most of which reduce any moral ambiguity surrounding the hero. Thus, Levinson has used both Homer's poem and Malamud's book as sources, but has created a film which closely reflects the mainstream late twentieth-century idea of heroism.

