



Black Odysseys: The Homeric Odyssey in the African Diaspora since 1939 (Classical Presences)

Justine McConnell

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Black Odysseys explores creative works by artists of ultimately African descent, which respond to the Homeric *Odyssey*. Considering what the ancient Greek epic has signified for those struggling to emerge from the shadow of Western imperialism, and how it has inspired anti-colonial poets, novelists, playwrights, and directors, McConnell examines twentieth- and twenty-first century works from Africa and the African diaspora, including the Caribbean and the United States. In seeking to discover why the *Odyssey*, as a founding text of the Western canon, has been of such interest to these artists, the great plurality of post-colonial and anti-colonial responses becomes clear: responses that differ dramatically from each other, even in the attitude adopted towards Odysseus himself.

Since Aime Cesaire's seminal 1939 poem, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (*Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*), the *Odyssey*'s homecoming trope and quest for identity have inspired writers who are simultaneously striving against and appropriating the very forms which had been used to oppress them. Following in the wake of Cesaire, this volume proceeds chronologically and considers works by Ralph Ellison, Derek Walcott, Jon Amiel, Wilson Harris, Njabulo Ndebele, and Jatinder Verma.

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