

within the villa that framed a series of views, maximizing the scopic power of the villa. Whereas in the *domus* rooms were modified caves, offering protection, in the villa rooms were lenses, a point repeatedly borne out by Pliny and Seneca in their letters. This second design principle, “perforated architecture,” facilitated the third: villa architecture as an architecture of the senses, with special emphasis on water in the form of fountains, *piscinae*, and *euripi*. The primacy of connectivity and movement, as facilitated by the connective tissue of the porticus, comprised the fourth design principle.

The analysis in Chapter Seven is interspersed with many references to modern parallels (e.g., Frank Lloyd Wright’s Fallingwater) that illustrate these design principles. Here Zarmakoupi presents some very well-thought out suggestions about the ways in which porticus, cryptoporticus, and peristyle gardens could direct movement around villas. That porticoes were structures that directed movement is a commonplace observation, but one rarely followed up by a detailed analysis of the varieties of passage-ways available to occupants and visitors depending on time of year, day, or presence of others, as is done here (94–101). Zarmakoupi’s willingness to work through the permutations enriches the ways in which we can think about how villas were used and who used them. The wants and needs of villa owners were paramount, but, to be effective architectural spaces, villas also had to facilitate the activities of slaves who fulfilled those wants and needs. The increased spatial emphasis on gardens and *triclinia* in the villa was a response to the possibilities offered by these spaces for ever more complex iterations of Roman social rituals. Zarmakoupi, however, notes that these areas could optimise performative opportunities for everyone—master, guest, and slave—as at the Villa Oplontis, where nodes of rooms allowed the owner to host a large gathering of people without sacrificing intimacy, while the light wells that connected them could be also used as small stages for single performers (195–198).

Zarmakoupi’s study offers an excellent historiographic overview, a solid methodological and theoretical framework, and draws on an impressive breadth of meticulously documented material. From a pedagogical perspective it is particularly welcome since it demonstrates a thorough understanding of the available sources of evidence and scholarly research. The bibliography on Roman villas is vast, and much of it not easily accessible to students due to being out of print, written in a foreign language, or too expensive for university libraries beset by austerity cuts. *Designing for Luxury on the Bay of Naples* would be a rewarding investment for anyone enrolled in a course on Roman domestic architecture. It is definitely a book to add to the reading list.

BROCK UNIVERSITY

KATHARINE T. VON STACKELBERG

BLACK ODYSSEYS: THE HOMERIC *ODYSSEY* IN THE AFRICAN DIASPORA SINCE 1939. By JUSTINE McCONNELL. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2013. Pp. 312.

IN THE EARLIEST BLACK ODYSSEY in Greek literature, Poseidon travels to feast with the Aithiopians,¹ inhabitants of a distant land (Hom. *Od.* 1.22–25). Here, global relationships trump local grudges and the concerns that preoccupy mortals do not exist. Despite

¹I denote people from this region as “Aithiopians” (spelled phonetically) in order to distinguish them from inhabitants of modern Ethiopia.

this utopian setting, the focus is on the god Poseidon rather than his Aithiopian hosts, who appear in the poem as silent objects instead of vocal subjects. In Herodotus' *Histories*, a text that is in dialogue with the earlier Homeric passage, "the empire writes back" when the Aithiopian king addresses the Fish-eaters, whom the Persian king Cambyses has sent to spy on the Aithiopians before his imperial invasion (Hdt. 3.17-26).² The Aithiopian king places himself, not the Fish-eaters or the Persians, at the center of the narrative when he dictates his ethnography. Furthermore, his repudiation of Persian gifts and uncanny knowledge of Persian ideology encourages the audience to scrutinize the belief that foreigners are inferior.

The need for this kind of two-way analysis extends to the world of classical scholarship; it is only through a balanced perspective that "the temple doors [will be] flung wide open so that there [will be] room for all texts, experiences, and voices."³ Although historical entities, such as the British empire, have used the classics in the service of modern cultural imperialism, it remains a fertile discipline with which to explore the complex relationship between different, yet profoundly connected, cultural traditions. In *Black Odysseys* McConnell builds on the work of other scholars who have studied the richness and complexity of the relationship between the African diaspora and the classics.⁴ Through the close examination of anti- and post-colonial artists from around the world (the Caribbean, North America, Africa, and the UK) who have both adapted and written back to Homer's *Odyssey*, McConnell explores how these original Odyssean adaptations produce a plurality of creations that enrich the Homeric epic tradition. McConnell importantly recognizes, however, that reading these works with a Homeric lens provides only one perspective; these texts are also important in their own geopolitical contexts.

Three of the chapters (Chapters One, Three, and Five) examine covert Odyssean allusions in the writings of Caribbean men: Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (Paris 1939), Derek Walcott's *Omeros* (New York 1990) and *The Odyssey: A Stage Version* (London 1993), and Wilson Harris's *Mask of the Beggar* (London 2003). Césaire, Walcott, and Harris engage with Homeric epic in a way that removes classical Greece from its pedestal without rejecting its influence (118). The Homeric tropes of *katabasis* and *nostos* run through these texts as the characters undergo psychologically and/or physically transformative journeys. While these chapters make it clear that writers can integrate contemporary politics into their writing, it leaves unanswered whether there is an apolitical way for postcolonial writers to engage with the Homeric *Odyssey*.

Chapters Two and Four examine Odyssean echoes in North America. In the second chapter, McConnell considers the relationship between Odysseus and the unnamed narrator of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (New York 1952). She highlights the skillful way in which Ellison merges allusions from the *Odyssey* and African American folklore

²This quote derives from Salman Rushdie, "The Empire Writes Back with a Vengeance," *The Times* (London, England) 8 (1982), *The Times Digital Archive*.

³K. J. Wetmore, *The Athenian Sun in an African Sky: Modern African Adaptations of Classical Greek Tragedy* (Jefferson, NC 2001) 215.

⁴For example, P. Rankine, *Ulysses in Black* (Wisconsin 2006); T. Walters, *African American Literature and the Classicist Tradition: Black Women Writers from Wheatley to Morrison* (New York 2007); E. Greenwood, *Afro-Greeks: Dialogues between Anglophone Caribbean Literature and Classics in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford 2010); B. Goff, *Your Secret Language: Classics in the British Colonies of West Africa* (London 2013).

(in particular, the tales of Brer Rabbit) with his creation of the trickster protagonist who is on a journey to achieve *nostos* and (re)claim his identity. Although African American folklore has its roots in the African oral tradition, Ellison himself asserts, “[I have] no special attachment to the place [Africa]. I don’t read much on Africa nowadays.”⁵ This provocative quote brings Ellison into collision with Césaire who looked back to Africa as an intellectual and spiritual homeland for black peoples. In the fourth chapter, McConnell explores cinematic echoes of Homeric characters and tropes in the film *Sommersby* (1993). The protagonist Horace Townsend assumes the identity of Jack Sommersby, a white Civil War veteran with whom he shared a prison cell. Other characters of note are the recently freed slaves Esther and Joseph who are similar to Eurycleia and Eumaeus, respectively. Although this chapter includes an intriguing analysis of the protagonist’s hijacking of an Odyssean *nostos*, the film’s clear focus on the white protagonist’s journey, rather than the primacy of the black characters, makes it a questionable choice of subject material. McConnell herself admits that the two freedpeople play a small role in the film and the movie is not engaged with the exploration of the protagonist as an Odyssean figure (69). As a result, some of the allusions discussed read as tangential connections rather than as pivotal references.

The final chapter (Chapter Six) shifts attention away from Homeric male characters to their female counterparts. In her analysis of *The Cry of Winnie Mandela* (London 2003), a novel by the South African writer Njabulo Ndebele, McConnell analyzes the novel’s literary and political spheres. The novel presents the perspective of four South African women, described as “Penelope’s descendants,” who develop an epistolary relationship with Winnie Mandela, a fellow dutiful wife, while they wait for their husbands to return home. By foregrounding wives, rather than husbands, at the center of the narrative, Ndebele writes back to the male-dominated narrative present in the *Odyssey*. The characterization of Winnie Mandela as inspirational and frightening allows Ndebele to rewrite Penelope as a powerful and independent character. There also lurks a provocative allusion to the flexible role of classics among other South African revolutionary fighters. For example, after reading and starring in a production of *Antigone* during his protracted imprisonment at Robben Island, Nelson Mandela appropriates Antigone as a fellow “freedom fighter . . . [who] defied the law on the grounds that it was unjust.”⁶ Through this characterization, tragic women, like epic women, command their narratives in ways that resonate with various audiences.

Through her integration of postcolonial and literary theory, McConnell investigates the black odysseys present in written literature and the performing arts (the coda reveals the expanding scope of the postcolonial experience as noted in the plays of Jatinder Verma, a British-based East African director of Indian descent). Due to the sophisticated plots of the modern works, it would have been helpful to have a fuller summary for each work discussed. Furthermore, inclusion of scholarship that examines actors of the African diaspora in ancient Greek plays would have been useful, especially in relation to the discussions of tragedy and performance in Africa (Chapter Six).⁷

⁵H. R. Isaacs, “Five Writers and Their African Ancestors: Part II,” *Phylon* 21 (1960) 317, quoted by McConnell (98).

⁶Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (Boston 1994) 397.

⁷For example, Wetmore (above, n. 3).

In sum, McConnell critically examines the reciprocal dialogue that occurs when artists of the African diaspora recast and appropriate the *Odyssey*. This volume encourages readers to view the Homeric epic and, more generally, the discipline of classics as tools of decolonization and syncretism in the twentieth century.

YALE UNIVERSITY

SARAH DERBEW