

Hall, Edith. **The Return of Ulysses: A Cultural History of Homer's *Odyssey***. Johns Hopkins, 2008. 296p bibl index ISBN 0-8018-8869-7, \$35.00; ISBN 9780801888694, \$35.00. Reviewed in 2009jul CHOICE.

Hall (Royal Holloway, Univ. of London, UK) has written a lively update of the history of the *Odyssey's* influence on later artists. Her target genres are fiction, poetry, theater, and especially film. Though she includes figures from antiquity onward, she focuses chiefly on the period from the 19th century to the present. She emphasizes themes more than character, but the book is not a warmed-over version of W. B. Stanford's valuable *Ulysses Theme* (1954). Each of its three parts comprises five chapters devoted to theme-clusters, e.g., "shape-shifting," "singing songs," "colonial conflict," "women's work," "class consciousness," "brain power," "exile from Ithaca," "blood bath," "dialogue with death." Though conversant with Homeric scholarship and the imperatives of postmodern literary criticism, Hall never burdens her prose with theoretical jargon. Her learning is broad (as the 36-page bibliography reveals)—thus the chapter "Sex and Sexuality" ranges over writers (or directors) from the Roman Servius to Felipe Calderon to Thomas Hardy to the directors of the Australian musical drama *OPA!—a Sexual Odyssey*. A goldmine of fascinating information on the persistence of thematic archetypes first formulated in Homer's great epic.

**Summing Up:** Highly Recommended. All readers, all levels.

—J. P. Holoka, Eastern Michigan University