



The World's Desire

H. Rider Haggard , Andrew Lang , Lin Carter (Introduction) , Vincent di Fate (cover)

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The World's Desire, coauthored with Andrew Lang, is the continuing story of Odyseus, who returns to Ithaca to find his home destroyed. Aphrodite orders him to go to Egypt to seek out the immortal Helen, whom he wooed before marrying Penelope. This book might be called The Further Adventures of Odysseus or The Odyssey, Part 2.

The World's Desire Details

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Author : H. Rider Haggard , Andrew Lang , Lin Carter (Introduction) , Vincent di Fate (cover)

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From Reader Review The World's Desire for online ebook

Bruce Nordstrom says

This is really an enjoyable classic fantasy novel. First time I read it, and the surprises just kept coming. The last adventure of Odysseus- in Egypt. And Helen of Troy is there!

If you are a fan of "the Odyssey," and you wondered what ever happened to the guy after he got home, this book will tell you. This is a great story, but I did have a little trouble sorting out some of the Victorian sentence structure and expressions. But once I got started, I could not put it down.

Great leisure reading. You will love it.

Trounin says

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(c) Trounin

Dan says

Odysseus's last voyage, and Helen's last fling. Very stirring, set in Egypt at the time of the 10 plagues, complete with the Slaves/let my people go elements. Loads of spooky supernatural happenings, prophecies, imaginative description. I sense this may have been one source for Raiders of the Lost Ark (city of Tanis), and the reincarnation of separated/competing lovers in the Deverry series by Katherine Kerr.

Toby Simmons says

The sequel to the Odyssey, written in Homer's style.

My favourite book as a child was Tales of the Greek Heroes, by Roger Lancelyn Green. I passed this on to my son (who has reread it an acceptable number of times!), and I happened to notice an afterward in this new edition of my son's. Green attributes his love of myths and desire to share them to Haggard's World's Desire, which I figured was as good a recommendation as you could get!

It was just like discovering a lost book of Homer's. I actually cried. In fact, writing this review is making me want to read it again

If you like the *Odyssey*, you'll love what happens next

George says

The story opens with Odysseus making his second return to Ithaca after again being sent by gods to on a another wandering odyssey. He returns, finding Ithaca devastated by an earthquake and all the inhabitants killed by a plague. Aphrodite orders him to go to Egypt to seek out the immortal Helen, whom he wooed before marrying Penelope and this starts the story.

It is on the scale of a Greek Homeric epic in which Odysseus travels to Egypt at the time of Moses seeking the release of Israelites and finds himself involved in a love triangle. A recurring motif in Haggard tales of lovers reincarnated time and time again seeking each other.

In other words, this Haggard tale has a little bit of everything which is not unusual for a Haggard tale.

Lisa (Harmonybites) says

I'm not going to claim that Haggard even at his best is the same order of classic as the best by Charles Dickens, the Brontes, George Eliot or Thomas Hardy. But like fellow Victorians Arthur Conan Doyle or Robert Louis Stevenson or Rudyard Kipling, Haggard really could spin a good yarn, and the fantasy genre in general owes him a great debt. Ten of his books are on my bookshelves. I gobbled those up in my teens and most I remember very, very well even decades later. My favorite of his novels involve Ayesha, especially the book *Wisdom's Daughter*, which is also set in Ancient Egypt and like *The World's Desire*, could be seen as historical fantasy. This is my second favorite of the Haggard books I've read, and is actually a collaboration with Andrew Lang, and other.

The back cover bills this as "the third *Odyssey*" and involves Odysseus, Homer's hero. At the end of *The Odyssey* we know that Odysseus must undertake another journey to placate Poseidon. In Haggard's novel, he returns only to find Penelope slain and his home burned to the ground. He then undertakes a new quest--to find his true love Helen under the auspices of Aphrodite. In a way that irked me a bit. Goodness knows Ancient Greek literature isn't perhaps the place to find strong female characters, but I always loved Penelope, a great match for Odysseus, noted for her cunning (remember her unweaving of the shroud to fool the suitors.) Helen on the other hand, is noted for physical beauty. And certainly this isn't a classic on the order of Homer! But taken for what it is, a crackling adventure yarn and fantasy, this is a lot of fun, as long as you aren't put off by Victorian prose or political sensibilities.

Adam says

What a fitting sequel this curious little novel is to *The Odyssey*! Co-authored by Haggard, a gifted writer with a penchant for crafting fantastic adventure novels, and Lang, a brilliant translator and pioneering folklorist, *The World's Desire* is a romance rife with magical spells, dark divinations, rapturous love, blood-splattered combat, and encounters with the gods themselves. While I found the plot rather slow and repetitive in the middle, the climactic ending more than made up for it. The supernaturalism throughout the book was

thrilling, especially in the closing chapters, and Odysseus's named weapons that exerted some kind of will of their own were totally awesome. Perhaps Tolkien borrowed an idea or two when it came to his own enchanted weapons in The Lord of the Rings?

As classicists themselves, the attention that Haggard and Lang give to other Greek, Egyptian, and even Israelite stories is very entertaining. Yet what is most interesting about the story is the late-Victorian interpretation of the Homeric legends themselves, specifically the whole Odyssean saga and their chosen outcome for the hero. There is much more attention to romantic, sexual love and to the unique power of Womanhood in The World's Desire than in either The Iliad or The Odyssey, which frequently treat women as "prizes," and sexuality as male pleasure-seeking. Indeed, neither of Homer's works could be called a "Romance" at all, as this novel clearly is from the first chapter. Chesterton is right when he says, "Romance is the deepest thing in life; romance is deeper even than reality." For even if the Greek gods are pure invention, even if Odysseus never existed, even if the Achaeans never battled the Egyptians, even still, is there some deep and divine truth behind the glorious perfection of Helen, who is Womanhood, Beauty, and Love incarnate. Helen is She, whom, alas, Man can never reach until he is perfected by Resurrection.

Neil says

I've read this before, but there are aspects of it that fascinate me. Off the top of my head, there are two things:

- 1) Haggard and Lang collaborated on this. Both men are interesting writers on their own, and Lang certainly played a crucial role in promoting Haggard's romances. Despite their close ties, Haggard and Lang have very different interests and styles in some ways, and this book is a bizarre turn for both of them.
- 2) The crossover between the book of Exodus and the Odyssey. Who knew that Odysseus, after his second voyage, ended up in Egypt looking for Helen of Troy? That that Pharaoh's wife would become obsessed with him? Haggard and Lang knew this!

Check it out! It's certainly better than a number of Haggard's other works...

Will says

Fascinating excursion into Egypt from the man who gave us She Who Must Be Obeyed and Alan Quartermain. Odysseus goes to Egypt in search of Helen of Troy and meets Moses on his way out of Egypt. I suspect only Haggard could think of that combination. What makes him timeless, as opposed to his many imitators, is that his heroes are flawed, his writing has drive and verve, and his plots are always interesting. Lots of fun.

Charles says

Beautifully written and very dramatic. For some reason it was slow going for me, even though I enjoyed it quite a lot. I think the characters always seemed so mythical that I couldn't identify well with them. I'm sure that was the intent of the authors, and it was done well, but it might explain why I didn't find it a page turner.

Norman Cook says

Being the further adventures of Odysseus, this is a fast-paced adventure/romance that is my favorite book by Haggard so far. Haggard and Lang captured the feeling of a classical Greek epic, which is not surprising, considering Lang's background as a translator of *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad*. The story sends Odysseus on a quest to find his true love, Helen of Troy, after the fall of Ithaca. Odysseus's trials culminate when he finds himself in a love triangle with Helen and the cunning Meriamun, wife and sister to the Pharaoh of Egypt. Haggard's sense of adventure carries the story along at a brisk pace, filled with exotic characters.

Fraser Sherman says

3.5 stars. In some ways this is very old-fashioned, with the characters as one-note archetypes (Meriamun the scheming Bad Girl, Helen the embodiment of desire, Odysseus the Epic Hero), so if you want in-depth characterization, be warned. In other ways this is just amazingly off-the-wall: following the death of his wife Penelope, Odysseus journeys to Egypt seeking his first love, Helen of Troy, and arrives just as this slave race is unleashing plagues of locusts and darkness upon the land. Oh, and Odysseus, Helen and Meriamun are three parts of an eternal triangle destined to reoccur until the two women can fuse their good and bad spirits into one again. So for me, definitely worth rereading.
