



Odysseus on the River of Time

Carl Hare

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Odysseus: On the River of Time is a substantial and rewarding tale about ancient Greece's best known hero.

Carl Hare's *Odysseus: On the River of Time* is a gripping, epic sequel to *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*.

Odysseus, elsewhere depicted as wise and wily, is here both clever and mature. He's haunted by his memories of war. Having returned to his family in Ithaca, reclaimed his kingship, and consolidated his power, he embarks on another quest in order to satisfy Poseidon. It's an urgent task about whose eventual completion Odysseus reflects, "Only then may I live out my life in full."

Written in the style of epic poetry and divided into twenty-one cantos, the book's dialogue and exposition complement extant translations of Homer's works. Direct glimpses into Odysseus's innermost thoughts, dreams, and nightmares result in depth. His quest takes him to distant lands, some known and some new to him. Action and excitement arise, though their foci depart from those of the inspiring texts.

Here, there are no monsters, and there's little outright intervention from the gods. In their place are detailed characterizations of Odysseus, his wife, his son, and others. Strong, complex women characters interject their points of view, staying true to the customs of Greek society: Helen, whose kidnapping was the impetus for the Trojan War, tells a girl who's destined to be a concubine that "We have no power, none, as women. / We bear children, we raise them, we persuade ... I was courted by many at too young an age."

The events of the inspiring texts are woven into the story; for continuity, characters reflect on their prior actions and the consequences that arose from them. This is evidenced in a moving scene wherein Helen defends herself against Odysseus's accusations about her complicity in the war and her attempts to draw out the Greek soldiers from the Trojan Horse before their surprise attack.

The book's verses utilize memorable imagery, while alliteration and rhymes are used to lift elements of scenes for celebration, as with "The young girl's surpassing beauty caught the eye / of the dread God of sea and sky, mighty Poseidon." Beautiful passages describe birds and their calls, and flowers in a garden, with lush natural details. Natural breaks come after each part of Odysseus's journey, during which every interaction pays off, revealing elements of the plot, characterizations, or both. When Odysseus reaches the end of his quest, it is a satisfying fulfillment of all that has come before.

Blending poetry, literature, adventures, and tradition, *Odysseus: On the River of Time* is a substantial and rewarding tale about ancient Greece's best known hero.

PETER DABBENE (July 29, 2020)

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