

## Cleopatra's Haggard Image

Among his fifty-five novels, Sir Henry Rider Haggard (1856-1925) published *Cleopatra: Being an Account of the Fall and Vengeance of Harmachis, The Royal Egyptian, As Set Forth by His Own Hand* in 1889. Although better known for *She* (1886) and *Ayesha: The Return of She* (1905) and the Allan Quartermain adventures, it was quite successful in the late Victorian pulp novel market. It has not fared as well recently as evidenced by only 88 downloads on Project Gutenberg versus 1165 for *King Solomon's Mines* (1886) and 586 for *She* (<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/author/365> accessed 09/14/2018).. The slow pacing, the stilted biblical diction and the abundance of dated antiquarian detail have doubtless discouraged many modern readers before the real fun begins. Cleopatra does not even appear until page 90! But it was immortalized as *Classic Illustrated Comics* number 161 in 1967. Those were billed as “the greatest stories by the world’s great authors.”

This paper will demonstrate that Haggard’s novel deserves to be regarded as an essential step in the reception of Cleopatra on a par with its contemporary theatrical efforts such as George Bernard Shaw’s *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1898) and Emile Moreau and Victorien Sardou’s *Cleopatre* (1890). It has been claimed ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cleopatra\\_\(1917\\_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cleopatra_(1917_film))) that Haggard’s tale influenced the Theda Bara *Cleopatra* (1917), but it certainly influenced the dark and dangerous image of the Queen in early film and *fin d’ siècle* literature and art.