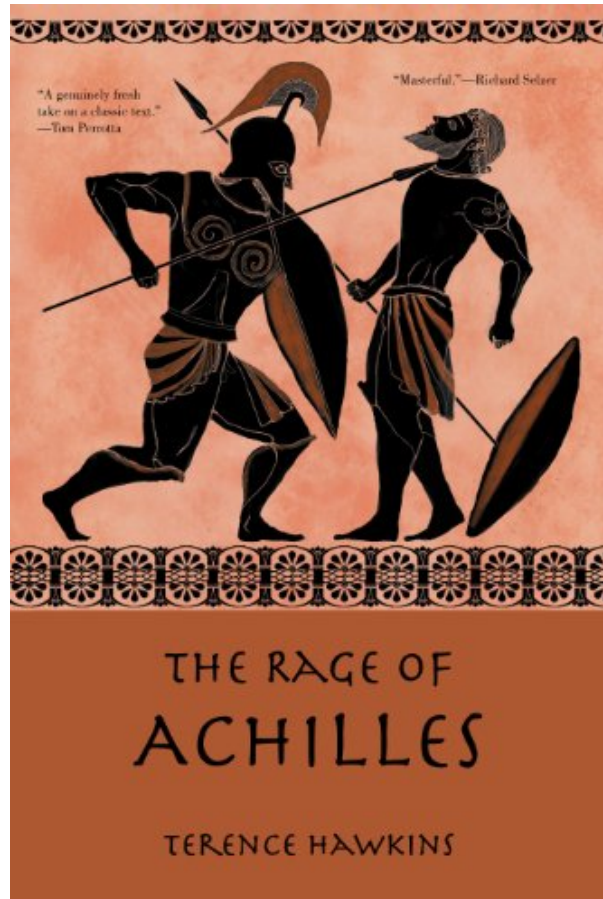
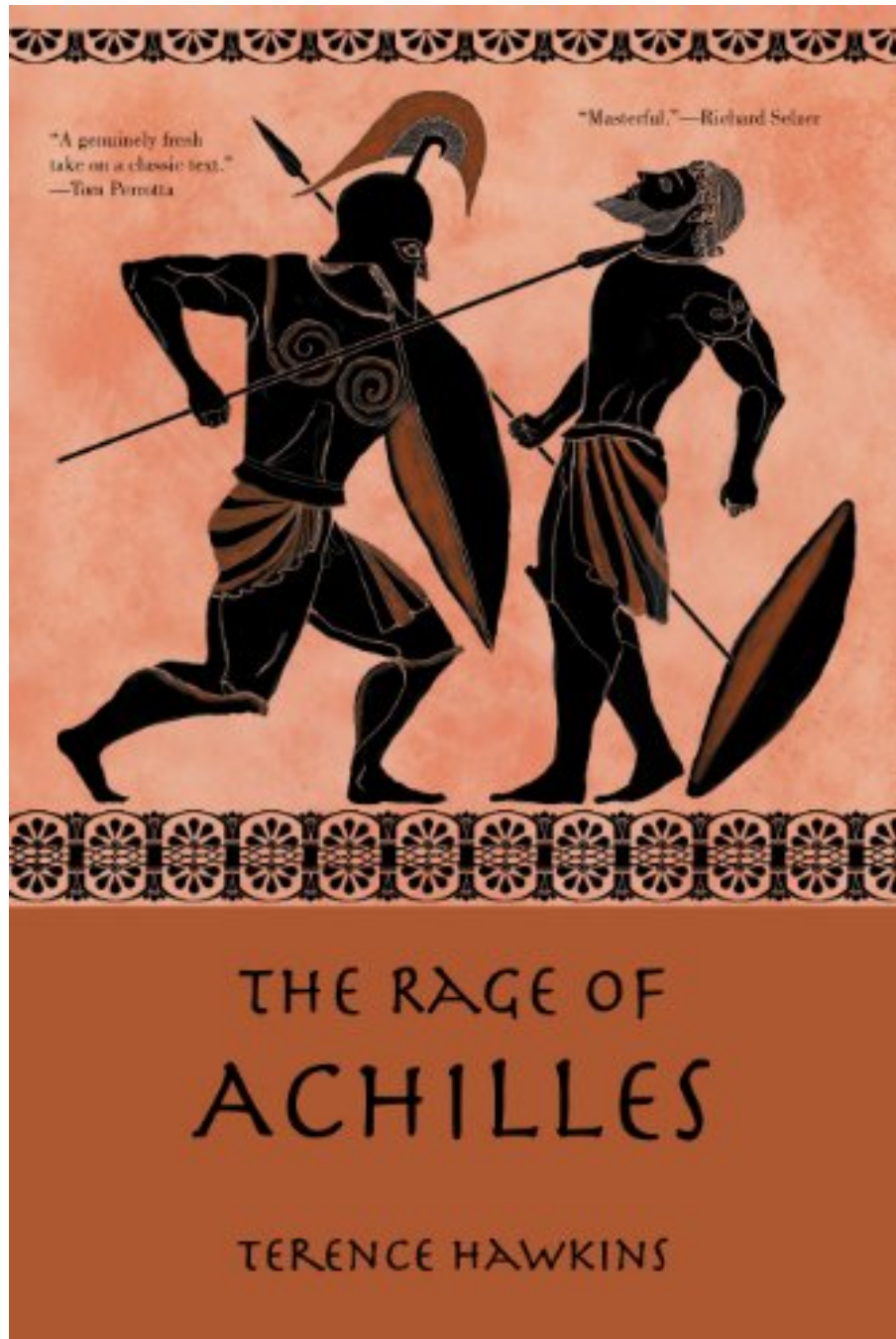


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Blood. Guts. Pride. Wrath.

The ancient clash of armies outside the walls of Troy is a cornerstone of Western literature. In *The Rage of Achilles*, Terence Hawkins brilliantly reimagines that titanic encounter. His stunningly original telling captures the brutality of the battlefield, the glory and the gore, in language that never relents.

Raw and compelling, *The Rage of Achilles* tells the story of Achilles, a monstrous hero, by turns vain and selfish, cruel and noble; of Paris, weak and consumed by lust for his stolen bride; of Agamemnon, driven nearly to insanity by the voices of the gods; and of Trojans and Achaeans, warriors and peasants, caught up in the conflict, their families torn apart by a decade-long war. *The Rage of Achilles* is an exhilarating story that has captured the imaginations of readers for thousands of years restored to immediacy.

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16 of 17 people found the following review helpful.

Modern twist on a old classic tale

By ReadtomeGrandma

A very modern twist to the classic Iliad tale. This is usually not my genre of books, but I found it to be a page turner, finishing it in just over a day. The author paid great detail to the historical integrity of the tale, but wrote in a modern language that will entices readers into the characters lives and emotions. Definately an adult read. I can't wait to see what Terrence Hawkins comes up with for his next book writing adventure. 5 stars and many kudos!!!

31 of 39 people found the following review helpful.

Too ugly to be profound; so patronizing it becomes parody

By Jacob Fowler

To the extent that I enjoy seeing how authors handle adaptations of the Iliad, I approached The Rage of Achilles with significant interest. However, while it has its strong points, Hawkins makes significant miscalculations in his treatment of the story - and thus it falls far short of its potential.

First the positive: Hawkins has a tremendous gift for description. He takes great care to make his scenes feel vivid and real, drawing on nuanced details to help us experience what his characters see, feel, smell, and hear. His command over the battlefield is great. With a lot going on during battle scenes, he proves himself quite deft at choosing what to include and what to leave out, so that we experience the sights and sounds of the battle without losing the strategic and dramatic flow of events. In this regard, I was surprised to see such talent in an obscure book like this one.

The rest of the book more or less falls apart, however, mostly due to a single miscalculation on the part of the

author. Hawkins sets out with the goal of de-glorifying the story. He wants to knock both the characters and the subject matter off their pedestals, strip the story of its polite veneer, and give us a gritty, no-holds-barred look at flawed humans in a harsh world. He rightly realizes that presenting us a sanitized Iliad, filled with perfectly noble heroes, would be a fatal oversimplification; however, his mistake is in his belief that the more violent, sexual, and nasty the story is, the more profound it is. While it's possible to make a story simplistic in its pure idealism, it's equally possible to, as a reaction, make a story simplistic in its pure depravity - and Hawkins does just that. Without discussing in gross detail, I'll say that he goes beyond taking an "unflinching" look at the story and presents us gratuitous scenes that are nothing but ugliness for the sake of ugliness.

Sex and gore aside, perhaps the ugliest thing about this book is its characters. Hawkins wants to show us an angry Achilles, so he thinks the thing to do is make Achilles as thoroughly nasty as possible. But the problem is that this doesn't make him any more human. Rather than being broadly painted as a one-dimensional paragon of virtue, he becomes a one-dimensional study in all the ways a person can be violent, arrogant, mean, and yes, stupid - and that's no better. Is it good to show a complex character who is full of flaws? Yes. But Achilles is nothing but flaws, and without a feeling for his underlying humanity, we have nothing but a name with a mess of horrid acts attributed to it.

The rest of the characters are no better. Hawkins' treatment of the Greek "heroes" is so patronizing that it descends to the level of parody. He goes to great lengths to pound into our heads the fact that Agamemnon is comically arrogant and that poor Menelaus lives in his shadow. Other than that, however, most of the others are lumped together into a homogeneous mass of middle-aged morons distinguishable only by their names. If they're not drunk or hung over, they're standing around like idiots waiting for the "penecostal fire" to fall while Agamemnon feels the "move of the spirit." Their moods turn on a dime, and they're so susceptible to manipulation that I found myself wondering how these guys managed to run an army. And since the Trojans are just as bad, we find that the story has only two half-intelligent characters. I won't give you their names, but I'll say that one is a Greek hero you'll identify within his first appearance or two, and the other is a made-up Trojan character who's not named Napolieono or Hindenibergo. They serve primarily as "voices of reason" by showing how men with 21st century sensibilities would interact with all the stupid people who lived in ancient times.

The dialogue in this book is a mixed bag. Hawkins often writes conversations in short, fast moving snippets that can be brisk and enjoyably glib at times, but that too often become choppy. Where it fails the most is at the end, where it is certainly not up to task at showing us that Hawkins' brutish Achilles had a plausible change of heart. His climactic decision is thus abrupt and unconvincing.

Other than that, there are a few inexplicable things that left me shaking my head as I read. I have no idea why Hawkins portrayed the Trojans as vastly outnumbering the Greeks; there's no reason for that reversal, and it makes the siege completely implausible. Equally inexplicable is his decision to show the Greeks winning in Achilles' absence. Why? It serves no purpose other than to force the author to contrive a half-hearted explanation for why Agamemnon would want to beg Achilles to return.

If the story as I described it appeals to you, then by all means buy this book. But don't use it as your tool for learning what the Iliad is about. Aside from the fact that it is dripping with irony from start to finish, Hawkins changes so much of the story that you'll walk away from his book with more misconceptions than knowledge. How much of this is deliberate on his part and how much is simple mistakes is hard to say (when I hear him talk about the Iliad in interviews, I squirm with embarrassment for his sake - so fundamentally lacking is his knowledge of the source material).

Either way, *The Rage of Achilles* is not the *Iliad*. And forget this notion that it's more complex or profound than its source. Homer's characters are far more rounded and fleshed out than the yahoos in this story... And the way the *Iliad* juggles the complexities of war is much more insightful than the blunt "war is bad/people are all jerks/the ancients are stupid" message presented in this novel.

I appreciate Hawkins as an aspiring writer, especially as one who decided to base a story (however loosely) on the *Iliad*. However, this one didn't work for me. I would advise readers to skip this and read a good modern translation of the *Iliad*.

12 of 14 people found the following review helpful.

Apocalypse Then

By Gil J. Stein

If Hunter S. Thompson and Quentin Tarantino teamed up to write an Aegean Bronze Age war novel, the result might come close to Terence Hawkins excellent book "*The Rage of Achilles*". This is a re-telling or re-imagining of Homer's "*Iliad*" in a language and style that has a visceral and unforgettable impact. Too often, Homer's epic poem is read primarily as poetry. But the enduring appeal of the *Iliad* as literature derives precisely from its power as a STORY - and that story has been too often buried under archaic language and slavish adherence to literal translation.

Terence Hawkins takes a meat cleaver to this barrier and brings the characters of the *Iliad* back to life - Agamemnon, Priam, Hector, Paris, Helen of Troy, Odysseus, and Achilles himself. The *Iliad*, as we know, focuses on the crucial turning point in the Trojan War, when Achilles, the leading warrior for the Achaean Greeks, first withdraws from the battle due to a quarrel with Agamemnon, and then returns to fight with a vengeance after a chain of events leads to the death of his lover Patroclus at the hands of the Trojans and their champion Hector. Achilles' slaughter of Hector in front of the gates of Troy has a brutal inevitability from which we simply cannot avert our eyes.

"*The Rage of Achilles*" recreates these characters as tough, cunning, fornicating, murderous, and totally believable people. Re-imagined in modern vocabulary, the dialog is by turns hilarious and appalling, and rings true. The language is modern, but the characters are so believable that it never seems anachronistic.

Above all, Hawkins' novel forces us to face the brutality of this war, how its participants rationalize it in terms of their own beliefs, and why they are able to carry out acts of almost unimaginable violence.

This book is not for the squeamish, and it is definitely an "adult" version of the *Iliad* - but it is written with an immediacy and intensity that draws you in and won't let go. I recommend it in the strongest terms.

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