



Achilles and Yossarian: Clarity and Confusion in the Interpretation of The Iliad and Catch-22

Leon Golden

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Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* has been interpreted from many different vantage points in the nearly fifty years since it was first published. One approach that has not been effectively used has been to consider the influence of Homer's *Iliad* on Heller's novel. From teaching a Humanities seminar in war literature some years ago I had become convinced that this Homeric influence existed and I wrote to the late Mr. Heller to see if he would confirm this impression of mine. In a letter which I received from him in 1994 he stated that he had been thinking about the *Iliad* all of the time he was writing *Catch-22* but wanted to avoid obvious comparisons. He confirmed to me his interest in the *Iliad* in personal conversations I had the privilege to have with him in 1997. In an interview which Mr. Heller had with the journal *Contemporary Literature* in 1998, he was asked "Were you thinking of Homer's ending when you wrote the conclusion to *Catch-22*?" He replied, "Very much so." This study offers a strong argument for an original interpretation of the intriguing relationship between *Catch-22* and the *Iliad*.

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