



An interview with writer Joe Abercrombie
by Martina Ercoli

- Welcome on SoloLibri.net, Mr. Abercrombie. You were educated at Lancaste Royal Grammar School and Manchester University, where you studied psychology. How your academic studies have influenced your work?

It's a pleasure to be here. I think as a writer you're influenced by everything you experience, so your academic studies no doubt find their way into your work somewhere. I don't think they're hugely influential on me, but one of the things I studied in depth on my degree was human error - the ways in which people and organisations fail.

Epic fantasy tends to be full of million to one shots that come off, clever plans brilliantly executed, heroic actions with heroic outcomes, but my experience of the real world is that victories and defeats are decided just as often by chance and by mistakes as they are by success. So I've always been very interested in failure, and try to reflect that in my fiction. My books are full of a lot of imperfect people trying to fumble their way to the right thing and not always succeeding.

- Now, let's talk about your last work. When and how is born the idea of The Heroes? Which the deepest moral do you want to spread?

The Heroes was an attempt to write a war story set in a fantasy world. Of course a great deal of epic fantasy is about war, has war as the backdrop and fighters, soldiers, warriors in many of the lead roles, but the impression of warfare is not particularly realistic, it focuses on the glory, the heroism, the shiny metal and doesn't have that much in common with the complexity of warfare in the real world. With the Heroes I aimed to tell the story of one single battle from many different viewpoints on both sides and at different levels of the chain of command.

So the great majority of the book takes place in one valley over the course of three days of fighting. The idea was really to investigate the nature of heroism. Epic fantasy often serves us up some ultra-heroic heroes, people with heroic motives, who perform heroic actions and achieve heroic outcomes. I started more from the standpoint that very few people are heroic in every way and under every circumstance, but that all of us can be selfless, or brave, or noble at times. That heroism is all a case of where you stand, in effect.

- The Heroes is set in the same world as your previous work. Why did you make this decision? Which is the biggest difference between the two world and How it affects the characters and the general meaning of the novel?

I suppose I've never seen the point of smashing up the sets just to produce new ones, and there seemed to be plenty more stories to tell in the world I'd created. I also liked the idea of picking up some minor characters from the trilogy I'd written and making them the central

characters of some other stories, while the major characters from the trilogy dropped very much into the background. To me that approach means new readers can jump on where they like and go back to older books without the experience being spoiled, but that established readers will get some sense of continuity.

- Let's talk about the future, can you give us information about your new project in Italy with Gargoyle edition. We are curious!

The next thing Gargoyle will be publishing is actually my first books, the First Law trilogy. I wrote those before the Heroes but they're set in the same world and feature some of the same characters. The idea was always that the Heroes could be read either before or after the trilogy without spoiling too much. The trilogy obviously has a much bigger scope and scale, but I'd hope it has basically the same recipe as the Heroes - visceral action, vivid characters, and a big streak of black humour in the midst of the cynicism...