

# FANTASY CROSSROADS

10  
11



# HOMAGE



Fairies under toadstool tables,  
Unicorns in forest stables,  
Wait for me,  
Child-believer in a fable's  
Fantasy

Down along the haunted river  
Waving willows sway and quiver  
As I pass,  
And the Sprite-Queen makes me give her  
Wreaths of grass.

- John Bredon

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I would like to especially thank Charles Melvin for allowing us to print the Frank Frazetta Sketch from his collection of artwork. Thank you, Charles.



Last issue I brought up the possibility of a series of awards in the areas of fantasy (including S & S, possibly horror lit, etc.) Some of the responses to that suggestion are included in this issue's Epistle Express. Response was, to be sure, minimal. I'm not sure how to interpret that. Either fans don't care, or they assume that silence is affirmation that planning should continue towards the establishment of an award. The final possibility is that fans are opposed to the idea and figure that if they ignore it... it'll go away. As a rule people seem to sound off long and hard if they're opposed to something, but then again, is that the case here?

It would be nice to garner further response to the awards from our readership. But there's now another factor entering the picture. C. C. Clingan, editor of **THE DIVERSIFIER** has proposed a new award and he already has support from two other fantasy journals: **ASTRAL DIMENSIONS** and **BLACK LITE**. He's asking for support from other publications in the field, but that's explained in his letter below. Read on and then I'll make some more comments.

For the past several months I've been kicking around an idea which I feel would be of benefit to all writers, artists and editors in the semi-pro field.

As a way of explanation (for those new to sf and fandom) I'll give an example of the professional version of what I have planned.

The Hugos, as they are known were named after Hugo Gernsback, who was the original editor of one of the first sf magazines. The Hugos are awarded by votes from the fans (a small majority and by popularity in a lot of cases). In fact, it's mentioned in one of the top fanzines that no more than five hundred people ever vote for these awards; that's out of all the thousands of fans reading and participating in sf and fandom. To vote you must be a member of the **WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION** for the current year. In 1976 it was Mid-AmeriCon in Kansas City. Attending memberships for World-Cons vary from \$15.00 to \$50.00; as was the case for at the door attendance at Mid-AmeriCon last year. You can obtain a supporting membership (non-attending) for \$6.00, as I did. This gives you voting rights and all the progress reports and the final program book.

Then there are the **NEBULA** awards, which are given at annual dinners, held at different sites each year. To vote on these awards you must be a member of the **SFWA (SCIENCE FICTION WRITERS OF AMERICA)**. Requirements for membership are: You must have had published (in the U.S.) original material as follows:

1 - Science fiction novel, within the current year or any of the previous five years.

2 - Science fiction novelette or short story published by an American trade publisher within the current year or any of the previous three years.

Continued to page 71

# Genseric's Fifth-Born Son

a james allison tale by:  
**ROBERT E. HOWARD**

The following three chapters compose only about 9600 words of a round-robin novel based upon a previously unpublished fragmentary tale by Robert E. Howard. The novel will eventually run close to 75,000 words and none of it has seen print before. Furthermore no part of the story will be reprinted anywhere until the entire story has appeared in FANTASY CROSSROADS. We'll be printing approximately 9-10,000 words per issue until the entire novel is in print. By the time this novel is complete, you'll see chapters by Michael Moorcock, Richard Tierney, Andrew J. Offutt, Manly Wade Wellman, Ramsey Campbell, Frank Belknap Long, Charles Saunders, Brian Lumley, Darrell Schweitzer and others in addition to the authors presented in this issue. Future illustrators (one per chapter) will include Stephen Fabian, Gene Day, Cliff Bird, Jim FitzPatrick and a host of others. If this isn't an all time coup supreme for Howard fandom...then I don't know what is. Read on dear friends.-  
Editor

## **GENSERIC'S SON**

By Robert E. Howard

Long, long ago an infant son was born to Gudrun of the Shining Locks, the wife of Genseric the Swordsman, in their horse-hide lodge on the frozen snows of Vanaheim. When the man-child's first wail of life broke upon the icy waste, Genseric lifted him in his mighty hand and searched him for any blemish, as was the custom of the Vanir and their brothers the AEsir. And he frowned, for the infant's left leg was crooked.

Immemorial custom had decreed that only the perfect should live; but Genseric turned to Gudrun questioningly, for hers was the last word in the matter. But Gudrun, with the rack of her throes still upon her, threw back fiercely and proudly her thick shining tresses, and said harshly: "I have four sons of fair, straight limbs; shall I give them a crippled frog for a brother?"

So Genseric went from the tent into the chill grey dawn, carrying the man-child naked. The smoke of his breath clotted his beard, and his shod feet crunched in the frozen crust. There was frost upon his sword hilt, and the icy air bit through his furs and the mail beneath.

Far out on the misty waste he laid the infant, its body turning blue in the wind that wailed out of the murky depths that veiled



•STEPHEN RILEY•

2 MARCH 1976

the horizons. He laid his hand on his sword, then blown to his ears from afar came the long howling of the great grey wolves. So he turned and strode back across the waste, like a dark phantom of the indefinite dawn, and behind him the cry of the pack rose to a crescendo of exultation and died away.

But even before the sun had thrust its way through the icy mists and low-lying clouds to turn the snow fields to a floating plain of blinding fire, old Bragi came to Genseric's tent, with his grey beard and his haunted eyes and the strangeness in his soul that an ancient sword-cut upon his head had made his.

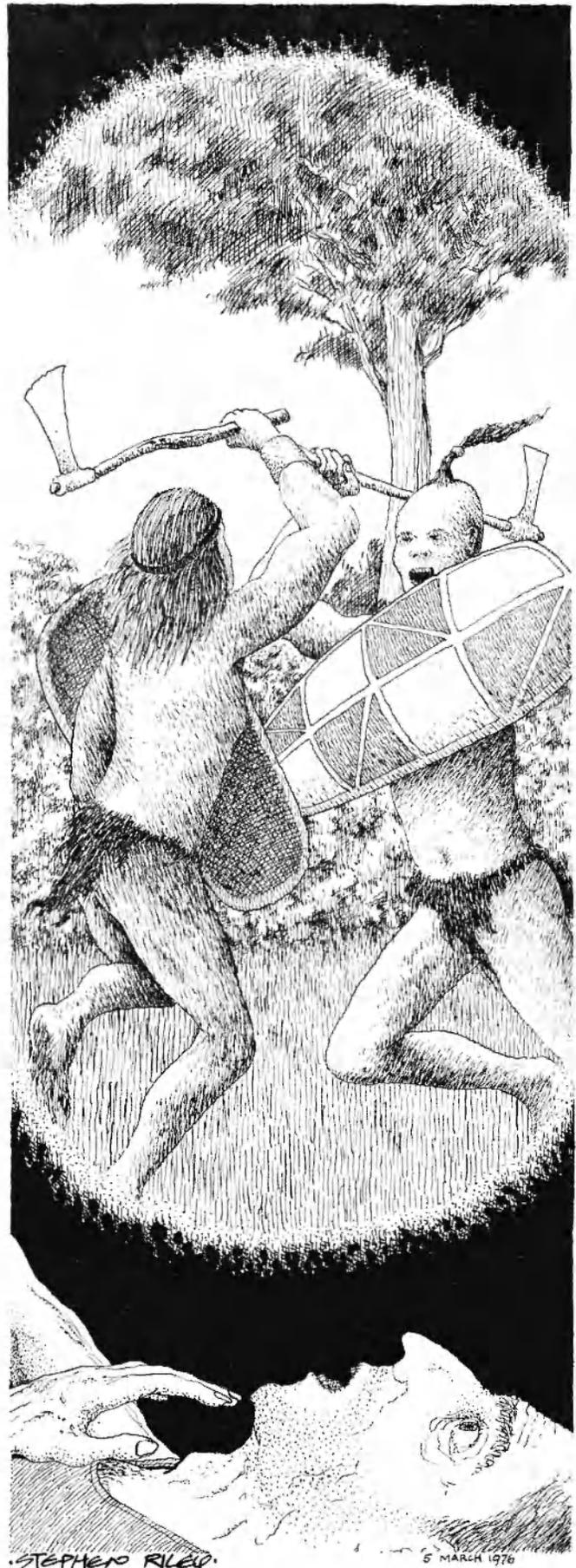
"I saw you lay the child upon the snow," quoth old Bragi. "I saw as I returned across the chill wastes in the grey birth of dawn. I heard the howling of the wolves as you turned away, and soon the swift patter of their feet over the crust. Their eyes were green in the murk, and their tongues lolled red as hunger between their white fangs. They came about the infant where it lay upon the snow, and stirred its limbs with their muzzles, yet harmed it not. By the icy blood of Ymir, they howled like the fiends of the wastes about it, and a great greyshe-wolf lay down beside it and gave it her teats. Its fingers clutched at her stiff grey ice-clotted hair, and it sucked at her dugs as a wolf cub suckles. Then fear fell upon me, and I fled swiftly. Yet it is the truth I speak."

So Genseric and his brothers went forth into the waste, until they came to the spot where the babe was left. But the infant was gone, and all about the spot where it had lain were the tracks of wolves. There was no blood on the snow, but the tracks of many wolves led westward into the plains of eternal ice and snow. And afterwards, in the horsehide tents of Vanaheim and of Asgard, over the flickering fires was told the tale of Genseric's fifth born, the man-child who was taken by the wolves.

I was the man-child. I, whom men now call James Allison, in another, weaker, softer age and clime. I can not tell you how I possess this knowledge, any more than you can tell me how it is that the events of yesterday, and the days before, and the years before remain indelibly impressed upon that part of your consciousness we call memory, so that you can call them into life again by speech and writing. You know, that is all; aye, and I know. As you remember your days, I remember my lives. Your memory of your days is unbroken by the nights of sleep which separate them, nor is the memory of my lives broken by the alternating nights of deeper sleep we call death. In that night I have gone ten thousand times, and out of that night ten thousand times have I wakened, as I shall awake again and again throughout the long ages until the destruction of the planet that spawned it shall at last and ultimately break the chain of flesh and blood and bone figments which have successively cloaked the undying spirit that is I.

Even the destruction of the planet can not kill that spirit, whether its end be blackening frost under a dead, icy sun, or the melting wrath of cosmic fires. Let the earth burst like an iridescent bubble floating in the gulf of infinity, yet life is not destroyed. I have seen visions, vast and terrible and wonderful, of the cataclysm that shall not destroy the spirit that is me, but hurl it into unguessed infinities, into undreamed oceans of suns and stars beyond the ken of man, to take up the endless succession anew in gorgeous, weird worlds beyond the echoing voids.

But I have no lust to plumb those dreaming deeps. I am of the earth earthly. Out of the dust I have sprung, and into the dust I have returned, not once, but a million times, to rise in eternal resurrection, clothed in a new flesh and burning youth, like fresh and shining raiment. I look not beyond the horizons of the planet that gave me birth. My feet are deep in the mysteries of her grasses and her pools; her dew is in my hair, and her sun is hot gold on my naked shoulders; under my hands the warm earth pulses with life that gave the races of man being, and my arms embrace the living trunks of her trees; they are no less her children than am I: the speech of their leaves no less articulate than mine.



STEPHENO RILEP

5 MARCH 1976

Oh, I have been many men in many lands! As I lay here waiting for death to free me from this broken, unsound body, I do not see the dingy walls, the cobwebbed ceiling, the cheap prints that pass for pictures; they do not limit my vision, nor the houses and the oak groves and the hills beyond; not the horizons themselves are my boundaries. I see the flaming dawns I have known of old, the far lands, the broad, foaming seas - white cliffs against the clear cold blue, with a smother of sparkling froth about their foot, and the cry of gulls. I see pageantry, and pride, and glory, the shine of the sun on golden corselets, the breaking of spears, the spreading of purple sails, and the dark eyes of women who have loved me.

Oh, I see all the men that have been I! The brave, the fearful, the strong, the weak, the kind, the cruel, the living, loving, hating, lusting, swilling, gorging, fighting, betraying, swaggering figures that have borne equally with one another the transient, restless spirit that now animates the frail and sickly frame that men call James Allison.

What have I not been? King, warrior, slave. I died at Marathon, at Arbela, at Cannae, at Chalons, at Clontarf, at Hastings, at Agincourt, at Austerlitz, at San Jacinto, and at Gettysburg. I was a nameless, yellow-haired chieftain riding a half-wild stallion when we brought bronze into western Europe; I bore spear and shield in the Macedonian phalanx when the plains of India shook to the tread of Alexander; I pulled a strong bow at Poitiers, when our whistling clouds of arrows broke the chivalry of France; and I heard the creak of leather, the tinkling of spurs and the singing of the night-riders when we drove the lowing herds of longhorns up the dim trail men call the Chisholm to build a new young empire of leather and beef and steel.

What could I not tell you of this planet, and the life that teems upon it; how could I not refute the chroniclers and the sages, and laugh to scorn the historians and the philosophers!

But I will rather go back beyond their ken, into an age of which they have no cognizance. I will tell you of the man-child of Genseric and of Gudrun of the Shining Locks, who was suckled by wolves.

Oh, the tale is no new one. Every race has its legends of a babe who tugged at the breasts of a she-wolf. It is the heritage of all Aryan peoples, and from them other races have borrowed.

But it was from the actuality of the son of Genseric and Gudrun that all these tales sprang. Romulus was suckled by a harlot, and his sons called her a wolf through courtesy and evasion. But the milk of the grey she-wolf was the only sustenance the son of Genseric knew.

I never had a name, as men are named, though in the years of my life I was called many things by many tribes. I was the Strong One. That was what my many names signified, in whatever tongue they were framed. I remember that a tribe of the AEsir called me Ghor, and since that is as good a name as another I will call the son of Genseric and of Gudrun by that name.

## THE COMING OF GHOR

By Karl Edward Wagner

### Chapter II

Of the first years of my life, only the most nebulous impressions remain etched into my memory. Most vividly penetrates the image of endless ice and snow, the memory of the cold--the relentless cold winds and crystalline nights when the chill stars shimmered through the frozen haze of my breath.

Even among the savage races of that age, I think no other infant could have survived a single night of that frozen wasteland. I survived.

I remember the sour warmth of the she-wolf's fur, the panting caress of her tongue, the sharp sting of her fangs. Dimly comes

the remembrance of the acrid milk that I suckled from her dugs. Sharper comes the memory of the hotter sustenance I drank as it gushed from the torn veins of some fallen prey, of sweet raw flesh stripped from yet thrashing flanks--before the cold transformed our kill into a broken statue of crimson marble and tattered fur. Nor were all our prey clad in their natural furs.

I say there was not another man-child who could have lived through my savage childhood. In the light of another age, I realize there was something about me that made me different from the tribe of Vanir from which I sprang. The pack sensed this, else they would have devoured me in that first instant: Some atavistic heritage in my soul, that called back to a lost age when man's apish forebears coupled with certain creatures who only mimicked the shape of man.

At times I think my father did well to cast my naked body onto the icy drifts, that his fault was rather to stay his hand from swordhilt as I squawled an answering cry to the oncoming wolfpack.

From the first dawning of conscious thought, I was aware that I was different from the she-wolf whose dugs nourished me, from my swift grey-furred brothers and sisters. The white fur that lay upon my childish limbs was no more than the down of a newborn cub, so that instinctively I wrapped about myself the half-rotted pelts of old kills. In the space of a few seasons, the cubs amongst whom I gambolled chased across the ice fields on powerful limbs--as bold and savage killers as their sires--while I scrambled clumsily about our den, too slow to join with the others.

I cannot say how many frozen seasons drifted past before I began to pull myself painfully erect, began to understand that I could stand unaided on my hind legs, realized that I could dash about in this strange upright posture. The crooked left leg that had condemned me to the icy waste had slowly straightened in the interim--whether from the rigors of my existence, or because it bore no weight while my infant bones elongated and hardened, I cannot guess. In time I ran across the tundra as swiftly and relentlessly as my brothers of the pack, with only a slight twist at my ankle to evidence my old deformity.

It was now that I began to sense a certain kinship to the strange two-legged prey we sometimes stalked. Before, seeing only a torn and mangled kill, I gave no more thought to what meat I shared than I did to the carcass of an elk or reindeer.

But now, running with the pack, for the first time I beheld another living man--a lone hunter, half-dead from the sudden blizzard that had separated him from his fellows. I held back, fascinated, as he made a desperate stand. He had neither fangs and claws, nor hooves and antlers--no more than did I. But as the pack ringed him in, he bent back the curved stick he carried, released its taut cord with an angry thrumm. A howl of agony, and the nearest wolf of the circle bounded high with a wooden shaft through his heart. The hunter drew a second shaft from the sling at his back, fitted it to his bow, sped it full into the throat of a second grey brother--all in the space of a heartbeat. Then the pack closed over him.

For a moment his limbs thrashed beneath the press of snarling slayers, and I saw that my first impression was mistaken, for one paw was armed with a single long, sharp talon. One ripping stroke of that silver-grey talon disembowelled one of those who tore at his throat. Then his struggles ceased.

Despite my own hunger, I watched in thought while my brothers fought over the steaming carcass. The curved stick and the shafts it hurled were beyond my understanding. The silver-grey talon had been torn from the man's forepaw. I examined it curiously, saw that the sharp grey siver was fitted with a haft of bone that my own smaller forepaw could grip in the same manner as had the hunter. It felt good in my grip.

Standing there, the knife in my hand, looking down as the pack snarled over the flesh that so resembled my own--I recognized that I was not, as I had assumed when I thought about it at all,



©

some ludicrously misshapen freak of nature, tolerated by my swifter and stronger brothers. I knew then that I was a man. At least in form.

With that understanding, a strange unrest claimed my soul. If I were a man, why did I not dwell among men--why was I brother to those whose enemy was man?

The mystery became an obsession with me. In fascination I couched in the shadows beyond the campfires of men, studying their inconceivable actions and incoherent barks and cries. On moonless nights when the frost hung invisibly upon my stealthy breaths, I slunk down almost within confines of their camps and villages. While my grey brothers kept a safe distance, I crept along unnoticed behind roving packs of hunters--mused upon their strange weapons, the pelts they wrapped their hairless flesh in, and the flashing devil of heat and light they shared their meat with.

As season followed bleak season, with but a fleeting thaw between the deadly chill of winter's return, I spent less time with the pack and ever more hours in contemplation of man and his ways. I recognized that his yelps and grunts were a pattern of speech far more complex than that of my wolf brothers. By long study I found I could form some of their cries in my own throat; that the bright devil-thing was called "fire", that the curved stick that hurled sharp-fanged shafts was called "bow". The silver-grey talon was "knife", and knife had an older, deadlier brother called "sword"--longer and sharper far than any tusk or talon. I coveted sword as I had desired no other thing in all my grim youth.

There came a day when the sun was a cold red disc lost beneath the lowering clouds of a gathering ice storm. My grey brothers had slunk into the shelter of their dens, while I, a wild thing of little more than ten winters, crouched along beneath the leaden skies to watch a scene beyond all marvels.

Two packs of men had come together in the storm-fraught waste. Their encounter was a bloody clash--a battle fought without quarter. The reason of their conflict was beyond my understanding, but the savage ferocity of that battle made my heart leap within my young chest. My blood throbbed in my veins, and I gnashed my teeth and trembled with a lust to throw myself into the slaughter. Some final instinct held me back, and the snarls and howls that escaped my frothing lips were drowned in the shouts and death cries of the combatants.

There were perhaps twenty men in one group and little more than half as many in the other. Despite the odds, the smaller pack held their ground gamely--because of the deadly prowess of one warrior. That one man, a mighty figure whose blond mane towered over the others, held my attention despite the moan of the approaching storm. Gripped in his huge hands, a sword as long as my own thin body wove a murderous pattern of red-streaked death. All about him men struggled together--locked in death embraces, battering steel against steel--until death brought a gory close to their separate battles.

The battle was too savagely fought to long endure. One by one those of the tall swordsman's pack died beneath the blades of the others. Then for a space he stood alone, ringed by four of his enemies--all that still lived of their band. One he clove from shoulder to belly--but before he could recover from that furious stroke, the others surged upon him. What followed was too fast for my eye. Blades clashed against blades--flesh tore apart with gouts of scarlet spray--bodies reeled brokenly as fierce shouts died in sudden groans. Then only the tall swordsman was standing.

As I watched, entranced by the tableau, he slowly sank to his knees, surveying the silent field of carnage. The snow was trampled and streaked with crimson, and the stream of blood that flowed from a dozen wounds in his flesh added its steaming portion to the spreading stain. His head sagged onto his chest.

The first crystals of ice were spitting down upon the broken bodies of the slain, when at last I dared leave my place of concealment. In silent awe I crept among the slaughtered corpses,

drawn to the motionless figure who slumped amidst the dead. The storm would soon bury slayers and slain, I knew from its deepening moan. But more urgently I knew that I must have that great sword for my own.

I had thought the man dead. As I reached for the sword, his eyes snapped open. I recoiled. The huge blade rose menacingly in the blood-caked fist.

"AESir dog..." his voice snarled, then fell. Dying eyes beheld me in wonder.

Stinging needles of ice rattled against the still bodies. A rising wind tore away our cloudy breaths. I stood before him--a tall thin youth, seeming older than my years for my rearing in the wild--even as my sinewy frame was ice-hard with the tempered muscles of the wild. Gusts of icy wind tossed my snow-white mane, rippled the beard I had already grown and the wiry hairs that matted limbs and trunk. Ill-fitting tatters of hide and fur were bound to my body, in crude mimicry of the hunters I had seen.

I snarled low in my throat, advanced when I saw he did not rise. "Sword!" I grated awkwardly, and growled as does one wolf who demands a joint of meat from a weaker brother.

As I started forward, his eyes fell upon my twisted left ankle. I snarled again, and his face showed stark wonder.

"By Ymir!" he swore. "You!"

But now on the howling wind I heard voices of other men. I must have the sword now.

With a sudden lunge I avoided his clumsy guard and wrenched at the swordhilt. He bellowed in rage, staggered upright with me clinging to his arm. My strength and my quickness surprised him, and I set my fangs into his arm before he quite realized I was upon him. Mortally wounded, he was still stronger than I, and knew the ways in which man fights man. A blow of his fist on my head all but cracked my skull. I hung on grimly, biting and evading his clumsy efforts to grip with me.

His swordarm pinioned, he then released his sword, caught its hilt in his free hand. Dazed from his pummeling, I remembered the knife I kept thrust in my furs. As he held me with his gashed swordarm and raised his sword on high with his other arm, I reached swiftly with my knife and drew it across his throat.

Blood choked his sudden cry of agony. Even a heart's beat from death, he had strength left to slash downward with his upraised sword. Slippery with gore, I already was tearing away from his weakened grasp. I spun under his arm, and the sword's massive hilt smashed against my skull, its blade grazing across my shoulder.

Then the dead giant had slumped over me. Waves of pain blurred my vision, but I triumphantly wrenched the sword from his dead fist, started away with my prize. I staggered only a few strides.

Now there were new figures to bar my way. Through the clawing ice-storm, another band of warriors had rushed upon the scarlet-streaked patch of snow. They gazed at me in astonishment as I drew away from the toppled corpse. Snarling, I reeled toward them, thinking to break past them and disappear into the storm.

My legs would not hold my weight. Blackness swallowed my brain, and I never felt my body strike the trampled snow.

I lay in a stupor for some days. The warrior's dying blow would have shattered any other youth's skull. As it was, I must have sustained a severe concussion, for my scalp was laid open to the bone, and it was days before my vision focused and I could stand without the roaring of black winds spinning through my brain.

Any other would have died. I was not like any other.

I awoke in a camp of the AESir, where they cared for my wounds and gave me food. The AESir treated me with a mingling of respect and of fear. I was the slayer of Genseric the Swordsman.

Over the ensuing months I was made to understand. The Vanir

and the AEsir were at war--not that there were ever extended intervals of peace. The tribe I had fallen in with was part of a new drift of the AEsir into Vanaheim. Many and bloody were their savage conflicts, for upon the loss or gaining of hunting grounds in that frozen waste balanced death or survival. Chief among the Vanir warriors was Genseric the Swordsman. A band of AEsir warriors had overtaken Genseric, as he and the other Vanir returned from an earlier battle. Before the presence of these AEsir, I had slain their fiercest enemy.

At first they wondered at my strange ways, at my ignorance of their speech and customs. But the wound to my head was one that should have slain, and the AEsir quickly assumed that the blow had driven all my wits from me. Beyond that, their speculation was simply that I was a youth of some other Aesir clan, whose kinsmen had all perished in that battle with Genseric. Later they would know different. For now they cared for my needs, according me the same consideration they would to any hero of their race, blinded or crippled in battle.

Despite the death of Genseric, the tide of war ran against the AEsir, so that for a space the tribal drift was driven back into the snowfields of Asgard. I went with them, although at any moment I might have clipped away and returned to the pack. But with the years I had slowly drawn away from my grey brothers, increasingly caught up in my obsession with man. At last, so it seemed to me, fate had given me a chance to live among men, to learn the ways of man. I would learn now whether I was indeed man, or some freak of the wild who only mimicked the shape of man.

I had no name, so the AEsir called me Ghor, meaning the Strong. And strong I was--strong with muscle and sinew honed by the merciless wild--and quick with the instant reflexes of a hungry wolf. A stripling in years, unskilled in the use of weapons--yet not even the boldest of their warriors cared to test my ready temper. They were all savage warriors, the least of them more than a match for any dozen men of James Allison's day. But they were reared in horse-hide tents and suckled at their mothers' breasts, while I had crawled naked in the snow to wrest a portion of the kill from my yellow-eyed brothers.

For all the strangeness of man's ways, I learned quickly. At times I frightened those about me, for I was a thing of the wild, and even their rude existence seemed to me soft, and contrary to the law of kill or be killed, that was my only law. But I wished to become as men, so I made myself learn their speech and their pointless customs. Had I fallen in with a tribe of the Vanir, I am certain I would have been recognized for what I was. But this tribe had migrated from far within Asgard, where no AEsir had yet heard the tale of Genseric's fifth son who ran with the wolves and haunted the darkness beyond the firelight.

Four years and more crept past, while I dwelt with the AEsir and learned the ways of men. By the time the scars of Genseric's blows had faded, I could speak their tongue fluently, could eat their burned meat, wear their stifling garments, and sleep within a tent without fear of smothering. My fear of fire was slow in leaving me, and not a few brows were darkly furrowed at this.

No man disputed my possession of Genseric's great sword. In their eyes the sword was mine by law of combat. Indeed, I should have killed any who sought to contest my prize. The blade was huge, and while I had the strength to wield it, my movements were clumsy and untutored. Again my awkwardness with weaponry was laid to the wound I had suffered. Patiently the AEsir trained me in the use of sword and knife, axe and shield, bow and arrow. My natural strength and feral quickness made me learn such arts in a fraction of the time another youth would have required. Not many seasons had passed before my skill with the sword excelled that of my tutors, and I could speed an arrow through the eye of a reindeer as it fled in vain.

And yet, for all the respect my strength and skill in arms gained for me, I knew I was still as much an outsider among the

AEsir as I had been among my brothers of the pack. There was a strangeness about me that no veneer could conceal. Most shrugged and said my wound had left me with a streak of madness. Some, who remembered my savagery in those first months, might scowl at my crooked ankle and the white hair that matted my body more thickly than seemed good, but out of fear of my anger they held their suspicions to themselves.

At length the AEsir again looked hungrily upon the lands of the Vanir. Once more the war horns bellowed, and the tribe with whom I dwelt heeded its summons. With a high heart I marched with them, for lately existence within their village had grown stale, and I was eager to turn to other things.

As before, the borders of Asgard and Vanaheim resounded with countless deadly battles and individual duels. Our wars were not a great massing of army against army, but rather a long series of chance encounters between raiding parties, of ambushes and pillaged camps. We had no cities to burn, no kings or generals to command great armies--only the savage ferocity of desperate men who followed their clans to seize or to defend the frozen expanses whose bounty meant life or starvation. We fought not for princes nor for ideals, but for our bellies and our lives.

This time the scales of war favored the AEsir. Some said it was because of Ghor, the white-maned berserker whose reckless strength and mighty blade tore a gory swath through the Vanir ranks. Be that as it may, I found my prowess in battle and zeal for slaughter did little to overcome the indefinable barrier that separated me from my AEsir comrades.

The sun was falling beneath the ice-locked horizon, when we overtook a handful of stragglers from the Vanir retreat. A dismal lot, they were, aged and infirm, and scarcely worth the dulling of our blades. I raised my sword over a fallen man, grey-bearded and too ancient to fight. Briefly I noticed the scars on his thinning scalp from an old wound, saw the haunted look in his eyes as he awaited death. I knew then that he was fey, and held my blade to hear his words.

"That sword," the greybeard rasped. "How did you get it?"

"I took it from the Vanir chief who carried it not five years past," I laughed. "And paid him for it with a knife for his throat."

"Who are you?" he queried, staring at me strangely.

"I am called Ghor."

"But you are not AEsir!" the old man swore, his eyes looking beyond me. "I saw you as a babe, laid out on the ice. You were suckled by wolves, and you are a child of evil--but I know you for Genseric's fifth son, and your father's blood is on your hands!"

"Better than for mine to be on his hands," I sneered. "Say on, old one. How do you know of such matters?"

"I am Bragi," he whispered. "Of the Vanir clan to which you were born. Your mother is Gudrun of the Shining Locks, and your father was Genseric the Swordsman. You are the fifth of their sons, but because your leg was crooked, Gudrun bade Genseric to leave you upon the ice, saying she had already four strong sons with fine straight limbs. Ymir curse that day, for you have proven Genseric's bane, and now you turn upon your own people!"

"I have no people!" I growled. "And of Gudrun's four strong sons? How fared they?"

"They are their mother's pride. Raki the Swift, Sigismund the Bear, Obri the Cunning, and Alwin the Silent. Hear their names and tremble, for they shall avenge their father and sweeten the snows of Vanaheim with AEsir blood!"

I laughed and placed the point of my sword to his throat. "It is Ghor the Strong who craves vengeance, Bragi! Vengeance on my brothers who usurped my place at the fire! Vengeance on my mother who condemned her own babe to death! The gods favor my vengeance, else they would not have given my father into my hands for the killing. Let Gudrun and her sons beware the vengeance of Ghor! I am what I am because of their crime against me!"

"You are a child of evil!" Bragi swore fiercely. "There is evil in your blood and in your soul--I see it! I saw it then, as I fled from the vision of the wolves who suckled a human babe!"

"And what else do you now see, old one?"

"I see death," Bragi whispered.

"You see truly," I told him, and drove home the blade.

## GHOR'S REVENGE

By Joseph Payne Brennan

### Chapter III

The AESir tribe I fought among had had a successful sword reaping that icy day. In the evening they squatted around their fires and roasted succulent bits of hoarded meat to celebrate, but I brooded alone in my horse-hide tent.

The dying words of Bragi echoed in my ears: "Hear their names and tremble!" I did tremble, but not with fear--with rage. Fury swept through me like a fiery fever. I repeated the names of my hated brothers over and over again: "Raki the Swift", "Sigismund the Bear", "Obri the Cunning", "Alwin the Silent". And then there was Gudrun, at whose bidding I had been left on the frozen snows to await the fangs of the wolf pack. "Gudrun of the Shining Locks"! The day was not far off, I vowed, when those locks would lie entangled in a welter of blood and brain fragments!

More than once that night the killing madness overcame me to such an extent that I gripped Genseric's great sword and started to leave the tent. Ice stung my face and the wind howled like a hundred demons as I stared into the outside blackness. Each time I turned back, shaking with the savagery of my own blood hunger. The fierce desire for revenge was like an inward fire burning away at my very bone marrow.

But the white heat of hatred did not completely blot out my common sense. There was work to be done before I wreaked my vengeance. I would have to learn which tribe of the Vanir my kinsmen led. And I would have to find out where in Vanaheim their chief camp was located.

If I rushed out blindly, thirsting for blood, I might indeed kill dozens of Vanir clansmen--but I myself might be cut down before I found my hated brothers and mother.

As I sat alone in the darkness of my tent, I decided that I would adopt the tactics of the great grey wasteland wolves. I would prowl the perimeters of the Vanir outposts; I would lie in the shadows just beyond the light of their campfires. Sooner or later I would learn all I needed to know.

Shortly before a frigid dawn threw scattered light about the AESir camp, I slipped away. Guards had been posted, but I had no trouble evading them. Belly-down, I crept through the brittle-cold brush and not even the snap of a single twig betrayed my presence.

By the time a fog-shrouded disc of sun arose above the bleak barrens, I was miles from the AESir camp. Stopping briefly where a fringe of tundra grass provided cover, I ate a piece of dried venison which I carried in an improvised pouch.

I was confident that the AESir would shrug off my absence. Most of them believed I was half-mad anyway. If and when I needed their help, I felt sure they would welcome me back. In their deadly war with the Vanir, the great sword of Genseric would be sorely missed!

From that morning on, for over a fortnight, I lived like a wolf. If hunger became unbearable, I took time out to hunt. I could run a deer to earth. Not for nothing had I been raised with those tireless roving wraiths of the northern wilderness!

I headed north and slightly east, where I judged the main Vanir encampments lay. On several occasions I spotted heavily-armed Vanir war parties, but I avoided them, even though my hand tightened on the hilt of Genseric's mighty sword. Wholesale tribal killing would have to wait; first, I had personal

blood debts to pay!

In my mind, I repeated the names of my brothers and mother over and over. Raki the Swift, Sigismund the Bear, Obri the Cunning, Alwin the Silent--and Gudrun of the Shining Locks.

Their names became a refrain, rushing through my head even while I slept. Sometimes I sat bolt upright, roused from sleep, my hand convulsively tightening on Genseric's sword. Momentarily, I was sure they were nearby, awaiting my vengeance. Then I would settle back and sleep again, but the names, like some sort of evil insistent chant, went on ringing in my head.

I slept under the shelter of rocks, or stunted trees, or even on bare unyielding ice with snow falling heavily from starless skies. A plain shoulder tunic, consisting of scraped animal skins, covered my back and belly. Deerskin covered my feet. I wore nothing else save a hide belt to which were attached scabbards for my huge sword and a bone-handled knife, plus a small but powerful bow and a few arrows. I sometimes awoke buried in snow, but, like a wolf, I simply shook it off and roved on, none the worse.

One morning, the third week after I left the AESir camp, I noticed a feather of smoke float out above a small stand of larch trees a mile away.

There was little cover, but I made the most of it. Squirring over the frozen ground, scarcely more than a layer of gravel-laced ice, I inched toward the larches, taking advantage of every contour of the terrain which gave concealment.

It took me nearly a half hour to reach the larch grove but I was not too late. A small band of Vanir -- stragglers from a much larger group, I gathered -- were picking the bones of some burnt animal as they hunkered over a tiny fire.

"Hell's traces!" one of them exclaimed. "Raki may have our heads for this!"

I shivered as I heard the name, but I dared not make a sound. Instinctively my hand squeezed the hilt of Genseric's thirsty sword.

Another Vanir tossed a bone over his shoulder. He shrugged and growled. "Let him rave. We got cut off. What could we do? Don't worry. Raki and his brothers need every fighting man they can muster."

He leaned forward over the fire. "With Ghor leading them, the AESir may drive us into the Death Lands. Eternal night and not even moss to chew on!"

Skulking only yards away, I started at the sound of my own name. In the mouth of this Vanir, it sounded strange.

Another arose from the fire with an oath. "Ghor is blood and bone like the rest of us! We'll drive the AESir back to Asgard -- and glad to get there they'll be!"

Presently they all stood up, kicked snow over the campfire and headed northeast. Like a gaunt, ravenous wolf, I followed. Once one of them turned around, scowling, but I was already flat on the ice by the time his eyes swung in my direction. He looked right over me. Shrugging, he turned and went on.

There were five of them but I felt confident that I could have killed the whole lot, if I attacked while they were off guard. I had other plans.

They would lead me to Raki -- Raki the Swift, Sigismund the Bear, Obri the Cunning, Alwin the Silent -- and Gudrun of the Shining Locks.

The five Vanir traveled with deliberation. It was obvious that they were in no great rush to rejoin their comrades. I raged with impatience but there was no way that I could hurry them along. Above all, I wanted them to remain ignorant of my presence.

It took them nearly three days to reach their main camp. Meanwhile I followed in their footsteps, famished, savage, implacable. I crouched outside the circle of the firelight while they ate, my own belly grinding with hunger, my eyes burning. They became uneasy and subdued, as if they sensed they were being followed, but not once did they catch a glimpse of me. I crept over the ice fields and through the sparse thickets like a

wolf -- like the shadow of a wolf. Occasionally I ran across small game but I ignored it in spite of my ravenous hunger. I could not take the time, I felt, to run down game and eat it. I had only one driving purpose and nothing short of death itself would deter me.

At last the Vanir reached the outposts of the main camp. After a brief confab, the sentries let them pass and they disappeared from my sight.

For an hour or more I watched from a nearby point of trees. At length I decided to circle the entire camp. It was no easy task. Guards had been doubled; they were wary and alert. But my long years with the wolf pack paid off; I prowled the entire perimeter of the camp and not a sentry the wiser.

It was a large clan assemblage, gathered and geared for war. There seemed to be an incessant whetting of sword blades, a notching of arrows, a repair and reinforcement of the heavy hide shields.

Time after time I had the opportunity to slit the throat of some isolated Vanir guard, but I desisted, even though the fingers of my knife hand itched. The killing of a sentry would arouse the entire camp. That was the last thing I wanted.

Early on the morning of the second day I found what I sought: a large skin tent set somewhat apart from the others and closely guarded by two powerful Vanir. They kept constant patrol, hands on sword hilts, eyes searching. From time to time single Vanir, whom I judged to be sub-chieftains, strode toward the tent and were admitted after a close scrutiny by the guards. One of these visitors was let in only after he had lain his sword, knife and arrows outside the tent. He cursed the guards but complied.

War strategy was being planned within the tent and that could mean only one thing: inside were my hated brothers. My heart hammered against my ribs but I managed to restrain myself.

Just to the rear of the large tent was another, smaller one. I could not be sure but I felt convinced that this was the tent of Gudrun of the Shining Locks.

It was late morning before one of the brothers emerged. There was no doubt in my mind that it was Raki the Swift. I had heard that he bore a striking resemblance to Genseric, whose prowess had become a legend. Raki was a huge man, far over six feet in height, muscular yet rangy, with gleaming blue eyes and long yellow hair. He carried an oversize sword and I noticed that his shield was not made of animal hides but hammered metal -- rare in these parts.

The sweat burst out on me as I gripped the hilt of Genseric's fabled sword. I felt no fear of this swaggering giant -- only a hatred so intense I seemed to be on fire.

I needed every ounce of self-control I possessed to keep to my place of concealment in the fringe of woods and brush. But I forced myself to remain silent and motionless. I was confident that I could kill Raki in open combat, but I was sure there were three more of Genseric's sons in the tent behind him. And Gudrun, probably, in the small tent to the rear.

I wanted to make a clean sweep. It would be necessary for me to pick my own place and time, if I hoped to succeed.

After striding about a bit, and exchanging some words with the guards, Raki reentered the tent.

All day, at intervals, sub-chiefs and leading fighters visited the tent. I surmised that a massive attack was being prepared against the AESir. Genseric's sons were planning carefully. I sensed that the old days -- small war parties, hit-and-run tactics -- were drawing to a close. Soon there would be all-out war, with extermination the goal.

During the course of the day, as they ventured out at intervals, I got a good look at my other three brothers: Sigismund the Bear, shorter and broader than Raki, a veritable barrel of a body, with a thick neck and rather small head; Obri the Cunning, thin and lean, with crafty eyes and an expression of open contempt permanently etched on his unpleasant features; Alwin the Silent, another giant of a man, with hooded, enigmatic eyes and compressed lips which seldom opened for speech.

Towards late afternoon a tall amazon strode around the side of the tent and spoke to the guards. I knew at once it was Gudrun of the Shining Locks. She had become somewhat heavy-bodied, but her thick plaited hair still gleamed yellow in the afternoon sun and, had I been able to retain any sense of objectivity, I would have been forced to admit that she remained an attractive woman.

But I glared at her with a loathing which no words could encompass. I think she actually felt the withering blast of my hatred. She turned, frowning, and stared toward the brush where I lay concealed. One of the guards made some comment and started toward the woods but she shook her head and called him back.

I looked away, afraid that if I stared at her longer, she would indeed order the guards to beat through the scrub where I crouched.

Presently she returned to the small tent at the rear of the larger one.

As shadows fell over the camp, I made my plans. I would wait until the middle of the night before I struck. Disposing of the two guards should present no great problem. When they were safely out of the way, I would glide into the large tent with Genseric's great sword held at the ready....

I reasoned that it would be easier to fight inside the tent, than out. I would have the advantage of surprise for one thing, and in the relatively small confines of the tent there would be less room for four fighting men to maneuver. Outside the tent, on the other hand, I would be surrounded at once and attacked from all sides. If I could kill the guards and steal into the tent while my brothers still slept, the odds would be more in my favor.

In addition, I foresaw, the ring of sword blades and the clamor of raised voices would be at least partially muffled inside the tent. Outside, the racket might rouse the entire camp.

Although I felt no fear, I was well aware that the sons of Genseric the Sworder would fight savagely and to the death. My only fear, however -- if fear it might be called -- was that I could be wounded or driven off before my revenge was complete. The thought gnawed at me. My own attack, I therefore determined, must be swift, merciless and efficient. The guards must make no outcry and the camp must under no conditions be aroused. I would have to strike with the speed and silence of Death itself.

The hours dragged. At first half a moon hung in the sky, but soon heavy cloud banks covered it completely. As full darkness closed in, the guards paced restlessly. Once a snow owl hooted somewhere in the nearby thickets.

Inch by inch, foot by foot, I squirmed out of the woods. I made no more sound than a shadow makes as it falls on frozen ground. No creeping tundra wolf could have advanced more silently than I.

At last I slid within sword range of the nearest guard. I bided my time. Leaving Genseric's gleaming sword in its scabbard, I drew my short bone-handled knife and waited.

The unsuspecting guard came within two feet, paused, turned and started to retrace his footsteps. I left the ground like an arrow sped from the bow. While one arm circled the guard's mouth to stifle any cries, the other whipped the knife blade across his throat, severing the jugular. Even with his life-blood spurting out, he tried to fight back. It was useless. Only death could have broken my grip. When his body grew limp, I eased it to the icy ground and wriggled along through the darkness toward the second guard like a deadly night adder.

He was standing still, staring off into the blackness, when my knife slashed across his throat. He twisted about and attempted to draw his sword but never managed to lift it more than an inch or two out of the scabbard. When his struggles ended, I drew my arm away from his face and very carefully tipped him backwards to the ground.

Then I started for the tent of Genseric's sons.

I paused at the flap and listened. Heavy snoring came from within. I forced myself to wait a full five minutes, hand on sword



hilt, but no other sound save that of snoring reached my ears.

Drawing Genseric's heavy sword, I stepped just inside the tent, letting my eyes adjust to the interior. In spite of the unrelieved darkness, I could presently make out the shadowy forms of four sleeping figures.

Lifting the massive sword high over my head, I crept toward the skin bed of the nearest. In spite of my stealth, something -- some obscure unspoken warning, some mental image of danger -- must have reached the brain of the sleeping man. He sat up suddenly, with a soft grunt. I judged it was Sigismund the Bear.

Waiting no longer, I lunged toward the pile of skins. The legendary sword of Genseric swung downward in a mighty sweeping arc, cleaving through skull, rib-cage, and spine. The Bear toppled backwards, split apart like a pine riven by a lightning bolt.

I had scarcely drawn the word clear when someone bounded from an adjacent bed of skins. It was Raki and I knew now why he was known as the Swift. He must have slept sword in hand, because the blade of his slashing weapon whistled within a half inch of my face as I leaped backwards toward the side of the tent.

Confident, he came on, but luck was with me. As he was about to slash again, he slipped on one of the skin blankets. Momentarily, he was thrown slightly off balance. It was all the opening I needed. Genseric's sword licked out, thrust forward with all my strength, and buried itself halfway to the hilt in Raki's chest. To my amazement, he held onto his own sword and slashed at me again. But it was the last instinctive movement of a dying man.

Two more figures were coming at me now and I saw there was no time to be lost. With a tremendous heave, I tore Genseric's sword out of Raki's breast and turned to meet Obri the Cunning and Alwin the Silent.

As Raki crashed to the ground, Alwin, the other giant, jumped forward, hacking at my head. I felt the tip of his blade cut through my scalp and scrape against bone and I laughed.

The fabled sword of Genseric became like a live thing in my hand. It leaped and slashed and parried and although Alwin fought with great skill, his efforts seemed clumsy and ponderous compared with my own.

As we fought, Obri the Cunning circled about, dagger in hand, striking at me like a coiled snake as I came within range. Once I felt his knife slice through my left forearm but I paid no attention.

Muttering with rage and exasperation, Alwin made a ferocious lunge with his oversize sword. It was his last. He was just a fraction of a second too slow in recovering. The great sword of Genseric, his father, sang through the air and Alwin's head spun off.

Grinning, I turned toward Obri. Quickly sheathing his knife, he backed off and drew, not his sword as I had expected, but a bow. An arrow smashed into my right shoulder and I knew more would be streaking toward me before I could reach him. Lifting Genseric's sword in both hands, by hilt and tip, I hurled it straight at him.

The impact of the heavy blade knocked him off his feet as another arrow hissed past my head. With a great bound, I sprang across the tent. My hands found Obri's throat before he could draw his knife. As I squeezed, I could see his bulging eyes shine wildly in the darkness. Bones cracked; his tongue protruded. Blood poured out his mouth and he went limp.

Flinging his body aside, I recovered Genseric's sword, strode to the tent flap and listened. I heard nothing. I surmised, correctly, that the brief sound of clashing sword blades had been effectively muffled by the horse-hide tent.

Blood was flowing out of my scalp, forearm and shoulder, but I paid no attention.

Pausing only momentarily as I slipped outside, I hurried through the darkness to the small tent at the back.

The sound of heavy, regular breathing reached me as I ap-

proached the tent flap. Without stopping, I stepped inside. Like a wolf, I could now see well in the darkness and I had no trouble making out a bulky form lying on skins toward the rear of the tent.

Slipping out my bone-handled knife, I held it by the blade, judged the blow carefully and swung the handle of the knife against Gudrun's temple. She jerked once but made no sound. Her breathing became harsh and irregular.

Hoping I had not struck too hard, I threw her over my shoulder like the carcass of a deer and hurried out of the tent.

Twenty minutes later I was well away from the camp and deep in scrub woods which covered much of the area. I walked swiftly, in spite of my burden, stopping only long enough to ram a crumpled piece of rabbit skin inside the woman's mouth. If she revived and tried to scream, the gage would turn her cries into little more than whimpers.

I estimated that I still had several hours before the bodies were discovered and the alarm sounded. But I could not be positive. I could not be sure that the two guards had been put on station for the entire night. They might be relieved. In that case, I would have only a few more minutes.

The night remained quiet. I heard no sounds save the occasional hoot of a snow owl, or the scutter of tiny feet as some small animal scurried away.

In spite of my wounds and the weight I carried, I was not even winded when I finally stopped.

Dumping Gudrun on the icy-covered ground, I wiped the blood from my face. Then I bent, ripped the gag from her mouth and stripped off every last shred of her clothes -- skin garments made doubly soft by the patient gums of elderly Vanir women.

At length she stirred, groaned and opened her eyes. I grinned down at her. She recognized me at once, in spite of my blood-smearred face, and sat up, snarling.

I prodded her with my foot. "Well, old hag, your crippled frog has hopped back to play a little game!"

Swaying, she stood up and beat at me with both fists. Dodging, I stuck out my foot and she crashed to the ground again.

"Frogs never forget," I told her, "nor does Ghor the Strong whom you had set out for the wolves to devour!"

She sat up again, glaring at me. "A pity they didn't! I should have strangled you myself! Give me a knife and we shall see who is left for the wolves!"

"I don't fight females," I said. "Besides, I have other plans for you!"

She sneered. "You are afraid to fight me with cold steel!"

I shrugged and laughed. "Ask your four sons if Ghor the Strong is afraid to fight. They lie back in their tent, still as in sleep -- but no longer do they snore!"

I saw her face whiten. She remained silent.

"Enough of this," I growled. "Get up, hag, and walk."

She got up without another word and started off, barefooted, across the ice. She staggered and I saw that already she was starting to turn blue with the cold.

When we reached the middle of a wide expanse, open to the frigid winds, I reached out and sent her crashing to earth again. Shivering, half-dead with the cold, she continued to glare up at me.

I stared down without pity. "You will be warm soon enough, Gudrun of the Shining Locks," I assured her. "Warm in the hungry bellies of the wolf pack!"

She made no reply and I walked away. When I reached the edge of a ragged fringe of fir trees, I stopped, turned and lifted my head. From my throat issued the long-drawn, eerie howl of the hunting wolf. I repeated the call three times. Then I squatted on my haunches and waited.

Answering howls rose in the night air. I could tell by the sounds that the pack was famished. They came on swiftly.

Gudrun had struggled to her knees. She knelt motionless, like an image carved out of blue stone.

Soon enough the pack swung into view, long, lean hunters of

the night with lolling tongues and glinting green-yellow eyes. Their grey coats looked mangy and thin. The hunting had not been good.

Paying no attention to me, they headed straight for Gudrun, who remained kneeling motionless.

I thought she was already frozen to death, but as the lead wolf leaped for her throat, she dodged aside, gripped it by the hind legs and swung it like a scythe.

In spite of my passionate hatred, I felt a brief flash of grudging admiration for the doomed woman.

Her maneuver held off death only for minutes however. The lead wolf finally wrenched itself from her freezing hands and the pack closed in for the kill.

Even then she fought on. As she went down under the ravenous, threshing grey shapes, I saw her sink her teeth into one of the wolves' throats.

That was her final act. Seconds later she was being torn to pieces.

I sat and watched as the pack fed, snarling and fighting among themselves. A few minutes later there was nothing left on the ice except smears of blood and a few of the larger bones.

The pack gathered together, swung in my direction, stopped, sat back on their haunches, howled in unison and trotted off into the night.

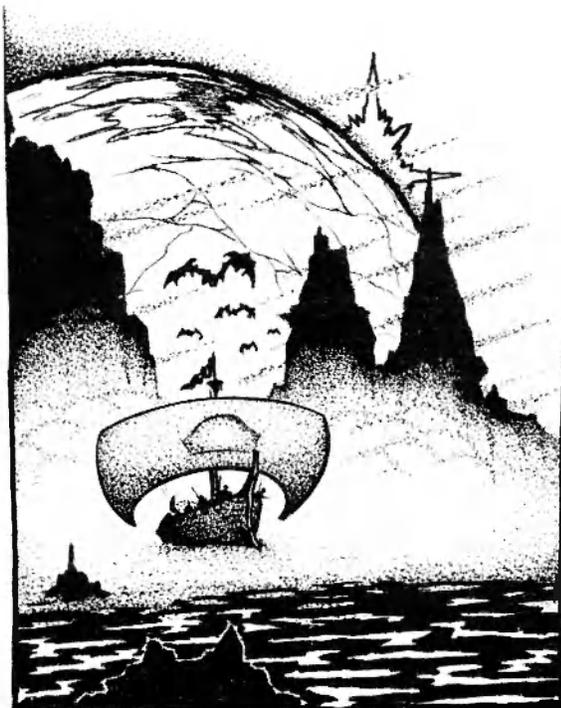
I walked out where the wolves had fed. The shining locks of Gudrun lay gleaming on the ice, tangled together with stiffening blood and bits of brain stuff. The great jaws of the starving beasts had even cracked open Gudrun's skull.

My blood debt was finally paid.

I strode off, across the expanse of ice, into the fir trees. From far away, over the freezing plains, I heard the subdued but growing murmur of many voices.

My night's earlier handiwork, I assumed, had been discovered.

(To be continued next issue by Richard Tierney, Michael Moorcock and Charles Saunders.)



## GALILEO SAW THE TRUTH

By Gregory Nicoll

The Tuscan artist, at his bench, invents a thing quite new,  
An optic orb of shining stone, ringed in white and blue;  
And through this whirling piece of glass, a wondrous thing he sees:

Great rows of troops, with capes and banners -- flapping in the breeze.

Advancing through the eons, through time's spectral gloom,  
One hundred thousand ancient soldiers, marching to their doom.

The orb he turns and then he finds, a stirring sight to see,  
The swords of Conan and King Kull, within a bloody spree.  
The shields they break and axes flash, through blood and bones and brains,

Horses scream as riders die, and Chaos, supreme, reigns.  
Advancing through the eons, through time's spectral gloom,  
One hundred thousand ancient soldiers, marching to their doom.

And through the piece of oddly glass, looms a conflict large,  
Hal and Hotspur meet with blades, and Worcester leads the charge.

With wood and steel the foes they slay, and shirts of mail they tore;

Many a good tall fellow served up to the smoky war.  
Advancing through the eons, through time's spectral gloom,  
One hundred thousand ancient soldiers, marching to their doom.

The scenes they shift and the artist sees, many more views of death,

The sounds of cannons choking flame, and conquerors' hard breath.

In lobster robes, and with Brown Bess, they march in legions wide;

Shots rake through well-ordered ranks and widow many a bride.  
Advancing through the eons, through time's spectral gloom,  
One hundred thousand ancient soldiers, marching to their doom.

The artist finds another clash, this one horrid to behold.  
Armies charging, Blue and Gray, each quite strong and bold.  
The skies are graced with flying craft, ships sail beneath the waves,

Repeaters crack with rapid fire and send men to early graves.  
Advancing through the eons, through time's spectral gloom,  
One hundred thousand ancient soldiers, marching to their doom.

A tyrant then comes centerstage, and thousands hear his song.  
A flag of red with four-armed cross; and Panzer barrels long.  
Then surprises come at Harbor Red (what madmen call it Pearl?)

A mushroom cloud picks up the Earth, and dancing atoms swirl.  
Advancing through the eons, through time's spectral gloom,  
One hundred thousand ancient soldiers, marching to their doom.

Unceasing shows the optic orb, on goes the grisly show,  
The air now rings with howl of rays, and rockets set aglow;  
Men take their plaything -- war, that is -- no warnings do they mind,

and carry it to distant stars, and worlds they've yet to find.  
Advancing through the eons, through time's spectral gloom,  
One hundred thousand ancient soldiers, marching to their doom.

The Tuscan takes the tiny thing, and hefts it in his hand,  
And smashes it to pieces -- what it shows he cannot stand;  
But though he tries to break the truth, he finds its texture hardest;

Fear of truth destroyed the glass, so too it killed the artist.  
Advancing through the eons, through time's spectral gloom,  
One hundred thousand ancient soldiers, marching to their doom.

# REH Editors/Publishers ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

## Part II

*Last issue we began the REH Editors-Publishers Round Table discussion which includes responses by all the current editors and-or publishers of fanzines with a Robert E. Howard emphasis. Because of space considerations we were forced to split the feature into two parts. Here is the second and concluding portion of the round table discussion. Thanks for your patience. I should perhaps mention that the answers were provided early last summer so some of the responses may be dated. Hope you enjoy this insight into the people behind the zines.-Editor.*

**Question:** What do you see as the future of Howard fandom?

**BACON:** Fandom in any area follows a cycle. Obviously REH Fandom is on the upward curve of interest. It'll diminish after a while. Some die-hard fans will remain, publishers will still publish Howardana and a few of the current fanzines will continue to exist. The REH "freak" will lose interest but the individual who enjoyed the exploits of Howard characters and is not on the bandwagon because "everyone reads Conan" will remain. It'll probably be a healthier time for the true enthusiast.

**FENNER:** I can't say for sure. If the field can shake off some of the exploiters, REH may continue to gain in popularity, perhaps reaching, eventually, the same plane attained by Burroughs. Maybe. A good movie based on one of his characters wouldn't hurt. Who knows? You can't tell what the public will buy or support next.

**HAMILTON:** I see a great future for Howard fandom. Previously unpublished REH stories are still in the process of being published. **THE LAST CELT** is another asset to Howard fandom. We have seen the rise of, in my opinion, the greatest Howard artist, Steve Fabian. Hopefully there might still be some Howard manuscripts located. The Howard boom is here to stay for a while. My greatest regret is that **REH** isn't here to share it with us.

**McHANEY:** Believe it or not, I expect this thing to go on another five years. By then, though, people will start getting sick of the last dregs of Howard material, and support will dwindle down to the same relegation that Burroughs fandom has now. It has gotten too out of hand to have any lesser status than that, though, and the REH fans who only know him through the comics will be satiating their idiocy on some new form of zap pow.

**ROARK:** Howard fandom is due to taper off a bit, I should think. However, there'll always be a demand for his work. . . much as there has been for HPL's. Eventually I hope that REH fandom grows a bit with the times and sees that there is more to heroic fantasy than Robert E. Howard. One of my main gripes with any specialized fandom has always been their insane "tunnel vision"; they can only see one thing at a time, and miss a lot of other good material for this reason. Just as there is more to English literature than Dickens, there is more to heroic fantasy than just REH'S WORKS. Several young writers are

doing superb things in the genre: Karl Wagner, Dick Tierney, Dave Smith and others are excellent, but have had a helluva time attracting readers, simply because both readers and publishers are afraid to test their feet in unknown waters. And it's a damned shame.

**SASSER:** Howard fandom has a bright and lengthy future if interest continues. As many know, a large number of REH's stories will be appearing in paperback -- both here and in England. Of course, there are the Marvel Comics, hardbacks, booklets, etc.; all of which are going strong and selling well.

**SCITHERS:** Decline when people realize it's being overexploited.

**WARFIELD:** I think there will always be a REH fandom, but expect it to diminish considerably in coming years. It will most likely leave the phenomena stage, and return to the smaller cult it enjoyed in years past.

**Question:** Is it important for fan publishers to work together as much as possible? If so, how might we better relations?

**BACON:** I feel that fan-ed's should work together, and I think that most do (more or less). I know I'm constantly trading pubs with other fan-ed's and trying to give them publicity in the News Notes section of FC. I think that mutual plugging of products help. If a fan-ed doesn't support a given zine or feels it's a rip off, then of course he shouldn't plug it. But barring that type of situation, I feel that one editor should assist another as much as possible. I've called on other fan-ed's for advice and criticism and sometimes (as much as I hate to admit it) the criticisms have been most helpful. . . even the belligerently put forth ones. Constructive comments, support thru cooperative sales blurbs and assistance in locating authors, artists, etc. are the main areas I think need to exist. No one is just born knowing how to contact Fabian, Krenkel, Jacobi, Conrad, de Camp or even Glenn Lord. This kind of assistance helped get FC going and is just what it needed.

**FENNER:** Other than keeping each other informed about possible products and features so we won't be stepping on everyone's toes, I really don't think that it's imperative to "work together" per se. I can't help but feel that if you work on your own, your publication will be more original, fresher, and ultimately more prone to be personally satisfying. It also guarantees variety in the genre, which is important. Competition's the life blood, they say, and I agree. Which isn't to say that you shouldn't be friends with your fellow publishers/editors: hell, they're the only ones likely to give you a sincere, constructive loc. Usually.

**HAMILTON:** Yes, it is my belief that fan publishers should work together as much as possible. They should check the different zines and tell the publishers where improvements should be made based on their own experience. They might know less expensive printers or artists whose work should be published which might prove beneficial to fans and zines involved.

**McHANEY:** Yeh, there's nothing that takes the fun out of all

this like a feud will. I think we should keep apart as much as possible, to be able to better present our own ideas, though we all learn from mistakes. We should pass along any advice, etc. we learn from our screw-ups. I'd like all the REH zines to combine forces just once in an effort similar to **TOADSTOOL WINE**, to see what everyone could come up with in the face of such a collaboration. I've "collaborated" about half a dozen times, and though the outcome wasn't always satisfactory, the result was usually fun, at least. I'd love to spend a week with all the other fanzine editors (at different times) and see what we could come up with. That might not be possible with all of them, since some of us are quite headstrong and domineering, and I don't think I could play second fiddle.

**ROARK:** I think that we ought to keep each other informed as to what we're doing, so we don't step on each other's toes, or projects. But I don't feel that it is important to spill your guts to everyone -- gotta have some secrets, ya know. I correspond more or less regularly with most of my fellow fan editors and despite some differences in opinion, I find a lot of fun in it. I wish we could all get together sometime and share a wee dram of spirits; **THAT** would help us communicate better! When we sobered up, that is. . . I've always found that nothing brings people closer than mutual hangovers.

**SASSER:** Definitely. It might be a good idea for each publisher to do a page or two of news about his latest publishing efforts and mail copies of this to the other publishers.

**SCITHERS:** Pretentiously worded question; better relations can be had by writing letters to each other more frequently.

**WARFIELD:** It is not a necessity, but a luxury we can all afford. Most of us already correspond, exchange pubs and viewpoints. We could better relations by avoiding ego conflicts, and having more patience with conflicting opinions.

**Question:** What do you think of your own publication, and how would you better your product?

**BACON:** I've tried for diversity in the range of fantasy topics which were covered in FC. At the same time I've tried to put together kind of a package concept where we may run an article on a given author plus some of his verse and fiction plus maybe an art portfolio based upon the works of that given author (such as the Algernon Blackwood section in FC No. 4-5 or the Cthulhu Mythos emphasis in FC No. 7). These have not always worked. It's hard to emphasize diversity and still show unity. Layout in FC has improved but continues to need work. I feel the quality of both artwork and written word has improved but the standard still needs to be raised higher. The one continuing criticism of FC has been the use of multi-colored papers (which we use more sparingly now) and the lack of a wrap around binding. Beginning with FC No. 8 (May 1976) FC will be professionally typeset, with justified margins, wrap around binding, two color covers and printed on a coated stock. That will change the appearance from a rough "fannish" look to a more professional look. I think the change is needed. Other areas that I intend to try improvements include the use of more professional artists and authors and a continued search for the best fan talent available. It has always been one of FC's goals to utilize and publish work by fans. There's a lot of raw talent that ought to be utilized.

In the currently running debate in FC (letters pages) one positive benefit has been the realization (Warfield was the catalyst for this) that FC ought to not only reprint those little gems from the old pulp magazines that haven't seen print elsewhere but more importantly to try to provide a place for work by the current "names" in the industry. That's why you'll find names like de Camp, Carter, Tierney, Jacobi, Brennan, Wagner, and others appearing under the Stygian Isle Press

imprint. My hope is that other names such as Leiber, Moorcock, C. L. Moore and others will also appear. Many of these individuals have been contacted and more will be. Fan-eds need to (within their financial limits) bring more NEW fiction and verse to their readers.

**FENNER:** It's got its faults and it needs quite a bit of work. But I'm proud of the booger. It may not be great, but I likes 'er! Improvements? I'd like to get some unpublished REH poetry. add some color to the insides, get more photos of Howard, go 3 column reduced type, lower the price, and anything else that I or one of our readers might think of. It's been suggested that we branch out. . . . cover other fantasy authors' achievements. But then we wouldn't be an REH 'zine anymore, would we?

**HAMILTON:** Since I don't publish a zine anymore I don't feel the need to answer.

**McHANEY:** I won't dwell on my pre-Howard zines. As far as the Howard stuff goes, most of what I did in my first year was real crap. I'd never done any experimentation away from the standard formats until last year. It's too bad I didn't get that out of my system earlier. I also used an incredible amount of bad judgement for art, etc. I decided the only way to improve my material and my circulation was to stop clowning around and get rid of my fannish attitudes; after all, I spent years of college in English and Journalism, learning to edit, write, do layouts, etc., so why waste that knowledge on just a fanzine? The new **HOWARD REVIEW** (No. 5) is where I show my stuff. From now on, if it isn't something I can be proud of, I'm wasting my time, and I am not proud of my first year of Howard publishing, with the possible exception of my "second edition" of the first issue.

**ROARK:** I like it, with reservations. Time is always a killer -- I truly wish that we had twice as long to commission artwork and do the layouts, but I've always felt that putting out a zine on a regular schedule was very important if you plan to hold fan interest. More color, more pages, more actual wordage -- I think all this would help. My dream is to do the ultimate fanzine -- with over half the pages in color, **LIFE MAGAZINE** size. Somehow, I doubt if it'll ever come off! Nevertheless, we plan to keep our collective noses to the grindstone -- God willing!

**SASSER:** I am really proud of it and happy that it is being received by REH fandom. I am planning on improving TGR with each successive issue. Typeset and color are in my plans for the future, and I still hold some faint hope for Howard fiction.

**SCITHERS:** Impossible to answer that question without seeming either a wittold or a braggart.

**WARFIELD:** No one can view his own work completely unbiased. Also, no one short of a conceited snob could not wish for improvement. I am never completely satisfied with any of my products.

At this writing, I'm unhappy with the printing end of my pubs. Type is not "crisp" enough, and detail in art is being lost. I'm working on that, and exploring ways to keep prices down and quality up. . . . which is quite difficult. Printers are unsympathetic, to say the least, to our problems.

**Question:** What do you think were Howard's merits as a writer, as opposed to his being a fan phenomena?

**BACON:** Howard was strong on action and in some cases managed some pretty good character development. His imagination was monumental. . . . it had to be for him to create whole cities, continents and situations that he never encountered in the first person. As many pulp writers, he wrote for a per word fee, and that tended to make him wordy at time but

it's never diminished my enjoyment of his fiction. Some of his verse is (in format and style) unsurpassed. Some is pretty rank stuff. Surprisingly even some of the verse published in recent months ranks high among the "canon" of verse he left behind (that's to say the unpublished verse may be reject material from the pulps of the day, but they didn't always print Howard's best). I enjoy reading Howardana and have re-read many of his tales (something no other author except maybe Asimov has induced me to do). Long after the Howard craze is dead, I imagine I'll still be sitting with Lancer paperback in hand.

**FENNER:** I think that Howard had a wonderful imagination which enabled him to capture that certain mood and flair that makes adventure fiction -- particularly his -- so much fun to experience. He wasn't another Dickens or Steinbeck as some narrow-minded folk might think. Still his finished work is quite entertaining and most times well written. I'm just curious as to what he would have evolved into if he hadn't committed suicide.

**HAMILTON:** I consider Howard's greatest merit to be the fact that he put himself in every story; it wasn't Conan in battle it was **Bob** himself! His knowledge of ancient history was another asset. Since S & S is very popular nowadays it's easy to see why REH is so popular. Plus his Conan and Solomon Kane stories had a supernatural element to them.

**McHANEY:** When Howard is no longer considered a "fan phenomenon" he'll be remembered as a powerful and occasionally remarkable writer. That's the way it was before -- it will be that way again. It's just a matter of time.

**ROARK:** Colorful action, narrative drive and pacing, mood and expert handling of the "heroic" figure are Howard's major pluses as a writer. At times, I feel his merits are over-rated by well-meaning fans of his works, but I would place several of his stories in the category of "classics within their genre"; "Beyond the Black River," "Pigeons from Hell," "The Dark Man," "Worms of the Earth," "Meet Cap'n Kidd," and "The Lion of Tiberias" stand out quite vividly in my memory. Most of all, REH was lucky -- fate is a high-roller at the table of literary resurrection and Howard came up a seven. If not for the upsurge of interest in nostalgia--pulp fiction, I have a spooky feeling that REH would've been a "lost" author.

**SASSER:** Howard was a natural storyteller who happened to be born in Texas, which, along with his distinct personality, made him the great writer that he was. Most Texans are born romantics -- imagine if REH had been born in Saginaw, Michigan! He'd probably written for farm journals! This may sound hokey, but REH's writings and general outlooks on life have had a profound effect on me, personally. Not that I consider him a messiah, but he did show me the way in many things. As a fan phenomena, Howard appeals to different people for different reasons. A theme popular today, especially in the movies (e.g., "Serpico," "One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest," "All the President's Men," etc.) if the hero or heroes alone against the system. The bulk of Howard's yarns feature this theme. Of course, REH's stories feature a chance for one to escape to the worlds of fantasy and such and not many can pass up a bit of escapism.

**SCITHERS:** Howard's strength as a writer are precisely why he is popular now.

**WARFIELD:** Howard was a superb storyteller, with a rich reservoir of knowledge and imagination. He is a fan phenomena because of his ability to entertain.

**Question:** Does producing a magazine infringe on your "real life" activities? Do you think it is worth the trouble?

**BACON:** Anyone who publishes a fanzine and claims it doesn't infringe upon his personal life either is lying or doesn't have a personal life. You can't have a wife, two daughters, be in the process of buying a house and re-modeling it, take active part in church and job activities and not let something ride. My biggest concern is that I do not fail in my role as a husband and father. If I saw those relationships being damaged, then I'd quickly give up FC. I hope that never happens though. Right now to make things fit, I do FC work on breaks from work in the morning and afternoon, sit with sandwich in hand at the typewriter over lunch hour plus I work on FC usually between 7:15 a.m. and when I start work at 8 a.m. and then work on it from 5 p.m. until 5:15 or 5:30 p.m. If I get too far behind, I stay at work an evening and try to catch up. If things are slow during the day, I'll try to hammer out an editorial or answer a letter. Generally, I cram so as not to let FC cut into evenings with my wife and two young 'uns. This has got to be worth the hassle. . . .I'm doing it aren't I?

**FENNER:** Conceivably it could, but it doesn't. I don't let it and I feel sorry for those people whose lives are ruled by their fan activities. Rather sad, to my way of thinking. **REH:LSF** is a hobby; one that can be continued or dropped. + Sometimes I'll get disgusted and say such and such an issue'll be the last one. But when the thing's completed I usually forget most of the hassles -- it's an accomplishment of sorts. Worth it? I'd say so.

+ I've never broken a date, missed a flick or postponed anything just to work on the 'zine.

**HAMILTON:** My life has truly become a rat race since I started publishing. Lots of times I would type **CROSS PLAINS** till 5 o'clock in the morning. I have very little if any time left for myself. Yes, I do think it's worth the trouble. I enjoy my correspondence with Glenn Lord, E. Hoffman Price, Joseph Payne Brennan, Stuart Schiff, Fred Blosser, Steve Fabian, etc.

**McHANEY:** I don't have a "real life" -- only a surreal one. It's worth "doing", but I do wish that once I "did it" I could be through with it.

**ROARK:** It infringes on my time, naturally. . .but only as much as I allow it to. If one's interest takes up too much of one's life, it can get to be ridiculous. You just have to adjust your thinking to the fact. If I didn't feel it was all worthwhile. . . .the way to the top is thorny, oh my brothers. . . .I'd chuck it all I enjoy the feeling of accomplishment, so I make room in my schedule for working on it.

**SASSER:** I am afraid it does, but I get a great deal of enjoyment out of TGR. Right now I do everything (layout, lettering, typing, etc.), which gets to be a bore at times. Overall, I do like working on it, but sometimes I have to get away from it for a few days. If I didn't think it was worth the trouble, I wouldn't be doing it. I don't care if I'm reaching just one fan with TGR, that's one more than I was reaching without it.

**SCITHERS:** Yes. Probably not.

**WARFIELD:** I'm not sure I like the word "interfere." My hobby is part of my life. It takes time, money, etc. If it really caused serious problems ("interfered"), I'd quit. If I didn't find it to be worthwhile, I wouldn't do it.

**Question:** How much of what you do is governed by reader response? Do you care what your readers want?

**BACON:** I do care what readers want and ask for. Some of it is pretty hard to come by. But by and large readers have helped FC a great deal. Former subscribers are now contributing verse, fiction, columns and artwork. Readers have helped me

located copies of long out of print works for us to reprint. Readers have helped almost as much as fellow fan-eds in providing contacts for professional art and fiction.

**FENNER:** You know, I wish I could stand up and say, "Why, gol-durn, ever'thing in our mag was suggested by our readers," but that'd be a bunch of crap. Of what little reader response we get only a very tiny fraction ever suggests anything; I guess the majority don't realize just how much we want their help. We're pretty much on our own and can only judge our mistakes or successes afterward by the letters we do receive. We care what the readers want and try to gauge our features to what we think they would like to see. Without them we couldn't continue the magazine and we do our best to make them feel like they're coming out the winner in this transaction. I feel very strongly on this point.

**HAMILTON:** To some extent CP was governed by reader response. I care what readers want if it is within reason.

**McHANEY:** I care about what my readers want, but I do what I want to do. Many people want a letter column, but I don't give a damn about printing praise or criticism, and no one has written anything controversial or even interesting, aside from what I mentioned above. If readers want to know what others think of the magazine, let them find out for themselves. I don't ignore suggestion, frequently consider them, and occasionally use them, if they are in line with my way of thinking. I do my magazine because I enjoy it, and being selfish, I can enjoy the contents only if they are right for me.

**ROARK:** Frankly, I wish more people would write and let us know what they want in our publications! We try to gauge content on fan interest, but we need more opinions to base our work on. I didn't believe the old whine about "the silent majority" until LSF came along -- I do now. We have a few staunch supporters who always give us sound criticisms and opinions (John, Bob, Marty -- you know who you are!) and we appreciate it. But dammit, we need more to go on! We read, analyze and try to answer all of our mail, so you're not talking to an unappreciative audience.

**SASSER:** I listen closely to what my readers say, as the FANS make the fanzine. I do try to please the bulk of them -- it's impossible to please them all. I know I like other people to listen to what I have to say about their publications and I care what others want from me.

**SCITHERS:** Apparently this question wasn't proof-read before being sent out."

+Ed. Note: Mr. Scithers is referring to a typographical error in the original question.

**WARFIELD:** I do not see how anyone can hope to sell a products that no one wants, so readers are, in essence, a magazine! I do find the majority of readers to be silent; so a minority have more of a say. An unfortunate circumstance.

**Question:** What attitude do you think your zine should have -- scholarly, lighthearted or wailing dirge?

**BACON:** FC should in some instances be scholarly. In other cases, it should be a rapping place for comments on current happenings in Fandom. Even the lighthearted has a place. I hope that the tone of FC is set by Epistle Express (our letters pages). I view it as communicative, inquiring, sometimes prone to debate and criticism; but always open to new ideas and opinions.

**FENNER:** Unless a magazine runs the gamut of all the attitudes -- those that are mentioned and others -- I think that it's fallen short of its potential. A well rounded approach seems to be the most appealing.

**HAMILTON:** Since I don't publish a zine anymore I don't feel the need to answer.

**McHANEY:** A combination of the first two - never a dirge. The sight of some poor fool crying all over himself makes me puke.

**ROARK:** I think all the attitudes have their place, but all of them can go too far. Humor is quite important, in my opinion: when you get above laughing at yourself, you deserve a pie in the kisser! Giving the readers the truth is important, too... as is keeping up a respectable image. As long as you don't start acting like an ass, you'll come out OK with few scars.

**SASSER:** Oh, I suppose TGR is a bit scholarly, but overall is light hearted. People read fanzines for entertainment, not to be depressed by pages and pages of silly analytical and obituary stuff about Robert E. Howard. Hell, Two-Gun loved to laugh and so do we all.

**SCITHERS:** Yes, yes and no, respectively.

**WARFIELD:** I don't really approve of such limited tags. I believe in an intellectual balance of scholarly and lightheartedness.

**Question:** Do you think that artwork plays an important role in your publication--both as a selling point and for graphic appeal?

**BACON:** As I stated back in question 6, I have always wanted FC to be a "graphic" type of product. Despite about 6-7 years of art school courses at the Flint Institute of Arts, I find myself a very poor artist. I have, however, a great deal of appreciation for the artist and his multitude of mediums. I hope that shows thru in the type of zine I produce. To be frank, most artwork is NOT a selling point unless it's "big name" stuff. Adams, Barry Smith, Conrad, Fabian, Eisner and many others help sell a zine. But some of the best work (I feel) on an even basis with the pros comes from the fan artist.

**FENNER:** Definitely, on all counts. Art work is part of our personality and one of our strongest selling points. We try to keep things balanced; something for everyone has been our goal. I'm a big art fan -- doesn't matter who does it or what the subject matter is, as long as it's done with style. It should be noted that LSF No. 2 was our quickest selling issue, mainly because of the Barry Smith interview and illustrations. I'm disappointed, though, when we get locs from customers who admit to not reading the mag, but would like us to get Neal Adams to illustrate next issue's Howard story.

**HAMILTON:** Yes, artwork plays a very important part in my publications; I should say good artwork. It is an excellent selling point, plus the graphic appeal it adds.

**McHANEY:** Yes.

**ROARK:** Hell, yes! I like art and enjoy having it around -- graphic design is quite important. As a selling point, it is nearly as important as everything else in the zine -- art & comics fans far outnumber weird--S&S--SF fans, so you're able to reach a completely different audience with artwork. I do tire of the letters that sing the praises of a certain artist while simultaneously informing us that they haven't read anything. Is reading a lost art? I doubt if we'll ever know.

**SASSER:** Artwork is what the fans want -- as I learned very quickly. The art can make or break a 'zine. It is definitely very important to have art to go with the text, and of course, a number of well known artists help a great deal in the way of sales.

**SCITHERS:** Very, very much so.

**WARFIELD:** Art is a definite plus factor. However, fans differ greatly in what they consider good art.

**Question:** What has proven to be your most popular feature, outside of any Howard fiction you might print?

**BACON:** Epistle Express is the most popular feature next to REH material. Readers enjoy measuring their observations of an issue against those of other readers. Professionals enjoy the comments of fans and fans enjoy the behind-the-scenes view offered via LOCs by pros. Debate and controversy help. I try not to run letters of the "I loved your swell fanzine" variety unless they go further with specific comments on FC or a debate currently in progress or make statements relative to the Fantasy genre which other readers might enjoy comment upon disagree with. We've had a very active readership and I hope it continues.

**FENNER:** It's pretty evenly divided among the art work, the interviews, and strangely, the photographic folios based on REH's female characters -- here all this time I've been told fans didn't like women and that I was a bit of a "freak" because I do. Another falicy blown all to hell.....

**HAMILTON:** Probably the Howard biblio.

**McHANEY:** I don't have more than two features that I've continued for several issues. One of those has simply been continued by fan writers who liked the idea, and that's fine with me. The more help I get with the chores of reviewing and articles, the less sweating I do at the last minute. I hope in the future my most popular feature will be my approach and sense of priorities.

**ROARK:** Our Barry Smith interview in No. 2 was well-received, as was the Glenn Lord interview in No. 3. "Vultures Over Cross Plains" garnered a helluva lot of fan comment, as was its intent. In our current issue, Ben Indick's "Incident at Cross Plains" was lauded by most readers.

**SASSER:** I've only got one issue out, but the most popular pieces so far have been Wayne Warfield's "Robert E. Howard: Retrospectively" and Bill Wallace's "The Sense of Hideous Antiquity."

**SCITHERS:** Artwork.

**WARFIELD:** Editorials, art and letter columns. Any controversial feature, of course, always draws attention.

**Question:** REH was the main fan interest in the '70's, following the mass appeal of Burroughs in the '60's. If interest in REH was to fade out, do you see any other author who could dominate future fan interest?

**BACON:** There are several authors whose work I feel may dominate or at least be grabbed up for future fan interest. Howard Phillips Lovecraft is one whose work already pretty much parallels Howard's in interest. Another would be Michael Moorcock or Karl Edward Wagner. I hope that fandom continues to push these gentlemen into further endeavors in the areas of fiction and verse. They will probably be the natural

inheritors of the current REH craze. I think that Howard and his Conan are opening the door to many fans and exposing them to Heroic Fantasy. One other author whose work comes to mind (and contains elements of REH and HPL in his fiction) is Richard Tierney. I personally feel (and hope) that this gentleman's work enjoys a great popularity in the future. Any one who hasn't read **THE WINDS OF ZARR** by Tierney ought to. It shows his strength as a story teller and setter of moods. My hope is that these four gentlemen (and especially the living three) will become fan favorites.

**FENNER:** First I'd like to say that I don't think ERB has lost its public appeal; there're new movies being made based on his characters, new editors of his books continue to come out, and kids still play "Tarzan" in their backyards. Burroughs is still top dog and I doubt if anyone in the foreseeable future will replace him. But to answer your question, if REH's popularity fades (which it won't, if handled properly) fans would probably begin to notice another of the old **WEIRD TALES** writers -- perhaps C.L. Moore or Manly Wellman. There might also be a resurgence of interest in HPL. Who can say? Karl Wagner is my personal favorite among those authors presently working in the field: if he'd learn to type with more than one finger and turn out a greater volume of stories he could, realistically, become the most respected and sought after writer yet to contribute to the genre. He's got my support, anyway. + But back to REH for a final moment; his popularity will only diminish if fans allow it to -- which would be a shame because his properties hold a great deal of promise for a variety of projects. I was amused recently to read that some consider Howard to be the "Star Trek" of fantasy fandom. Perhaps that's so; yet, no one's organized a bus tour of REH's Cross Plains with special notations as to which streets he shadow-boxed down on hot Texas afternoons. At least to my knowledge, that is.

+I think the Epic Fantasy Field needs an Ellison figure - someone whose personality, drive and audacity draws new people in. Many don't like him, but you must admit that Harlan has breathed new life into S-F.

**HAMILTON:** C. A. Smith and H. P. Lovecraft might be some candidates.

**McHANEY:** I doubt that any writer will become what Howard, Lovecraft and Burroughs have been, but that may be because I've never looked far into the future with any amount of thought. They might drag up some other poor slob from the grave and adore him, but I think that is about tapped out. Maybe someone like Phil Farmer will be treated with the same awe as a Burroughs or Howard. He has the same popularity the others had when they were still living, and perhaps a bit more than some. The problem though, is that fewer people are reading books every day. It's easier to look at comics or some other simple minded drivel, and unless you throw tons of artwork in a book these days, you might as well forget it. The "new generation" of fans must have frequent breaks for their feeble brains. I see books of the future as a page of art, maybe a whole page of text, and so on -- sort of a **FARENHEIT 451** society, though it won't be government forced -- it will be by choice. By then, though, I hope to be so old and blind that I won't mind the vanishing written word.

**ROARK:** I feel that several writers are due more fan interest - Karl Wagner, for instance, though he probably won't get really big until he dies. Clark Ashton Smith has a fair chance of a big revival, if readers can adjust their own tastes enough to accept his slightly bizarre (and unique) writing style. I do feel it will depend on how much publicity the various genre writers get -- that and the undeniable finger of fate. Some will get the gold, others the shaft.

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RICHARD HUBER

# THE WRATH OF TUPAN

By Richard L. Tierney

At the headwaters of the Zungaro, near the foothills of the Andes Mountains, lies a strange land seldom visited by man. Even when I first saw the place, it somehow struck me as sinister. The waters of the Zungaro were black as death, and the dank jungle on either side was unnaturally silent. In the distance great cone-shaped mountains rose abruptly and loomed like titan gods brooding over bygone eras. Mightiest of all rose one great snow-capped volcano, overshadowing the others as a god overshadows men. In spite of the discomfort I felt from the swarms of biting insects, I gazed at this peak in awe and wonder.

"That, señores, is the mountain which the natives call **Tupani-kam-kisiteri** -- the Place of Tupan," said Ramon Valesquez, our Colombian guide. "The mission is not far now, and that is good. The Indians fear the mountain as the abode of evil gods, and I do not think they will go with us much farther."

The mountain itself did not frighten me half so much as the thought of trying to pronounce its name; but I had noticed that the Indians were indeed becoming restive. For the past two hours they had been paddling with constantly decreasing vigor, and now they were beginning to talk excitedly among themselves.

"What are they saying?" demanded Rayburn, our aging but wiry archaeologist, from his canoe. I listened as closely as possible to Ramon's reply while swatting at the cloud of singing mosquitoes hovering about me.

"They are afraid. They say that Tupan, the thunder-demon, will be angry and deal us death if we go on. I fear we must make camp soon."

"But we could reach the mission in a few hours," protested Rayburn.

"The sun sets quickly in these latitudes, my friends, and it is almost down now. It is best not to travel at night. We can still reach the mission tomorrow."

Rayburn shrugged. "Do as you think best, then."

Valesquez shouted some orders to the Indians, and immediately they seemed greatly relieved. I, too, was glad we were stopping, for I could hardly bear those swarms of insects much longer. We beached our three canoes on a sandy bank and pitched camp in record time. The red sun was just sinking behind the shining peak of the volcano as we prepared our supper.

At dusk, as we dined on fried palm-worms and the rubbery flesh of macaws I questioned Ramon about the native superstitions concerning the volcano. His voice grew hushed as he answered me.

"Do not let them see that you speak of the thunder-demon, Meester Hobson," he cautioned. "To speak of Tupan is to incur his wrath, or so the Indians believe."

The fire crackled sharply in the stillness. Overhead, the vampire bats flitted softly by on velvet wings. The stillness was eerie.

"But what is this Tupan?" queried Rayburn, his voice involuntarily low.

"He is the god of thunder, earthquakes and destruction, señor. To the Indians of this region, no other god is half so powerful as he. Perhaps their ancestors of long ago knew the mountain in its fury of eruption, and handed down their frightening legends of it to the present day. Who can tell?"

We did not try to answer, and for the rest of the evening we sat in silence around the fire. The stillness of the jungle had the effect of discouraging conversation, and the trees seemed to press closer in from all sides. The murmuring waters sang a monotonous dirge, and even the insects soon ceased to hum. The Indians, too, sat silent about their small fires, as though feeling that a spoken word in this place would be blasphemous. At

length, we turned in; but tired as I was, I could not sleep. There seemed to be a vague air of creeping tenseness about this place, as though something were about to happen. For some time, therefore, I lay awake and thought of many things.

They had told me in Manaos that the hills along the upper Zungaro were rich in gold, and that one could pick diamonds out of the mountain stream beds. They also told me that few had ever returned from the region, but that did not stop me from wanting to go there. I had lost everything the year before, when the rubber firm I owned had closed down, and I was anxious to regain my wealth. Only one who has been wealthy, and has lost his wealth, can fully appreciate the value of riches; and I was willing to undergo any hardships rather than remain in ignoble poverty.

My chance had come in the person of Professor Philip Rayburn, of the Midwestern Society of Historical Research. He, too, was anxious to visit the region, for he had heard of the ancient stone ruins to be found there. However, he could find no one willing to take him up the Zungaro. Having had some training as a geologist, I offered to accompany him on his expedition at no cost, and he gladly accepted my offer. He was especially delighted when I acquired Ramon Valesquez as a guide. Though Ramon was at first reluctant, he finally consented to come; for he, too, had heard tales of the fabulous wealth to be found in the jungles along the Zungaro.

Soon afterwards, we began our tortuous journey up the dark rivers of the Amazon Basin, and for many hellish weeks we traveled steadily. Besides the Indian bearers and myself, there were three others in the party--Rayburn, the archaeologist; Ramon, the guide; and a young photographer named Moran. It was a small group to be traversing so much country, but I doubt that a large party would have fared better. In fact, I was somewhat glad about the small size of our group. There would be fewer to share whatever riches we might find.

Of the many adventures and hardships we underwent, I shall say little. Let it suffice when I say that traveling through the hideous jungles of the Amazon is the furthest thing from so-called "romantic adventure" that one could imagine! The heat and the insects, combined with the eternal dampness, made the rain-forest a place of constant torment, second only to hell itself. Added to this was the imminent threat of a thousand painful deaths, against which we had always to be on guard. Venomous reptiles and insects hid under every leaf, and our lives hung always on the whims of the savage Indian tribes through whose territories we had to pass. Only the thought of gold drove me on, as it had the Conquistadores of old; and I often marveled at the persistence of Rayburn and Moran, whose sole incentive for enduring all this was scientific curiosity!

Despite the sticky dampness and the occasional bites of the parasol ants, I must have finally dozed off; for the next thing I remember is being awakened by pistol shots, and hearing Ramon shouting threats in Quechua dialect. Awake in an instant, I grabbed my rifle and dashed out of the tent, Moran at my heels. The sky was already grey with approaching dawn, and we saw Ramon standing on the riverbank, pistol in hand. He was shouting imprecations after our three canoes, which were rapidly vanishing downstream into the morning mists.

"The Indians have deserted!" Ramon informed us, swearing in Portuguese.

Moran looked after the receding canoes, incredulous. Then he began to dance crazily, for in his haste he had neglected to put on his pants, and the insects were always ready to take advantage of any such carelessness.

"Why did they run off?" he asked, scratching.

"I do not know, señores, but I think something in the jungle made them afraid. Some of them were out hunting this morning while I made the fire. They came back soon, and began to talk excitedly to the others. I heard them say something about

Tupan. Then, when my back was turned for a moment, they made off with the canoes. Carramba!—they were gone before I could stop them.”

“What do you suggest we do now?” I asked.

“We must set up a more permanent camp here, *amigo*. It is fortunate that we did not leave many supplies in the canoes.”

“But we can’t stay here indefinitely!”

“Of course not, my friend; and that is why you and I must go to the mission today, on foot. From there, we can bring back canoes in which to carry our supplies.

## II

That day will remain forever in my mind as one of the worst in my life. Directly after breakfast Ramon and I struck into the jungle, following the riverbank. Ordinarily, it would have taken us two or three hours of paddling to reach the mission. As it was, however, it took us most of the day to hack our way through that incredible tangle with machetes. Thorns tore at our bodies, and the blood attracted buzzing hordes of mosquitoes to us. Small white ticks, which no insect repellent would discourage, threatened to drive us mad with their infernal stinging. Yet we dared not bathe in the river, for the dreaded *pañas* would quickly tear us to pieces.

Coming upon an open mud bank, we smeared ourselves liberally with mud, which kept off most of the insects. It did not keep them away, however, and we continually had to keep them from flying into our eyes and ears. Moreover we had to watch constantly for venomous snakes, which were dangerously numerous. Several times we narrowly missed being bitten by rattlesnakes as big around as a man’s leg. Once we had to stop and let a great swarm of army ants pass by in front of us. We were safe, Ramon assured me, as long as we stayed out of their line of advance; but if we had blundered into their path, they would have swarmed over us and picked our bones clean in minutes.

It was midafternoon when we finally staggered into the clearing around the mission. A few decrepit huts stood in a semi-circle about the church, which was itself a rather large structure considering its remoteness from civilization. We were greeted enthusiastically by Father Carlos de Sarmiento, a man of intense vitality despite his nearly seventy years of age.

“*Madre de Dios!*” he exclaimed impiously, seeing our tattered and filthy clothes. “You must rest and refresh yourselves, *señores*. Come with me...”

“Later, *Padre*,” replied Ramon. “Right now, we desire to get back to our friends before nightfall.” He explained our situation to Father Sarmiento, and added that we wished to hire Indians to help us bring our supplies to the mission.

“I fear that is impossible, my friends,” replied Father Carlos. “The Indians have all left the mission, and have gone into the jungle to worship their savage gods. The witch-doctors say they must make magic to appease the thunder-devil.”

“What made them suddenly do that?” I asked.

Father Carlos answered sadly. “Here in the jungle, man worships older deities than our God, and the powers of evil are held to be stronger than the forces of good. The Indian’s religion is not a way of praising God; it is primarily a method of staving off His wrath.” He gestured toward the great volcano looming in the distance. “That mountain,” he continued, “is said to be inhabited by a thunder-devil, a titanic monster who comes forth every generation to lay waste the land and destroy the people. Tupan is his name, and no god or demon in this region is more feared than he.”

“And the natives believe this monster is about ready to come forth again?”

“Si, *amigo*! Yesterday morning the mountain rumbled slightly, and by nightfall every last Indian had left the mission. It is most discouraging, *señores*; no matter how we try to convert them, the old superstitions still remain uppermost in

their minds.”

Ramon looked at me somewhat apprehensively. “Do you think the volcano might erupt, Meester Hobson?”

“I doubt it. It looks like it’s been extinct for a long time, perhaps thousands of years.”

Father Carlos looked up at the sun. “Perhaps you had better start back, if you wish to reach your friends by nightfall. Choose any one of the canoes down by the river; the Indians will not be using them.”

Two hours of paddling downstream brought us once more to our camp. As we beached the dugout, our friends greeted us excitedly.

“We found out what frightened away the natives this morning,” said Moran. “It’s back in the jungle.”

“Come along! we’ll show you,” exclaimed Rayburn, his eyes gleaming with excitement. “It’s incredible! You’ve got to see it.” He began to lead us along a newly cut path through the brush. About a hundred feet from camp, we came upon the object of Rayburn’s fascination.

“What do you think of it?” demanded the archaeologist, a trace of pride in his voice.

What I saw was an extremely hideous idol about five feet tall and carved of dark basalt. Rayburn had hacked away the surrounding brush and vines, and we could see the thing in complete detail. Its general shape can best be described as that of a very squat milk bottle surmounted by a round, flat head. Twelve stumpy legs supported it upon its stone pedestal, and twelve arms or tentacles were shown in bas-relief, sprouting just below the head. So fine was the detail that we could see that each “arm” branched off into six smaller tentacles, giving the thing a total of seventy-two “fingers”. The horizontally flattened head was surmounted by six short, spiky horns arranged in a circle. The most interesting feature to me, however, was the twelve eyes set into the head around the perimeter of its greatest circumference; for I saw that each one was a large, glittering crystal.

“This is what frightened our bearers,” Rayburn commented: “They must have thought of it as a symbol of some god. I would say that it is pre-Incan in origin.”

Stepping up to the idol, I quickly dislodged one of its eyes with my knife and examined it closely. Ramon looked on with interest, but Rayburn seemed almost as horrified as one of the Indians might have been at my apparent sacrilege.

“What are you doing?” gasped Rayburn.

It was Quartz! Disgusted, I handed the stone to Rayburn. “I thought they might be diamonds,” I said.

Ramon, too, was plainly disappointed, but he still seemed hopeful. “We have not reached the mountains yet,” he said. “It is there that the jewels grow, eh, *señores*?”

“Sometimes, Ramon,” I replied. “The tremendous pressures in volcanos often cause carbon to crystalize into diamonds. We may find many of them in the weathered vents, or in the stream deposits, if we’re lucky.”

We worked our way back to the camp, for it was quickly growing dark. Directly after supper I turned in, and neither the insects nor the eerie silence of the jungle kept me from quickly falling asleep. It had been a rough day.

The next day it rained; not the usual tropical thundershower, but an all-day downpour that turned dirt into mud and mud into a gooey slush. It took us five hours of paddling to reach the mission with what supplies we could take. When we arrived, Father Carlos saw to our comfort most graciously and let us stay in the church itself. He explained that the Indians would probably not be attending again for some time, and that we were welcome to stay. And as our quarters were reasonably warm and dry, we were well satisfied.

Father Carlos’ own room in the back of the church was comfortable and well furnished, considering how far he lived from any civilization. We spent much of that day talking with

him in his room, and he was delighted at our company; for, aside from a nondescript Frenchman named Raoul, who helped Father Carlos keep up the mission, there was no other white man for perhaps several hundred miles around.

It was during one of these conversations that Rayburn happened to mention the stone idol we had found.

"Yes, there are many of them in the jungle, señor," said the priest, "and the natives hold them in great respect and fear. In fact, not far from here there are many ancient ruins left by a vanished race, and among them an idol such as you describe. I have been there often, for the natives sometimes go there to worship their gods."

At this Rayburn grew quite excited and began to ask the Padre many questions about the place. Father Carlos was delighted at his interest and promised he would take the archaeologist there "mañana".

Late in the afternoon the clouds rolled away, and we could see the snow-capped peak of Tupanikamciseiteri gleaming in the sun. Soon after, we were surprised to hear a soft, throbbing beat in the air, like the pulsing of a giant heart.

"Native drums!" Ramon whispered. "The Indians are worshipping the mountain."

"This is the third night I have heard them," said the priest. "According to the native beliefs, Tupan will come forth on the eighth night of worship, to wreak his judgment on the tribes."

"Has this happened before?" I asked.

"Not within my memory, señor. The mission has only been here for four years, and they say this happens but once in a generation."

"What an opportunity this could be!" exclaimed Moran. "Do you suppose we could photograph them?"

"I would not try it, my friend," said the priest. "Your life would be in great danger. Even I, who know the Indians so well, would not attempt to interfere with their savage rituals."

### III

All night long the drums kept up their insistent beat, and once we heard slight rumblings from the mountain. Early the next morning Father Carlos led Rayburn and Moran into the jungle to visit the ancient ruins he had spoken of. Ramon and I spent most of the day bringing the rest of our supplies from the camp to the mission. A koati had torn open one of the food packs during our absence, but otherwise our equipment was still in good condition.

When our work was done, Ramon went off into the forest to hunt, and I was left alone at the mission. Thus, with little else to do, I had plenty of opportunity to look over the church. One thing that surprised me was the large number of books the Padre had brought with him to this place. There were over a dozen of them in his room, many with covers designed to protect them from the damp. Among them I noticed Prescott's **CONQUEST OF PERU** and other historical works concerning South America. A large black volume, whose pages were yellow and brittle with age, caught my attention, and I glanced through it. The title was **MISTERIOS DE LA JUNGLA**, and I found that it had been written by Sancho de Verada, an early Conquistador.

My interest aroused, I began to pour over this fascinating first-hand account of the journeys of those first explorers to the Amazon. Scarcely had I read a dozen pages, however, when I was electrified by what I came across in a certain paragraph. Translated from the Spanish, it read:

"Having gained information from the natives concerning the great treasures to be found upon the mountain called Tupani-kameciseiteri, we journeyed there; and, after many hazardous days of travel, our hopes were confirmed. Such a wealth as we found there--of gold and silver and all manner of precious stones--has not been known since the days of Solomon. And the golden temple we found in the cauldron

itself was splendid beyond all imagination. Yet, though our hopes were confirmed, they were not rewarded; and though our luck seemed due to divine Providence, it was but a curse in disguise. For all that great wealth of gold, silver and precious stones, is guarded over by SATANUS Himself, who dwells in the fires of the mountain, and who waits to come forth and slay all who would take His accursed treasure hence. Indeed, of the three score men who journeyed with me to that abhorred mountain, only five of us returned, not a soul the richer and with our souls shaken by the sights of Hell. So take heed, all you who would seek the treasure of the mountain, lest the wrath of Tupan fall upon you! For no man can stand against Him, whose stature is like unto that of the Titans of old, and whose form..."

I could read no further, for the rest of the page had been torn away, as though deliberately. Yet I had read enough. Here was almost positive proof of the existence of vast riches in the western mountains; for the account had told not only of the treasure itself, but had given its exact location also. The "cauldron" of the mountain was evidently the crater at its summit, where some ancient race--if the writer had spoken truly--had built a "golden temple". As for the account of the guardian demon, I gave it little consideration. Perhaps the volcano had been slightly active at the time, and the Conquistadores had very likely been caught in a landslide that had taken most of their lives. At any rate, the allusion to "Satanus" was no doubt figurative...

That evening, when Ramon returned, I told him of the new plan I had conceived.

"Can you be ready to leave for the mountain at dawn?" I asked.

"Yes--but señor Rayburn will want to stay and study the ruins..."

"Bother Rayburn -- All he cares about is old ruins! We're going by ourselves."

"But why...?"

"Because there's gold on that mountain, Ramon! That's what you came along with us for, wasn't it?"

"On that mountain?" he gasped. "How do you know of this?"

I told him of the things I had read in the ancient volume.

"But that is the Place of Tupan!" he exclaimed.

"Don't tell me you're superstitious, Ramon!"

He looked at me intently. "I have studied the ways of science," he said, "and I am not 'superstitious'. But I have studied the ways of the Indians also, and I have learned many things about their strange beliefs. Some of their ideas are ridiculous to the white man's way of thinking, and some may seem beyond the bounds of sanity. But this I have found: that behind their legends and beliefs, there always lies a reason!"

### IV

In spite of his apparent reluctance, Ramon eventually agreed to accompany me, for the lust of gold was strong in him also. That night we loaded a dugout with a few supplies; and the next morning, before the sun was up, we crept silently from the mission and started out on our journey.

A few miles up the Zungaro we were halted by a stretch of rapids several hundred yards long, and we had to portage around it. Fortunately there were no Indians to ambush us in the jungle, as they were all attending the ritualistic ceremonies to Tupan. After much labor and many insect bites, we at last managed to get the canoe and our supplies to a point above the rapids.

As we continued on, the banks of the Zungaro became farther apart, and the ground on either side began to assume a marshy aspect. By noon, we found ourselves at the edge of a great swamp which stretched away to the foot of the mountain itself. Taking careful bearings so that we could find our way back, we

set out across the great expanse.

The vegetation here was, for the most part, semi-aquatic, being bunched together in floating "islands" or clumps. Great horsetails forty feet tall rose out of the water near the shores of occasional solid islands. These bits of land were covered thickly with tangled forest, in the shade of which grew twenty-foot ferns, and mushrooms four feet in diameter. Anacondas and caymans basked on every log and floating clump, while poisonous snakes were superabundant. Once we saw a grotesque, seven-foot reptile with a high fin on its back. It ambled out of a canebrake and hissed at us, showing a huge mouth full of vicious-looking teeth. But in spite of its belligerent manner it would not come into the water after us, and we were glad to leave it behind.

Dusk found us nearly at the far side of the swamp, the mountain looming high over us. The mosquitoes grew so bad that we had to wrap our hands in cloth and protect our faces with mosquito netting. We camped on a small island and, after a frugal supper, spent a miserable night swatting insects which managed to get to us in spite of the mosquito net.

The next morning we set out as early as possible, anxious to get out of that horrid swamp. Soon after dawn we reached the edge of the marsh, where the forest began to climb the slope of the mountain. Here, to our great surprise, we came upon a place where the jungle seemed to have been **mashed down** recently. A swath of destruction a hundred yards wide led up the mountainside, and many of the larger trees were still oozing sap where their trunks had been broken off. It was a puzzling thing, and I detected a note of apprehension in Ramon's voice as he questioned me about it.

"What could have caused it, amigo?"

"Perhaps a landslide," I answered. "We heard the mountain rumbling two or three nights ago, remember? It probably dislodged a huge boulder which rolled down into the swamp, crushing the trees. Anyway, it makes a good trail to follow."

"Maybe we should not go up, Meester Hobson. Suppose the volcano should erupt?"

"I'll wager this mountain hasn't blown its top for at least several centuries. Besides, if it is going to erupt, that's all the more reason for us to find that treasure soon. Come on!"

Leaving most of our gear in the canoe, we started up the trail. It was actually harder going than regular jungle, and our only advantage in following the swath was to keep from getting lost. Occasionally we came upon deep circular pits about thirty feet across, which resembled great post holes sunk into the soft jungle floor. All of them seemed fairly new, and appeared to be arranged in a curious pattern extending up the slope. A faint, unfamiliar odor hung upon the air, mingled with the scents of smashed and rotting vegetation. Also, I noticed a strange absence of snakes and other creatures. When I asked Ramon what he made of those strange holes in the ground, he shook his head and did not answer, but I caught a look of fleeting fear in his glance.

By midafternoon we had emerged from the tangle and were continuing upward. The going, though steeper, was somewhat easier, but it was still no facile task. The slopes were covered with a gritty volcanic ash that was as hard to walk in as loose sand. Now and then we saw shallow pits in the ash which were strangely similar to the holes in the jungle below. At the time, I could not imagine what they were.

That night we camped on a ledge not far below the snow line. By morning it had turned so cold that we could see our breath when we exhaled. Moreover we had nothing with which to start a fire, and we had to eat cold canned foods for breakfast. After we set out again, however, the sun warmed the bare mountainside, and before long we were reasonably comfortable. We were actually sweating from exertion when we reached the snow line.

It was here, as we stopped to drink at a glacial stream, that we made our first discovery. Ramon, crouching on the gravelly stream bank, suddenly cried out in surprise.

"Diamonds!" he exclaimed. "Come quick!"

At his bidding, I examined several glittering bits of stone from the stream bed. They were indeed diamonds; and though they were of a low-grade quality, they raised our hopes greatly, for they promised of better things to come.

"Let's go on!" I cried out in elation, and we set out with renewed vigor. We had not gone far before we noticed that the snow patches, like the jungle far below, had been plowed through in a great swath dotted with those puzzling holes. This made the going much easier, but it also piqued my curiosity no end.

We climbed until about noon, when we suddenly came up against an abrupt cliff about a hundred and fifty feet high. Great rocks lay tumbled about as though a recent landslide had occurred, and we noticed an enormous ring of those circular pits at the base of the cliff. It took us about an hour to climb around this obstruction. Our hands and feet were numb with cold by this time, though the sun was warm on our backs.

Another hour's climb brought us to the rim of the crater, where we paused to rest and beat some feeling into our numbed hands. I felt quite tired and weak, probably due to the thinner air. Suddenly Ramon, who was ahead of me, cried out in amazement as he reached the inner edge of the rim. Hurrying to his side, I gazed into the crater with equal astonishment. It was nearly half a mile across, forming a perfect bowl-shaped valley sparsely dotted with patches of snow. At the center was a vast pit several hundred feet in diameter and at the brink of this pit stood a great stone edifice whose roof gleamed golden in the sun.

"The golden temple!" I exclaimed. "The stories were true."

"Let us go see," said Ramon, his voice tense with excitement, and we began to descend the inner wall of the crater. To our amazement, we now found that we were still following that enormous swath. It did not stop at the summit, as we had supposed it would, but continued over the rim and down into the crater, terminating finally at the brink of that monstrous pit in the center.

Arriving at the temple, we found it to be made of enormous basalt blocks. The domed roof shone like beaten gold, which perhaps it was. From the front of the building to the edge of the pit extended a flagstone courtyard, in the center of which stood an enormous altar. Surmounting this altar was an idol similar to the one we had found in the jungle, only immensely larger; and its eyes, each one as large as a man's fist, glittered green in the sunlight.

"Tupan!" murmured Ramon. "This is the temple of Tupan, and that is his image."

"Look at those eyes!" I cried. "They're emeralds!"

"Yes—but they are too high to reach. Let us see what we can find in the temple itself."

Crossing the courtyard, we entered through a giant door in the structure. The inside was but one immense room, illuminated by narrow windows high overhead. About the walls stood golden images on pedestals, and the walls themselves blazed with great ornaments of gold and silver. Everywhere we looked we saw metal or stone images of the twelve-legged monstrosity that evidently represented Tupan. A heavy silence seemed to settle about us as we stood in that dim-lit temple, and I found it strangely oppressing to consider how long that silence had reigned there unbroken by the voices of men.

"No wonder old Sancho de Verada and his henchmen came away empty-handed," I commented. "Everything here is too big to carry off."

Ramon said nothing, and I did not like the hollow echos my voice stirred up in that place. I decided to try dislodging the emerald eyes from the idol outside, and we returned to the courtyard. It was then we noticed the carvings around the base of the circular dias upon which the idol stood. These carvings formed a series of pictures in bas-relief, showing in detail the ceremonial rituals which the ancients had conducted in honor of Tupan. We paused to study them, and found them strangely

interesting.

The first picture showed a group of people being herded by exotic priests into the temple courtyard. In the second picture the priests had gone, and the people--both men and women--stood about in various attitudes of worship. The third picture showed Tupan rising out of the pit, towering above the people, and the fourth depicted a strange organ sprouting from the side of the god. Next, the people were shown being sucked up by this weird appendage, something like bugs might be drawn into a vacuum cleaner. And last of all, Tupan was shown with his twelve arms lifted in symbolic blessing. The pictures gave me a strange feeling as I glanced over them, and when I had finished I felt somehow uncomfortable.

Feeling a vague desire to have a closer look at the pit, I walked over to the brink and lay flat on my face, peering down into the mammoth shaft. I could see nothing down there but profound darkness. The sides of the pit were as sheerly perpendicular as those of a well; and a strange odor, like that which I had noticed before in the jungle, floated up to us. Evidently the volcano was quite dormant, as I had suspected. There was not even any indication of volcanic gasses, unless the queer stench we noticed indicated anything.

I grew curious as to the depth of the pit, and had Ramon help me push a large flagstone over the edge, hoping to determine the distance it fell by the length of time it would take in descending. We never heard it strike bottom!

"Let's get those emeralds and go," suggested Ramon. "I do not like this place!"

Strangely enough, I felt the same way, and was anxious to follow his advice. Ramon, by standing on my shoulders, could just reach the huge emerald eyes of the idol. He managed to dislodge four of them with his knife, but the rest were mortared in too tightly to budge.

"We will have to chip the rock away if we want to get out the others also," he called down.

"No matter," I assured him. "We have two apiece, and that's enough to make us both rich for life. Let's go!"

Both of us, I believe, were glad to be leaving. To me, the carved images on the altar seemed somehow suggestive of hidden horror, and that huge, unnatural swath leading to the pit made me imagine things I did not like to think of. Stashing the jewels in our knapsacks, we started back the way we came. We made better time descending than we had climbing up, and nightfall found us near the base of the mountain. Somehow, I was glad that we would not be spending the night in the crater, near that strangely forbidding temple and the deep, noisome pit which descended to such unguessable depths inside the mountain.

## V

That night, as we camped just above the jungle, Ramon seemed strangely talkative; or rather, he seemed talkative in a strange way.

"You know, Mr. Hobson," he began, "it is strange that the Conquistadores did not melt down all that gold and carry it away."

"They had nothing with which to make a fire up there," I commented. Ramon was silent for a space.

"You are sure the volcano is extinct?" he asked presently.

"Perfectly sure."

"Then why did we hear it rumble several nights ago?"

"Probably a landslide," I answered.

"Perhaps the landslide that cut the swath through the jungle below?"

"Perhaps."

After this, he was silent for some time, apparently lost in deep thought. But after supper, he started in again.

"How old is our earth, Mr. Hobson?"

I was startled at his question. "Several billion years old, I

would suppose."

"And how long has life existed upon it?"

"Not over a billion years, probably."

"Does that not seem strange to you, amigo?"

"Why should it?" I asked, my curiosity mounting.

"It seems illogical to me," continued Ramon, "that so long a time could pass without some kind of life existing. Nature abhors a vacuum, or so I have heard; and several billion years is a very long time indeed!"

"But conditions then were not suitable for life," I explained.

"The earth was hot and semi-molten, and all water existed in the form of steam. Life could not possibly have existed."

"True, -- conditions were not suitable for our kind of life. But what about other kinds?"

"What are you getting at, Ramon?" I demanded impatiently.

"Why are you asking me these things?"

"I will tell you presently, Meester Hobson; but first I want you to suppose -- just suppose -- that some form of 'life' might have evolved under conditions such as those you have described."

"All right, I'm supposing."

"Then, is it not possible that such creatures could have survived down to present times, in places where conditions are similar to what they were long ago--perhaps near the center of the earth, or . . . or in the core of a volcano?"

"Of course not! that's ridiculous," I snapped, strangely irritated at what he was suggesting. "There is absolutely no evidence. . . ."

"Isn't there? What about earthquakes? What about eruptions--Pompeii and Mount Pelee? And, amigo, what about those strange holes in the jungle, and in the snow above? Do they not make one think of footprints?"

"Why, what nonsense!" I exclaimed, feeling a strange uneasiness creeping over me. "A creature such as you suggest would have to be almost a thousand feet tall!"

"Yes," said Ramon.

During the night my dreams were filled with frightening things. With the dawn, however, my fears had all vanished, and I set out laughing inwardly at Ramon's imaginative fancies. Even as we passed those strange holes in the jungle floor, with that unclassifiable odor lingering about them, my mood remained unchanged.

Before long, we reached our canoe and set out across the swamp, anxious to cover as much ground as possible before sundown. Once we were delayed in a floating tangle of strange, carnivorous plants, but fortunately none of them were large enough to be a menace to us. In spite of the delay we made good time, and by midafternoon we were back at the Zungaro, glad that we would not have to spend another night in the swamp.

Continuing down the river, we arrived at the rapids a little before nightfall. Here we suffered a serious mishap; for as we stepped out on shore, the canoe and all our supplies got away from us in the swift current. Quickly we waded in after it, but before we could reach the canoe it was swept down the rapids. In spite of our predicament, I was relieved to remember that we still carried the knapsacks containing our emeralds.

Circling the rapids, we salvaged what little was left of our supplies. The canoe was a total loss, and we were hopelessly stranded. Not being Indians, we could not hope to cross those many miles of jungle that separated us from the mission. Besides, it was already dusk.

"We had best camp here till morning," suggested Ramon. "Perhaps then we can construct a raft."

Accepting his idea as sound, I helped him kindle a fire, over which we cooked most of our remaining food. Soon after, the full moon rose and shone down like silver on the distant snow-clad peak of Tupanikamciseiteri. It made a lovely tropical scene, but we were in no mood to enjoy it.

For about an hour we sat around the fire, trying to keep the mosquitoes away by means of the smoke. Suddenly a slight noise made us look up, and I froze in alarm. A dozen or so Indians stood around us, their painted faces hideous in the firelight, and their spears and blowguns held ready. My heart sank with dread; I realized that the only weapon we had was Ramon's .22 pistol for killing small game.

"Do not act frightened, amigo," said Ramon evenly. "I will talk with them." So saying, he entered into a long discussion with the savage who appeared to be the leader. It sounded to me as though they were arguing heatedly; but since all the conversation of these Indians is habitually carried on in a loud and heated manner, I could not tell what the savage's true emotions might be. Finally Ramon turned to me and explained:

"They are going to the religious feast of Tupan, amigo. They say we must accompany them."

"But why?"

"I do not know--but don't worry. I'm sure these Indians mean us no harm, and we will be closer to the mission if we go with them."

We set off at once with the Indians, following dim jungle trails that only the natives could detect. Not once did they stop or speak a word, and it seemed that we were being ushered by ghostly shadows along those moonlit forest aisles. I lost all sense of time, but it must have been some hours before we suddenly came to a halt before a vast clearing. Both of us gasped in surprise at what we saw there.

Perhaps a hundred natives stood or squatted about the clearing in the moonlight, facing an idol like the one we had seen on the mountain. A great fire blazed before it, making fearsome highlights dance in its crystal eyes. Hideously painted and feathered witch-doctors stood about in gruesome silence, and several huge drums were spaced evenly in a circle around the idol.

A witch-doctor accepted our group into the mass, and we were each offered a bowl of nauseating *chicha*, which we dared not refuse. Then, at the order of the savage priest, the drums began to beat. The natives commenced to dance about the idol, chanting all the while.

"Ate, Tupan!" they cried. "Ate! ate!"

Ramon and I, watching from the edge of the clearing, noticed the tumbled blocks of ancient ruins lying about--stones similar to those of the temple on the mountain. Evidently, this was the place Rayburn and Moran had visited with the Padre some days ago.

"Do you think you could find the mission from here?" I asked Ramon.

"I think so. The Padre showed me his map once. If I remember correctly, all we have to do is follow the trail to the south, and we will come out at the river, not far from the church."

"Then let's watch for a chance to get away. . ." I began. Suddenly, I stopped and listened intently. From far off came the sound of thunder. It was the mountain rumbling.

"Tupan! Tupan!" the natives shrieked. The rumbling died away after several minutes, but the savages continued to dance with increasing frenzy. The drums beat louder.

"Moran would give his right arm to photograph this," I chuckled. Ramon said nothing, but he looked worried.

"Tupan! Tupan!" screamed the Indians.

For two or three hours we waited, seeing no opportunity to escape. We feared to disturb the rituals in any way, and we did not know how the Indians would regard our departure. We were about ready to try and slip away, hoping the savages were too engrossed in their dances to notice us, when suddenly we heard a far-off sound like a tree falling.

"What was that?" I exclaimed. Ramon was staring intently in the direction from which the sound had come. I could see

nothing but the blackness of the surrounding jungle. Then, even as we listened, the sound of several more falling trees reached our ears.

"It is Tupan!" whispered Ramon, the sweat standing out on his face. "He is coming!"

"Ridiculous!" I snapped, my nerves all on edge. The crashing sounds were coming closer. The dancing and chanting had stopped, and all was silent but for that dread noise from the jungle. The Indians stood about motionless, staring toward the edge of the clearing as though waiting for something to happen. The crashings grew louder and louder. . .

And suddenly, as I watched, a great humped form seemed to rise slowly out of the forest, towering over the tallest trees. Louder and still louder grew the tremendous crashings, and higher and higher rose that fearsome shape, until it blotted-out the moon. For an instant, it seemed to me that the fire had cast an immense, black shadow of the idol against the sky; and then, the Indians screamed as a huge, dark, massive object began to descend into the clearing.

Before I could see more, Ramon pulled me after him into the jungle, threading his way rapidly along a narrow trail. Behind us I could hear a horrible roaring, sucking sound mingled with the cries of terrified Indians; and then, to my horror, came a different sound, one that neither Ramon nor I will ever forget, and which I cannot bring myself to fully describe. It seemed to come from a point high above and behind us, and was in volume like the roaring of a thousand cataracts. Yet this was not its only quality, nor its most horrible one. It was the most hideous thing I have ever heard; and as its reverberating thunder fell upon my ears I screamed out in terror and dashed away as swiftly as possible after Ramon through the jungle. . .

How Ramon found his way through the tangled forest I shall never know. Perhaps terror sharpened his instincts even as it had numbed mine. At any rate, shortly after dawn we stumbled into the clearing around the mission.

Rayburn and Moran were there with the Padre, and they all voiced their surprise at seeing us again. Without bothering to explain, we told them that we must leave the mission as soon as possible and start downriver. When they demanded the reason, we made up a story about being captured by the Indians, adding that they were preparing to go on the warpath. By midmorning we were ready to leave, and together with the reluctant Padre and his assistant, we all began our perilous journey down the Zungaro.

After innumerable hardships, we finally reached the Rio Negro, and eventually the Amazon itself. Neither Ramon nor I, since getting back to civilization, have spoken to a soul of our adventures on the mountain and in the jungle afterwards; yet they are never far from my mind. Often in my dreams I can hear that thunderous voice that bellowed after us as we ran shrieking from the clearing. Ramon seems to have been affected by it even more profoundly than I, perhaps because he understands the native dialects; but though I have questioned him many times on that subject, he would never tell me what I wished to know. Perhaps it is just as well, as the limits of sanity are ever narrow. For, horrible as it may seem, that monstrous voice we heard as we dashed madly into the jungle fell upon our ears in thunderous syllables, as spoken words of the native Quechua dialect!

## DREAMERAIDER

By Steve Troyanovich

the moon winds homeward  
clouds interweave with dreams---  
all Pictdom sleeps

# Donald M. Grant Interview

## Introduction.

Donald M. Grant is a name that is instantly recognizable to anyone involved in the fantasy field for his beautifully produced and illustrated fantasy books. His editions never stay in print for very long and always command premium prices once out-of-print. We're all familiar with Grant books, but few of us know anything about the man himself, in spite of his esteemed reputation.

At a time when many major figures in the fantasy field have been interviewed, I thought it a gross oversight that Grant had been overlooked. Jonathan Bacon was enthusiastic to the idea of a Grant interview for **FANTASY CROSSROADS**. I then contacted Grant, who readily consented. Armed with nothing more than my bubbling enthusiasm, an outline list of questions, and a tape recorder, I drove to West Kingston, a quiet, scenic town in southern Rhode Island, on 26 June, 1976.

Donald M. Grant is a tall, bespectacled man, soft-spoken, and modest about his accomplishments. He welcomed me warmly and during the course of the afternoon, showed me many examples of text and illustration from his forthcoming projects. His enthusiasm for his work is infectious, to say the least. I found that our conversation oftentimes left the path of my outline and delved into areas I hadn't considered--so much the better, for I feel this has provided greater depth. There were, in addition, questions I never posed, due to time limitations and my desire not to hamper the conversation with a rigid framework.

In editing this interview I have tried to preserve the conversational effect because I felt this is a more effective means than a cut-and-dried question-and-answer format. My own biases are apparent in places -- I have tried to keep these to a minimum in editing without destroying the flow of the interview. Some material has been rewritten by both Grant and myself to clarify statements while retaining the gist of what transpired. Other material has been deleted due to its inappropriateness. Readers will notice that several projects discussed as forthcoming have already appeared, and, indeed, by the time this is printed, may be out-of-print! This is simply another indication of the popularity of Grant's books.

It is my hope that **FANTASY CROSSROADS** readers will enjoy this long-overdue interview with the country's most active fantasy publisher.

Stephen T. Riley

## An Interview with Donald M. Grant.

FC: I'd like to thank you for granting this interview. Starting off, do you think you could give a brief biography of yourself?

Grant: I've always had an interest in reading fantasy. I suppose I did it as early as ten years old, and I think I was attracted by Edgar Rice Burroughs before anyone else, which is common enough for anyone in my age group. I think somewhere in the early '40's, the very early 1940's, I became interested in science fiction magazines, and probably this is

an outgrowth of the Burroughs interest. The Edgar Rice Burroughs stories went into **AMAZING STORIES** about 1941; they were the magnet. From **AMAZING** I went to **FANTASTIC ADVENTURES**, to **FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES**, to **FANTASTIC NOVELS**, to **WEIRD TALES**, and to a lesser extent to the other science fiction magazines. There were a great many of them in the early war years.

FC: Why has fantasy been of such interest to you instead of another genre such as mysteries or westerns?

Grant: I suppose it's the opportunity to use the imagination more than anything else. I'm a bit of an armchair adventurer but it doesn't go any further than that.

FC: I am myself. . . (laughter). I think too, it's a way to get away from the mundane events of everyday life, in a way, to put yourself in a different perspective, a change of pace. . .

Grant: No question. I suppose a lot of us identify with some of the characters that we've read about.

FC: Such as Conan, John Carter, or somebody. Was there any particular reason for your start in publishing, such as a desire to put your favorite stories into hardcover, or to make what you felt were classics available to collectors?

Grant: Well, when I started in publishing, there was only one so-called "fan" publisher, and that was Arkham House. Now, at the time, no one was doing science fiction and I became involved with Thomas P. Hadley. We more or less felt there was an opportunity to present some of the stories that were favorites of ours in a permanent hardcover form. I guess this is what initiated it.

FC: **RHODE ISLAND ON LOVECRAFT** was your first publication then, with Hadley?

Grant: Yes. We began work on that, I think, in 1944, though it didn't come out until 1945. By that time, I had gone into the service, into the army.

FC: And after that, with Hadley and Kenneth Krueger, you formed the Buffalo Book Company?

Grant: **RHODE ISLAND ON LOVECRAFT** came out under the imprint of Grant-Hadley Enterprises. We were both pretty young at the time, (laughter) and downright novices. **THE TIME STREAM** was the first hardcover, actually that preceded **THE SKYLARK OF SPACE**. That came out under the imprint of the Buffalo Book Company and GHE, which was Grant-Hadley Enterprises. The Buffalo Book Company came about -- Ken Krueger, who was an old fan, lived in Buffalo, New York, was stationed in New England in the. . . I think he was in the Air Force. . . and he came down to Providence while I was in the service. He was enthused about what Tom and I were doing, and he joined the company. . . and for some reason or other he pushed this Buffalo Book Company, the BBC.

FC: Could you tell me something about the Hadley Publishing Company? I've seen a bibliographic listing that seems to connect you with this imprint.

Grant: I was not a partner in the Hadley Publishing Company. I

was still in college at that time - out of the service and in college. I helped Tom from time to time, but no, he was the sole owner of the Hadley Publishing Company.

FC: After the Buffalo Book Company, you formed the Grandon Company, which lasted a number of years.

Grant: The Grandon Company originated in 1949, and involved me with James Donahue who was a long-time associate of mine. The first book we put out was **THE PORT OF PERIL** by Otis Adelbert Kline. Interestingly enough on that, Kline died by 1949. We were talking to the Kline agency as early as 1948. I had a couple of letters from Otis Kline prior to that. Now in 1949 I went down and signed a contract with Otis Kline's daughter who was more-or-less running the old literary agency, Otis Kline Associates. Mrs. Kline was in on the talks. Interestingly, in '49, we talked about the Conan books.

FC: Really?! That far back?

Grant: That far back.

FC: That's before Gnome Press got them into print.

Grant: That's before Gnome Press. This is before Oscar Friend took over the Otis Kline Agency. Now, oh, I was young, I was in school, I had a lot of ideas then. . . (laughter) **THE PORT OF PERIL** was going to come out first and be an overnight success, which it wasn't, it wasn't anything like that! (laughter) Then I was going to bring out the first Conan book. We were in accord on it, but I couldn't deliver. And then Oscar Friend came along and I worked with him as well. Oscar took over the agency and, well, the books were just not selling at the time. I was too young, too inexperienced, too much of a dreamer I suppose, too, and certainly a novice. Further, I didn't have the capital at that time. So it slipped away and after a time Oscar sold the Conans to Gnome Press. They had a time with them too!

FC: That's true. Some of the later titles were remaindered.

Grant: Oh yes. They were a very cheap edition which I wouldn't have done though I'm not exactly pleased with my earlier books. . . the formats of them. My interest in Conan went back that far.

FC: I've noticed that three titles were listed as being published by the Grandon Company, but I've never been able to find information on them. They are **THE SWORDSMAN OF MARS**, **THE GOLDEN CITY** and **THE FACE IN THE ABYSS**. Could you give some information on this?

Grant: Well, in 1949 the Grandon Company did publish **THE PORT OF PERIL** and the following year it published an A. Merritt story, **DWELLERS IN THE MIRAGE**. Now these were favorites of mine, and in their field they stand up remarkably well. I'm still a great A. Merritt enthusiast, and **THE FACE IN THE ABYSS** seemed a natural follow up to **DWELLERS IN THE MIRAGE**, as **SWORDSMAN OF MARS** was to **THE PORT OF PERIL**. Well, it was just a case that **DWELLERS IN THE MIRAGE** and **PORT OF PERIL** didn't sell that well.

FC: So it was more financial difficulties than any lack of interest or desire?

Grant: It certainly wasn't lack of desire. That was always there. But it was not only financial, it's just that the field was not ready for hardbound science-fantasy at that time.

FC: The genre was still considered very immature.

Grant: It was a lot of fun at that time. It still is. I can still pick up **THE DWELLERS IN THE MIRAGE** and enjoy it.

FC: What can you tell me about Betsy Wells Halladay? My research has indicated that she illustrated a number of your earlier books, and **THE PORT OF PERIL** is copyrighted by "Halladay, Inc."

Grant: Halladay, Inc. was the printer that did **THE PORT OF PERIL**. They also did **THE SKYLARK OF SPACE**, **THE TIME STREAM**, and one edition of **RHODE ISLAND ON LOVECRAFT**.

FC: Was that the first or second edition?

Grant: I believe it was the second. . . Betsy Wells Halladay was the daughter of Allan Halladay, who ran Halladay, Inc., a medium-sized Rhode Island printer. They still are in existence. They're not strictly a book printing plant as we know them today. But in those days they were (laughter) large to me. The only thing that Betsy Wells Halladay did, that I can remember, is she reproduced some of the artifacts from the Lovecraft collection for the pamphlet **RHODE ISLAND ON LOVECRAFT**. I believe that the dustwrapper of **THE TIME STREAM** was done by Allan Halladay, her father. The Halladay family was a, still is to a certain extent, a family involved with art in Rhode Island.

FC: Do you know what's happened to her?

Grant: Frankly, I don't even remember her. (laughter) I think Tom may have arranged that, to have those things copied, because Tom Hadley was friendly with the Halladay family: I didn't know them that well.

FC: The first book published under your current imprint was Henry Hardy Heins' **A GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY BIBLIOGRAPHY OF EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS**. This was a record seller wasn't it, going out-of-print in about two months?

Grant: Yes, for me it was astounding. Of course, the edition was 1000 copies which is a lot smaller than the current editions. But, at that time, I was very pleased with the way it performed, as well as the enthusiasm it was received with.

FC: Why was a hardcover edition printed if it had already been available in a paperback format?

Grant: Henry Heins had mimeographed an edition, I think the date was 1962 -- you could probably verify that. It was an 8½ by 11 mimeographed. It contained 25 percent or perhaps a third of the content of the clothbound edition.

FC: So the clothbound edition was expanded, revised and. . .

Grant: It was revised and it had a great deal more information in it than the mimeographed edition.

FC: It's quite a rare book today.

Grant: The cloth edition? Yes it is.

FC: Do you know what the current market value of it is?

Grant: As far as I know, it has been about \$125.00. I think that's a fair value on it.

FC: It doesn't seem to have gone up much since I last heard a

price quoted which was about \$100.00 and that was probably about four years ago. I had expected the book to sell for about \$150.00 by now.

Grant: Prices are relative. I'm sure that some of the dealers have placed it much higher than that, whether they sold it or not, I don't know.

FC: I've noticed that there's been a shift in the subject matter that you've published. Your earlier publications seem to be mostly science fiction—fantasy, but lately you've changed to Robert E. Howard and adventure—fantasy. Is this because of changing public tastes or changing personal tastes?

Grant: I would think a combination of both. Actually, if you'll go back to the early books, **THE SKYLARK OF SPACE**, **THE PORT OF PERIL**, **DWELLERS IN THE MIRAGE**, they were highly imaginative books. They were fast moving and imaginative. Now, getting back to my current interest. . . you know, in my old age I do think that my tastes have changed. My real favorite, and he's a very uneven writer, is Talbot Mundy. I think Talbot Mundy's best stuff, and goodness knows there isn't enough of it. . .

FC: It seems that's the case with all our favorite authors.

Grant: . . . surpasses everybody's. But he did an awful lot of hack writing. Mundy had a very interesting career; I wish we knew more about him.

FC: Will you be printing a book on him, perhaps? A biography of sorts?

Grant: I honestly don't know. Mundy wrote for **ADVENTURE** magazine, developed there under Arthur Sullivant Hoffman, who was to my way of thinking the premier magazine editor in this country. At the same time, Mundy's contemporaries in **ADVENTURE** included Arthur O. Friel, whom you have told me you enjoy. . .

FC: Very much.

Grant: Friel was a standby for **ADVENTURE**, doing about seventy-five stories for the magazine. Another contributor was Harold Lamb, whose fiction appeared chiefly in **ADVENTURE** prior to his success as a biographer.

FC: Such as his book on Omar Khayyam?

Grant: Omar Khayyam, Tamerlane, Hannibal, the Crusades. . .

FC: Genghis Khan. . .

Grant: Genghis Khan. His fiction preceded this writing, though a part of the material that he incorporated into those biographies was also in **ADVENTURE**. H. Bedford-Jones was in **ADVENTURE**. I have in mind, **THE TEMPLE OF THE TEN**. This was right out of **ADVENTURE**. 1921, I believe. . . And, Arthur D. Howden Smith was in there, John Buchan was in there. . . there are any number of authors that were in there. William Hope Hodgson was in **ADVENTURE**.

FC: Really?!

Grant: Yes he was. Not very much but he was in **Adventure**.

FC: I don't even recall reading that in Sam Moskowitz' critical biography. (In *Out of the Storm*, Grant, 1975.)

Grant: There's mention of it in there. **ADVENTURE** is a great

favorite of mine. It began in 1910 and went into the '50's in approximately the same form. At its peak it was being issued three times a month. Now, take **ADVENTURE** magazine -- this was the magazine that influenced Robert E. Howard!

FC: That's true. It featured all the top-notch adventure authors of the day.

Grant: REH tried to break into **ADVENTURE**. He wrote his first materials on the idea of a character that was molded out of Talbot Mundy and Harold Lamb. He couldn't write in that vein authentically enough to break into **ADVENTURE**, but **ADVENTURE** was an enormous influence on Howard.

FC: It's easy to see the influence but Howard didn't stop there, he went beyond that. He sort of used it as a building block, at least in my opinion.

Grant: Oh yes. It's a building block; definitely.

FC: It reminds me of Lin Carter, who seems to be influenced by everybody and puts it together into a blend. Although, unlike Howard, Carter doesn't strike me as being a writer who does anything new with it -- he's just eclectic.

Grant: Howard was completely different. I think his train of thought was less orderly than Talbot Mundy or Harold Lamb. He was a more erratic person, and because of this, he's much more imaginative. I think, probably, people like Lamb were much greater researchers, they were more careful about what they did. Mundy? Well, Mundy saw a lot in the East, and he involved a lot of what he had seen in his stories. I don't believe in reincarnation (laughter) but when I read **TROS OF SAMOTHRACE** I almost have to think Mundy was a reincarnation of a man who had lived in Caesar's time. (laughter).

FC: I haven't read the books, I have them, but they are quite good from what I've heard. (Zebra Books is currently issuing the **TROS** series in the same format as their Howard books. I've read the first volume since then and must concur with Grant's opinion.)

Grant: Oh, incredibly good. There's a certain flavor of mysticism wrapped up in them, history, just enough fantasy in there to get your mind twisting and working. **Marvelous! TROS OF SAMOTHRACE, PURPLE PIRATE. . .**

FC: When did your interest in Howard start? When did you first encounter his fiction?

Grant: I think my interest in Howard went back to the time I acquired my first set of **WEIRD TALES** magazine, which would be early 1946. I was stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas, and I went home on furlough and naturally I hit the bookshops wherever I went. I went to Fort Worth, Texas, I went to Dallas and I did the bookstores in both of those cities rather thoroughly. In Fort Worth I found this great collection of magazines, and it consisted of a complete file of **WEIRD TALES** to that date, from the first issue. The first two issues were fifty cents, the remaining ones were fifteen cents each. There were also complete runs of **AMAZING, ASTOUNDING**, the Wonder group, **TALES OF MAGIC AND MYSTERY, MIRACLE SCIENCE**, oh, I could go on. . .

FC: That's enough to give a collector, today at least, a heart attack; hearing prices like that!

Grant: That's a long time ago, the interest wasn't there. They were delighted to sell them to me. They set the prices, I

didn't.

FC: Why does Howard interest you as an author? What is it about him that you like? Obviously, you are the major Robert E. Howard publisher.

Grant: Well, to date I've published... let's see...

FC: It must be about twenty titles... twenty-one... I think counting reprint editions though...

Grant: As I recall it, and we should verify this I suppose, seventeen books in nineteen editions. **ROGUES IN THE HOUSE** will make the twentieth, which will be out next month, and **THE LAST CELT**, which is the bio-bibliography of Robert E. Howard, will be issued at the same time. Plus a reprint edition of **THE SOWERS OF THE THUNDER**, so that will put it over twenty hardcover books. I don't know what it is -- it's his imagination, his speed I think more than anything else.



FC: There's also that element of sheer conviction in Howard's work, as if he really believed what he was writing, whereas I get the impression that when other authors, such as de Camp and Carter, write one of their Conan tales, that element that is so necessary to bring the tale to life is lacking, because de Camp and Carter realize it's done for fun, for entertainment. I think Howard really put a lot of himself into these tales.

Grant: Frankly, I don't agree with you. No. (laughter)

FC: How would you feel about it then?

Grant: I think there's a lot of Howard in some of the stories, but there are probably less stories that have something of Howard in them than not. Essentially, I think it's Howard's speed that makes the stories work -- but remember, Howard created whole panoramas, whole civilizations in an antediluvian era.

FC: The Hyborian Age.

Grant: Exactly. Howard peopled it the way he wanted to, but he drew on a lot of sources to people it. It would seem reasonable that the magnitude of this panorama, the very grandness of it, is one of the elements which attracts readers to Howard. Strangely enough, one of my great favorites is Breckenridge Elkins. I like Breck Elkins at least as well as I do Conan.

FC: Speaking of Breckenridge Elkins, why was **A GENT FROM BEAR CREEK** the first Howard book you published, instead of, perhaps, **RED SHADOWS**, **THE SOWERS OF THE**

**THUNDER**, or some other sort of stories? Why did you decide to do the first American edition of Howard's first book?



Grant: Really, this comes down to finances. Glenn Lord and I were talking about Howard in the early '60's and we wanted to do something; we wanted to do it right. This took time. If you'll recall, at the time, all of my imprints were being published with typeset that was no more than an IBM Executive Boldface 2 typeface. Oh, it was justified, it was readable, **THE SOWERS OF THE THUNDER** is done in that fashion, but typeset in those days was a problem, and also getting illustrations done. These colored illustrations that are in the current books just didn't come overnight. We wanted to do these books up right. Well, the book **A GENT FROM BEAR CREEK** had been done in England a year after Howard's death, in 1937.

FC: That's the rarest of all Howard books.

Grant: It's a very, very difficult book to obtain actually. It was presumably reprinted a year later in 1938, but I have never seen one.

FC: Glenn Lord had written me something about a "cheap edition" copy, but he said he doesn't know what differences there really are between them.

Grant: I don't think Glenn has ever seen it, either. Well, anyway, we were talking about Howard over a period of time and Glenn threw out **A GENT FROM BEAR CREEK** and said "Look, I can make this book available to you, the British edition. We can go from there." So I said fine, let's take a look at it. I read the book and I was very enthused with it. It's always been one of my favorites. I went out and photographed the British edition and that was actually the first attempt, a controlled attempt, at doing a book thirty-two pages up... a thirty-two page signature. The edition was 600-odd copies, I don't remember exactly. All of this information is in **THE LAST CELT**. That was the first one, the first Howard, 1965.

FC: Right. And that was followed by **THE PRIDE OF BEAR CREEK**.

Grant: **THE PRIDE OF BEAR CREEK**. Now this was typeset on the IBM Exec, again. It's readable but it isn't any great

shakes as far as I'm concerned. I've always been interested in typography and up until, well, the last few years, more or less, I hadn't been able to do with the typography what I wanted to.

FC: How about **RED SHADOWS**? Would you consider that to be your most popular title, particularly since it's gone through two editions and a third is planned?

Grant: I don't know. That's a very difficult question for me. I don't know really that I have a favorite either. **RED SHADOWS** has gone through two editions, but they have been small editions, both of them well under 1000, so that there are probably something like 1700 copies of **RED SHADOWS** out. Noticeably less than, say, **RED NAILS**, which is 3500, or **ALMURIC**, which is 3500. . . **ROGUES IN THE HOUSE** will be 3500. **RED SHADOWS** is going into a third edition. It will be completely redesigned. I have the artwork by Jeff Jones on hand now for it. **RED SHADOWS** in the new edition will be typeset on the new computer typesetter that we have here.

FC: Will it be printed in the same format or will the book be enlarged?

Grant: It will be an oversized book.

FC: Like the size of **BLACK VULMEA'S VENGEANCE**?

Grant: Not quite that size. **BLACK VULMEA** is a little bit larger than the Conans. It will be the Conan size.

FC: Aha, that should make a very attractive book!

Grant: I would think so, yes. Talking about **RED SHADOWS** as a favorite, of course, it's one of my favorites, no question about it. It's interesting, because I met Jeff Jones in Cleveland while he was still in art school in Georgia. He had some stuff displayed at the Cleveland convention and I was very taken with it. I thought he was a "comer"; he had to succeed. So I spoke to him. At this time he hadn't sold anything professionally. I spoke to him about doing a book. He was enthused and the result was the first edition of **RED SHADOWS**.

FC: Do you think the book helped him along in his career, it made him more popular or gave him the exposure that he needed in order to become one of the top illustrators in the field today?

Grant: I don't go that far. (laughter) I hope it helped him a little bit. . .

FC: Well, although Jeff's technique has improved and been refined to the point where he's incredibly good today, so good that his **RED SHADOWS** paintings look almost crude in comparison, I know people who love those paintings just the way they are.

Grant: I'm one of them.

FC: Me too!

Grant: I don't think that he has gone beyond **RED SHADOWS** really. I like some of the stuff he does now, very much in fact. Perhaps it's sentimental attachment, but I like the **RED SHADOWS** paintings very much.

FC: What made you decide to release the paintings inside the book as canvas prints in a limited edition? You've never

done anything like that since.

Grant: I was so enthused about the illustrations that I thought it would be nice. A lot of people that saw them wanted them, and I thought that to lithograph them would be a logical move. It was a good move. I haven't gone in that direction again because they're hard to handle.

FC: Do you think you might do it with the third edition of **RED SHADOWS**?

Grant: Doubtful, extremely doubtful. Not that I don't like the stuff. . . and, the new material for **RED SHADOWS** is completely different. It's very sombre and it's cold and shadowy.

FC: Why did **SOWERS OF THE THUNDER** take so long to see print? It was mentioned on one of the Bear Creek titles and that was about seven or eight years before the book was actually published.

Grant: **THE SOWERS OF THE THUNDER** is another one of my great favorites. It does have some faults in typography, but there's a lot of love that went into **SOWERS**, both from the artist Roy Krenkel, who worked many years on it, and from me.

FC: It's obvious!

Grant: Actually, **THE SOWERS OF THE THUNDER** took seven years to produce. Roy was very much taken by the material that went into **THE SOWERS** and he wanted to do it right. If you know Roy Krenkel he's very. . . well, he can't seem to please himself.

FC: He's his own worst critic, in other words.

Grant: Yes.

FC: He's quite a character. I think he puts himself down too much.

Grant: He does.

FC: He's got a lot more talent than he realizes.

Grant: (laughing) He's got incredible talent! He took a long, long time to produce the book. You can see why when you just thumb through it. There are well over 100 different illustrations in that thing.

FC: It's one of the most profusely illustrated books I've ever seen in my life. Did you plan to publish it this way originally or did this format grow as Roy kept doing more and more illustrations?

Grant: Oh, it grew, it grew. There were going to be a number of illustrations originally, but nothing like this. As we went along, we talked, and we talked, and we talked about it. The little facets of it evolved. The designs in the margins and the use of the folios and the use of the line illustrations -- they were worked into the text. Now, unfortunately, this book was set on the IBM Executive, it isn't a bad job, for the IBM Exec. It was the only way it could be done. There are so many run-arounds, and so many marginal pieces in there. . .

FC: It's a typesetter's nightmare!

Grant: (laughs) It really is! So, what was done. . . I prepared the page repros, made prints of the illustrations, and did a paste-up, combining the print of the illustrations with the page repros. They were produced in that fashion and made ready

for camera so all that had to be done in the darkroom was a straight line-shot. Of course, there is color on the title-page, and the frontispiece is four-color. The dustwrapper was a job. . .

FC: I had heard tales of how Krenkel kept repainting the cover illustration. He'd get it just right, then he wouldn't be quite satisfied with it and he'd scrape half of it off the canvas, and he'd go back and paint more.

Grant: That could very well be with the dustwrapper, I don't think it was the case with the frontispiece. Roy just can't seem to satisfy himself. **SOWERS** is a favorite with me and it is going into a second edition this month. It was a very successful book. The edition was 2500 copies, a lot for me at that time, and it went out of print rapidly. It did very well.

FC: It sold out almost as fast, or faster, than the Burroughs bibliography, didn't it?

Grant: Not quite that fast, but you have to remember, too, in 1964 when the Burroughs book came out there had been some heavy advertising in advance. My policy now is to stay away from advertising books far in advance. It creates problems. If you can't deliver on time, it builds up bad feelings -- ill will. And what is just as important for the small publisher who has a minimum of time, there are all sorts of people writing in demanding to know "Where is my book?" Which is legitimate. I don't blame these people at all. This is one of the reasons, that, today, I like to advertise the books as close to publication as possible. I know there are those who do not go along with this; some publishers like to advertise far in advance and take the monies involved.

FC: What was the story with **THE IRON MAN**? Zebra Books came out with a paperback edition, as far as I know, before the hardcover saw print, yet the hardcover says "First Edition" inside it. Is the paperback really the true first edition?

Grant: Well, the paperback did appear first. The clothbound was scheduled to come out. In fact, the typeset on **THE IRON MAN** I did. Zebra had made arrangements with the agents, with Glenn Lord and Kirby McCauley, to bring out a paperback edition, and they were in urgent need for Howard property. So what I did was allow them to use the page repros in advance. You'll notice the typeset is just the same for the two books.

FC: There's even the David Ireland illustrations, so I knew that the hardcover had already been typeset when the Zebra edition had appeared.

Grant: Right. Well, they went to press at the same time, but it takes longer to produce a casebound book. There's a lot more involved. They hammer out the paperbacks. It was probably done on a Cameron Belt Press. From start to finish it's a day or two or some ridiculously small length of time.

FC: Now the reason I asked that question is because **SWORDS OF SHAHRAZAR**, which FAX is publishing, has already appeared in England as a paperback, without any interior illustrations, and that's considered the true first edition of the book.

Grant: Still, a paperback first edition, to me, is different from a casebound first edition. First in paper, first in cloth.

(Tape shut off at this point for off-the-record conversation.)

Grant: (Talking about Mike Kaluta's illustrations for **THE**



**LOST VALLEY OF ISKANDER** and the stories). This sort of thing -- the story -- comes directly from **ADVENTURE**. It's right out of Mundy and Lamb. Howard by way of Mundy and Lamb. Currently, there is one guy who has the best "feel" for this type of writing, and he's the toughest guy in the world (laughter). Roy Krenkel, of course. Roy has an incredible feel for this kind of fiction. Right now, he has a Howard in the same vein as **THE SOWERS OF THE THUNDER**. It's been over a year (laughter); I hope I get it pretty soon! One man who could have done it better would have been Coll, who is long dead. Another artist who could have done a creditable job would have been. . .uh. . .what's his name. . .

FC: Modern?

Grant: No, he was a **BLUEBOOK, COLLIERS** illustrator. He succeeded Coll on **Fu Manchu**.

FC: No, it doesn't ring a bell.

(Grant runs into another room and checks his reference.)

FC: That was John Richard Flannigan?

Grant: John Richard Flannigan. He was influenced by Coll also. The more you see of Coll. . . more people were influenced by him. Krenkel, Austin Briggs, John Richard Flannigan, who was very well known, a whole mess of them. . . where were we?

FC: We were at **THE IRON MAN**. We'd just finished that. In **BLACK VULMEA'S VENGEANCE**, I noticed the opening story is very similar to "The Black Stranger." Do you know offhand if it was written as a pirate tale, and couldn't be marketed, so Howard turned it into a Conan story, which was then completed by de Camp after Howard's death? (Published as "The Treasure of Trancos", in the Lancer Conan series.)

Grant: I have a complete version of "The Black Stranger" that was completed by Howard.

FC: There does exist a complete version?

Grant: I'm quite sure that it is complete. You'll have to check on that though. Maybe you'd better verify that with Glenn. He'd be the expert on it. It exists both ways. I think he did the pirate version first, and my reasoning there.

(Telephone interrupted interview at this point.)

Grant: **BLACK VULMEA'S VENGEANCE**, of course, is a pirate story, and he did these three pieces. . . my assumption here is that, Howard, again, was reading **ADVENTURE**. We've talked about that! **ADVENTURE** ran some good pirate stories, and, as a matter of fact, carried the first appearance in this country of **CAPTAIN BLOOD**.

FC: By Sabatini?

Grant: By Sabatini. It was in **ADVENTURE** as a series of episodes. Now, the funny part of it was Sabatini at this time hadn't drawn it together. He hadn't built the complete novel out of it. If you remember anything about **CAPTAIN BLOOD**. . .

FC: I've never read it, myself. Haven't found a copy. (This has since been rectified and the book is highly recommended.)

Grant: It's a super book! (laughter) I'll have to give you a copy. If you remember anything about the movie, even, the big ship that Captain Blood used as his flag ship was the "Arabella," named after the girl he eventually married, Arabella Bishop. She was the niece of the evil planter (laughter) Colonel Bishop, who hated Blood. In **ADVENTURE** magazine, Sabatini hadn't brought the story along that far. The ship is the "Colleen." It isn't the "Arabella" at all! This is in the early '20's, when all of these people were making a great influence on Robert E. Howard, so I think that when **CAPTAIN BLOOD** came out, Howard was ripe to try some pirate stories.

FC: From what I've heard about the novel, it seems to have influenced a lot of people. . . inspired them. Why did you choose Robert James Pailthorpe as an illustrator? To-date you've stayed basically in the fantasy field, choosing people who've done work in that vein, and here you went outside to a man who is a marine illustrator.

Grant: It was an experiment really. I wanted to see what he could do in that vein, and I was pleased with it. He is a nationally-known marine artist, but years ago he illustrated **THE MIGHTIEST MACHINE** by John Campbell under the Hadley imprint. Currently he has a series of Rhode Island Bicentennial prints that has been advertised widely on television. There's a 1776 waterfront scene of Providence -- a beautiful piece -- another one of the burning of the **GASPEE**, a third Revolutionary War General Nathaniel Greene's homestead, and the fourth is a sea scene. He has a feel for the sea and has done a great amount of research in that direction. I think I like his whaling portfolio best of all, and he has done some incredible work for a book on whaling.

FC: You had mentioned that to me in your letter.

Grant: I'm so enthused about it that we have talked about publishing it. I'd be completely out of my science-fantasy element if I did, but the work is so good that it deserves something permanent.

FC: Is it similar to his whaling portfolio or to the kind of work he did for **BLACK VULMEA**?

Grant: It's closer to the whaling portfolio. But still, there is a

departure. There's a finer line involved.

FC: I hope you can find some more people like that who aren't as well known in fandom, perhaps. You say **THE LAST CELT** will be out next month. . .

Grant: Yes.

FC: This is a long-awaited volume.

Grant: Four hundred and sixteen pages, seven by ten. I think it's a good buy. That much material. . .

FC: I'm going to buy it. (laughter)

Grant: A lot of people are waiting for it.

FC: How many copies?

Grant: Twenty-six hundred.

FC: Oh, so it's probably going to sell like that.

Grant: I don't know. Perhaps the price is prohibitive, twenty dollars, I don't know that it's going to sell like that.

FC: When did you plan to publish the Conan series, disregarding the time you wanted to do it back in the late '40's?

Grant: (laughs) We talked about that. . . Glenn and I talked about it, oh. . . well, around the end of '69 or 1970, and it was slowly formulated. Actually, the final decision on the format did not take place until after **THE SOWERS OF THE THUNDER**, and I think **THE SOWERS OF THE THUNDER** influenced the Conan series.

FC: Having a larger-sized book, a little taller and wider. . . ?

Grant: Well, not only that, the general ornateness, the possibility of a better binding, and that's an expensive binding on **SOWERS**. Of course, the Conans are a three-piece binding. The dustwrappers are completely different. I've had people comment about. . . write in and they'll say "Well, I want to do a Conan and I would like to do a colored dust-wraper."

FC: You've got to keep the series matched, once it's started.

Grant: I won't deny that I gave some thought to the use of process color dustwrappers throughout the series. But dustwrappers are going to show themselves off when placed side by side on a bookshelf. Can you imagine what would happen when there are ten different artists involved?

FC: It would make a riot of color in that area.

Grant: Exactly! The wrappers would clash something fierce! That was the reason for simplicity in the dustwrapper. There are a lot of innovations and trials in this Conan series. For one thing, the drop folios and running heads are outside of the text margins.

FC: The running heads? What are they?

Grant: (Showing a page from a Conan title) This is a running head. This is a folio. And here is a drop-folio. The folio could have gone up there (indicates top of page).

FC: So the folio is the page number and the running head is where the title of the book is placed on the page.

Grant: Now this is a drop-folio (at the bottom of the page, or below the running head) as opposed to the folio in the running head.

FC: Okay, like in **THE BOWL OF BAAL** where the title is up on the page and the folio is over on the right-hand side. I'm saying this to get it into the tape recorder! (laughs) How many volumes do you anticipate for the Conan series? I really haven't heard a definite number.

Grant: I haven't really decided yet. It's probably going to be between fifteen and twenty.

FC: How are you going to package **THE HOUR OF THE DRAGON**? Is that going to be one volume? (Better known as the book **CONAN THE CONQUEROR**)

Grant: It's going to be one. . .

FC: Immense volume. (laughter)

Grant: Immense volume; yes. The 14 pt. Souvenir typeface is too large for such a book. Still, it has to be something eminently readable. . . probably a 12 point, one point leaded. There will be a lot of text -- probably build up to a good 500 pages -- and well illustrated. I haven't got an artist for it as yet, though.

FC: It's going to be quite a book it seems.

Grant: It will have to be the most expensive one in the series because of its sheer magnitude. Probably be about a twenty dollar book. It will be difficult to come up with the right illustrator for that one.

FC: Who are some of the artists that you have working now on volumes?

Grant: Well, as you know, **ROGUES IN THE HOUSE** has Marcus Boas. This will be released next month. **THE DEVIL IN IRON**, which will be the sixth Conan, is Dan Green. Jeff Jones is doing one. . .

FC: Krenkel?

Grant: Krenkel has talked about a hand-lettered edition of "The Hyborian Age" as part of the Conan series.

FC: Nice.

Grant: He wants to hand-letter the entire thing.

FC: It may be ten years before you get it!

Grant: That's a possibility. I'm not pressing; it's a big series. But I hope to have something of Krenkel's as part of it. Michael Hague -- he has sort of a Rackham approach -- is doing a volume.

FC: (Being shown examples of Hague's work) Oh, wow! A define Rackham influence.

(Material deleted at this point)

Grant: (Talking about the illustrations for the Conan series). There are people who like the Alicia Austin ones the best. Now, admittedly, Alicia's work is not what I envision Conan as. Neither do I envision Conan as a Neanderthal, either. (laughs) I think Alicia's work is beautiful and I can take it. After all, the whole idea, the whole premise for this series,

was to put it out with illustrations that interpreted the Conan stories as the illustrator saw. And this is just what's been done. They were all different. As I said, I've gotten more criticism of the Robertson illustrations than any of them. And there have been criticisms. . . not a great many now. . . there have been criticism of all of them, of Alicia's, of George Barr's, and David Ireland's.

(More material deleted.)

FC: How do you feel about the de Camp and Carter pastiches in the Conan series? They've been rather controversial and it's a question that seems to be asked of everybody these days, so I thought I'd pose it to you.

Grant: I prefer the Howard, frankly. They're both very successful authors in their own right, but they don't seem to capture quite as fully what Howard was trying to do.

FC: How long have you known Glenn Lord?

Grant: I think it would be, probably, the late 1950's. He hadn't taken over as agent for the estate. He wasn't involved at that time. In fact, when did **ALWAYS COMES EVENING** come out?

FC: '57, I believe.

Grant: '57, that's right. It must have been shortly after that date. . . no, I think I remember him before that.

FC: How did you come into contact with each other? Just two fans exchanging letters?

Grant: Probably. Chances are Glenn got some of the books, if not new ones, then out-of-print. (In addition to publishing, Grant has been a dealer in used and out-of-print books.)

FC: You've done publishing for Glenn, issues of **THE HOWARD COLLECTOR**. Do you remember how many issues you published, was it the entire set?

Grant: I don't remember how many; it wasn't the entire set. The first two or three were professionally typeset and printed. At that time, I had a small offset which I'd bought as a means to an end (laughs) . . . printing has always been an expensive proposition and through the years has become increasingly so. When Glenn asked me if I would take over production of **THE HOWARD COLLECTOR**, with the interest I had in it, I was happy to do so.

FC: You've had associations with other publishers, too. One of them is Joseph Payne Brennan's **Macabre House**. You published, what was it, three or four titles. . . ?

Grant: Yes, I produced some of his issues of **MACABRE** -- on the small press -- in the same way that **THE HOWARD COLLECTOR** was produced.

FC: Do you still publish **MACABRE** for him?

Grant: No, I haven't done anything like that for several years. The early magazines and books were run off on a small A.B. Dick offset press, two pages up. Everything was hand-folded in those days. . . it was the way I produced books at that time. Then we were associated with **SCREAM AT MIDNIGHT**, **THE DARK RETURNERS**. . .

FC. And **THE CASEBOOK OF LUCIUS LEFFING**.

Grant: Right.

FC: And you showed me something that is in progress.

Grant: **THE CHRONICLES OF LUCIUS LEFFING** is now into typeset. It has been illustrated. I do have the illustrations on hand for it. This will be under my imprint.

FC: It won't be under Macabre?

Grant: It won't be under Macabre, no. It should be an attractive little book. You've seen some of the type for it.

FC: What is your arrangement with Centaur Press?

Grant: I'm one of the original partners in Centaur Press.

FC: Did you, and do you still, do typeset for the books?

Grant: Some of the typeset in the books was utilized from casebound, from the hardcover editions. For instance, the Howards. I did do the typeset for **THE PATHLESS TRAIL**, I can remember. Very small. . .

FC: I remember **TIGER RIVER** was miniscule.

Grant: **PATHLESS TRAIL** is the real small one. See, (showing book) that was done on the IBM Exec. **TIGER RIVER** is more readable. We had to get that into so many pages and that was the only way it could be done, frankly. (laughs)

FC: What happened to **THE KING OF NO MAN'S LAND**? It's mentioned on the back cover of **THE PATHLESS TRAIL** and it's never. . .

Grant: It's never been published in paperback. I would like to think that my associates would want to follow through on it eventually.

FC: I hope so. I have a hardcover copy and loved it. I think a lot of other people should have the chance to read it too.

Grant: There's a fourth one, also.

FC: Do you have a spare copy of it? (laughter)

Grant: It's called **MOUNTAINS OF MYSTERY**. All four of these stories ran in **ADVENTURE**. We're back to **ADVENTURE** again! There was a later yarn called "In the Year 2000" in which the descendants of the heroes go back into interior South America to the land of "The King of No Man's Land." It appeared in magazine only; never did make it into hardcover. The original appearance of the four books, **THE PATHLESS TRAIL**, **TIGER RIVER**, **THE KING OF NO MAN'S LAND** and **MOUNTAINS OF MYSTERY** was in **ADVENTURE** magazine as long serials. Then Harpers, who was a major publisher at the time, put them into book form. Harpers also published **RIVER OF SEVEN STARS**.

FC: That's the non-fiction book?

Grant: That's the non-fiction one in which Friel details his explorations in South America in search of the "White Indians." He came back with some most interesting conclusions. Mrs. Friel told me that when he got off the boat he was virtually skin and bones. He barely survived that trip!

FC: Whew! Why did **THE BOWL OF BAAL** appear as a hardcover under your imprint when it was originally projected to be a paperback edition in the Time-Lost series?

Grant: **THE BOWL OF BAAL** is a title that I've wanted to do for

years -- long before Centaur was ever dreamed of. The story originally appeared in **ALL-AROUND** magazine, as you know, and it is a devilishly difficult thing to obtain today. Actually, the magazine was competition for the Munseys. By and large, it featured a fantastic type of story. **BOWL OF BAAL** was in there, of course. But some of the other inclusions were: **BEYOND THIRTY**, by Edgar Rice Burroughs, the Centaur paperback **THE TREASURE OF ATLANTIS**. . .



FC: The Dunn book?

Grant: Yes, that's the one. **BEYOND THE RANGE** -- that's the book title -- appeared in **ALL-AROUND** as **THE UNDERCOVER TRAIL** by George B. Rodney.

FC: I'm not familiar with that one.

Grant: That's a lost-race thing. They did a lot of stuff in that vein. Well, we wanted to get into that, in Centaur, though I had wanted to do it right along in hardcover. I found the heirs of Robert Ames Bennet, who wrote his first book in 1901. That was **THYRA**, another fantastic.

FC: So it was quite a while ago.

Grant: Yes, it was quite a while ago, but I did find Bennet's son alive and paid a royalty for the book. Eventually, I hope that it will come out from Centaur because it is a real period piece.

FC: How have the non-Howard titles sold? I know that the **RED SHADOWS** collections, the three paperbacks, have gone into reprintings. How about the other titles?

Grant: Nothing in the Centaur line has sold as well as the Howard material. Sales on the other authors have been, say, moderately good. **THE TREASURE OF ATLANTIS** has dragged worse than the others. . . I don't think **TREASURE** has sold as well as we had anticipated.

FC: Do you have any projected titles in the series that haven't seen print yet? Books that are in progress or for which you're negotiating the rights?

Grant: There are some, but at this time I'm not at liberty to mention them.

FC: When you go about publishing a book, after securing the rights to the story, what are your next steps? What are some of the duties you have to go through in order to see the finished volume come off the presses?

Grant: That is a very good question. It depends upon how you approach it. Can I edit it, do I want to edit it? There's editing

involved with say, Friel. **THE BOWL OF BAAL**. . . there's some rewrite there. Basically you've got to figure what direction you're going to do with that book. Am I going to put it into my, what I call my trade editions, the size of **THE BOWL OF BAAL**? About five by seven and a half book. They're nicely casebound, and I like a good readable type for them. Basically, my bread-and-butter typeface is Baskerville. I think it's the finest typeface for readability that's ever been created. The five by seven and a half books, **THE BOWL OF BAAL**, **THE IRON MAN**, **TIGERS OF THE SEA**, **WORMS OF THE EARTH**, **ALMURIC**. . . they're all Baskerville. Twelve point Baskerville. . . mostly two points leaded; twelve on fourteen. I think that the measure -- the column width -- is 22 picas on most of them. Baskerville is a good, readable typeface. For other books, there might be the need, the call for them to go into a 7 by 10 size, or, in the case of **BLACK VULMEA'S VENGEANCE**. . . originally that was going to be even larger than the seven and a quarter by ten and a half inch book that it now is.

FC: It was going to be larger??

Grant: I was thinking in terms of. . . the painter that illustrated. . . that influenced so many people, Wyeth, Schoonover. . .

FC: Oh, Howard Pyle!

Grant: Howard Pyle, of course.

FC: His **BOOK OF PIRATES**?

Grant: I was thinking in terms of the **BOOK OF PIRATES** and in fact I laid it out that way but I couldn't justify it. There isn't enough marginal material to go with it. So I went to a seven and a quarter by ten and half. (Looking at a copy of **BLACK VULMEA'S VENGEANCE**) Now, this is a completely different typeface; the first time that I have used it. It is Goudy Oldstyle. What I tried to do is take the story and use the type that seems to go with it. Since this is an historical pirate tale, the face that lent itself to the book most agreeably was Goudy Oldstyle. The heads, the running heads, are Greco. (Turns to title page) The title page is designed with a Greco title. This is Goudy Oldstyle (pointing to illustration credits and his imprint at the bottom of the page).

FC: Do you usually choose an artist before or after you've chosen the typeface and typestyle? Or does it vary, again, with the book?

Grant: It would vary with the book. I might find the artist before I acquire the book. The Conan series is done in Souvenir. Now, Souvenir is a very popular face today, but it's an ad face. It is not used for text work like this. It's not used for a book.

FC: (laughing) Very readable, though!

Grant: It seems to lend itself to Conan, which is why I went with it. I do enjoy this sort of thing. . . I suppose it is the design factor that attracts me. . . not design in the sense of illustration, since I have no artistic ability. It's the complete packaging process. . . Fitting the type with the editing, the proofreading, the preparation of literature, and the advertising.

FC: You try to think of a book as an entity. Cover to cover. . .

Grant: Sure. There's a lot of blood, sweat and tears that go into each book.

FC: It shows. About how long, on the average, does it take to do a book, barring any unforeseen delays or something. . .

Grant: (laughing) Seven years!

FC: . . . or does it really vary from title to title?

Grant: It varies completely from title to title. I couldn't begin to say. **THE LAST CELT** has been a few years in the working, but it's incredibly detailed. It has been a very difficult book to do. The Lovecraft-de Camp book, **TO QUEBEC AND THE STARS**, is also a very difficult book to produce because of the text. Remember, Lovecraft wrote this for his own enjoyment -- it's the longest single piece of writing that he ever did -- and he has taken on eighteenth-century word forms that we tried to use throughout the book. An example would be the word "Majesty's" which HPL wrote as "Maj" and then made the "t-y-'s" a superior in a smaller typeface. A superior is a character -- letter or figure -- that prints above, higher than, normal character height. This was devilishly tough, and made more difficult when the computer insisted upon inserting a tiny degree circle instead of an apostrophe. I ended up cutting most of these in by hand. The book is 97,000 words long.

FC: What books are you planning to issue in the future, outside of the Conan series, and books you've already mentioned, such as the Lovecraft-de Camp book, **TO QUEBEC AND THE STARS**?

Grant: Well, I'm far along on the Clark Ashton Smith bibliography from Don Fryer which should have been done a couple of years ago. That's going to appear. I'm extremely excited over the Harold Lamb material, and the first one. . . actually, you may have noticed it in the other room on the bookshelves, **DURANDAL**. . .

FC: About the sword?

Grant: The sword of Roland, yes. **THE SOWERS OF THE THUNDER** is just drawn out of **DURANDAL**. Now, **DURANDAL** ran as three separate adventures in **ADVENTURE** magazine, in the '20's.

FC: Getting back to **ADVENTURE** again. . .

Grant: Getting back to **ADVENTURE** again. A few years later, Doubleday-Doran issued it as a semi-juvenile in one volume - the book has appeal for all ages -- illustrated by Alan McNab. I exchanged some letters with Harold Lamb back in the sixties, just before he died.

FC: He died that late?

Grant: Yes.

FC: I had thought he died in the '50's.

Grant: No, it was either '62 or '64. Lamb was very enthused over my projects and I was just at the point of saying: "Look, I'd like to do one of your stories. . ." when I read of his death in **TIME**. In fact, I think I did put such a proposal before him in a letter that he could not have seen, just a few days before he died. Now, I have a contract with Lamb's son, and I'm working in full cooperation with the Lamb estate. **DURANDAL** was chosen to begin the Lamb series because of its remarkable influence on Robert E. Howard. I have gone back to the original versions of the three stories as they appeared in **ADVENTURE** magazine -- before they were reworked for the Doubleday-Doran edition. The "Durandal" stories will be issued as three individual books, each

illustrated by George Barr. The readability is more adult, and they will carry the notes and information which Harold Lamb revealed in the "Campfire" department of ADVENTURE. It's excellent stuff.

FC: Good!

Grant: I have hopes that this Lamb material can equate some of the popularity of Howard. Certainly it has all the ingredients. . . the action. . . the writing ability. . . the background.

FC: I've enjoyed those Lamb biographies I've read.

Grant: Wait'll you read this stuff. It's good!

FC: You were telling me about a George Barr artbook when I arrived?

Grant: Yes, **UPON THE WINDS OF YESTERDAY**. It contains 54 pieces of full color -- "The Paintings of George Barr." Actually, it contains more than just color. There is some line work, a couple of introductory pieces by Tim Kirk and Stuart Schiff, and an Afterward from George himself. All in all, it contains 141 pages, in an 8½ by 11 page size, clothbound. Since George Barr is one of the guests of honor at the MidAmericon in Kansas City, I plan to issue it there. . . And we'll have a Joseph Clement Coll book coming out which I'm very excited about. I think the man was incredible.

FC: I look forward to seeing that! Particularly since I'm unfamiliar with most of his work.

Grant: I'd like to see more illustrators develop something of Coll's style if they could.

FC: Who are some of your favorite artists, outside of those you've already published? Obviously you enjoy their work.

Grant: Yes, I like the artists I've been using, otherwise I wouldn't have used them! (laughter) Obviously. A favorite. . . gee, I couldn't pick a favorite! But, I do like Joseph Clement Coll very much as an illustrator, line opposed to color.



FC: Frank Frazetta?

Grant: I think he's very good. Perhaps not a great favorite because he doesn't have that mystic quality -- for me -- that I can find in Coll or Finlay or Krenkel, or in Barr or Austin or Jones.

FC: What about some of the Golden Age illustrators like Dulac, or Rackham or Parrish?

Grant: I like Dulac. I've seen one book of his that's incredibly good. I like Rackham. I like N. C. Wyeth, Schoonover, Neilson. . .

FC: Are you familiar with Willy Pogany?

Grant: I've seen some Pogany that's incredibly good, I've seen some that isn't so good.

FC: Same here.

Grant: He's uneven. I like Harry Clarke.

FC: I love Clarke's work! What is your opinion of the current fantasy boom? It's grown beyond anybody's expectations in the past few years.

Grant: It's just incredible! (laughing) I don't know what more I can say about it. . . I'm very pleased -- glad that we finally have the recognition after so many years. I don't know that it's any more fun today, though, than it was then.

FC: I think it may die a bit, but do you think it'll fade out again, back into obscurity, or do you think it's pretty much here to stay now that it's so widespread and popular? Do you think we've finally entered "literature" or are we still a "bastard child" of sorts?

Grant: I think we're a part of literature now. There has to be some let down, but I don't see how it can fade completely with the inroads science-fantasy has made into movies, television, and especially education.

FC: Did you ever think that Howard's work would be so popular?

Grant: No.

FC: You took a gamble when you published the Bear Creek titles, back ten years ago.

Grant: Yes.

FC: And Howard has become a "monster" practically. Howard fandom today, that is.

Grant: It was close to twelve years ago that I started the Bear Creeks, early '65. Actually, we were talking about it in '64. No, I never thought it would be a fad, as it is.

FC: In a way I think it's too bad, because while I appreciate all the stories and information that's come to light due to Howard's immense popularity, prices have been driven sky-high and factions and squabbles have developed to some degree. I wonder whether the benefits aren't outweighed by the hassles involved.

Grant: There were hassles among the authors, even in the '30's - perhaps not to the degree there are now. After all, there are more people involved now.

FC: What advice would you give to young artists who seek work from you? What criteria do you judge them upon?

Grant: Well, I don't have any art training, Steve. I guess we've discussed this before. So all I can go by is whether I like it or not. There are certain styles I like, there are certain artists whose work I like.

FC: You probably do get packages in the mail from time to time. . .

Grant: Time to time? Every week!

FC: What involvement did you play in setting up the Providence convention last year? Were you chairman?

Grant: No, I was a vice-chairman. Actually, you can put the blame on Kirby McCauley! (laughs) Not blame, really; I'm only joking. We had talked -- Charles Collins and Chris Steinbrunner among others -- about having a convention in Providence. It seemed like a natural, but we never did any more than talk. Then Kirby McCauley came to town and Harry Beckwith gave him his famous tour of Lovecraft's Providence. I met Kirby that night for dinner and he dropped a bombshell. "I went to the Holiday Inn and reserved a group of rooms for a convention!" On such-and-such a day, that Halloween weekend. Kirby took the bull by the horns, smothering the rest of us had never done, and the success of the convention should be attributed to Kirby McCauley.

FC: Are you planning another convention? A yearly event, perhaps?

Grant: Not for Providence. The second World Fantasy Convention will be held in New York. For a third there are people who want to hold it in Brownwood, Texas, and then there's a group on the west coast that want a Clark Ashton Smith-oriented convention in California. I would love to see it in Brownwood because it has so much of Howard. I'd like to go there while Tevis Clyde Smith is still in good form and Tevis has volunteered to take a bus tour in much the same fashion we had here in Providence. (Referring back to the Providence convention). . . It was a very emotional convention. It was great to see these old masters come in and they were touching. I'm talking about people like Bob Bloch, who gave a very emotional speech. A fine person. Fritz Leiber came. Long and Munn, both of whom are getting along in years, were in attendance. And the convention was directed at them and at Lovecraft's Providence. In that respect it was far different than the average science fiction convention.

FC: I wish I had attended, but circumstances dictated differently at the time.

Grant: It was worth going to. Several of the authors stayed around afterward, just exploring Providence; Lovecraft's Providence I should emphasize. Fritz Leiber and Bob Bloch gave lectures at a local college.

FC: It was so long overdue. We've had science fiction conventions since 1939. It took us, what, thirty-five years later to get a fantasy convention together?

Grant: Well, the organization is much better in science fiction. For some reason, in my old age. . . science fiction just doesn't do as much for me anymore. I much prefer the fantasy.

FC: I still enjoy science fiction. When I get tired of fantasy, when all the barbarians and ghouls start to sound alike, I'll

read a few science fiction books for a change of pace and then go back to fantasy with renewed vigor and interest.

Grant: Well, when that happens, I can switch to, say, Harold Lamb, who, well, at times he gets a little fantastic, but he's. .

FC: He's viewed primarily as an historical biographer.

Grant: Yes, he's known as an historical biographer, but this is his fiction which was in **ADVENTURE**, which is not known today. And I can turn to people, say, like, A Merritt, who is as different from Robert E. Howard as science fiction is. Or I can turn to Talbot Mundy, whom I enjoy thoroughly. Or Friel. They're so different!

FC: To wrap things up, what advice would you give to fans who are interested in publishing, whether it's on a fan level or whether they're anticipating a professional thing? What philosophy would you impart, something to follow and keep in mind, from someone who has the experience and insight you do?

Grant: I think I'll give a different interpretation, a different direction than most people would. I would say get all the graphic arts you can and learn from the ground up. An understanding of production. . . Do as much of a book as you can.

FC: Even if you have to print it page by page?

Grant: Page by page. . . This is something we don't get enough of today and I think that the individual is left out. He can't get a proper understanding. I think it helps him right along the line.

FC: I'd like to thank you again for consenting to this interview.

Grant: My pleasure. I hope you get something out of it! (laughs)

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# A Vision of Rembathene

By Darrell Schweitzer

It is late at night, the feasting long over. Guttering torchlights swim in a haze of stale incense. The ghosts of ancient heroes, like shadows, stir in the corners, behind the limp hanging draperies and begin to move about as darkness creeps upon the exhausted court.

Amidst the revellers the King raises his head, and looks wearily over all. The Queen by his side whispers something into his ear, and he calls out to one on whom his eyes have come to rest, saying, "Tell me now of the cities of your dreams, that I too may behold them when I sleep."

The storyteller replies, "Of which, O King?"  
"Of Rembathene."

"Ah Rembathene! Rembathene! Of all the cities revealed to me thou art the fairest! Rembathene, thy towers catch the dawn glow before even the mountain peaks the gods have wrought. Ah glorious Rembathene, a diamond with a thousand thousand facets, not built, but grown like some strange tree from that single pebble called The Soul of the Earth. Rembathene, all the Worlds envied thee!"

It was in Rembathene that Anahai the young king sat, on a throne of the East Wind carven, of night air frozen into a solid thing by magic and ancient rite, and shaped in secret beneath a broad moon of old, when they who first conceived Rembathene came out of the East armed with the sword. On this seat of his forebears he sat, brooding for the first time in the six months of his reign, the days of which before had dawned on nothing but peace and contentment, the enemies of his people having been subdued long before the birth of any man yet alive. Perhaps it was the very grace of his reign, and the splendor of his realm, that had brought him woe, for a pestilence had descended upon Rembathene, of the sort that a petty god sends when he is jealous.

By these signs was it known: First, a chill, such as one might feel when a window is left open in the evening, then a fever following, very slight, still not cause for alarm. But after that the suffering was swift and terrible. The afflicted one would awaken one morning covered with sores and welts, as if he had been flogged; blood would stream from every pore, and from his nose and ears; and he would go mad. In the end the flesh would decay while yet animate, and that which had once been a man would claw putrid chunks from itself as long as hands remained, and only after long hours of howling and writhing find relief at last in death. When a person was so stricken, all those around him would flee, for touch, or even nearness to such a one would mean contamination, and a similar fate within days. So the people of Rembathene and the lands around fled in all directions, into the city and out of it, from villages and towns into the fields, and from the fields into villages and towns. They trampled the crops they had planted. They clogged the roads. Many were crushed in the great arch of Rembathene which had been built for triumphant armies. And all this was to no avail, for when one of their number screamed and fell they could only turn in another direction, often back the way they had come. The subtlety of the plague was that in any crowd there were always a few who were already infected but did not know it yet, so that Doom walked always as a silent companion among the refugees.

This young King, who knew himself to be the father of his people, who was willing to supplicate whatever god was angered and to sacrifice himself if need be, who had never truly proved to the people by effort that he was their king, listened helplessly to the reports brought to him, and watched much from his high windows. He felt in his heart the misery of the citizens of Rembathene.

He asked first of his Physician, "What cause?"

And the Physician answered, "Lord it is not known. Many and marvellous are the secrets of creation, and marvel enough would it be if a cure were to come to us, or some mitigation of our suffering. To know the cause is to ask too much."

He turned then to his Master of Leechcraft, saying, "Has your art been tried, to draw out the evil humors?"

"Aye, Majesty, and there are fewer of my brothers than there were before."

And to his Magician he said, "And magic?"

"Magic has been tried, O King, and there are today fewer magicians in the land than there are physicians or leeches."

Anahai ran his fingers nervously through his beard -- it was not much, for his years were few -- and the learned men stood impotent and afraid before him, and silence ruled in the room, until one spoke whose voice had not been heard before, an ancient who was not learned but wise, who had given up his name because he was so holy. All faced this revered one as he rose from where he had been seated, his black robe draped over him like a shroud, his polished ebony staff glistening like a living serpent.

"Most noble King," said he, "the cause of Rembathene's sorrow is not an imbalance of earthly humors, or a magical curse laid on the land by some enemy, or even the anger of a god, but this: beyond the world's rim there sits a Guardian with the Book of Earth in his lap, and this Guardian has fallen asleep with the Book open in his lap to the page of Rembathene, while he sleeps the spirit Nemesis has crept close, whispering "Death, death, death" into the book."

"Then the Guardian must be awakened. How can this be done? What god shall I pray to?"

"There is one god only who can help you, one who is greater than all the gods of Earth. The God of Mysteries alone has power over the rim and beyond."

"He is not one to whom I sacrifice each day," said the King, puzzled. "Tell me of this god."

"Lord, there is little to say, for little is known. He resides in his tower, apart from the other gods, who are to him as ants to a great beast. He brushes them aside with a wave of his hand. His name cannot be known. His face cannot be seen. Perhaps he is not a god at all, but Fate or Chance, or some other force not yet imagined, for his ways are mysterious and hidden from men."

"But how was he carven then, for surely his image was carven?"

The nameless man paused, then looked at the others about him and said, "This is a secret only the King may know."

The physical, the leech, the magician, and all the others were sent away, even the two massive eunuchs who stood perpetually on either side of the throne. Then when they were alone, the holy one continued.

"Know, O King, that of old a carver in Rembathene was touched by a madness, and his slaves took him to the top of the highest tower in the city, and they gave him his tools, and stone to work with, and they drew a curtain around him. For a month he carved, as the moon waxed and waned, and when the moon was gone he shrieked horribly, and staggered out, his face ashen and wide, and when his slaves beheld him they knew their duty, and slew him. They touched not the curtain, and none shall, until the ending of time, when one shall tear it back, look on the face of the God of Mysteries, and bring non-existence to all things."

"But if we cannot see his face, how can we know his nature? Is he cruel or kind? We cannot know if he mocks us."

"Even so, O King, for his ways are hidden from men."

"Still I must go to him. Where is his tower?"

"From a distance, it is seen by many. Close by, by a very few. Its base I touched for the first time in the fiftieth year of my contemplation, and I have gone there many times since. I can take another with me, for I have gained this strength."

At sunset, when the way he was to walk had been purified as far as ordinary men could follow it, King Anahai went with his

guide through the streets of Rembathene, until they took a turn no others could take, and the city grew dim around them. They came at last to a tower glimpsed often by travellers who look back on Rembathene against the western sky, but seldom discerned by anyone else, and the King alone entered. He climbed a stairway of a hundred spirals, looking out windows at each turn, and saw the dark and quiet rooftops sink away below him; saw the sun burning low and golden, the purple on the horizon; and at last, when he neared the top, the stars appeared, seemingly below and round him, as if he had left the earth altogether.

He came finally to a room at the top of the tower, which the old man had described to him, wherein resided the god he sought. It was dark in there, dimly lit by tapers and without windows. The air was heavy with incense and dust and the stench of slaughtered offerings, making the place very holy. At the far end lay the crumbling skeleton of the mad carver, whose remains had never been touched, and beyond them was a curtain.

The King prostrated himself before the curtain, but presented no sacrifice, for when a ruler seeks rescue for his people from a god, the only thing he may offer is himself. Thus he rose empty handed to his knees and spoke humbly to the god, telling how the folk of his country had suffered, and begging that some cure to the disease be revealed.

Whatever was behind the curtain remained still. Anahai remained on his knees for many hours until his legs were numb, and still no answer came. He wanted very much to leave, but dared not, fearing the anger of the god, and hoping that the god was only thinking, and about to speak. Also he knew that if he were to leave, and return to his people without some solution, there would be no hope at all, and he would have failed in his duty. Kings who fail, he had always been taught, are seen in the corner of the eye as dim shapes which vanish when gazed upon directly. They are phantoms, wisps of smoke, sounds in the forest when no ear listens, unworthy to walk either on the earth or under the earth in the land of the dead.

The musty air made his eyes and his whole body heavy. He first sat back on his ankles, then brought his feet out from under him after a while and sat cross-legged. Later he slumped to the floor, asleep.

A dream came to him. He saw himself asleep in the tower, on the floor before the black curtain. Suddenly a wind blew the drape back, against the god, and there was a hint of an outline, a form hunched and powerful, and a face not at all like that of a man. The figure on the floor screamed and thrashed about, yet there was no sound, and the spirit of Anahai, oddly detached and floating in the air overhead, knew that there was cause for terror, yet felt nothing. The body did not wake, and the dream continued. The lips of the idol moved and formed words silently, and in silence the body of the King got up and left the room. The spirit followed it down the hundred turns of the stair, into the city over which a heavy mist had fallen, through streets of looming, grey shapes, and out into the fields. Leagues passed, and at last a forest rose ahead, drenched in the fog so that the trees stood like dim Titans in the night. Led by a will not his own the King's body and awareness walked among them for a long way, somehow sure of the path no eye could make out.

Suddenly something before him moved, a shadow detaching itself from the general gloom to become a man.

"You!" cried the King. "Who are you?" As he spoke he awoke, and heard his voice echoing down the towers, "areyouareyouareyou. . ."

He was disoriented for a moment, but then he knew that the god had answered. He prostrated himself once more, in thanksgiving this time, before the curtain which was unruffled, and behind which no shape was visible, and he left the room. He looked out the first window he came to and saw that there was indeed a mist over the city, as he had dreamed, lapping against the towers like the silent waves of some magically conjured sea.

It was still the middle of the night. He was met in the darkness at the door of the tower by the holy man without a name, and with him he went through the faint, strangely turning streets until they emerged onto the pavement on which all men may walk. They went wordlessly back to the palace, where the King was met by his physician, his leech, and his wizard.

"Majesty, is it well?"

"I am sent to another place."

"Then go as a king must go, resplendent in your robes, with crown on your head and sword at your side, riding your finest stallion, with a troop of royal guards at your back."

And he did all these things, and rode out of the main gate of Rembathene, called the Mouth of the City, with his cavalry behind him, and his magician, his leech, and his physician at his side. Also with him was the old man of mystical learning, who spoke to the king in strange signs, and in whispers none of the others could hear.

When they were more than a mile beyond the town, the mist had swallowed all the towers. Anahai turned to the horsemen and said, "I need you no longer," and sent them away, and the old man nodded.

After another mile he sent away the three who had advised him, saying to them also, "I need you no longer."

And when he came to the end of the wood he had seen in his dream he said to the wise man, "I need you no more either. From here I must go alone."

The one holy, beyond naming, smiled. The King paused a second, unsure of himself and spoke once more.

"Know you to whom I am sent, or what price shall be asked?"

"No one knows that, save He who will not reveal it. He may have no price, or the world may be his price. He may jest and give forth nothing."

"Then goodbye," the King said, and he dismounted, handed the reins of his horse to the other, and walked into the forest. His purple cloak, his red leggings, and his golden armor and crown seemed grey in the depths of the fog. He turned and looked back once and saw only an empty field. Far off he thought he heard hoofbeats on the muddy ground, then all was silent.

He entered the forest, and the mist hung over him like a damp blanket, and his steps were directed, as they had been in the dream. The trees loomed over him, and vanished in the darkness above.

Then suddenly, as had been foretold, he met a stranger. One shadow detached itself from the rest and became a tall, thin man of fierce, weatherworn features, dressed in a cape the color of the fog, and a tall peaked hat. His sudden motion startled the King.

"Who are you?" Again his voice echoed, but this time he did not wake.

The other did not answer, but stood again motionless, as if he were some strange and twisted tree that had seemed by some sorcery of mist and night to be momentarily alive.

"I am sent to you," said the King. "It has been revealed that I should meet you here by one who sits behind a curtain in the tower few can reach."

At that the stranger seemed to recognize him, and still not speaking, he motioned for the King to follow. Deeper into the woods they went, along a winding way the other knew. The stranger's cape hid him until at times Anahai feared he was alone, and lost, only to hear once more the soft, steady footsteps receding in front of him.

After a while the ground began to slope upward and the trees thinned out a little. They came to a gorge in which grey-black clouds broiled. A dwarf with a long spear challenged them with a savage yell, but the one who was leading cast a jewel as big as a fist over the head of the little man and into the pit. There was an explosion like the wrath of an angry god, and a bridge of ancient wood appeared. They crossed, and when they set foot on the other side, the bridge vanished.

The trees got shorter and shorter, became gnarled and stunted little shrubs, then gave way to grass and moss, then to bare rock. The two climbed up precarious slopes, the fog clinging around them, as if the mountain wore it like a night-shirt. At last they came to the summit, and to a tiny hut. Inside was a bare table and two chairs. The stranger ushered the King in and motioned for him to sit.

Anahai looked around at the bareness of the dwelling.

"There is a pestilence in the land," he said doubtfully, "and I will give you anything you desire if --"

A long, flat box was placed on the table.

"Play this game with me."

Anahai nodded, and regretted he had spoken rashly. He knew to wait, to expect but not to ask, and hope that what he had requested of the God of Mysteries would be granted.

Inside the box was a notched board painted in black and white squares, and some glowing balls. With these they played a game, the King keeping his balls on the white squares and the other keeping his on the black. When those of one were surrounded by those of the other, they were taken, and when the stranger captured one he placed it in his palm, and the light of it would go out, leaving it a dull brown. But when Anahai took one it would glow all the brighter. He won some and he lost some. Over this game the man in the grey cape showed emotion, gloating as he hoarded each new acquisition, scowling each time Anahai made one brighter. For a time the King feared he would not win, and played on with the resignation of a general fighting a hopeless battle in which he cannot surrender, but then the tide turned, and the room glowed with his winnings which he piled on one side of the table. It seemed to go on forever. Sometimes he felt as if he were asleep, and the motions of his hands were being made by the hands, independent of his will, and at times his mind was very clear, and he schemed and made strategies and practised diversions.

At last dawn came. The sun began to melt through the uppermost mist, and the gloom inside the hut was somewhat lessened. For the first time Anahai saw that there was a window. Through it he could see the dull orange glow of the morning, diffused in the fog.

He felt confused, exhausted, irritated at having spent the whole night doing this meaningless thing.

"What happens now?"

The other spoke for the second time. His voice was deep and hollow, as if coming from far away, from beyond the form that stood before Anahai.

"You have won. You hold more worlds than I."

"Will you then drive the pestilence away, if this is within your power?"

"Do? It shall be done! It is done! Know! Recognize! See, as was randomly pre-ordained!"

"See what? Recognize what?" The King's bewilderment was now mixed with terror.

The other made a sweeping gesture with his arms, his cloak flapping out like wings. He went to a corner, picked up two things, threw the door of the hut open and stood silhouetted, the rising sun behind him.

He smiled. For the first time Anahai noticed he had a long white beard.

"Do you not know me?"

And there in the doorway, with his scythe in one hand, his hourglass in the other, and his satchel of Years slung over his shoulder, the young King knew him.

In the middle of a day measured variously according to various calendars, one dressed in rich but ragged garments wandered into a village. He called all the people around him, and some came, while others went on about their business, and when they would not bow before him he grew angry, saying, "I am your king! I am your king!" And he mentioned certain names, and the people laughed, and went away. He stood alone

in their square until a very old woman came up to him and said she had heard those names before in tales told to her long ago, but that the place he spoke of had passed away ten times ten generations ago.

And on hearing this King Anahai began to weep, for he knew how his request had been fulfilled and who had done it, and he knew the answers to all the questions that had come into his head that morning, when he descended the mountain and found himself in a strange country. Somewhere the God of Mysteries was laughing perhaps, or perhaps not. Perhaps things could not have turned out any differently.

Time had driven the pestilence out of Rembathene.



## THE UGLY AVOIDED PLACES

By Joseph Payne Brennan

There are ugly, avoided places  
where vibrant words  
turn into chaff,  
places we pass,  
places where we look the other way,  
where we don't want to stay.

There are empty, ambiguous places  
where crevices smoke,  
where the winds poke,  
places far within,  
too far beneath the skin,  
where the mind-wrenching questions begin.

## OF SWORDS & SORCERY No. 3:

Brak the Barbarian by John Jakes  
Prester John by Norvell Page  
The Warlock by Larry Niven  
The Leries Mecca by Gene Lancour

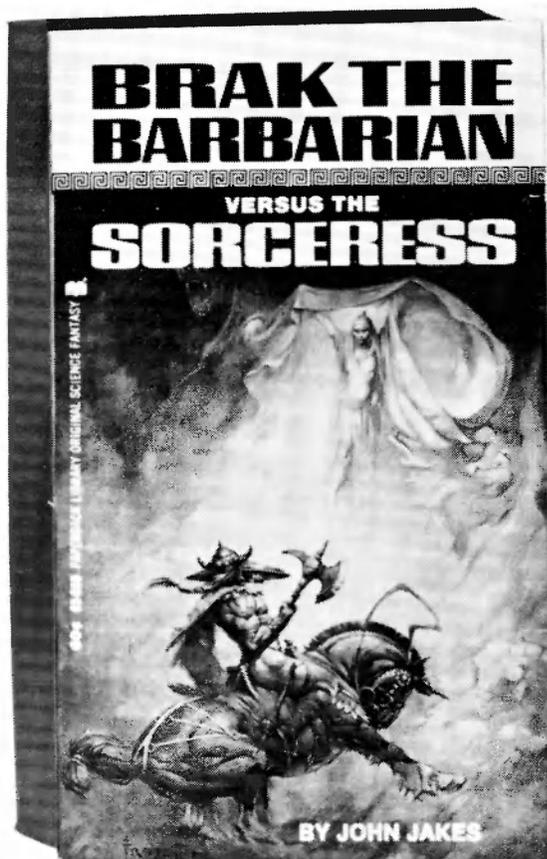
If we can believe the prefatory notes and brief interviews via which fantasy authors enjoy tantalizing their readers, John Jakes is an old Conan fan from way back who always longed to add another Conan-like hero to the sword & sorcery genre but never quite got around to it. Until one day, he was asked to write a 5,000 word short story overnight to fill an editorial hole in the first issue of a magazine that never saw the light of day. In a burning flash of inspiration, Brak the Barbarian was created.

Even if it isn't true, it sounds nice.

Out of the chilly northern steppes of his world wanders Brak the Barbarian on his quest to reach fair Khurdisan in the far south, a living Valhalla-like land of wonders, riches and eternal peace of mind. Naturally, along the way, he runs into a number of obstacles not the least of which are damsels in distress and wicked sorcerers worshipping the evil god Yob-Haggoth. All in all, it's a nicely woven fabric on which any number of tales can be hung. Unfortunately, Jakes hasn't taken to hanging many of them in recent years.

Brak is a big, brawny barbarian who wears his blonde hair in a braid hanging down his back. Disregarding Frazetta's cover illustration to the first paperback, his favorite weapon is the sword and he has never used a battleaxe (Frazetta even faked out the blurb writer on that one). Although it seems just a wee bit incongruous, he always rides a pony (unlike the monster of a horse Frazetta created for one cover) and he's always losing them. In one story his pony gets eaten!

Jakes unabashedly admits the influence of Robert E. Howard's Conan, but except for the Conan-like paperback covers and the fact that Brak is indeed a barbarian, all similarity ends there.



In the earlier stories -- those written for Cele Goldsmith's **FANTASTIC STORIES OF IMAGINATION** in the mid-60s -- Brak comes across a basically dumb, naive, good-natured barbarian; willing to help out anyone in need and equally willing to be gulled by anyone wanting to take advantage of him. Nevertheless, he always manages to triumph, help out the good guys, punish or eliminate the bad guys and get back on the road headed south to Khurdisan.

These traits do lead to some awkward plot situations at times that tend to stretch to the breaking point the reader's willingness to accept. On the other hand, it is at times a refreshing change from such somber, moody and violent heroes as Conan. Brak is more peaceful in nature, more at ease and more trusting of his fellow man, and less prone to react violently when antagonized. In short, he'll put up with a lot of guff before doing something about it.

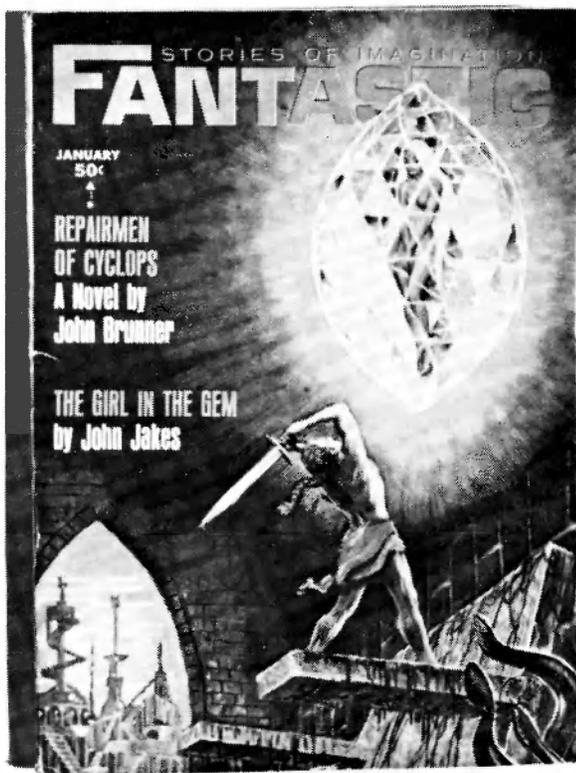
The 5,000 word short story Jakes wrote overnight appeared as "Devils in the Walls" in the May 1963 **FANTASTIC**. Internal evidence supports the story that Jakes did indeed create Brak on short notice. Khurdisan -- the fabric running throughout the Brak stories -- is not mentioned and vague references to Christianity tend to place the story on Earth sometime during the first few centuries A.D. Jakes later rewrote and slightly expanded the story from inclusion in Robert Hoskins' **SWORDS AGAINST TOMORROW** (Signet, 1970). In addition to making Brak just slightly less naive, he also placed the story in its proper context in the saga.

Fortunately, Brak doesn't come off as overly naive in "Devils" -- chalk it up to youthful inexperience -- and by no means is he portrayed as a weak character. The story opens with Brak on the auction block. In the second paragraph, he is beating the auctioneer's brains out with his slave chain. Later in the story, he dispatches his sorcerous opponents with great finesse and skillful efficiency. Nevertheless, he's not another Conan and differs greatly from a host of other Conan imitators. For an overnight assignment, Jakes put together an enjoyable story.

I wish I could say the same for the second story in the series, "Witch of the Four Winds", a short novel published in two parts in the November and December 1963 issues of **FANTASTIC**. In this story, Brak is not only naive, he's downright clumsy, inept, slow-witted and totally unable to take decisive action. It is more an experiment in frustration than anything. Brak stumbles his way through 107-digest size pages to a denouement hardly worth the effort made in reaching it on the part of the reader. For me, the story was a severe disappointment; the plot is sadly lacking and the hero comes out looking like a complete schmuck.

Fortunately, Jakes made some major improvements in rewriting and expanding the story for publication as **BRAK THE BARBARIAN VERSUS THE SORCERESS** (Paperback Library, 1969). In **SORCERESS**, Jakes drastically changes Brak's antagonists, making them more formidable. He also throws in some additional action, makes Brak look a little less naive, and alleviates the feeling of clumsiness by providing some much needed justification for some of Brak's actions (or lack thereof). The story is a tighter one and the hero more believable. Although an improvement, I thought the plot still dragged heavily in places. Undoubtedly, my opinion of **SORCERESS** remains tainted by the bad taste of "Witch".

"When the Idols Walked", another two-parter in **FANTASTIC** (August and September, 1964) is a return to the Brak of "Devils". The plot is weak in several places, but it's a fairly enjoyable, fairly well-written story. Still, it lacks the 'in-



spiration' or whatever it was that made "Devils in the Walls" a better story. "Witch" and "Idols" probably would have been much improved as novelettes. For some reason, Jakes was going after more wordage; he failed disastrously with "Witch" and barely succeeded with "Idols".

Perhaps Jakes noticed a difference, too, because the next three Brak stories to appear were short stories: "The Girl in the Gem" in the January 1965 *FANTASTIC*, "The Pillars of Chambalor" in March and "The Silk of Shaitan" in April. I enjoyed all three and I also noticed a subtle change beginning to take place in Brak. He progressively becomes a little less gullible and a little more wary of strangers. While the change is not a drastic one, he becomes suspicious of people's motives earlier in the game and is more prone to decisive action. "Girl", by the way, was later reprinted in L. Sprague de Camp's *THE FANTASTIC SWORSMEN* (Pyramid, 1967) and "Pillars" appeared in *SWORD AND SORCERY ANNUAL* No. 1 in 1975.

With the departure of Cele Goldsmith from *FANTASTIC*, it appeared that Brak's adventures had come to an untimely end. Fortunately, in 1968, Avon paperbacks revived the cycle with the publication of *BRAK THE BARBARIAN*, a collection of five loosely-connected short stories and novelettes. The titles are: "The Unspeakable Shrine", "Flame-Face", "The Courts of the Conjurer" (a reprint of "Silk of Shaitan"), "Ghosts of Stone" (a reprint of "Pillars of Chambalor"), and "The Barge of Souls." It is in this book that Jakes introduces Septegundis and his daughter Ariane, worshippers of the evil god Yob-Haggoth, who threaten to plague Brak throughout his journey to Khurdisan. Incidentally, it is they who comprise the more formidable antagonists in *BRAK VERSUS THE SORCERESS*.

Shortly after *BRAK THE BARBARIAN*, the first issue of a new fantasy magazine, *WORLDS OF FANTASY*, appeared on the stands (summer of '68). It was edited by Lester Del Rey and for fans familiar with Del Rey's earlier work with the ill-fated *FANTASY MAGAZINE* of 1953, it had to be a thrill. Included in the first issue was a new Brak story, "The Mirror of Wizardry". And evident in "Mirror" were still further signs of change. Brak

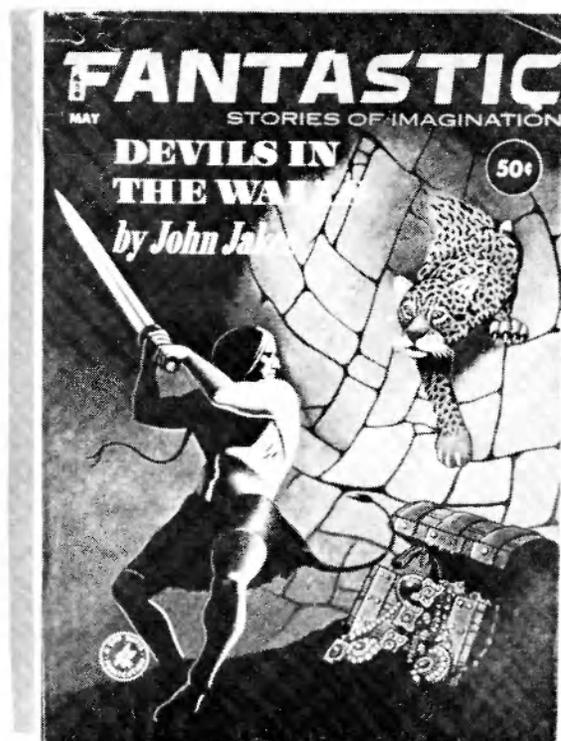
had begun to age and mature; no longer is he the good-natured, somewhat simple-minded barbarian. He's had a gut full of the ways of civilized people by now and is beginning to show signs of cynicism. At the very least, his attitude toward life is much more realistic.

In early 1969, Jakes switched to Paperback Library for publication of *BRAK VERSUS THE SORCERESS* and quickly followed it the same year with another novel, *BRAK THE BARBARIAN VERSUS THE MARK OF THE DEMONS*. In *DEMONS*, Brak is now a fully mature, adult barbarian. Gone are all signs of the younger, more naive youth. He is now openly cynical of civilized people, more quickly and easily angered, swifter to react violently and more openly antagonistic. By contrast, the Brak of old appears almost weak-livered and wishy washy. Some people may not like this change because it brings Brak closer to being a carbon-copy of Conan. I do like it because I think Jakes has matured along with Brak in his approach to writing the stories. From a technical viewpoint, *DEMONS* is more tightly-plotted and better written than any of the earlier stories and Brak definitely comes across as a more believable character.

A final Brak novelette, "Ghoul's Garden", appeared in Lin Carter's *FLASHING SWORDS* No. 2 (Doubleday and Dell, 1973). Those who objected to the somber, almost Solomon Kane-like tone of *DEMONS* were probably relieved with *GHOUL'S GARDEN*, which is considerably lighter in tone.

Jakes has always claimed that he enjoys writing the Brak stories; yet "Ghoul's Garden" is the only new Brak story that has appeared in the last seven years. + If he does enjoy writing them, he's missing a golden opportunity to hit the currently burgeoning sword & sorcery market with some new stories. Currently, Jakes is authoring a number of bicentennial novels for Pinnacle paperbacks which probably pay better. However, he has written a few sword & sorcery stories around other characters and I'll be covering them in future columns.

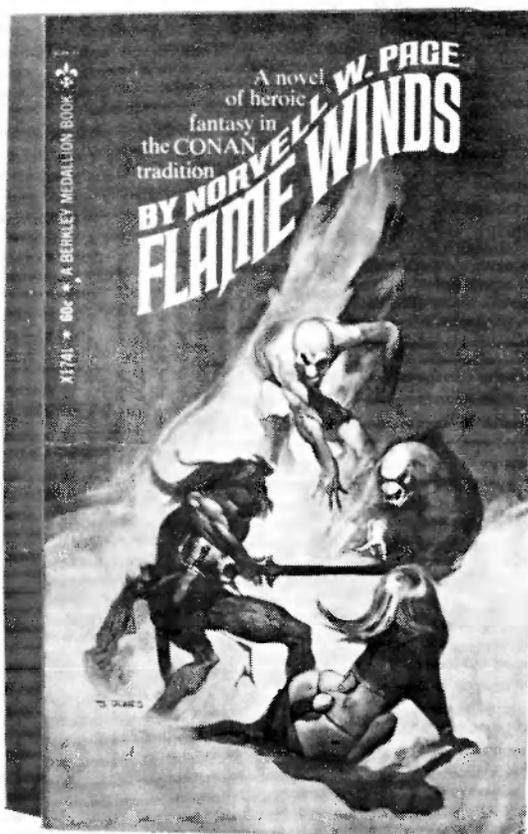
+A footnote for Brak completists: It's not my intention to cover



comic strip adaptations in this column, but one story bears mentioning. "Spell of the Dragon", an original Brak story, was plotted by Val Mayerik and scripted by John Jakes in Marvel's **CHAMBER OF CHILLS** No. 2 for January 1973. It was later reprinted in **SAVAGE TALES** No. 5 for July 1974. Incidentally, Jakes has scripted a number of other sword & sorcery stories for Marvel comics.

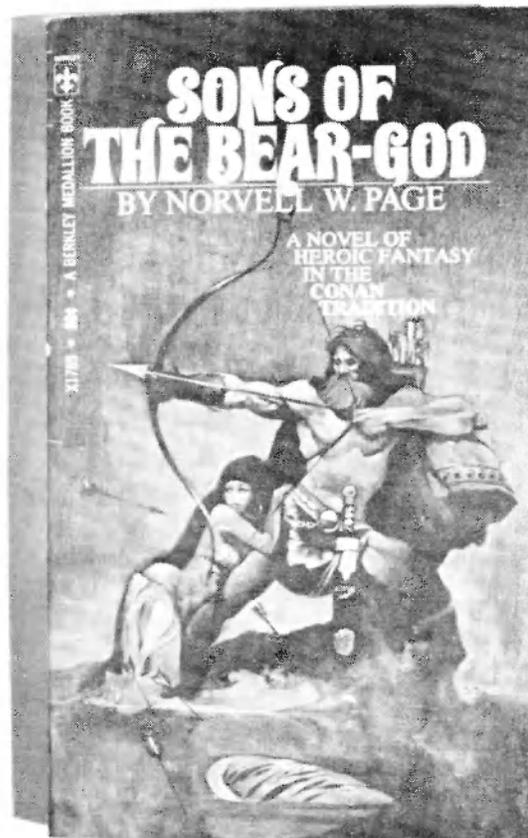
Picture if you will, a red-headed, bearded Conan, a follower of Christ, who wanders Asia during the first Century A.D. conquering cities; if successful, Christ gets another 50,000 followers and our hero gets all the wine, women and loot he can handle. Sounds like a pretty wild premise for a sword & sorcery story, but it worked for Norvell Page back in 1939. And the stories turned out pretty damned good.

A former newspaperman turned freelance pulp writer, Page was one of the more prolific pulp writers of his time. During his prime in the mid-30s, he claimed to be writing (and selling) as much as 120,000 words a month to a variety of pulps under a variety of pseudonyms. Probably his most famous hero was the pulp character, The Spider, written under the Grant Stockbridge byline.



In 1939, Page decided to give the sword & sorcery genre a try and wrote two short novels about a Conan-esque hero named Prester John, or, as the Asians called him, Wan Tengri. According to recorded history, the real Prester John lived and reigned in the 12th Century A.D. and died on the battlefield around the year 1200 fighting the hordes of Ghengis Khan. In fact, it's written that the great Khan wanted to marry Prester John's daughter. John replied to the effect that he would rather set his daughter in the fire than give her to Khan in marriage; which sounds like a polite 12th Century way of telling someone to go to hell.

Apparently, all of this wasn't exciting enough for Page, so he rewrote history and placed Prester John somewhere in the 1st Century, a former gladiator in Byzantium and early follower of



the new god Christos. According to Page's history, Prester John has wandered most of the Mediterranean area, including Egypt and the Middle East. As the first novel opens, he is somewhere in eastern Asia, planning to circle up north and then back west, eventually to his homeland. A circuitous route, but necessary due to the enemies he made wandering the Mediterranean. In each of Page's two novels, Prester John conquers a city only to lose it in the end and wander on in search of another city to conquer. He has been told in a prophecy that he would conquer three kingdoms, presumably keeping the last one. Unfortunately, Page never chose to chronicle the third novel of what might have been an excellent trilogy.

According to pulp expert Bob Weinberg, Page cared about the quality of his writing, despite his enormous output. Many of his stories underwent numerous rewrites prior to submission until Page felt happy with them. Offhand, I'd have to agree with Weinberg after reading the two Prester John novels. The first one, in particular, is written with gusto -- a real old-fashioned, rip-snorting, fun reading experience. Obviously, Page enjoyed writing them, although the pace of the second is somewhat slower.

Stated simply, Prester John is another Conan; perhaps not as complex a character and certainly not as memorable, but fun to read about nevertheless.

Page's first Prester John novel was titled **FLAME WINDS** and appeared in the June 1939 issue of **UNKNOWN** magazine, only two months prior to the appearance of Fritz Leiber's first **Fafhrd & the Gray Mouser** tale (see **OS&S** No. 1). The second, **SONS OF THE BEAR GOD**, appeared five months later in the November issue.

In 1969, Berkley re-issued both novels in 60c paperbacks with attractive Jeff Jones covers. Both are now out-of-print but not all that hard to find in the used bookstores. If you don't already have them, I think you'll find the search a rewarding one.

Larry Niven is most well-known among fantasy and SF fans for his stories of hard science. After debuting in the December

1964 issue of *If*, he went on to SF stardom largely by centering his fiction around some scientific theory and than exhausting that theory via one or more stories. Although the vast majority of his output has been hard SF, Niven has proven himself to be a capable sword & sorcery writer with only a few such tales to his credit.

His first published S&S effort was a short story entitled "Not Long Before the End" in the April 1969 issue of *MAGAZINE OF F & SF*. It relates the ultimate confrontation between a swordsman and a sorcerer, named simply the Warlock.

Niven's purpose for writing the story was again to present a theory -- hardly one we would call scientific, but an intriguing one nevertheless. Magic requires power. That power is "mana". When the Earth was young, it was rich in mana, but the gods ruling the Earth used up most of it... to the extent that it brought about their collective demise. Fortunately, what remained was sufficient to permit the practice of sorcery by mere mortals. Thus: sword & sorcery. Presumably, there is no (or precious little) mana left in our world today, and, as a common practice, sorcery died out at least several hundred years ago.

New sources of mana are rare. Mana can be collected from meteorites. It can also be artificially produced via animal or human sacrifice. However, these sources produce quite limited amounts.

Mana was discovered around 12,000 B.C. by our friend the Warlock prior to the events in "Not Long Before the End." In addition, he discovered the finite nature of mana -- the fact that it was constantly being used up and could not be replenished. The swordsman in the story carries an enchanted sword that repels any sorcerer attacks. The Warlock sets into motion a disc that doesn't stop spinning until all of the mana in the region is used up. The enchanted sword is eliminated and the opponents reach a stalemate.

All in all, it's a nice solid little piece and if you enjoy playing around with theories such as this (and it should be obvious by now that I do), you'll probably love it.

I can't really think of many stories I've read by Niven that aren't solid. He says what he sets out to say, does it extremely well and then ends the story. Along the way, he manages to sprinkle a few other theories, pseudo-historical information and a variety of gimmicks to tease the reader. Some of the latter are cute while others come across as ineffective puns.

An example of his pseudo-history is how Atlantis sunk, which I am not going to reveal here. You'll have to read about it in the second and third stories dealing with the concept of mana. The second is a novelette in the September 1972 *MAGAZINE OF F & SF* entitled "What Good is a Glass Dagger?" (Compleatists take note: Actually, there is another Warlock story in between these two. It is a half-page anecdote entitled "Unfinished Story" that appeared in the December 1970 *MAGAZINE OF F & SF*.) The story features the return of the Warlock and takes place shortly after "Not Long Before the End." The secret of mana is now out and knowledge of it has become a potential weapon in sorcerous conflict. It's a typically good, well-constructed Niven story with the emphasis on sorcery rather than swordplay, a trait evident in most of his sword & sorcery tales. Unfortunately, it ends on a horrible twist that I didn't think was any too novel or exciting. Chop off the last two paragraphs, though, and you still have a hell of a good story.

"Glass Dagger", by the way, was later reprinted in Ballantine's *THE FLIGHT OF THE HORSE* in 1973. The volume is a collection of time-travel stories and "Glass Dagger" has nothing whatsoever to do with the series; Ballantine apparently wanted to make the book thicker.

The final story in what I call the "Mana from Niven" series (go ahead and groan) is "The Magic Goes Away", a novella in the second issue of Roger Elwood's *ODYSSEY* (Summer 1976). The Warlock once again returns along with a couple of leftover sorcerers from "Glass Dagger" and a couple of new sorcerers. The story takes place about twenty years later and the Earth's

supply of mana has continued to run down with no hope of any major form of replenishment in sight. The Warlock -- who must be getting senile by now -- comes up with the madcap idea of dragging the Moon down to Earth to replenish the supply of mana. Beyond that, I refuse to discuss the plot -- read the story.

I should mention that the reason for the fall of Atlantis is only hinted at in "Glass Dagger". In "The Magic Goes Away" he actually sinks the island -- and that's only for openers in order to introduce the barbarian hero who accompanies the sorcerers on their zany quest. And if you think that's bad, wait'll you read how the Rocky Mountains were formed!

The only other major sword & sorcery work by Niven -- and it's probably his only well-known one -- is *THE FLYING SORCERERS*, written with David Gerrold (Ballantine, 1971). It originally appeared in novella form as "The Misspelled Magician" in (2 pts., May and July, 1970). "Magician" is a tragic-comedy about a first encounter between a primitive society on an alien planet and a one-man exploratory expedition from another planet (presumably Earth). Shoogar, the village sorcerer, considers the visitor an interloper, is awed and affronted by his 'high sorcery' and takes him on in a duel. The results, as you might expect, are humorous and highly entertaining. However, the story does end on a more somber note reflective of the futility of man's endeavors, both primitive and modern.

"Magician" comprises roughly the first quarter of *THE FLYING SORCERERS* and, with the immediate continuation of the story, the more serious ending of "Magician" carries little or no impact. Shoogar meets up with the visitor again and the remainder of the book is primarily concerned with getting the visitor back to his mother ship, orbiting the planet. In *SORCERERS*, the humor continues unabated and Niven's motive becomes more apparent as an attempt -- and a damned good one -- at world building. The novel contains virtually no sword-play, but if you enjoy the humorous styles of Fritz Leiber and Jack Vance, you'll love this one. I wish Niven would take a break from his hard science stories again and team up with Gerrold for another one of these.

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Until purchasing *THE LERIOS MECCA*, I'd never heard of Gene Lancour, or Gene Fisher, under whose name the book is copyrighted. Although Fisher did have a short story in *ANALOG* once, he appears to be a newcomer to the sword & sorcery field and quite a talented one. According to the jacket liner (Doubleday, 1973) Lancour is a pseudonym and the author -- I assume Fisher -- is a graduate student in history and working on a sequel.

*MECCA* takes place on another world and the hero, Dirshan, is an atypical barbarian in a typically barbarian society. While Dirshan has all of the physical characteristics and fighting prowess of a first-rate barbarian, he appears to be well-educated and more intelligent than the run-of-the-mill semi-literate barbarian. He is capable of keeping his cool and, unlike Conan, can do more than merely hack and hew his way out of tight situations with the abundance of empty-headed Conan imitations available these days, Dirshan comes along as a refreshing change.

For that matter, so is Lancour (or Fisher, or whomever). The book is deceiving in one respect: it seems longer than it is. The plot seems to move at a rather sedate pace for a sword & sorcery novel, but it doesn't drag; there's plenty of action and the novel is in no way boring. While thud and blunder purists may be a little disappointed, I found more than enough cleaved skulls, spilled entrails and general swordplay to keep the average sword and sorcery fan happy. Perhaps one reason is that Lancour doesn't dwell on gory details. He describes the splitting of a skull, for example, in about the same amount of time as it takes to happen and then gets on with more important matters.

One of those more important matters is the development of his characters and their environment, and Lancour does an ex-

cellent job at that. In addition to Dirshan, Lancour creates an outstanding heroine in the person of Karinth, a member of the Family, and a member of the nobility in name only. With loving care, Lancour develops Karinth into a marvelously complex creation: at times exhibiting all of the frailties of nobility and the 'weaker' sex and at other times more brains, strength and leadership ability than most men.

As the book opens, Dirshan is the only survivor of a raid on a village by desert barbarians. In his youth, he fled his homeland as a fugitive for wanting to leave the Order, a mystical religious cult dominating his world. Arriving at another city, he is captured and imprisoned by members of the Order. To free himself of his fugitive status (not to mention a death sentence), he accepts a mission on behalf of the Order. In the course of his novel-length mission, he meets up with Karinth; uncovers an incredibly ancient, mysterious city; encounters desert barbarians again; becomes involved in a battle at sea led by Karinth; discovers a prophet older and more knowledgeable than the highest member of the Order; and learns a good deal about that same mysterious and somewhat awe-inspiring Order. As I said earlier, there's plenty of action. As far as sorcery is concerned, it borders more on the mystical. And if you enjoy the sense-of-wonder in discovering lost cities, you'll like Telhawa.

I didn't read **THE LERIOS MECCA** in one sitting. In fact, it's the kind of book you can easily set down when necessary and enjoy coming back to again and again. It has not been reprinted and I'm pretty sure the Doubleday edition is now out-of-print. Any paperback publisher would do well to pick it up. . .and, hopefully, the sequel, too.

**OS&S UPDATE** -- "The Frost Monstreme", Fritz Leiber's latest Fafhrd and the Gran Mouser tale (see OS&S No. 1), has appeared in Lin Carter's **FLASHING SWORDS** No. 3 (**WARRIORS & WIZARDS**, Dell). It's a welcome return to the novelette length after a rash of tantalizingly short stories. A short humorous F&GM vignette entitled "Fafhrd and the Mouser Say Their Say" also appeared in the first issue of **THE DRAGON** for June. An earlier novelette, "Under the Thumbs of the Gods" has been reprinted in **THE YEAR'S BEST FANTASY STORIES** No. 2 edited by Lin Carter (DAW, No. 205).

Chuck Miller has published his limited hardbound edition of Jack Vance's **THE DYING EARTH** (see OS&S No. 2), lavishly illustrated by George Barr and lavishly priced at \$15.95. A super deluxe edition sold out at \$25.

andrew j offutt's sequel to **SWORD OF THE GAEL** (OS&S No. 1) has appeared from Zebra entitled **THE UNDYING WIZARD**. It's as good or better than its predecessor and, judging from the ending, it's likely a third volume will be coming. offutt's introduction was omitted from the paperback and has been published as an article in Wayne Warfield's **PHANTASY DIGEST** No. 1. And people interested in still further adventures of R. E. Howard's heroes will want to pick up Karl Edward Wagner's continuation of Bran Mak Morn: **LEGION FROM THE SHADOWS**, published by Zebra last April. While their writing styles are quite different, both Wagner and offutt have turned in excellent performances on these novels.

Speaking of Wagner, "Sing a Last Song of Valde" is a new Kane short story appearing in **CHACAL** No. 1; from the same people that brought you **REH: LONE STAR FICTIONEER**. They have a collection of Kane stories on file which they will hopefully be publishing one of these years entitled **NIGHT WINDS**. Meanwhile, a Kane novel, **DARK CRUSADE**, is due out from Warner this December. Next Spring will witness a Kane bonanza as Coronet paperbacks in Great Britain reprints the entire series including the uncut **DARKNESS WEAVES** (see OS&S No. 2) and **NIGHT WINDS** (thanks go to Karl Wagner for that information).

Upcoming is a new Brak the Barbarian novelette in **PHANTASY DIGEST** No. 2 that I learned about too late for inclusion in this issue's column.

## Two Views of Bob Howard

*Stygian Isle Press has commissioned two different biographies of Robert Ervin Howard. They will be written by two of his closest associates: Harold Preece and Tevis Clyde Smith. Portions of the biographies will first appear in FANTASY CROSSROADS. This issue we present a chapter from each biography. Harold Preece has contributed Chapter 5 of his work titled: "Quest for Books". Tevis' chapter follows immediately and is titled: "The Magic Name". We hope you enjoy these added insights into the life and environments of the creator of Conan. One last note, please do not write and inquire regarding the availability of the biographies. They are a long way from completion and have not yet been titled let alone priced. Information will be forthcoming once the books are completely typeset and ready for printing.*

### CHAPTER 5

## QUEST FOR BOOKS

By Harold Preece

For a wordsmith the need to read parallels the need to write. A beginning writer's initial efforts will often be cast in the mold of favorite authors - as Bob Howard's first fantasies reflected the strong influences of Arthur Machen and Don Byrne with both of these being, coincidentally, Celts. A good book or a good story is a natural incentive to write something comparable. Even though wish may not become tangible result till far in the future.

Like all of us who concoct scripts, Bob would have many spiritual progenitors. What they produced would set his mood of a lifetime - that ineluctable mood of the writer forever binding us to what we seem or dream or realize through experience touched by imagination. Through these expressions of other men and women we are able to formulate what the Welsh novelist, John Cowper Powys, called "our mythos." These enable us to answer those plaguing questions haunting every craftsman of script:

Who are we? What are we all about? Where are we going and for what reasons?

Through his professional work and his voluminous correspondence with friends like H. P. Lovecraft, E. Hoffman Price, and myself, Bob groped for the answers throughout his brief life. So that his vividly stated doubts and resolutions carry some architectonic quality which I have never been able to define fully through the standard techniques of literary criticism. Yet whatever my always incomplete approach to the large volume of published Howardana, I realize that every paragraph reflects Bob's ceaseless quest for books.

He could have hardly found any large collection in Callahan County. For the past few years, there has been a public library at Clyde which I recall as a pretty little town with loaded apple trees growing in neat back yards. But in Bob Howard's day, few rural Texas counties would have had these indispensable adjuncts of a fully literate society. Which does not mean that this first Post-Frontier generation of Texans were stupid dolts as caustic cosmopolitans like to assert of everybody in our country's grassroots areas. It was rather that Bob's native people were still in the process of building a developed civilization and hadn't gotten much further than erecting public schools.

But some of those schools did have small collections of books - probably consisting of various individual donations - in addition to the regular texts studied for pupils. So that the book-hungry Howard boy helped himself through his own system of borrowing.

During summers when classes were suspended, he would mount a horse, visit the unoccupied schools and carry away whatever seemed worth reading. Entry was not accomplished by break-ins since few schools or, for that matter, few homes, were ever locked in Texas country communities where the other fellow's honesty was taken for granted.

We have no list of the titles that Bob borrowed from this or that one or two room center of education. From recalling the reading tastes of that period with its strong Victorian hangovers, I can imagine he found a number of sweetly-written pietistic novels like Charles M. Sheldon's **IN HIS STEPS**, distributed in millions of copies throughout those last naive generations of America. Still another might have been a fictionalized life of Jesus, **THE PRINCE OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID**, written by Prentiss Ingraham who had originally won his literary spurs through counties lurid dime novels forbidden by proper parents to their growing boys. Still another might have been **ST. ELMO**, a syrupy classic about a "great sinner" turned "great saint" through a woman's love written by the incredible Augusta J. Evans, Georgia born, but Texas raised.

Small shelves of books might also have been graced by the romantic secular novels of Mrs. Evans, a patrician Southern dowager never quite believing that the Confederacy had surrendered at Appomattox - a complex also shared by certain Texans of her time. Other chaste lady romantics might have shared honors with her including Mary J. Holmes and Mrs. E.D.E.N. Southworth (whose initials spelled Eden). Or more mercifully Gene Stratton Porter whose novels of the Indiana Limberlost area were well written and carried a certain decorous charm. Her books were worth reading if you didn't expect too much.

There is no evidence that Bob Howard was purified by any of this exalted stuff. Though out of filial obligation, he still attended the Baptist Church with his parents, Bob probably would not have read more than two chapters written by estimable paragons of righteousness-like Mrs. Evans and Mrs. Southworth. He would have delighted in the early day adventure novels of James Fenimore Cooper, generally accepted despite the author's sometimes carelessness about historical facts. More importantly to concerned parents and teachers Mr. Cooper, a Nineteenth Century country squire, had never breathed a cuss word in any of his extensive works.

Bob likely found some gems among all the truffles and trash during his book hunting. There might have been some fair fact historical works and biographies worth his intensive study. But it is scarcely possible that he would have found anything by any of the later authors who would so influence his own style - (Harold Lamb, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Jack London, Talbot Mundy and others of the adventure genre. These he would have found in literate pulp magazines like **ARGOSY**, **ADVENTURE**, and **BLUE BOOK**. They would leave lasting impacts upon a reader of his imaginative temperament.)

Within one of the schoolhouses he might have found a copy of Jane Porter's excellent work for its time, **SCOTTISH CHIEFS**, dealing with Scotland's 13th Century War for Independence against the English. This work, also approved for youngsters, was very popular during its time. It would remind Bob of what he considered his finest family tradition--

One of his far off ancestors had been armor bearer to heroic Scottish King Robert Bruce leading a Celtic country in a struggle against a Sassenach (Saxon) one. Ever since that time Robert had been a family given name with Bob, already preoccupied with Celtica, being the latest to possess it.

Bob - that unconventional patron of schoolhouse libraries - always returned "faithfully" every book lent him. Additionally his own home had an intellectual cast symbolized by books.

There would have been other works besides Dr. Howard's medical reference ones around the family home. Bob's father had a particular interest in the lives of authors. His mother was a poetry buff.

All this interest in literature undoubtedly encouraged their son's ambitions to become a writer. But whether the Howards would have wanted him to have followed full-time such a precarious craft seems debatable.

For all their admirable interests in culture, they were conservatively-minded folk conditioned by what is called the Protestant work ethic of steady pay for steady occupations. Within that Texas of the early Twentieth Century, most authors were either college faculty members or middle-class ladies with ample leisure and husbands to support them. Probably there were not more than a dozen daring souls trying to support themselves by straight freelance writing in that whole mammoth state. I never knew but one and he finally died of virtual starvation - after having been a well-known fictioneer for the **SATURDAY EVENING POST**.

I think it likely that the Howards wished for their odd boy a successful career in some "educated" occupation plus marriage to the proverbial nice girl. In that sort of context, writing might have been a pleasant, occasional hobby for him with the whole Howard-Ervin kinship connection being muchly pleased whenever their gifted member published something.

Of course, these observations are not made to reflect upon parents naturally concerned for the future of an only child. Quite simply, agrarian societies like the Texas one are not conducive to the full development of bold, independent souls like Robert Ervin Howard. Otherwise the various heartlands of America would not lose so much fine native talent to the big cities where cultural skills are marketable.

Time marched on to the slow rhythms of Cross Plains. Bob Howard kept right on being Bob Howard because he couldn't be anything else. During this time he joined briefly the only organization to which he may have ever belonged.

The Lone Scouts of America it was called. A rival movement to the larger Boy Scouts of America, founded by a Chicago publisher, W. D. Boyce, who had helped birth the BSA but had pulled out after feeling that the latter, with its expensive, elaborate, regimented setup did not meet the needs of rural boys.

A beautiful bonnie for individualist kids, rural or urban, the Lone Scouts became with its annual dues of five cents a year. You didn't have to wear a uniform or be bossed by a scoutmaster when you might already be chafing under too much adult authority.

Moreover you could be a scout all by yourself if you wished - hence the term: Lone Scout. A lonely boy might correspond with still other lonelies around the country. Five or more Lone Scouts, living within a common area, could form what was called a "tribe" since the organization's emblems and rituals commemorated the American Indian.

But the magnet drawing so many boys was a juvenile magazine whose likes had never been seen before in America and will never be seen again. **LONE SCOUT** was the title of that publication whose well-written fiction and articles were entirely produced by youngsters. Contributors were awarded successive medals and corresponding titles for their efforts. Profits - such as they were of **LONE SCOUT** - were used to finance this unique gazette created by smart kids.

Robert Ervin Howard would be one of many later prominent authors who'd worn the arrowhead badge of the Lone Scouts. He seems never to have written for the magazine since his name does not appear in any index compilation. He probably did no more than read it for a few months before losing interest.

Yet for the rest of his life and throughout his writing career, some of his most significant friends would be present or former Lone Scouts.

# THE MAGIC NAME

(To Glenn Lord)

By Tevis Clyde Smith

It was a day much like today--cloudless, pleasantly warm--probably in early April, if not late March, 1923 that I asked Truett Vinson if he knew Robert E. Howard. We were on the school grounds at Brownwood High, and Truett said "Yes, there he is now." I told Truett that I'd like to meet Bob, and he called Bob over, introducing us to one another. We shook hands, if it could be called that, for Bob extended a limp palm and executed what was known as "a dishrag shake". I hadn't wanted him to break the bones in my hand, but I was a bit surprised at such a greeting, though I soon found that he was warmhearted, and we became good friends before the school term ended. We became well acquainted before Dr. Howard came to take Bob and his mother back to Cross Plains. It should be mentioned that Cross Plains, in 1923, had a ten year high school, and that Brownwood went one grade further, bringing many students from surrounding towns just as men and women now leave home to attend colleges and universities.

Dr. Howard had rented a furnished house at the corner of Wilson and Hawkins Streets for Mrs. Howard and Bob. This lot is now vacant, and I suppose is the property of The Presbyterian Church. It was about a half-mile from the old Senior High School, which at that time took care of all four high school grades. It was in the same block with The First Presbyterian Church, then being constructed, and a block away from the First Methodist Church, which was also under construction. When the men were off from work we would sit in the sand in front of first one and then the other of the churches, and carry on long conversations while the traffic went by, for Bob was an enchanting talker, and also enjoyed what I had to say. This enjoyment was increased, for him, by my recital of the events of a fight which I had about ten to fourteen days before I met him. There was a bullying group which gave flathanded rabbit punches to anyone who would take them. I got fed up with this type of treatment and made up my mind that I had taken all I intended to take. At the time, we had two senior colleges here, and both had good baseball teams. I was sitting high in the stands, and one of the bullies was sitting beside me, watching Howard Payne play one of the T.I.A.A. teams. In the midst of my engrossment the bully delivered a jarring blow but I did not turn quickly enough to be certain he was the one. I looked behind me and saw no one I felt I could suspect. I turned back around, pretending to watch the game, but ready to wheel at a moment's notice. The blow was soon repeated, and this time I moved fast enough to see the tormenter straighten out his body and jerk his right arm back to his side. A red haze surrounded me as I removed my glasses and handed them to a friend. Then, as Breckenridge Elkins would have put it, my language was awful to hear, though I wasn't talking only. I drove three hard blows to his nose and he began to grapple with me. I lost my footing, and began to bounce from step to step, fortunately clearing the barrier at the foot of the stands as I nosedived to the cinders below. I was in a daze as I waited for my friend to hand me my glasses, and for my opponent to decide whether he wanted to go with me, or not. Apparently he did, for he came down about the time an officer came up, and ordered us out of the park. We left the field with some six or eight followers who had evidently decided that any chance of future action from us promised more than they would find at the game. We walked for four blocks and had another set-to, a repetition of the first except for the fact that it was fought on solid ground. From there, we walked another block and had at it again. I got in some more punches. My part of the fight was good both offensively and defensively. I don't remember him getting in a single punch, and I hammered his nose through all three stages of the battle.

As a result, life became more pleasant.

Our discussions always included history, and Bob was ex-

cellent in his presentation of this subject. He had picked most of it up through his own personal reading, and not in school. One woman told me that Bob accompanied his father on a visit to her parents, spotted a set of history books and looked through it the entire time his father was there. I don't know whether this was a professional or a social visit, but it evidently lasted long enough for Bob to make a rather thorough examination of the books. I tried to get this lady to write an article for **THE HOWARD COLLECTOR**, but she was not literally inclined, and would dislike it if I revealed her name, so that will not be done.

Another friend, very, very close to Bob, declined to write a biography. He said, "No, you are the one to write it--you were closer to him than I was." So, much valuable information will be lost, but I respect this man's wishes, and will not reveal his name, or keep asking him to do something which he does not wish to do.

As for myself, Robert E. Howard was a magic name to me before I ever met him, and before he became a magic name to his thousands of readers. I had known him but a very short time before deciding that I would make plans to some day write about him. A certain amount of this has been done: "ADVENTURE IN PULP", in **PECAN VALLEY DAYS**; "REPORT ON A WRITING MAN", in **THE HOWARD COLLECTOR**; several poems in the same magazine, later included in **IMAGES OUT OF THE SKY**; an introduction for a collection of poems published by George T. Hamilton; some book reviews for various newspapers; an introduction to a co-authored book, **RED BLADES OF BLACK CATHAY**, which Donald M. Grant brought out; a ballade, introduction, and completion of Howard work which Jonathan Bacon published under the title of **THE GRIM LAND**, with additional material now in the hands of Jonathan. Not a great volume of work when one considers how prolific Bob was, but it is factual, in case the reader wants unembellished writing.

In talking with Jonathan Bacon, I stated that I would rather not start with the first time Bob ever put a toe in his mouth. I thought it best to begin with my first meeting with Bob, and, if needed, to make a flashback, though I should mention some things I've talked about a number of times: I had a 6X9 Kelsey hand press, I published a small paper along the order of the Lone Scout tribe papers, Truett Vinson was assistant editor, and Bob and I wrote a fragment, never completed, called **UNDER THE GREAT TIGER**. This fragment was published in the amateur journal, and should probably have never been mentioned, as some people seem to have the impression that a rare work of art is being kept out of the reach of humanity. If anyone feels this way, now is as good a time as any to disillusion him. However, I might dust it off, do a lot of research, and see what could be done with it one of these days, if I get sold on the idea, and Glenn Lord feels it is worthwhile.

This little paper was a follow-up to **THE ALL-AROUND CLUB**, which meant that a group of boys banded themselves together to have a literary program, followed by a game of sandlot--or in this case front yard--football. Our rules were strict, if one sided. For instance, if you took part in the program, you had to take part in the football; on the other hand, you could play football without being a club member, or attending a meeting of the society. Our treatment of one boy who was very brilliant, but adamant about participation in anything other than the society programs, was very callous. We requested his resignation. I feel rather bad when I think about it, and often wonder if he is alive, or dead. A mutual friend ran across him in the lobby of a New York City theatre in 1929. I haven't heard from him since that time. I say from because the mutual friend and I had discussed this episode, and I had mentioned that I would like to see the offended party. He sent back word that he would like to see me, too. I felt better after this apology, even though it was by proxy. This club was disbanded before I met Bob.

Once again it seems in order to mention that Volume 3,

Number 7, of **THE TATTLER**, dated December 22, 1922 carried two stories by Robert E. Howard. Both had a western setting. One was serious, the other humorous, and each story showed talent. **THE TATTLER** was published twice a month by the Senior Class of Brownwood High. Claude Curtis was Editor-in-Chief, C. S. Boyles was Associate Editor, Ilene Embrey was Society Editor, Harry Boyer was Joke Editor, J. Hervey Mayes was Sports Editor, Miss Maedgen was Censor, Alton Dorsett was Business Manager, and John Friley was Assistant Business Manager. I knew all of them, but they are scattered far and wide and how many of them are now alive is a question I cannot answer.

Claude Curtis came from a newspaper family. His father was the owner-editor of **THE RISING STAR X-RAY**, a paper which was published in a small town thirty miles north of Brownwood. A short article appeared in **THE TATTLER** about my publication and Travis Curtis, Claude's brother, invited me to go home with him and pick up some items I needed for my small magazine. I gladly accepted. The entire Curtis family was very hospitable. Travis went back to Brownwood the next morning, and I stayed over until that night, spending the day in the newspaper plant. I rode home on the bus--that is to say, back to the business part of Brownwood--and the bus was an old Reo Speed Wagon, with seats the length of the vehicle on each side, from which the passengers rode facing one another. The country was much prettier then than it is now, as none of the native trees and shrubs had been bulldozed down, and the unpaved sandy road ran past rustic churches and farmhouses. The country, especially around Rising Star, was dewberry and blackberry country.

There was a motion picture on that night at **THE LYRIC** which I wanted to see. It was **SHERLOCK HOLMES**, with Clive Brook and Gustav Van Seyfertitz. As well as I remember, I delivered my composing stone and other equipment to the residence, and went back to town to see the show. The last part was without melody, as the musician left at 10:00 o'clock. The picture seemed odd without the music, as I was used to getting there in time to enjoy the benefit of the score. The performance was disappointing to some extent as a result. It looked like it would pour down rain when I got out, and the pavement was all ready damp, but I made the mile and a half home by foot without any inconvenience.

Claude Curtis went to New Orleans to take a Linotype Operator's course, and Bill Stewart and I ran into him in that city in 1925. That was my last meeting with him, but I talked with Travis Curtis a number of times in 1957-1958-1959. He was President of a bank in a town where I had clientele. I understand that his father sold his newspaper, entered the real estate business, and was joined in this venture by Claude. Glenn Lord tells me that C. S. Boyles writes westerns under the name of Will C. Brown. As far as I know, every member of **THE TATTLER** staff moved from Brownwood, some of them soon after graduation.

Bob had an embarrassing few minutes while walking with two of the staff members, one male, the other female, when he discovered that the seat of his britches had split open, but was able to laugh about the incident by the time he told me of the occurrence.

Bob and I went swimming in a small stream on the edge of town in late March, or early April. It was several days after this activity before Bob returned to school. He stated that he took the intestinal flu from the swim, and had spent three days in misery. Both of us may have been lucky not to take typhoid fever.

At the period of which I write, Bob was a Senior and I was a Sophomore. One of his classmates killed himself a few weeks before graduation. Bob was 17 at the time, and I was 15. The suicide had an impact on him, and, as the years went by, he became more constant in defending the right of self destruction, dropping hints of the value of such an ending. How much effect he had on others is a question I am unable to answer. It may

have been more far reaching than any of us realize.

Anyway, Bob graduated, and returned to Cross Plains. He visited me for a few days during the middle of the summer. We spent the time swimming, going to shows, visiting the library, taking short hikes, and talking. There was a train from Brownwood to Maytown, as we called it, in those days, and Bob took the train to May, rode the mail hack from there to Rising Star, and transferred to another mail hack from Rising Star to Cross Plains, making what is now a short trip by modern means into the greater part of a day's journey. Once home, he went to work at a series of jobs, and it was months later before I saw him again.

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## REH Zebra Cover Blurbs vs Reality

By Brian Earl Brown

Neicer and I were at Midwestcon, in the huckster's room, sharing the wealth in the traditional fannish way. Neicer expressed some interest in finding out what this Robert E. Howard was all about and could I suggest a typical book. I was silent for a while, trying to decide which of the many available paperbacks best typified Howard. I could come to no simple answer. So she made a choice of her own, **THE IRON MAN**.

"Ah, Neicer," I said, somewhat embarrassed to have to mention it. "That's not typical Howard."

"It's not?"

"Boxing stories. Straight boxing stories." Later I lent her my copies of **THE DARK MAN** and **WOLFSHEAD**, which probably reprint the best of Howard's non-Conan fiction.

However, I wonder how many people are not so lucky to have a Howard-expert at their elbow.

I would dearly love to read about "a magic that turns men into jackals, wolves and vultures. . ."

Or "The Iron Man ((who)) can be struck down by a thunderbolt -- or can kill, like lightning in a world ruled by savage instincts."

Or take "A mythical magical foray into the inscrutable, indestructible Orient, where echoes of the hordes of Genghis Khan send tremors through the land."

Indeed I would love to read those stories, but you won't find them in the pages of, respectively, **THE VULTURES OF WHAPETON**, **THE IRON MAN** or **THE INCREDIBLE ADVENTURES OF DENNIS DORGAN**, three books all published by Zebra.

The publication of **THE SOWERS OF THUNDER** in an inexpensive paperback format was easily the most exciting thing to happen to Robert E. Howard fandom since -- the publication of **CONAN THE ADVENTURER** by Lancer in 1966. This Zebra edition of **SOWERS** ended a virtual five year drought of readily available REH material.

Between 1966 and 1969 some 14 books of Howardania were published (including non-Howard Conan material). A further two volumes of short stories appeared in 1972 and after that nothing -- that was readily available. What Howard fiction that was appearing was either scattered about in numerous fanzines or in expensive, limited edition, Collectable hardbacks. Tracking down the former and affording the latter was beyond the greater bulk of REH fandom.

So we all applauded when Zebra published their illustrated edition of **SOWERS**. And well we should for they had carefully reproduced each page of the hardcover original exactly, only trimming the generous margins in the Grant edition so the text would fit in the narrower paperback format. Lost were only some page decorations Krenkel used on those pages where no other art appeared. The Zebra edition had a new Jeff Jones painting, but for some that was as much a plus as a minus for others.

It hardly seemed sinister that "Conan" appeared with the largest lettering on the cover. Zebra had to hype the book didn't they? Establish reader identification, right? After all, Zebra was sticking its neck out by publishing these books (with five years of inactivity the market could have dried up). And it was doing us a favor by making **SOWERS** and **WORMS OF THE EARTH** and **TIGERS OF THE SEA** and **A GENT FROM BEAR CREEK** readily available, so did it really matter that "Conan" was so much more visible than the actual title?

Unfortunately, the answer is -- yes!

The editors of Zebra had presumably determined that it was Conan and what Conan stood for that sold books, therefore every book had to be willinilly, a Conan book, no matter how distantly they may be connected. Thus Andy Offutt and Karl Edward Wagner get small credit lines while "Conan" and Robert E. Howard hulk larger and more visible than the title. And something like **THE VULTURES OF WHAPETON** is outright and deceitfully blurbed as a "Fantasy Adventure."

Zebra has labeled only three of its Howard books by this phrase "Fantasy Adventure," **VULTURES**, **DENNIS DORGAN** and **THE IRON MAN**.

**VULTURES'** cover features a skeleton riding a horse with a vulture perched on its arm. The blurb on the back begins (in bold type "There is a magic that turns men into Jackels, Wolves, and Vultures. . .") The implication is that this is going to be a volume of weird tales about werewolves, etc. Far from it. This is a volume of realistic westerns and the only 'magic' present is gold--a metal that has made men act like animals but certainly has no magic in the sense one associates with Conan.

**THE INCREDIBLE ADVENTURES OF DENNIS DORGAN'S** cover shows a standing, empty suit of armor with snakes crawling about it. The blurb on the back, already quoted above, invites us on a "magical forey" into the Orient. What sounds like a description of "Red Blades of Black Cathey" is, in fact, a collection of humorous boxing stories set in this century, and as often as not, in this country.

The cover of **THE IRON MAN** shows a golem-like creature of primitive splendor rising above a sea of clenched hands. The blurbs on the back vaguely talk of men "forged out of steel, hewn out of granite, sculptured out of oak." What it doesn't say is that this is a collection of realistic boxing stories.

Even Zebra's **THE BOOK OF ROBERT E. HOWARD** a book to display the wide range of Howard's writing, is blurbed to only mention "sword and sorcery; trembling tales of horror; fantasies so weird they defy description." Which conveniently forgets to mention the two mysteries, the two westerns, one fight story and one spicy adventure that makes up half of the material in this book.

I do not mind Zebra publishing Howard's westerns, or boxing stories, or his spicy adventures or his mysteries, but I do mind the deceitful way in which they have been packaged. Blurbs have always been exaggerated but this goes beyond poetic license.

That Zebra is deliberately attempting to mislead the public is most evident in an ad carried in **THE SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN** No. 14. Here is a full page ad, displaying nine different titles. It is a wonderful place to boast of Howard's variety. Here's a chance to say that Howard excelled in many fields of literature and here are some of his best works in these fields, works rivaling his Conan material. (Not that I think these stories are that good, but it's no more than typical cover blurb exaggeration.)

Instead we are told that **THE BOOK OF REH** is a collection "of horror, fantasy, sorcery. . ." and that **DENNIS DORGAN** is a mythical, magical forey. . . . . and that in **VULTURES** "a magic from deep within the earth turns men into jackels, wolves and vultures." (my emphasis).

Zebra doesn't want the truth known, they just want your money. Which brings up another point. **THE BOOK OF ROBERT E. HOWARD** and **PIGEONS FROM HELL** carry a \$1.95 price tag. At first this seems reasonable as these three books run 350+ pages in length. Only this great length is achieved through the use of a very inflated typesize. The size of typeface in a paperback varies to a considerable degree and for as many reasons. A page of 'average' sized type will contain around 400 words. A page of small type might carry around 450 words. Zebra's pages run around 300. In short these books are running a fourth again as long as they need be. We're paying \$1.95 for books that have the thickness and heft of a \$1.95 book but the contents of a significantly smaller book. We're being overcharged by as much as twenty-five cents for these three books. A 384 page edition of **TROS OF SAMOTHRACE**, with small (for Zebra) type is priced at a mere \$1.75. If Zebra can afford this low a price for Talbot Mundy, surely they could afford the same for Howard, who's been dead as long as Mundy.

Oddly enough, this whole tirade was inspired by the publication of **PIGEONS FROM HELL**. I had snapped this book up, excited at the prospect of a new collection of REH fiction and had already paid for it before I thought something funny was going on because the title story had been reprinted only a couple months before. The book seemed even more familiar when I examined it closely at home. The contents looked familiar, but not half as familiar as the copyright page. It looked just like a Lancer copyright page. So I checked it against my Howard bibliography. It has every story, no more, as **THE DARK MAN** and others, with one exception. It didn't have the title story. I got back my copy of **THE DARK MAN** from Neicer (you remember Neicer from the start of this article, don't you?) for comparison. Not only were they the same stories but they were in the same sequence, with the exception of the missing **THE DARK MAN** and "The Voice of El-Lil" was moved to the end of the collection. "The Voice of El-Lil" still appeared first on the copyright page, tho.

It looks for all the world as if Zebra simply took the old, out-of-print Lancer edition, cut out the title story and sent the book to their typesetter "as is". Which makes it all that much harder to justify its \$1.95 price.

It seems a rather dubious way to get some of the REH material that's been tied up in the Lancer bankruptcy back into print, but I suppose we shouldn't question gift horses. And for once it is some of Howard's better material.

The latest thing from Zebra, as of this writing, is a new edition of **TROS OF SAMOTHRACE**. This is a massive historical set in the days of Julius Caesar. In fact, Caesar is the continuing villain of the series. **TORS** was printed in the 60's as a four book serial by Avon. Zebra seems intent on doing it in three volumes this time. Two further books **THE PURPLE PIRATE** and **QUEEN CLEOPATRA** continue the action. It has bearing here

# Howard and the Races

By L. Sprague de Camp

As I have written before, many of Robert E. Howard's views would today be stigmatized as "racist". He followed the example of most American authors of popular fiction of the period, in whose tales ethnic stereotypes were stock in trade. Hence Scots were always thrifty, Irishmen funny, Germans arrogant, Latins lecherous, Jews avaricious, Negroes childish, and Orientals sinister. He agreed with Lovecraft's rhapsodies on the non-existent "Aryan race" and his rant against non-Nordic immigrants.

On the other hand, Howard was, if a racist, a comparatively mild one by the standards of his time. He noted the superior qualities of the industrious Bohemian immigrants to Texas. He sympathized with the Confederacy and expressed what one of his memoirists calls a "deep distaste" for Abraham Lincoln. He voiced conventional Texas views of Negroes and Mexicans whom he admired, as well as Jewish prizefighters whom he had known. His story "Black Canaan" has gallant white men dashing about the Deep South to forestall nigger uprisings; while in "The Dead Remember," his sympathies are with a Negro couple abused and murdered by the narrator, a drunken, vicious cowboy.

One of his early story synopses, never transformed into a finished story, was called "The Last White Man." In this racial fantasy, the white race has become "decadent" from "idleness and pleasure," so the black Africans, "a new, strong race," rises up, conquers, and exterminates them with the help of the Orientals. The Orientals are then wiped out in their turn. But the blacks are "destroyers, not builders", who soon "revert to savagery." (1)

Howard's racial views, however, were not static, any more than those of his pen-pal Lovecraft. Both seem to have evolved away from the crude tribalism, which they obtained in much American thinking of the early twentieth century. Later, as "John Tavarel," Howard wrote a prizefight story, "The Apparition of the Prize Ring," published in *GHOST STORIES* for April, 1929 (2). While no immortal masterpiece, this story has an interesting feature. It emphasizes the mildness of Howard's racism, for the author made a Negro prizefighter his hero. Ace Jessel, the "ebony giant," is described as clever, brave, goodnatured, noble, indomitable, and unselfish. How many virtues do you want?

True, Ace speaks a "dese and dose" dialect. His antagonist, a "full-blooded Senegalese," is closer to the hostile stereotype of the Negro, being thickset, with a "small bullet head. . . set squarely between gigantic shoulders" and on his chest "a thick grizzle of matted hair."

My colleague Charles R. Saunders tells me that Jessel may be based either on Peter Jackson or on Harry Wills, black heavyweights of the 1890s and 1920s respectively. They were denied a chance at the world title when the then champions, Sullivan and Dempsey, drew the color line. Perhaps both suggested Howard's fictional character.

The Senegalese boxer (says Saunders) is probably based upon the Senegalese light-heavyweight, "Battling Siki," who held that title from 1922 to 1932. Siki was commonly called "a gorilla" in the press, and he "abetted this image with stunts like walking a pet lion down Broadway." (3)

Howard's handling of dialect, like that of his fellow pulpsters, was crude. His Senegalese shows the peril of writing about exotica with neither personal acquaintance nor intensive research. Most Senegalese are rather slender, and pure Negroes have practically no hair on their chests. But at least, the story shows that Howard was a lot less ethnocentric than many of his contemporaries.

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- (1) *THE HOWARD COLLECTOR*. No. 5, Summer 1964, pp. 22-29.
- (2) Recently reprinted in *STORIES OF GHOSTS* (Evergreen, Colo.: Opar Press). A second story about Ace Jessel was apparently never sold.
3. Letter from Saunders, Nov. 26, 1976.

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## THE NIGHT BOB HOWARD DIED

By John Rieber

Once I sang on her silver knee.

A dreamer cries to the moon-seared skies;  
The skulls in the stars murmur to his shade.  
From nighted gulfs, red shadows rise;  
Black orchids stare with sightless eyes;  
A dead god lives while an infant dies;  
Grey slabs grow cold in a silent glade.

Plague shriveled her in sullen glee.

Dark tendrils thrust through the soul's thin crust;  
The Snake holds sway in the hell He made.  
Supple strength crumbles to graveyard dust;  
Worms mock the beauty of mortal trust;  
Ashes burn to ashes, dust sifts to dust:  
At the kiss of the Master, the fairest fade.

Thunder rumbles; my chains fall free.

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because, once again, the name "ROBERT E. HOWARD" stands out in lettering larger than either TALBOT MUNDY or the title. It's a darn good book and I recommend it, tho it's not "in the tradition" of REH -- more like Kwa Khan Caine. The cover, by Tom Barber, is of exceptional beauty, even if it is about a thousand years off with its depiction of a Viking Landing.

A book's blurb must answer, often usually in 25 words or less, the question: "why buy this book?" And considering that these 25 or less words are perhaps the only thing standing between a considerable profit and a considerable loss, it is no wonder that blurbs are often more fantasy than fact.

Yet in a survey of dozens of paperbacks in my personal collection, I find few cases of blurbs as misleading or as cluttered as Zebra's. The Lancer covers for *THE SLEEPING SORCERESS* and *THE DREAMING CITY*, both by Michael Moorcock, are cluttered. The "Family D'lembert" series by "Doc Smith" is in fact being written by Stephen Goldin from notes by the late E. E. Smith. A crop of Clifford Simek reissues are blurbed "Hugo Winner" and while Simek has won the Hugo award, it wasn't for any of these books.

Yet, the vast majority of books-90-95 percent of them-clearly and distinctly identify the title and author over and above the blurbing. Zebra's blurbing policy is way, way out of line.



**ARIEL** No. 1, Autumn 1976, \$5.95, 80 pages, Morning Star Press, Ltd., PO Box 6011, Leawood, Kansas 66206. Four issue subscription \$21.00.  
Reviewed by Arnold Fenner.

As unfortunate as it is to say and realize, the first issue of **ARIEL** from the Morningstar Press people is, in a way, a sad commentary on what portions of the amateur publishing field has evolved into over the past few years. While it's only natural for an editor to wish to improve his product and reach the largest possible audience, one shouldn't lose sight of the readers' wants and needs—we purchase the item, we suggest and criticize, and we should get our hard-earned money's worth out of that item, especially when we remember that without us, said products would simply be collecting dust in someone's basement. And perhaps, just perhaps, that's where **ARIEL** No. 1 belongs.

Which isn't to say that **ARIEL** is not an attractive magazine: it most certainly is. Reproduction is sharp and clean while the lay-out and design qualities are first class; in fact, the issue is a top-notch example of a commercial venture, much like the numerous picture-movie volumes that constantly find their way to the "Remaindered" table at the local B. Daltons. And that, in a nutshell, is the major flaw with the publication.

Editor Armand Eisen has collected an interesting list of contents for his first issue: fiction, articles, interviews and art. He also has collected a healthy \$6 per magazine--which he can hardly be faulted for. Announce and proclaim the names of Frazetta, Corben, Hogarth, REH and company loud enough and you're sure to have eager fans beat a path to your door. A wise move, to say the least; but that's where the deception comes in. The potential buyer isn't told what to expect from such blurbs: "Color front and back covers by Corben and Frazetta!", "Corben's 'Den' ", "Hogarth's last Tarzan Art!". Tantalizing, of course, but where are we told that it's all a reprint in some form or another? We're not. "Den" comes from the underground comics, Hogarth's art from his latest Tarzan book (**JUNGLE TALES OF TARZAN**), The Corben front cover from the splash page of his second "Den" story from **METAL HURLANT** and the **RICHARD CORBEN FUNNYBOOK**, and the Fritz backcover from the **CONAN OF CIMMERIA** book cover, poster, album jacket, and several other places. Hmmm. Maybe your thoughts ran along the same lines as mine when I bought **ARIEL** No. 1: "I thought I was going to get something new."

Other contents include an excerpt from the other Morningstar Press product, **BLOODSTAR** (which, while good in its original form, suffers because it is nothing more than an excerpt and it is another reprint), two fairly good poems by Howard and a ridiculous article by Charles Hoffman digging into the identity of REH and his creation, Conan. It was done much better

several years past in an article by George Scithers appearing in **AMRA**.

Also featured in the magazine is a short story by John Pocsik titled "The Fiend Within." Mr. Pocsik may be remembered for several original short stories that appeared in an Arkham House anthology during the early '60s and for his ghastly rewrite of Robert E. Howard's Solomon Kane adventures, "Blades of the Brotherhood" (Pocsik's title: "The Blue Flame of Vengeance"). Which might explain why "The Fiend Within" is essentially nothing more than a bastardization of the Kane series, with the main character's name being Isaac Grail, "the Puritan swashbuckler" set in the time of the Spanish Inquisition! Come, come, Mr. Pocsik; leave the dead in peace.

Hard as it may be to believe after reading my previous statements, there are some worthy aspects to **ARIEL**: the Frazetta interview, though a bit silly in parts, is an interesting look into the thoughts of the most influential artist working in the fantasy field today. And Hogarth's comments on his past accomplishments are intriguing reading, to put it mildly.

**ARIEL** is seemingly aimed toward the general public, rather than the regular fan of the various genres, yet it is not professionally distributed and the only people who'll get the opportunity to see and buy it are the fans. Which is why I feel that Mr. Eisen and company should take another look at the market they are reaching, re-evaluate their values and outlooks, and listen to what their readers would like to see. It is possible to produce a commercial item without compromising your integrity. Collectors might not really care about what goes on their shelves so long as it does find its way into their hands; but those of us that read, look at, and enjoy the works of various contributors within and outside of the field deserve something more for our time and support. It's possible that **ARIEL** will eventually provide what we're looking for (though more reprints are forthcoming--the cover for the next issue is the painting for the Ace **ERB** book **THE MOON MAID**, but as it stands, the first issue falls sadly short of its potential. I'd suggest that you save your \$6 to help pay your Christmas bills, or use it to buy several of the other fanzines the field has to offer--I believe you'll have a greater feeling of satisfaction.

(Editor's Note: When I hand out a review, I never place restrictions on the reviewer. I aim for honesty and intend to portray that image. All publishers submit review copies to Stygian Isle Press and receive no advance guarantees of favorable review. If I don't like an item as a reviewer I have a right and responsibility to tell readers my opinion and what that opinion is based upon. Arnold Fenner has fulfilled that right and responsibility admirably, but I can't help adding a postscript to his review. It's not that I disagree with Arnie, it's just that I'd add a further perspective on **ARIEL**. Much of Arnie's criticism of **ARIEL** is based upon the heavy reliance on reprinted material. That becomes a handicap to the buyer ONLY if the buyer has the original appearance of the work in his collection or has seen the original presentation of the material. Corben's "Den" was new to me. I loved it and anxiously look forward to the next installment or I did until I bought **THE RICHARD CORBEN FUNNY BOOK** which included the sequel segment of "Den". The cover of **ARIEL** appeared in **FUNNY BOOK** too but then I enjoyed it first on **ARIEL**. The Frazetta illustrations throughout the book (appended to the Frazetta interview) were all old hat to me, but it was nice seeing them again. But again, it depends upon the buyer's exposure. **ARIEL** No. 1 provides some nice graphics by Frazetta unless you're an avid Frazetta collector, in which case you've seen it all. The Frazetta interview was rather trivial in parts but overall it was an interesting expression of the man and artist. The REH verse was new and I would have bought the mag for that alone, but then not everyone has the completist bug that I have. I guess I'd recommend **ARIEL** with reservations. It depends on your bookshelf. I found enough new surprises to make it worth my money.)

**UPON THE WINDS OF YESTERDAY AND OTHER EXPLORATIONS** the paintings of George Barr, Donald M. Grant Publisher, West Kingston, RI, 140 page hardback, \$25.00, limited to 2500 copies

Reviewed by Jonathan Bacon

**UPON THE WINDS OF YESTERDAY** has a brief forward by Tim Kirk and an introduction by Stuart David Schiff. It contains approximately 48 color plates, ten black and white plates and a page featuring color reproductions of six convention name tags created by Barr. Those are the technicalities of the publication, but what is the book really like?

**UPON THE WINDS** is a journey into a mythical, mystical fantasy world that stirs the soul. "Fantastic" is too mild a generalization for this publishing venture. Barr's women are more beautiful than life ever intended women to be. His Hobbit is a creature of distinction and intellect, perhaps more admirable than Tolkien ever envisioned. Barr's Pooh Bear is more loveable and affectionate than any stuffed animal could ever be. Thru Barr's work, I see the Gollum for the first time as a truly tragic figure. And I'm delighted by George's visualization of a "Thingamajig".

I keep returning to this book, time and again, to view thru the protals into Barr's world of fantasy. It's a beautiful book, a priceless addition to any library. Many of the paintings in this edition have never before seen print. For that we owe Don Grant our undying thanks.

Quite frankly, I've tried to restrain myself from listing my personal group of favorites. . .but I just can't do it. I have no "favorite" only a group of "favorites". Look over any of the following and tell me they're not masterpieces: "Your Hair Wants Cutting", "Butterfly Garden", "What has it Got in its pocketses?", "The Hundred Acre Wood", "On the Trail", "Beauty and the Beast", "The Bride", "Winter Walk", "The Last Package", "The Enchanted Thingamajig", "Cookout", "Vigil by the Violent Sea", and the list goes on and on. How do I find the right words to convey the fantastic amount of pleasure this book has given me? I guess I just say: Explore **UPON THE WINDS** at your own risk, you may never again want to return to reality.

**THE DEVIL IN IRON** by Robert E. Howard, Donald M. Grant publisher, West Kingston, R.I., 154 pages, hardback, \$15.00, illustrated by Dan Green.

Reviewed by Jonathan Bacon

This latest in the deluxe Conan series includes both Conan tales: "The Devil in Iron" and "Shadows in Zamboula". The exciting part of this series is the opportunity it affords new artists to have their work come before the REH audience. I've only seen Green's work once or twice before but never in work related to the Howard canon. His work has a touch of the Jeff Jones flavor and yet it's grossly unfair to compare the two. I would in fact prefer Green's work over much of Jones' more recent illustrations. I know there will be a great deal of disagreement over the artwork in this volume. Many fans seem unable to appreciate anything unless it's signed by Frazetta, Fabian or Barr. I hope buyers won't be trapped into such narrow mindedness. Once again, in this reviewer's opinion, the strength of the Grant deluxe Conan series lies in the diversity of artists and Grant's refusal to submit to fannish pressure to go with the "in" names in Howardian illustration.

This series is, in all honesty, geared for the Howard enthusiast or the collector of fine books. \$15 is a high price to pay for two short Conan tales that could be read via a second hand copy of

the Lancer Conan editions. I enjoy and treasure finely wrought books. Grant's publications qualify EVERY time. They're works of art and anyone who doesn't recognize that. . .should save his \$15 and spend it elsewhere.

**THE DYING EARTH**, 224 pages, published by Tim Underwood and Chuck Miller, cloth edition of 1000 copies, \$15.95 with full color DJ and interior illustrations by George Barr. 239 North 4th Street, Columbia, Pa 17512.

Reviewed by Jonathan Bacon

I have a favorite publisher. Anyone who cannot guess that Donald M. Grant holds that position, hasn't yet read this issue. I judge new books by the high quality standards that Grant has set and maintained for several years. How does that tie in with a review of **THE DYING EARTH**? The team of Underwood and Miller have, with their first hardback book venture, established themselves in the league of publishers which Don Grant epitomizes. This small group takes great pride in EVERY aspect of their publication. Typestyle, illustrations, Djs, text content and every phase of bookmaking is carefully thought out and followed thru. **THE DYING EARTH** is a beautiful production well worth the \$15.95 price. The only regret this reviewer has is that the book is probably out of print. Some dealers and maybe Miller may still have copies but they're very nearly gone. If you can get a copy. . .get it.

It's hard to know where to begin the praise. George Barr's DJ is beautiful, a real visual delight. The end papers are maps of Vance's "Grand Motholam" in the "latter days". The black and white interior illustrations are extremely appropriate to Vance's text, not a single weak illustration in the lot. And of course, **THE DYING EARTH** sage is delightful, funny, tragic, whimsical and intriguing all at once. I only wish Vance would do more work in this vein. His hand is needed in the field.

**CONAN-DE CAMP LP**, \$6 unsigned, \$7.50 signed, Moondance Productions, Box 425, Wilmington, Vt. 05363

Reviewed by Wesley Kobylak

Picture a skinny little kid, weird by nature with brooding bitterness inflicted upon him by the harshness of youth. It's a hot Texas night -- a sweltering plains night when even the stars seem to give off heat -- and the times are not good. This young man, who by day beats his body into a shape that cannot be taunted, is sitting in the parlor of his family home. Recently one of his few friends let him listen to a crystal set wireless. Out of nowhere, with bits of ceramic and wire and crystal (oh that beautiful tiny crystal through which all of life had sprakled!), this slightly bitter, very sensitive youth had heard a sound -- voices, music, static -- from hundreds of miles away. His name was Bob Howard and he was thinking of that colossal event as he sat writing a fantasy story.

Picture also a powerful animal of a man, stalking naked down a primitive road of carriage and chariot ruts. He carries a sword, hacked with chips, and a dagger in his boot. The countryside is chill with spring air and blemished by smoking rubble from the dawn's sacking. As the man walks north he passes faint moans that soon gag out; he quickens his stride to be gone. Always there is dying and horror -- it sickens his barbaric instinct for freedom. Outside of what was once a village he stops, and faces a cross roads. One is as fateful as the other; he wishes Crom would point the way. This young, steeled man, Conan, by name, wants done with the pettiness of life. Suddenly, from down one road he hears -- so faintly, like a wisp -- the strings of a

lyre. It's beautiful. If it opportunes evil, so be it: he strides toward the sound.

And now picture finally, a young man returning home from work, stultifying work that breeds creativity and destroys it in one blow. He sheds the day's uniform, fills his pipe, and sits to listen to music. The times are not good. In his hand is a book picked up a week earlier, something he meant to read. With the music, the pipe, the day's relaxing end, he reads the book. It puts him at a cross roads; his name is Alan B. Goldstein and he takes the path toward the sound in his head.

That imaginary sound became CONAN, produced by Alan B. and his Moondance Productions. That record offered Robert E. Howard a reverent token of respect in the form of Conan dramatizations in the old-radio tradition of Orson Welles -- updated 40 years by modern technology; it attempted to "go where no man has gone before" to provide living aural color to the starving ears of fantasy audiophiles.

Alan B. has now produced a second Conan album featuring R. E. Howard's post-humous collaborator, L. Sprague de Camp. The prodigious effects of studio-made sound evident on the first album are subdued here to give de Camp room to move. Nevertheless, Alan B.'s artistic handiwork is present throughout the productions, wafting around de Camp's voice. At times the voice becomes hypnotic. The listener finds himself losing the trail of the drama and sinking into the subtleties of Aural-Vision.

The two stories presented are "The Bloodstained God", a de Camp--Howard piece from 1955, and "The Curse of the Monolith", a de Camp--Lin Carter work of 1968. Like the first album, this one presents two very different stories to fit either of your Howardian moods.

"The Bloodstained God" is traditional Howard fare, with treachery, deceit, loyalty and final victory -- an empty victory as so many of the Conan tales have. It is full of pitched battle and remorseless gore; it is full of the flowing imagery and pounding rhythm so characteristic of Howard -- with a touch of tightness provided by de Camp. The spectre of the ruby red god--monster haunts the story.

"The Curse of the Monolith" is a different sort of mood. There is a certain expansiveness in it that allows the listener to take a breath and enjoy the atmosphere. It is my favorite, just as "The Frost Giant's Daughter" was my favorite on the first album. Both "Tower of the Elephant" and "The Bloodstained God" share a forcefulness that I like, but "Daughter" and "Curse" provide that wonderment that I crave. In the latter, Conan is as usual partly deceived, partly never deceived, into foraging for treasure. He is led to a black monolith of solid lodestone whose magnetic forces entrap Conan and his mail armor while a slithering ooze promises death. And, like "Daughter", it ends with Conan back in camp among his comrades, sharing the barbaric spirit of fellowship.

De Camp's dramatization is obviously the focal point of the album, although due respect is made by Alan B. for evoking realism with vinyl ghosts. It is always interesting to note how an author interprets his own character. Here, de Camp shows us a hulking, slow-stalking Conan, willing to trust anyone, at the point of a sword. It is an ingenuous Conan, far removed from the first album and yet easy to get accustomed to. On the first album, Conan's force was in his voice while here his brawn is left to the imagination -- and all the better since imagination was what that young man from Texas was aiming at. De Camp works his voice from narrative to action and, unlike a mere spoken word recording, takes upon himself various accents and characters. Besides Conan, de Camp uses an odd mixture of voices from his own imagination. One character becomes a Scottish rogue, very effective in the presumed dark age of a millenia ago. Another voice has the characteristics of a New England Yankee--British aristocrat. It is an amusing voice and appropriate. For the most part, de Camp keeps his voice on an even register; thus the hypnotic effect. To hear de Camp use

such Howardian terms as "Khitai", "kaffia", "Kezankian", and "Zuagir khilat" is worth the price of the record alone.

Alan B.'s first Conan LP has sold out the first pressing of 1500 numbered copies and is well into sales of the second pressing of 1000. If it were a fanzine with a circulation of 2500 it would be noticed. And so it has. Tentative offers have come from on high; the de Camp production was a result of such growing notice. More Conan stories will be finding their way through the studio and out to the public. The initial success of Moondance Productions is due, apart from the intrinsic worth of the Howard stories, to the integrity Alan B. has for pure sound. (His license plate spells: AURAL.) And that success is all the more dramatic for its lack of commercialism in a world of conglomerate record companies. These records are available only by mail order, a handicap that, like little Bob Howard's scrawny body, is being overcome with tenacity.

Business -- if you can call being a fan a business -- has expanded at Moondance to include Tim Conrad posters of the first album cover (devastating!), Howard paperbacks, and relevant "graphic novels" ("comics" to the non-afficianado). The process of transforming oneself from a paying fan to a paid-for fan is a story in itself, one Alan B. will be glad to share with you at the next Con.

Until then, listen carefully: are those feet coming toward you from your speakers?

**THE DRAGON**, published bi-monthly by TSR-Periodicals, TSR Hobbies, Inc., P. O. Box 756, Lake Geneva, WI., 53147. Subscription rate is \$9.00 for 6 issues. Single copy and backish at \$1.50. **THE DRAGON** is edited by Timothy J. Kask.

Issues reviewed: June, Vol. 1, No. 1; August, Vol. 1, No. 2  
Reviewed by Michael Clagett

Have you ever wondered about, or tried to play those fantasy quest and war games you see advertised by flyer or resting on the game shelves of hobby or department stores?

Have you thought about how they are played and how many different variations are available? And what about those metal miniatures of Gandalf and Frodo and other characters and historical figures you see and hear about, but don't know where to get?

**THE DRAGON** is devoted to those questions and a number of other items which may surprise you in a magazine of this type. **THE DRAGON** is published by those people who bring you **STRATEGIC REVIEW**; only this magazine is primarily concerned with the fields of Sword & Sorcery, Fantasy, Science Fiction, and Role Playing gaming. **THE DRAGON** is available through subscription, some bookstores, but most readily found at better hobby stores.

The June Premier issue (No. 1) presented a Fritz Leiber, Fafhrd and Grey Mouser dialogue article on a new board game called **LANKMAR**. Also included is a Lin Carter and Scott Bizar article on game variations and additions for **ROYAL ARMIES OF THE HYBOREAN AGE**.

Other articles include the uses of magic, science and language elements in the games, plus notes on books and other magazines explaining or adding to board games. Mind you, I found the articles very interesting in themselves. One need not play the games to enjoy the features.

There is also fiction in **THE DRAGON**, to wit, "The Gnome Cache", a two part story by Garrison Ernst. Also a short story by Jake Jaquet called "The Search for the Forbidden Chamber".

General information on Wargame Conventions, hobby dealers, future issues, and similar magazines may also be found.

The August issue (No. 2) presented similar articles on board games and new variations, plus new games forthcoming, among them a new **LOTR** game. Also included is the second part of "The Gnome Cache" and a complete Gardner F. Fox story

introducing Niall of the Far Travels in "Shadow of a Demon".

The best article of the August issue is "The Feathered Serpent" by Lynn Harpold concerning Quetzalcoatl. (Neither stories nor article are game oriented.) The August issue's art work, by E. Otus, Mike Symes, P. Jaquays, Lynn Harpold and others is much better than the June issue.

Printed on slick paper with color covers, and black and white and color art work throughout, **THE DRAGON** comes off as a certainly unique and different publication. Should you follow or take part in fantasy gaming in all its myriad, thoughtful, and thinking aspects, then **THE DRAGON** will be a useful, interesting, and enjoyable publication to read.

#### **THE LAST CELT**

Edited and compiled by Glenn Lord

Donald M. Grant, Publisher, 1976; \$20, pages: 416

Reviewed by Loay Hall

**THE LAST CELT** is without doubt one of the most exciting and long-awaited books to appear in some time. It is a volume which will probably prove to be as controversial to REH fandom as de Camp's biography of Lovecraft was to HPL fandom. It is a fascinating and valuable contribution to REH scholarship.

Robert Ervin Howard (1906-36) is a writer who, in recent years, has commanded the enthusiasm of a legion of fans, who continually clamor for more fiction and greater detail into his life and ideologies. Glenn Lord, forever alert to REH's fans wishes, and desiring to publish the definitive bibliography of REH's work, has at last published what should amount to the greatest bit of Howardian scholarship yet attempted: a bibliography. Howard fans will eat it up!

The volume is divided into four categories--autobiography, biography, bibliography and miscellanea.

The autobiography section is made up of four papers--"The Wandering Years", "An Autobiography", "A Touch of Trivia", and "On Reading--And Writing"--written, obviously, by the inimitable Bob E. Howard. It also contains an insightful letter to **WEIRD TALES** editor Farnsworth Wright. In this segment Robert E. Howard, the man and the writer, are clearly bared for the reader to see.

The biography portion is made up of five appreciations of REH by Alvin Perry, H. P. Lovecraft, Glenn Lord, E. Hoffmann Price and Harold Preece. All are interesting discussions of Robert E. Howard and his work, but, in my opinion, Harold Preece's "The Last Celt" is the best of the five. The Lovecraft and Price essays were recently reprinted in **THE SKULL-FACE OMNIBUS**.

The bibliography of REH's work--241 pages in length--is a massive and staggering thing. Lord has done an impressive job, and should be commended for his herculean efforts.

The miscellanea, in this reviewer's opinion, alone is worth the price of the book. It contains a story fragment, letters, pages reproduced from REH's fanzine **THE GOLDEN CALIPH**; an article by HPL; a Howard photo album; a holograph of one of REH's school papers; a sample of **WEIRD TALES** covers based on REH tales; and many other curious items. Even REH's funeral notice.....

The volume, of course, is not without its flaws. The bibliography is a full three years behind on published Howardiana; the Price and Lovecraft appreciations are too well-known and accessible to warrant reprinting so soon after the **SKULL-FACE OMNIBUS**; there is actually less biographical material in the book than appears in de Camp's **THE MISCAST BARBARIAN**; and Glenn Lord's discussion of REH is in reality nothing more than a rehash of his introductions to the various Howard paperbacks. But these are minor peccadilloes in comparison to its innumerable merits. It is, after all, the first major attempt toward a definitive bibliography of Robert E. Howard's writings, and REH fans should appreciate Glenn

Lord's efforts. To Glenn I offer my personal thanks for such a remarkable book!

The controversy, of course, of which I mentioned in the first paragraph of this review, will no doubt stem from the question of whether or not **THE LAST CELT** is worth the \$20 price tag. That is a point which the individual reader must decide for himself. If he is not a sincere Howard collector or just new to the writings of Bob Howard, it is doubtful if he would wish to hand out so much. But if he is a Howard collector or avid REH fan, it is a book he will grab up immediately, little caring about the cost. It is highly recommended!

#### **VIRGIL FINLAY: AN ASTROLOGY SKETCH BOOK**

Donald M. Grant, 1975, 148 pages, 2000 copies, \$15.00.

Reviewed by Stephen Riley

This book is the second volume in Donald M. Grant's projected trilogy of Finlay art volumes, the first being published in 1971 and out-of-print for just about as long. Considering the rapid sales of other Grant books, why this volume is still available a year after publication amazes me, particularly with Finlay's soaring popularity and his escalation to revered status of Grand Master of science-fantasy art.

Physically, the book is the same size as Grant's Conan series, and features the same quality, three-piece maroon and gray binding. The paper is first-class and the printing is flawless.

The book's contents are no less in keeping with Donald M. Grant's quest for quality: an introduction by Beverly C. Finlay (the artist's widow) that explains Finlay's connection with the field of Astrology (closely allied with fantasy in its mythological symbols), and offers informative highlights of Finlay's working methods and relationships with art directors. A second and shorter introduction by Robert Prestopino, Art Director for Popular Library (who publishes the Astrology magazines Finlay did covers for) acknowledges the artist's contributions to the field.

The rest of the book is divided into twelve sections, each concerning itself with a particular Zodiac symbol. Introductory comments for each section explain the meaning of the symbols and give a brief commentary on each of the drawings for that sign.

But the cream of the volume is in the illustrations, ranging from loose preliminary sketches to the tightly-polished pieces that are Finlay's trademark. For those of us who were previously familiar only with Finlay's finished work, the sketches offer an interesting glimpse into the artist's working methods and construction of a drawing. Three color reproductions of studies (for paintings?) complete the artistic offerings, of which there are plenty.

This is a book that rightfully belongs in many a book collection, be you interested in Finlay's superior craftsmanship, art illustration, Astrology, or if you simply love beautifully produced books. I unreservedly recommend this volume.

#### **FANTASY: BOOK ILLUSTRATION 1860 - 1920**

By Brigid Peppin

(British edition: Studio Vista, L8.95) (192 pages.) Hardbound  
(American edition: Watson-Guption, \$25.00)

Reviewed by Stephen Riley

I sometimes receive the impression that many fantasy fans think most quality fantasy art was produced mainly within the pages of **WEIRD TALES**, **UNKNOWN**, **FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES**, etc., and that the most notable practitioners of fantasy illustration have been Virgil Finlay, Hannes Bok, Frank Frazetta -- to name three who have a high fannish popularity.

Yes, these men have produced some outstanding work, but they are hardly alone. Fantasy illustration, like fantasy fiction, has a long, proud tradition.

Ever since books have been produced, fantasy has been involved to some degree as far as illustration goes. One early example I can think of is Hans Holbein's *DANCE OF DEATH*, published in 1538. In spite of an occasional lone artist like William Blake, who produced lavishly illustrated editions of his own work in the late 1700s to early 1800s, it wasn't until the middle of the 19th century that fantasy book illustration started to blossom, particularly in England and Europe. (America produced many notable illustrators during this developing period, but their output was directed more toward adventurous and down-to-earth subjects. Maxfield Parrish is one of the few exceptions.)

This period (1860 - 1920) produced many fine examples of fantasy art. Indeed, between the Romanticists and Classicists of the early 1800s, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in the middle of the century, the Symbolist painters, (heir to the Pre-Raphaelites), who lasted into the early 20th century, and the *art nouveau* movement of the 1890s, the 19th century was a veritable feast of fantasy art in many forms.

The ever-increasing technological developments in printing led to an increase in the number of periodicals and books produced. This in turn led to a demand for more artists to illustrate all those columns of text. The Golden Age of book illustration, a period of lavishness in books, had begun. The opportunities for artists had never been greater.

Brigid Peppin's book explores this splendid period in England and Europe, as she rightly should, considering the proliferation of fantasy there in contrast to America. Her sixteen-page introduction takes the reader on a guided historical tour through the ranks of the great illustrators and the not-so-great. Each is put into perspective, while Ms. Peppin discusses the various influences that shaped the period and the societal role the varying aesthetic movements played. Not only are the artists themselves discussed, but the role fantasy played in the Victorian era through its literature is brought into account: the boom in children's books, fairy tales, the Arabian Nights, Arthurian romances and so forth. (Interestingly, William Morris, the fantasy author, had been influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites. In 1861 he founded the Arts and Crafts Movement, which gained acceptance and gave birth to *art nouveau*.)

The remaining text of Ms. Peppin's book concerns itself with a capsule biography of each artist, a list of the books he illustrated, and an excellent bibliography of related books.

The balance of *FANTASY* is about 160 pages of illustrations selected from this period, 250 in all, 64 of them in full color. Representation is fair for the artists involved. Those of greater popularity, influence and talent are designated the most space. Some of the artists will be familiar to readers: Beardsley, Charles and W. Heath Robinson, Gustave Dore, Arthur Rackham, Edmund Dulac, etc. Others, such as Rene Bull, H. J. Ford, John D. Batten, Laurence Housman and Edmund J. Sullivan may not be as well known. All artists represented are of importance in fantasy illustration, regardless of their stature.

There are almost 50 different artists featured in this book. I am thankful that Ms. Peppin kept inclusion of Gustave Dore to a minimum. Dore's work is beautiful but he has had plenty of exposure elsewhere and much of his work does not reproduce well unless special pains are taken in printing. I wish Beardsley had been given less space in spite of his importance -- there are already several collections of his work available. On the brighter side, Sidney Sime and Harry Clarke, two long-neglected artists, are both given ample space.

Arthur Rackham and Edmund Dulac are two of the foremost giants in this field and as you'd expect, both are well represented. Although both artists have been subject to increasing popularity in recent years, many of the color plates devoted to them have been rephotographed from the original

drawings rather than from a printed image in a book. The reproductions are breathtaking -- the plates look almost like originals themselves!

To try and locate and purchase an old book illustrated by any one of these artists would in many cases cost more than *FANTASY* itself. Most are rare collectors' items and lucky is the person who can locate such a book. I recommend collectors try to locate the British edition of *FANTASY* first. It features a different dustwrapper than the American edition, but the cost is several dollars cheaper. (The edition is supposedly not for sale in the U.S. or Canada, yet I ordered my copy from England without any problems.) If this fails, then purchase the American edition by all means.

*FANTASY* is an interesting, informative book, a feast for the eyes and imagination. This has been a lengthy review but this is quite a book -- you'll be repaid by the treasures within many times over.

#### **THE ART OF FRANKLIN BOOTH**

Nostalgia Press, Inc., 1976, 60-plus pages, \$8.95

Paperbound

Reviewed by Stephen Riley

Roy Krenkel acknowledges his debt to Franklin Booth. After looking through I can understand why. (My respect for Krenkel has only increased as a result.) Booth was an American illustrator early in the 20th century. He worked exclusively in black and white and must surely rank as one of the greatest artists to ever hold a pen to paper.

The first thing one notices upon looking at Booth's work is...well, you don't notice just **one** thing. The man simply overwhelms you in awe. His use of line is nothing short of incredible. Making very little use of stipple or "dash" lines, Booth created living, breathing pictures in a tight yet sweeping manner, putting Charles Dana Gibson's mastery of the technique to shame in comparison. By varying the length and width of his pen strokes, Booth etched upon the paper clean, sharp delineations, crisp contrasts in tonality, patterns, texture, and most importantly, **believability**. Booth's work is uplifting, inspired -- he imparts a sense of spirituality to his subject matter as if it were not merely enough to make the drawing recognizable.

"...after turning the leaves of this collection, I am moved to remark that Nature probably intended Booth for a poet of the contemplative order, but, in a perverse mood, changed her mind and bade him exercise his talents in line rather than in rhyme and meter." This statement from the book's introduction by Meredith Nicholson probably comes as close as words can to describing where Booth's genius lay.

This volume features 60 pages of reproductions of aspects of Booth's work in a facsimile of a rare 1925 edition. It's all here -- hauntingly beautiful forests, quiet shady streets steeped in nostalgia, exquisite works of fantasy that rank with Finlay in conception and execution, flying cities in the night, mysterious scenes with looming dark emotion and inspiring vistas. One thing you can put into words regarding Booth is that art is not uninteresting!

Anyone who loves finely crafted art in a tradition seldom seen anymore deserves to have this book on their shelves. Run out, buy it, run home and settle into your favorite chair. And then lose yourself in one of the most beautiful private universes ever created on paper. Nostalgia Press deserves our thanks for making this volume available.

## NEWS NOTES

Our general policy is NOT to blurb items until we've received review copies, that way our readers know the items listed are NOW available. If you order material, please mention that you read about it in FC. That keeps the news flowing in and enables us to keep you posted on happenings in the fantasy field.

Dark Eagle (1202 East 13th Ave., Denver, Colo. 80218) has released a new high quality poster measuring 15 x 20" and printed on heavy 80 lb textured cover stock. The full color print is entitled "The Emperor's Leave-Taking" by Tim A. Conrad and features Michael Moorcock's Elric. This edition has been authorized by Moorcock and is limited to 500 signed and numbered copies signed by the artist at \$5 plus an un-numbered edition at \$3. Add 75c for postage on either edition.

Conrad's work is always straight out of a fantastic universe that could never exist. His men are too lean and grotesquely sad. His women are grotesquely beautiful. He's exactly the type of artist I enjoy. This Dark Eagle poster is Conrad at his best. . . he utilizes that impossible feeling of fantastic emotions that can only exist in the head and on the canvas of a talented artist. His subtle use of color with meaningful departures for emphasis creates an excellent wall piece for lovers of fantasy.

XENOPHILE Vol. 2, No. 12 was just issued in August and Nils Hardin's mag (Box 9660, St. Louis, Mo 63122) continues to be one of the outstanding aids in locating out of print AND in-print books for your collection. A sample copy costs \$1 or a 1st class sub (one year) in US or Canada is only \$12. Bulk rate in the US is only \$6 or 3rd class (Canada only) is \$8. Overseas airmail sub (one year) is \$18 or by Surface mail the cost is \$6.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW (formerly THE ALIEN CRITIC) edited by Dick Geis PO Box 11408, Portland, Ore 97211) has always been one of my favorite zines. Geis has that knack for controversy that makes every issue interesting reading. If you read last issue's interview with REH editors, you know that FC was heavily influenced by and patterned after Geis' SFR. In light of that I'm extremely pleased that Geis has seen fit to favorably pluf FC in the recent issue of GALAXY MAGAZINE. I consider that a real compliment from an editor—writer I admire. SFR is available at \$1.25 for a single copy, \$4 for one year or \$7 for a two year sub.

Scribners has two fantasy related 1977 calendars on the market. The one I've seen is the SCIENCE FICTION CALENDAR 1977 which includes 13 full color paintings by some of the biggest names in SF illustration: Frank R. Paul, Virgil Finlay, Hannes Bok and Howard V. Brown. The selection of artwork was made by noted SF historian Sam Moskowitz. The spiral bound (10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 13<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>) calendar retails for \$4.95.

The second calendar (which I haven't seen) is THE 1977 BEASTLY RIDDLE CALENDAR featuring twelve pages of riddles and full color illustrations of beasts both real and fanciful. It is also spiral bound (9 x 11") and retails for \$3.95. These should be available at your local bookstore.

WANTED: Any issue of THE HOWARD COLLECTOR. REH: LSF Nos. 1 and 2, FANTASY CROSSROADS No. 1, 4 — 5, 8 and the Fabian ALMURIC PORTFOLIO. Bob Bull, 315 Meadow Ct., Ft. Atkinson WI 53538.

I just received a copy of the 3rd mailing of The Pulp Heroes Amateur Press Association (PHAPA). The Official Editor is Lester Boutillier (2726 Castiglione St., New Orleans, La 70119). PHAPA is a quarterly apa with \$1 dues and a copy count of 20. Membership is at nine and there's room for more. For more information write Lester.

Simba Reproductions (Cliff Bird, 616 Livingston, Hurst, Texas 76053) has just issued a sorcery theme print (based upon a Frazzetta illustration) by Cliff Bird. This is an extremely nice

print available in black & white from Simba at \$1 postpaid.

THE FANTASY BOOK No. 1 (\$1.00 per copy from Larry Herndon, 1830 Highland Dr., Carrollton, TX 75066) is one of the most unique publications I've seen lately. It's produced in tabloid format on newsprint (a medium I usually dislike). TFB No. 1 includes two comic strip adaptations of fiction by Robert W. Chambers. The strips utilize concepts and themes from THE KING IN YELLOW by Chambers (1895). The first strip in this issue ("The Shadow in the Starstone") is excellent. The introduction of Hastur, Koriah, the King in Yellow and a myriad host of others is handled well. The script is tightly written and the art is generally far superior to most fan strip adaptations. My only negative observation is in regard to the use and non-use of the air-brush in adjacent panels where the same characters are pictured. It gives the story an odd variety. The second strip in this issue was wasted on me. I just couldn't get into it. "A Vision of the Black Stars" is an attempt to graphically picture action which is not easily rendered in a visual medium. It is an unsuccessful attempt BUT the first strip is well worth the cover price and I urge you to support TFB No. 1 with your \$1 to Larry Herndon.

SKULL-FACE OMNIBUS: VOLUME 2 (subtitle "The Valley of the Worm and Others") is now out from Panther Books Ltd., Frogmore, St. Albans, Herts AL2 2NF, England. The paperback volume sells from 60p (Canada \$2.50). Overseas buyers must add 20p for the 1st book and 10p for each additional one ordered from Panther. Volume 2 includes: "The Fire of Assurbanipal", "A Man-Eating Jeopard", "Worms of the Earth", "Kings of the Night", "The Valley of the Worm", "Skulls in the Stars", "Rattle of Bones", "The Hills of the Dead", "Wings in the Night", "Robert Ervin Howard: A Memoriam" by H. P. Lovecraft. "Which Will Scarcely Be Understood" and a "Forward" by August Derleth. The cover is mediocre at best. It's by Chris Achilleos and frankly doesn't compare with other recent covers he's done for British REH volumes.

I just received a price list (No. 1) from Star Treader Books, 4325 West 10th, Vancouver, B. C., Canada V6R 2H6. The list includes for sale items by HPL, REH, Derleth, Blackwood, Farley, Ellison, Moskowitz, etc. 145 books are offered for sale and Star Treader offers free search service with no obligation to buy.

Larry also mentioned the following in his letter: I've recently unearthed a box containing back issues of REMEMBER WHEN MAGAZINE, a fan-magazine produced by Nostalgia Inc. several years ago. While they last, I'll be selling these back-issues at \$1 each. Issues available include No. 3 (containing, among other items, an article on Ralph Milne Farley and his "Radio World" Novels), No. 4 (an in-depth examination of ERB, including the novels, comics, films, radio show, etc., and featuring a new, exclusive interview with Johnny Weissmuller), No. 5 (containing, among other items, a long WIZARD OF OZ feature), No. 9 (featuring material on THE MARK OF THE VAMPIRE, FLASH GORDON, THE WEREWOLF OF LONDON, & an article on sf shows on tv), and No. 12 (with KING KONG material as well as an in-depth examination of the fantasy film THE THIEF OF BAGDAD). Each issue contains much OTHER material... I just touched on the high-points, above.

Last issue, I listed those dealers who carried FC. I failed to complete the address of William Scoville. His full address is 1124 N. Jefferson Street, Arlington, Va 22205.

Sphere Books (England) are planning new editions of the Conan REH titles. They'll be out in January 1977 and differ from previous volumes in that they'll have white instead of black bindings.

Neville Spearman Ltd. (PO Box 75, Normandy House, St. Helier, Jersey, Channel Isles, UK) are issuing a hardback volume titled simply **WEIRD TALES** for 3½ pounds. It'll include work by CAS, REH, HPL, Whitehead, Leiber, Quinn, Kuttner, Bloch, Wellman and several others. The book is a facsimile reproduction of the actual pages from **WEIRD TALES**.

Roy Squires (1745 Kenneth Road, Glendale, CA 91201) has announced the publication of **THE MARRIAGE OF SIR JOHN de MANVILLE**, a single poem by Frank Belknap Long. The poem was first published in Long's collection **A MAN FROM GENOA AND OTHER POEMS** back in 1926. Squires' small press publication is a 50th Anniversary edition retailing for \$6.50. I don't know the print run, but Squires seldom prints over 200-300 copies. All of his publications are hand press printed, numbered and published on fine quality papers. If you've not experienced truly fine printing, send off for **SIR JOHN**. The discerning collector will NOT be disappointed.

Chuck Miller (239 N. 4th Street, Columbia, Pa 17512) has published a set ten different fantasy theme Holiday Greeting cards illustrated by Bot Roda. The black & white cards measured 5 by 5¾ inches on good card stock. There's something in the collection for everyone: Star Trek fans, the Lovecraftian, the S & S fan, Burroughs fans and the general fantasy fan. My favorites include the Barsoomian Christmas card that reads "On Barsoom it's not easy to find something green with limbs that is taller than 8 feet. . .so we borrowed Tars Tarkus for an evening" or another that states "Merry Christmas" and "Have a Merry Christmas or I'll. . .Check one: a. burn your village b. plunder your temple c. rape your women d. stave in your skull e. snap your spine f. splatter your guts g. all of the above h. none of

the above." Well you get the general idea. They're clever, well drawn and ideally suited for the fantasy fan. You may order a box of ten different cards (one of each design) for \$5.50 (including postage) or order 10 of one design in a box for \$5.50 postpaid. If you want to see a flyer with pictures of all ten designs send Chuck an SASE.

**DARK HORIZONS** No. 14 (Summer 1976) is now out. It is the official journal of the British Fantasy Society. Membership in BFS entitles the member to a year's sub to **DARK HORIZONS** plus a year sub to the **BFS Bulletin** with news from the continent & America. Membership is 2 pounds or \$6 and checks should be made out to Brian Mooney, Secretary, British Fantasy Society, 447A Porters Ave., Dagenham, Essex, RM9 4ND, England. DH No. 14 is a special tribute issue to Brian Lumley. It includes a bibliography, fiction by Lumley and an interview. LOCs, articles and artwork by Fabian, Pitts, and the reincarnation of Virgil Finlay (Stephen Jones) fill out the issue. I strongly suggest you join this fine organization.

**MACABRE** No. 13 (from Joseph Payne Brennan, 26 Fowler Street, New Haven, Conn. 06515) is still available for \$1.25. This verse magazine includes work by W Paul Ganley, Brennan, and others plus a short fiction piece. **MACABRE** deserves your support. Fantasy verse is a very precarious portion of the genre. There aren't too many practitioners because the market for verse is so slim. Help out a dying art form. OK?!

Hyperion Press Inc. (45 Riverside Ave., Westport, Conn. 06880) has issued a series of books composing the Classics of Science Fiction: Series II. Works in this series include landmark fiction by John W. Campbell Jr., Erle Cox, George Allan England, William Hope Hodgson, Thomas McClary, John Munro, H. G. Wells, S Fowler Wright, Philip Wylie and others. The books are available in both paperback (quality sized books) or cloth bound editions. Sam Moskowitz is the editor of the series. His criteria for selecting the nineteen titles was 1) the work had to be either long out of print or hard to find, 2) must have been unusual or significant in its own right, and 3) it had to be literate or highly readable and entertaining. The volumes range in price from \$3.95 to \$6.95 for the paperback editions to \$10.50 to \$16 for the cloth editions. A sampling of titles include **CLOAK OF AESIR**, **OUT OF THE SILENCE**, **THE BOATS OF "GLEN CARRIG"**, **THE GHOST PIRATES**, **THE NIGHTLAND**, **SAURUS**, **REBIRTH**, **THE SEA LADY**, **THE IRON STAR** and **THE HOUSE ON THE BORDERLAND** to name a few. Write Hyperion Press for a complete listing of books and prices.

**ART & STORY** No. 2 is now out and available from editor James Denney (32692 Black Mountain Road, Tollhouse, Ca 93667) for \$2. No. 2 includes a short tale by C. S. Lewis titled "Ministering Angels" (the story of the first men and women on Mars), the continuation of Denney's own excellent strip "The Black Star" (a combination SF, heroic fantasy strip with a flavor of Tolkein about it), an article on **SPACE 1999** (with plenty of photos), a new story by Alan Dean Foster (illoes by Clyde Caldwell), part two of L. Frank Baum's "The Enchanted Isle of Yew" and an article on Arthur C. Clark which touches on the scientist/fictioneer's views on everything from SST to "Why Explore Space?". It's a good solid issue for fantasy — SF fans.

**DARK PHANTASMS** No. 1, Summer, 1976, VW Studios, 1515 Argonne Rd., Tallahassee, Fla 32303, contains "The Black Hound of Death" by REH, a comic adaption of Wagner's "In the Lair of Ys1s1", a Kane portfolio by Bill Black and a few other ditties (editorials, plugs, etc). \$3.50, covers by Krenkel, Fabian illoes to the REH tale, 48 pages, 8½ x 11".

This is put out by Bill Whitcomb and really is a rather nice publication. The "Ys1s1" adaption is average or better visually



"DORIAN  
HAWKMOON"  
D. HERRING  
12-75

and the diverse hands who composed it have done an exceptional job on putting into the comic format, a very difficult piece of fiction. Fabian's interior two illoes are very nice indeed. He's captured the mood of the fiction very well. Wes Smith and Hoberg have collaborated on a comic strip titled "Arbada-Fetex". The graphics are adequate and considering that I've pretty much been turned off by S & S strips of late...that's sort of a compliment. I hate continued adventures but this one does seem to be ripe with interesting possibilities.

**SIMBA** No. 1 (Cliff Bird, Simba Reproductions, 616 Livingston, Hurst, Texas 76053) has just appeared with a gorgeous Steve Fabian cover. The 46 page (8½ x 11") magazine is printed offset with wrap around binding and costs \$3. The bulk of the mag is a presentation of Bird's "The Sands of Nakhlah"...the adventures of Simba. The story is amply illustrated as well as written by Cliff. Besides Cliff and Fabian, other artistic contributors include Arnold Fenner, Ken Raney, William Black, Clyde Caldwell, Russ Manning and Paul Schliesser. Charles Saunders has contributed a short (illustrated) article "Imaginary Beasts of Africa". One very interesting development is that Andrew J Offutt has edited **SIMBA** No. 1 for Cliff. Andrew has written a very interesting and very personal introduction to this issue. I think you'll enjoy this mag from Simba Reproductions.

**PHANTASY DIGEST** (Hall Publications, Box 326, Aberdeen, Md 21001) is one of the newest additions to the fantasy genre mags. This initial issue costs \$4 for an 88 page (5½ x 8½") mag. Reproduction wise and binding wise this is a step in the right direction for Hall Pubs. Their previous glue bound zines were a more expensive form of binding but less utilitarian than the simple staple binding now used. Binding is secondary to contents of course. This issue includes "Graveyard Rats" by Robert E. Howard, "The Place of Stones" an Imaro origin tale by Charles Saunders, "The Final Solution" by Wayne Hooks, plus fiction and verse by John Bredon. Andrew J Offutt also has made available in this issue an article which was to have prefaced his **THE UNDYING WIZARD** published by Zebra. News notes, plugs and review of Lin Carter's "World's End" novels fill out the issue. Artists represented this issue include Caldwell, Jim Pitts, Gene Day, John Stewart and David Reisman.

**MIDNIGHT SUN** No. 4 published by Gary Hoppenstand (2014 Mackenzie Drive, Columbus, Ohio 43220) has appeared. This 48 page (5½ x 8½") zine sells for \$2.50 or a year (6 issues) sub may be had for \$12.50. This issue features work by Basil Copper, Richard Lyon, C. L. Grant, Joseph Payne Brennan and artwork by Andrew Smith, Bob Love, T. J. Buckingham.

**MARVEL WORLD** No. 1 (1116 S Jefferson, Olympia, Wash. 98501) is really a comic strip zine meaning it includes primarily comic stories and an emphasis on Marvel comic titles. It does include an article on the Marvel **CONAN THE BARBARIAN** comic. The article is pretty old hat if you've heard most of the criticism aimed at Marvel. No price listed on the zine.

Reed S. Andrus (226 E. 4800 So. Murray, Utah 84107) publishes a personal-zine with SF--fantasy overtones called **HARBINGER**. No. 4 is available for \$1.25 or contribution. The zine includes verse, comic strips, fiction, reviews, LOCs and some nice art (notably by Rick McCollum and a nice cover by Gray Lyda). Give it a try, then write Reed an LOC. He'd love to hear from ya!

**NYCTALOPS** Volume 2, No. 4--5 (whole number 11--12) is now in print from Harry Morris Jr. (500 Wellesley S. E., Albuquerque, NM 87106) for \$4. This 126 page (8½ x 11") volume is a stupendous bargain. Compare page size, cost and printing quality with ANYTHING else on the market (including **FC**) and you'll see that Morris has produced a real bargain.

**NYCTALOPS** is not a bargain just because of page count. Those pages include some of the finest graphics (by Riley, Tiani, Pitts, Cox, Wenske, Stewart, Huber and many others) plus fiction, verse and articles related to HPL and the weird fantasy tradition. Darrell Schweitzer conducts an excellent interview with Frank Belknap Long, E Hoffman Price wrote "A Letter in Regards Lovecraft", plus, LOCs, reviews and a great deal more. Beyond what I've listed, the greatest portion of **NYCTALOPS** No. 11--12 is a series of articles, fiction and verse about or by Donald Sidney-Fryer. Fryer is a poet and gentleman who is past due for this type of recognition. The poet himself has written (and appear in this issue) "The Cosmic Troubadours", "The Spenser Experiment", "A Defense and Illustration of One Poetic Method", "Arthur Machen and King Arthur: Sovereigns of Dream" and "The Atlantis Fragments". I heartily recommend this most recent issue of a distinguished journal from Silver Scarab Press.

I bet you never expected to see a blurb for **MUSCLE MAG INTERNATIONAL** in **FC**! But here it is. Vol. 2, number 2 includes an article titled "The Tarzan Blueprints" by Denie. This should be of interest to Burroughs fans since the article is illustrated by sixteen different photos of the various actors to portray Tarzan on the silver screen. The same issue includes an article titled "The Steve Reeves Cult". All of this is approached from the Muscle Mag standpoint but makes for interesting reading and background on some giants in the fantasy film genre. Each issue has featured an article regarding men like Reeves, Reg Park and Gordon Scott, i.e. the greats and the movies that featured them as Hercules, Goliath, Samson, Thief of Bagdad and Morgon the Pirate. The mag is available from Robert Kennedy, c--o Health Culture Publications, Unit 1, 270 Rutherford Rd. South, Brampton, Ontario, Canada L6W 3K7. Cost is \$1.25.

**SPACE & TIME** No. 38 is in print and includes fan fiction by Christopher Kelly, Ira H Herman, and E R Lovick. The bimonthly mag is edited by Gordon Linzner (138 West 70th Street, Apt. 4-B, New York NY 10023) and a single issue may be had for \$1. A six issue sub runs \$5.00. This issue includes a cover by Gene Day, and interior illoes by Tim Lynch, S. Scott Sater, Allen Koszowski and Jim Garrison.

Steven R Johnson (16385 Two Bar Road, Boulder Creek, CA 95006) and Hendrik Sharpies (Serendipity Corner, 1401 S.E. Division Street, Portland, Ore. 97202) have issued **THE BRUNNER MYSTIQUE** at \$4 per copy and available from either co-editor. The booklet runs 36 (8½ x 11") pages on coated stock. Both front and back covers are full color reproductions of Brunner work. In addition to an interview with Brunner, a Brunner bibliography (which includes comic book appearances, fanzine work, book covers and art prints), the booklet also includes (exclusive of covers) 35 pieces of artwork by Frank. It's a beautiful booklet for Brunner fans!

**ERB-DOM** No. 88 and No. 89 are now out from Caz (that's Cazedessus Jr., PO Box 507, St Francisville, La 70775). Issue No. 89 contains the astonishing news that C. E. Cazedessus Jr (Caz for short) will no longer continue editing one of the finest magazine around. **ERB-DOM** No. 90 will be Caz's last issue. No. 88 contains the usual excellent fare for **ERB-DOM** including photos from **AT THE EARTH'S CORE** (movie with McClure, Munro and Cushing), color Tarzan strips, reviews and articles. Caz goes in for lots of artwork, too. No. 89 begins a huge Burroughs sale. In addition to giving up **ERB-dom**, after over 20 years of collecting, Caz is selling his entire collection including several original manuscripts by **ERB**. No. 89 also includes lots of art and a 1968 proposal by Star Trek's Gene Roddenberry on how to make a Tarzan movie. In issue No. 89, Caz states: **ERB-DOM** will be sold to the highest bidder after the publication of

No. 90 or it will stop there. . .Whoever takes over this magazine will get all applicable files, artwork and over 1000 back issues with which to keep up the momentum." It will be sad to see Caz leave the **ERB** scene, but I do hope someone carries on with **ERB-dom**. Nos. 88 and 89 are available at \$2.50 each

**COMPASS** is published by Tony Scialis, 1100 Cutspring Rd., Stratford, CT 06497 and is available at 12 issues (monthly) for \$3. The issue I have (vol. 1, No. 2, Oct 11-Nov. 7) is 8 pages (8½ x 11") and deals primarily with comic book news including an interview with artist George Perez. This issue of **COMPASS** does include an article on **SPACE 1999** also. Tony writes that he's interested in a columnist on sword & sorcery or fantasy. Anyone out there willing to help?

**BLACKLITE** No. 1 is a new zine out from John DiPrete (PO Box 8214, Cranston, RI 02920). The 32 page (8½x11") mag sells for \$1. Gene Day has done a SF cover (space ship and astronauts) and a very interesting comic strip titled "Starlorn the philosopher". No. 1 includes fiction and reviews, columns, etc by DiPrete, Darrell Schweitzer, AK Molnar, Jon Inouye and others. Art credits include Ken Raney, Mark Gelotte, etc.

Issue No. 2 is also available with a continuation of the Gene Day strip, fiction by Charles Saunders (of Imaro fame), Gordon Linzner, etc. Either issue is available for \$1 each.

**GALILEO** is a new SF mag available from 339 Newbury Street, Boston, MA 02115. The premiere issue includes work by Arthur C Clarke, Ray Bradbury, Robert Chilson, Andrew Whyte, Ruth Berman and several others. Tom Barber has done two extremely nice color covers for this issue. This issue shows a great deal of promise and certainly should be supported. Single copy price is \$1.50, 4 issue sub, only \$4 or 10 issues at \$9.

**CARTOONNEWS** is billed as an education publication for students, pros and fans. Issue No. 11 is before me and retails for \$1 from Bill Sheridan, 330 Myrtle St., Redwood City, CA 94062. No. 11 includes "The Cartoonist and Murphy's Law", "The Face Behind the Laugh", "C.W. Kahles and Hairbreadth Harry", plus spotlights on the editorial cartoons of several contemporary cartoonists. One section deals with "Cartoonists on the World Economy. Very interesting mag even for non-fans.

**SIGN OF THE SALAMANDER** by Karl Edward Wagner is the first booklet in the John Chance vs Dread series. It's new pulp-villain adventure by the creator of Kane. **SIGN** is available from Gary Hoppenstand, 2014 Mackenzie Dr., Columbus, Ohio 43220 for \$1.98.

**QUANTUM** is one heck of a nifty little zine. Issue No. 4 features a very nice cover by Mike Streff. David Kyle, the editor of **A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF SCIENCE FICTION**, is interviewed. LOCs, fanzine reviews, fiction and book reviews fill out the issue. **QUANTUM** has six editors, my understanding is that everything printed must be approved by a majority of the editors. Knowing human nature, I'm surprised they've got to issue No. 4! Single issues are \$1 while a six issue sub is only \$5. Recommended.

De Danann Press has issued **CELTIA: A Collection of Posters and Drawings in the Celtic Style** by Jim FitzPatrick. **CELTIA** was reviewed very favorably in the last issue of **FC**. It's truly a breathtaking collection of prints by Northern Ireland's most outstanding young artist. To give you an idea of FitzPatrick's style, the cover of this issue of **FANTASY CROSSROADS** is from the **CELTIA** collection. The soft bound volume measures 8½ x 11¾" and has a color cover that is truly beautiful beyond words. Stygian Isle Press has purchased copies of **CELTIA** which we now are making available to our readers. No other dealer has

them in stock in the USA. Cost is \$5.50 (no discount on this item). We recommend you add 40c for insurance. We are not responsible for un-insured packages. Oh, one final note, one of the prints folds out of the book to a size of 15½ x 11¾". A second fold out poster measures 23¾ x 11¾". The book can easily be taken apart so the prints may be framed. If interested, write us today for your copy.



**THE DIVERSIFIER** is a bi-monthly fanzine of fan fiction, verse and art. Pro contributors are not uncommon either. Recent issues include work by Steve Fabian, Gene Day, Gary Winnick, Carl Potts, A B Clingan, Jon Inouye, Richard Tierney, Vic Kostrikin, Wayne Hooks, C C Clingan, E C Tubb, Brian Crist, Greg Nicoll, Neal Wilgus, Gordon Linzner, Nicola Cuti, John DiPrete, Robert Bloch, David Gerrold, L Sprague De Camp, Donald Sidney-Fryer, E Hoffman Price, William Conder, Robert Eber, Sutton Breiding, Mark Gelotte, A. B. Cox and lots more. If you enjoy fiction and verse in the S & S, weird or fantasy traditions, then try **THE DIVERSIFIER**, \$1.25 per copy of six issues for \$5.75 from PO Box 2078, Oroville, Ca 95965.

When W Paul Ganley found himself swamped with "good" material (fiction, verse) for **WEIRDBOOK** and realized he'd never be able to afford to get it all published via offset, he began a new mimeo publication called **WEIRDBOOKLET**. **EERIE COUNTRY** is the first in the **WEIRDBOOKLET SERIES**. 300 copies of this issue were printed and are available at \$2.50 from Box 35, Amherst Branch, Buffalo, NY 14226. The 82 page (plus covers) booklet includes work by a great many unknowns, plus familiar people like Brian Lumley, Joseph Payne Brennan, William Scott Home, and Darrell Schweitzer. There's a lot of good solid fiction and verse in this issue. Depending upon buyer reaction and sales, Paul will continue the series. I suggest you vote for its continuation by sending Paul \$2.50 today.

I've just received a copy of **TITAN**, a British mimeo-zine. It includes two fanzine review columns ("Zines Across the Water" and "Home Ground"), LOCs, a listing of new books (July 76 to December 76) and a lot of chatter on British fandom and cons. For the British fan, I'm sure it's a very informative zine. Americans would probably feel a little left out and lost. **TITAN** is available for 1/25p.

THE ROBERT E HOWARD UNITED PRESS ASSOCIATION (REHUPA) has a new Official Editor (OE). It is Brian Earl Brown, 55521 Elder Rd., Mishawaka, Ind. 46544. REHUPA is one of two apas (amateur press associations) dealing with the work of Robert E Howard. The second is THE HYPERBORIAN LEAGUE which also concerns itself with the life and works of Clark Ashton Smith. THL's OE is Don Herron, but since Don is in transit to a new home in California, Ben Indick (428 Sagamore Ave., Teaneck, NJ 07666) is acting as temporary OE. If interested in THL then contact Ben. Both apas require members to write and print a contribution which is then sent to the OE for collation with contributions from other members. The total package is stapled together and each member received a copy of the mailing. Members must pay yearly dues (\$2-\$3) and print enough copies for all members to receive one (both THL and REHUPA require 40 copies of each member's zine contribution.) Write Brian or Ben for more info.

**SOUTH OF THE MOON** is a zine which lists all apas currently operating. It indicates who the OE is, minimum activity (minac), deadlines, dues, etc. for all apas. A sample copy of SOTM cost 50c from Andrew Sigel, 424 Greenleaf St., Evanston, Ill. 60202.

**SWASHBUCKLE** No. 1 is out from Don Herrig, PO Box 411, Pottstown, Pa 19464. The zine is edited by Bruce D. Griffiths. **SWASHBUCKLE** is a comic strip zine devoted solely to the Heroic fantasy or S&S genre. The artwork and scripting ranges from average to excellent. I think this zine deserves support because of the potential it holds. If you enjoy S & S, pirate adventure, etc try it. Future issues promise work by Jihm Rohn and FC regular Jim Coplin. Single issue price is \$1.50.



Byron Roark (2951 S. 34th Street, Kansas City, Ks 66106), one half of the former team that produced **REH: LONESTAR FICTIONEER** is carrying on the tradition of LSF but in a new mag titled **PALANTIR**. There will no longer be a LSF, rather two mags will be published. Roark will do **PALANTIR** and Arnold Fenner (Box 186, Shawnee Mission, Ks 66201) will publish—edit **CHACAL**.

**PALANTIR** No. 1 is due out around the middle of February 1977 and will include "Hawks Over Egypt" by REH and illoed by Randy Spurgin, "To All Sophisticates" by REH; an article on the new Berkley Conan books by Karl Edward Wagner (editor of the new series); a five plate portfolio based on "The Scarlet Citadel" by Jeff Easley, an article on the new REH-oriented collaborations (illoed by Jim Pitts) by Dave McFerrar; and artwork by Steranko, the Severins, Hank Jankus and others. Single issue price will be \$3.50 for the 48 to 52 page mag.

Darrell Schweitzer is in the process of gathering material for a S & S humor anthology titled **BLUNDERING BARBARIAN TALES**. The anthology will be published by TK Graphics and pays a 50—50 pro rata split of royalties. Darrell is seeking manuscripts and would especially like to see a good solid Conan parody and a first rate parody of **THE WORM OUROBOROS**. Contact him at 113 Deepdale Rd, Strafford, Pa 19087.

**NIGHTSHADE** No. 3 is available from Ken Amos (7005 Bedford Lane, Louisville, Ky 40222) for \$1.50. It includes Karl Edward Wagner's updated bibliography and biography of Manly Wade Wellman. Also a short interview with Manly. **NIGHTSHADE** contains other material of interest to the fantasy fan.

I don't have price or content information, BUT I do know that Arnold Fenner (PO Box 186, Shawnee Mission, Ks 66201) has delivered **CHACAL** No. 2 to the printers. If it's half as good as No. 1, don't miss it. Fenner will also be bringing out a final issue of **REH: LONE STAR FICTIONEER**. Send him an SASE for more information.

I'm a newcomer to the work of Lord Dunsany but I'm learning to love (and almost understand) his delightful, insightful style of short fiction via **TALES OF THREE HEMISPHERES** published by George Scithers' Owlswick Press (Box 8243, Philadelphia, Pa 19101). The book of short stories and sketches (fictional not illustrative) was first published in 1919 sans illustrations. This is the first reprinting and the first illustrated edition with Tim Kirk doing the honors. Kirk's style seems so appropriate to the text. It's a delightful book. Scithers seems to put a lot of care and careful deliberation into his book-making. It's a finely wrought addition to any book shelf and all for only \$9. For Lovcraftians an added treat is a biographical sketch of Dunsany written by HPL and reprinted in **TALES** from a 1944 Arkham House volume.

Donald M. Grant (West Kingston, Rhode Island 02892) is one of the foremost publishers of quality fantasy hardcovers today. This issue includes an extensive interview with Grant plus reviews of several of his current in print books including **THE DEVIL IN IRON** \$15.00, **THE LAST CELT** \$20.00, **VIRGIL FINLAY: AN ASTROLOGICAL SKETCHBOOK** \$15.00 and **UPON THE WINDS OF YESTERDAY** (George Barr artbook) \$25.

Also available from Grant or his distributor (F & SF Book Co., PO Box 415, Staten Island, NY 10302) are: **OUT OF THE STORM** by William Hope Hodgson with Fabian DJ and interiors at \$10, **ROGUES IN THE HOUSE** by Robert E Howard and part of the Deluxe Conan matched set of books at \$15, **TO QUEBEC AND THE STARS** at \$15 and **BLACK VULMEA'S VENGEANCE** at \$15.

**TO QUEBEC** is a 318 pp. hardcover book edited by L Sprague de Camp which includes a variety of non-fiction works by Howard Phillips Lovecraft. It's a treasure trove for Lovecraftians who wish to delve more into the thoughts and opinions of this master of horror literature. The works reprinted are from obscure fan presses, newspapers that HPL contributed articles to, and the like.

**BLACK VULMEA'S VENGEANCE** includes three pirate tales by Robert E. Howard. The three are: the title story, "Isle of Pirate's Doom" (reprinted from the George Hamilton OP booklet of the same title) and "Swords of the Red Brotherhood" (never before published). The title tale is reprinted from a 1938 issue of **GOLDEN FLEECE**.

"Swords" runs 25,000 words long according to **THE LAST CELT** and was edited by de Camp into a Conan tale titled "The Black Stranger" so it may seem familiar to some Conan-philes.

Stygian Isle Press (Box 147, Lamoni, Iowa 50140) has several items still in print though **FANTASY CROSSROADS** Nos. 1-9 are not among those items. **OMNIUMGATHUM** is still available at \$5 for the nearly 70 pages of fantasy verse and illustration. Well over 2200 lines of verse is included by such notables as REH, HPL, CAS, Peake, Bok, Hodgson, Whitehead, de Camp, Munn, Long, Moorcock, Lumley, Campbell, Norton, Zelazny, van Vogt, etc. The booklet includes (in addition to 45 authors and 125 poems) artwork by Fabian, Bok, Day, Caldwell, Easley, Riley, Vess, Mohr, Huber and Englum. This volume has been praised as "in the tradition of Derleth", "a volume that is so outstanding in content that even its certain high value as a collector's item ceases to seem important" (Frank Belknap Long) and lauded as "representative of the field of contemporary fantasy" (Donald Sidney-Fryer). Print run 1000, order today.

**RUNES OF AHRH EIH ECHE** is still available at \$2.95. It is the largest collection of letters (correspondence) by Robert E. Howard yet to be collected between two covers. The 1000 print run booklet is illustrated by Randall Spurgin with an REH oriented alphabet. Reading this booklet has been called "a moving experience". It certainly provides added insight into Howard the man.

The status of **ERASED FROM EXILE** is uncertain. Over 100 copies were returned to the printer with defects. The book is OP if those copies are not replaced. Send us an SASE for more information.

**FANTASY CROSSWINDS** Nos. 1 and 2 were published in January 1977. Nos. 3 and 4 were promised but are late, please have patience with us. Nos. 1 and 2 are now OP, print runs were 300 each. Print runs on the next two issues will be respectively 400 and 500 copies. You may still order Nos. 3 and 4 at \$1.50 each or \$3 for both.

Many new projects are in the works but we're keeping mum until they're in print. Stygian Isle Press will be finishing up the **ALMURIC PORTFOLIO** by Fabian, hopefully by late March 1977. The portfolio is sold out.

One final bit of news: I am now the US agent for the British Fantasy Society. See the blurb elsewhere in News Notes regarding **DARK HORIZONS** the BFS publication which members get along with their membership. Membership costs \$8 in US funds and may be remitted to Jonathan Bacon, Box 147, Lamoni, Iowa 50140. I strongly urge support of the BFS. In return you get an outstanding magazine of fiction, verse and news. I'm of course speaking of **DARK HORIZONS**. Send your money in today.



## WARGAMING

I'm a real novice when it comes to wargaming, but I'm in the process of learning. As I try new games, I'll pass the results on to you.

To begin with, during the month of January 1977 I conducted (and am currently conducting) a non-course at Graceland titled Wargaming. The purpose was to find students who enjoyed complex games and work with them at learning several wargames.

We began with **DUNGEON** by David Meggery and published by TSR Games (PO Box 756, Lake Geneva, Wisc. 53147). It's a fairly simple game where in prizes are guarded by monsters which must be fought and defeated in order to win the prize. A player may enter as (in order of strength from most powerful to least) a wizard, a super-hero, a hero or an elf. The less powerful players require fewer prizes (gold pieces) to win than do the more powerful players. Each monster card indicates what each player must roll on two dice in order to defeat the monster and claim the prize. Wizards have spells to use, Elfs can get thru secret doors easier than other players, etc. The monsters and prizes get bigger at the lower levels of the Dungeon. Of course players have limits on how deep in the Dungeon they can go based upon how powerful they are. If a player fights a monster and loses he may be required to lose a turn, drop a prize or be killed and removed from the game based upon a "Combat Losing Table". As I said before, the game is very simple but that doesn't mean it's not enjoyable. The real fun begins in exercising options in the game. In fact we began using "Additional Rules for Advanced Play" before we finished our first game. Such things as ambushing, wandering monsters, re-entry, etc., made the game more lively. The rules say a 10 year old or older can play. I believe it. This is a good starting point for the wargamer headed for more complex action. **DUNGEON** is a boardgame for 1-12 players and sells for \$10.95.

Another company with more of a fanish flair is Flying Buffalo Inc. (PO Box 1467, Scottsdale, AZ 85252). We'll be discussing

their games in later installments, but if interested drop them an SASE for a listing of current games, etc.

I'd like to introduce you to a new friend: Charles Anshell (1226 North Rossell Ave., Oak Park, Ill 60302). Charles handles a great many items related to Wargaming. His first major catalog is in the works and can be had for \$2.50 (refundable off your first order of \$20 or more). The catalog will list over 100 manufacturers including games, accessories and miniatures from the areas of fantasy, S & S, SF and historical wargaming.

Hopefully my next installment will be longer and include material on **LANKHMAR**, **TUNNELS AND TROLLS** and **DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS**.

The Summer 1976 issue of **MACABRE** published by Michael Ambrose (9913 Minuteman St., El Paso, Texas 79924) is available for 60c. (no subs). This issue includes a review comparison by Mark S. Geston of the Willis Conover and Sprague de Camp biographies of Howard Phillips Lovecraft. Also Joel Harbin has contributed "Origin Point" (fiction) and Reginald Brane has contributed "A Fable". In the verse vein, the editor has included fragments from "The Old Path" by C. T. Thackeray. Incantations (editorial) and a review of Mark Geston's **LORDS OF THE STARSHIP** fill out the 14 page issue. Ambrose has indicated the next issue will be out in March, 1977.

**WHISPERS** No. 9 (December 1976) is now available from Stuart Schiff (Box 904, Chapel Hill NC 27514) for \$2 per copy. It features one of the eeriest Fabian covers I've yet seen coupled with a truly macabre back cover by Lee Brown Coye. **WHISPERS** continues to be the leading magazine in the area of weird or horror literature and this issue is no exception to the trend toward perfection. H Warner Munn has contributed a short piece titled "HPL: A Reminiscence", Dirk Mosig furthers the Lovecraftian studies with a piece on HPL and his fiction called "Myth-Maker". This issue contains an outstanding assortment of fiction by R. A. Lafferty, Lee Weinstein, Paul Bond, William Nolan, Dennis Etchison and David Campton. Mike Garcia has contributed a truly erotic visual portfolio based upon HPL's fiction. Lovecraft I'm sure has turned over in his victorian grave. **WHISPERS** is rounded out with news notes, editorial comments, verse by Gahan Wilson ("Bad Baby") and the usual fine selection of illustrators. Pick up a copy if you haven't already. You'll enjoy a great deal of reading pleasure from this magazine.

Stellar Z Productions (4608 St. Nazaire Road, Pensacola, Fla 32505) has just issued **FROM THE DEEP AND BEYOND** a 48 page booklet containing a series of three short stories by Gregory Nicholl. The three are "From the Deep", "The Hammerhead Horror" and "The Night The DOLPHIN Went Down". Nicholl admits a Lovecraftian influence and his fiction shows it. \$1.50 per copy plus 50c postage. Very interesting reading.

**FANTASIED** is an 8 page (8½x11") offset newsletter style zine from Peter Gaffney (RD No. 1 Campville Rd., Endicott, NY 13760) It's more SF oriented but does include material in related fantasy areas, such as L. D. Fleckenstein's article "Science Fiction vs Fantasy". The rest of **FANTASIED** No. 4 includes comments on "Hard SF", definition of SF, book reviews, etc. No price listed, send an SASE for information.

**THE GALAXY OF FANDOM** No. 2 (Oct-Nov 1976) is geared towards fantasy and SF films. Articles cover Caroline Munro (who has appeared in the Dr. Phibes movies, **THE GOLDEN VOYAGE OF SINBAD**, **CAPTAIN KRONOS: VAMPIRE HUNTER**, **AT THE EARTH'S CORE** and other fantasy-horror

films), Space 1999, **LOGAN'S RUN** plus artwork by Frank Brunner, Alfredo Alcala and some fanzine reviews. Available for 75c plus 25c postage from Christopher Simmons, 607 S. Pacific Coast Hiway, Redondo Beach, CA 90277.

Dark Eagle (see address in first paragraph of News Notes) has issued another finely reproduced Frank Brunner poster. **BELLADONNA** is a beautiful blond haired lass who I'd hate to tangle with (especially with that sword in her hand). This full color poster measures 17 x 22" and is printed on heavy textured cover stock. **BELLADONNA** has never before been published. There is a signed edition of 500 copies (numbered too) selling for \$5 plus 75c postage. The unsigned edition sells for \$3 plus 75c postage. All posters shipped in heavy tube mailers. **DARK EAGLE** also has an **ELRIC** poster available by Bob Gould and a **CONAN** poster by Barry Smith. Send 'em an SASE for price information.

I just received a copy of the HJMR Co. Newsletter (PO Box 308, North Miami, Fla 33161). It lists a great many SF and fantasy titles including copies of **AMAZING**, Arkham House books (OP), **SKULL-FACE** by Robert E. Howard (at \$50) and many more items. Send them a note and request the SF edition of their newsletter.

Lucile Coleman (PO Box 610813 North Miami, Fla 33161) just sent me her price list. It includes OP books and includes material from the fantasy genre and mainstream works. Send her 24c for her list.

**OUTWORLDS** No. 28-29 is available for \$2.50 from William Bowers (PO Box 2521, North Canton, Ohio 44720). **OUTWORLDS** is always a looked for zine and this issue is no exception. It starts out right with a Fabian cover and continues with Bowers' comments on being a BNF (Big Name Fan). Stuart Gilson contributes a fascinating portfolio (my favorite being "An Angel of Hell Peering..."). Further features include "The Fan-Writer Symposium", an interview with Robert Shea, some delightful artistic renditions—cartoons—potpourri by Derek Carter, "Opinionation" by andrew j offutt and lots more. Very fine issue. . . Buy!

T-K Graphics (PO Box 1951, Baltimore, Md 21203) has just issued **ESSAYS LOVECRAFTIAN** edited by Darrell Schweitzer and illustrated by Richard Huber. Huber's work first appeared in **FANTASY CROSSROADS** and I'm pleased to see him at home in another publisher's enterprises. He's a fine artist who deserves more than occasional exposure. It's hard to pinpoint "favorites" in his illustrations for the volume. I truly love his "Esoteric Order of Dagon" piece on page 57. . . I just wonder if that's supposed to be Scott Connors or Dirk Mosig (just kiddin' fellas). The illo on page 67 (opposite George Wetzel's "Genesis of the Cthulhu Mythos") is also superb. Of course no one buys for just the illustrations. Schweitzer has assembled a fantastic array of articles on Lovecraft and his Cthulhu Mythos. Pieces include HPL's letter on "Story-Writing", "A Literary Copernicus" by Fritz Leiber, Dirk Mosig's article: "The Four Faces of the Outsider" plus work by Bloch, Schweitzer, Marion Bradley, Richard Tierney, Robert Weinberg, Ben Indick, Bill Wallace and many more. Only \$3.95 for a real gem for Lovecraftians. . . novices and pros alike.

**TWO-GUN RACONTEUR** No. 3 is in print from Damon Sasser (PO Box 21278, Houston, Texas 77026). Only 500 copies at \$1.75 each have been printed. This issue includes artwork by Fabian, Ken Raney, Don Herron, David Parsons, Jamilkowski, Tom Foster, Arnie Fenner and a VERY nice portfolio by Gene Day based upon REH's "The Moon of Skulls". This issue also includes Howard fiction ("The Devil's Joker"), LOCs, "REH and the Ring" part one by Dennis McHaney, a comparison of the REH Conan vs the de Camp-Carter-Nyborg Conan in Don

Herron's article "Conan vs Conantics", and "The Rare Ones" and article by Charles Melvin on REH hardback books.

For Lovecraftian's, it might be noted that **THE YEAR'S BEST HORROR STORIES: SERIES 4** out from DAW Books (\$1.25) includes a six page article by E Hoffman Price titled "The Lovecraft Controversy-Why?". It compares the de Camp and Frank B Long biographies of HPL.

**VOID** is an Australian semi-prozine which features fiction in the fantasy, S & S, horror literature vein. The US agent for **VOID** is Darrell Schweitzer (113 Deepdale Rd., Strafford, Pa 19087). The magazine sells for \$1.45 per copy or three for \$4.00. Darrell has issues 2, 3 and 4 in limited stock so I'd order NOW, don't wait. Issue No. 4 has a story by Schweitzer which is a continuation of "The Veiled Pool of Mistorak" which Stygian Isle Press published in **FANTASY CROSSWINDS** No. 2. Quite frankly, you'll miss a lot if you miss the fiction in **VOID**. If only for the Schweitzer story (and the issue does have a lot more to recommend it) I suggest you send off your hard earned cash to the US agent.

I apologize for the lack of detail in this issue's News Notes. I try to make most of the blurbs into mini-reviews. As regular readers know, our last issue was out in August and a lot has happened since then, thus you get a double issue of **FC** and a double dose of News. The following items arrived too late to be covered but I'm squeezing them in anyway. Heaven knows when the next issue of **FC** will appear and I figure a short blurb now is better than a longer one in several months (though hopefully **FC** will get on to a quarterly or bi-monthly schedule again).

Readers who have been with **FC** since the early issues will remember the Vaughn Bode style cartoons of David Heath Jr. David published a zine title **NO SEX** but it disappeared about two years ago, with issue No. 3 showing up in my mail box just recently. This issue is larger than I remember the others (64 pages, 8½ x 11") and sells for a measly 70c (5 issues for \$3.50). It is predominantly comic strips by David and several cohorts. Frankly, the other work in **NO SEX** is very amateurish. Only David's work is worth the time to read and enjoy. He has a very unusual sense of humor in that he can find most anything to poke fun at. Heath is probably best characterized as a SF humorist though that may be over-all a little too restrictive in definition. Anyway, try **NO SEX**, the mag that is! (Write: C. Co. 1-68 Armor, APO NY 09034).

**ART FANTASTIQUE** No. 1 and No. 2 are questionable publications. Available for \$2.50 each from **TREK**, 2500 Pennington, Houston, Texas 77093. **AF** No. 1 contains artwork by Virgil Finlay and No. 2 includes work by Frazetta, Crandall and Wood. Neither publication has an introduction, explanation of the work or any kind of copyright notice. I wonder if this is a bootleg publication or if it contains material in the public domain. The Frazetta pieces have appeared in various portfolios that I've seen. Reproduction (especially on the Finlay work) is a poor to average. Some of the Finlay work seems to have been reproduced from the poor quality images of an old pulp magazine. Frankly, I'd save your money and suggest you buy something more worthwhile. I just wish I knew more about the copyright status of the work in the volumes. I can't believe a reliable publisher would leave off copyright information.

**WHO WAS THAT MONOLITH I SAW YOU WITH** by Michael Goodwin is published by Heritage, PO Box 721, Forest Park, Ga. 30050. It's a booklet of Star Trek cartoons. The artwork isn't all that great but it does include some clever pokes at the space adventure yarn format epitomized by Star Trek. Available for \$2.50 plus 50c for shipping from Heritage. Be sure to ask for their catalog, Heritage has some mighty nice items, like the Thomas Burnett Swann Jr. hardcover book **QUEENS WALK IN THE DUSK** which is illustrated by Jeff Jones. I've been trying to beg

a review copy of it but have not succeeded. It looks to be a real gem.

**THE OLD DARK HOUSE** is a horror film-zine published by George LaVoo (1719 Ninth St., Bay City, Mich 48706). Issue No. 1 sells for \$2.00. This issue includes information on **THE SENTINEL**, **BURNT OFFERINGS**, the films of Brian de Palma (**CARRIE**, **OBSESSION**, **SISTERS** and **PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE**) and reviews plus lots of pictures. George needs a lesson on cluttered lay-outs, but the zine does show promise and enthusiasm. Foreign buyers please add 50c to the \$2 purchase price.

**THE PULPS** by Tony Goodstone has just recently been issued by Chelsea House (70 West 40th Street, NY, NY 10018) as an oversized (7½ x 10½") paperback which retails for \$7.95. The book runs 240 pages with an additional 48 pages of full color illustrations and reproductions of rare pulp cover art. It includes over 50 complete stories, poems, and features from the pulps. Robert E Howard under the pseudonym of Sam Walsler penned "The Purple Heart of Erlik", a spicy adventure story of innocence (dear Arline) and a vengeance filled Chinese priest (nice stereotype). Also included in **THE PULPS** is another REH James Allison story (using the same character as appears in "Generic's Fifth Born Son") titled "The Valley of the Worm". The book reprints work by HPL, CAS, Long, Finlay, Counselman, Weinbaum, Bradbury, Gallico, Burroughs, Max Brand and many others. This is one heck of an interesting volume.

Almost Omitted Addresses: **TITAN**, Geoff Rippington, 15 Queens Ave., Canterbury, Kent, England. **QUANTUM**, 1171 Neeb Road, Cincinnati, Ohio 45238.

BY THE WAY THE  
MAN IN THE SUIT IS  
F.C. REPORTER  
SEAGULL BACON



## EPISTLE EXPRESS

Loay  
802 East Bridge  
Blackwell, Okla. 74631

Concerning Scott Connors' query about my statement regarding the Lovecraft cult: I view Lovecraft fandom as being divided into two

very distinct groups, the Lovecraftians, the serious students of Lovecraft and his writing and wish him only the best (EOD fits into this group), and the Lovecraft Cult, the fanatics who have erected an altar to HPL as they envision him and seek to force this view of their idol upon anyone who will listen. This group is made up of people like Dirk Mosig and Scott Connors; well meaning people who have simply gone overboard on their admiration and desire to 'do something good for HPL', and are slowly turning most of fandom off (from) the remarkable gentleman called H. P. Lovecraft. And to say that the Cult does not worship HPL--let readers delve into such dagonzines as "Continuity" and "The Miskatonic" and decide for themselves--is as ludicrous as saying the Moon is made of Green Cheese. It is easy enough to try to undermine such criticism with levity or ridicule and abuse--the Cult has used such tactics on me before, as well as other critics--but it does not change the matter; most fans are discerning enough to penetrate to the heart of the matter and see the Cult for what it is. And that is what makes it so 'detestable': it isn't for the glory and fame of HPL that they are working so earnestly. . . it's for the glory of themselves. And the sooner the fans realize this, the sooner Lovecraft fandom will begin looking at HPL and his work in proper perspective again.

"The Half-Men of Chikanda" by Charles Saunders is, simply, one of the best stories I have read in a long, long time! I'm now an avid Imaro fan! Saunders' style is decidedly unHowardian. It is nice to see some originality re-entering the genre at last. His characterizations are skillfully and realistically handled. Charles Saunders, I believe, will go far in the fantasy genre.

"Review Rak" was enjoyable as always, particularly the reviews by McHaney, McFerran and Bacon. In all honesty, however, I think it only fair to point out a possible error of date in my review last issue of Cliff Eddy's **TERROR OUT OF TIME**. There are two dates for his death available--1967 on the jacket for **EXIT INTO ETERNITY** and 1971 in Muriel Eddy's introduction to **TERROR**; I used the latter because Mrs. Eddy of all people should know the date of her husband's death.

"Of Swords & Sorcery"--Paul Allen's very fine column--is an excellent contribution to the spirit of FC. I normally find myself in total agreement with his judgements. However, I think Lin Carter's criticism of Wagner's anachronisms in 'Kane' is wellfounded. The use of the term 'dollars' is unfortunate; it is enough to break the spell of fantasy that he, Wagner, has struggled to create for the reader. Ordinarily, it wouldn't be earth-shaking, if he was writing modern fantasy or science fiction, the term might be carried over to that period; but in fantasy's S&S subgenre it is critical to avoid all anachronisms. No doubt Wagner learned from his mistake. But Carter, certainly one of the finest fantasy writers and critics ever, was within his rights to bring it to people's attention. And it might be mentioned that Lin was easier on Wagner than he was on some other popular authors, like Dave Van Arnam or Mike Moorcock!

"White Slayer's of the Waste" by J. E. Coplin is highly enjoyable--second best tale in the ish in my opinion (Saunders' is the best)--and I hope he'll honor FC with another 'Hyborian Age' tale soon!

Linward C. Marley  
213 Puritan Street  
Fayetteville, N. C. 28306

I thought FC No. 9 was your best issue, and wrapped in another great Corben cover. I was very surprised to learn that many readers considered his beautiful cover on No. 8 to be pornographic. The reasons you give for the reaction are probably correct, but I

don't understand this reaction coming from FC's audience.

The letter column is always interesting. Please do not follow Gregory Nicoll's suggestion and print Blackwood's "The Wendigo". It would take up too much space and besides is readily available in **BEST GHOST STORIES OF ALGERNON BLACKWOOD**, published by Dover Publications and available from Dover, F & SF Book Co., T-K Graphics, and other dealers. By the way, Dover Publications has an excellent line of fantasy and supernatural books with which everyone should be familiar.

All the fiction this issue is good, with the ubiquitous Charles Saunders leading the pack. I assume he will eventually collect his Imaro stories into one volume. Eddy Bertin's "A Whisper of Leathery Wings" was very good. Actually, I enjoy the fantasy-horror story more than the S&S tale.

I enjoyed all the art this issue, especially the Gene Day portfolio. I hope we never get to the point that artists will not undertake a project because other artists have produced "definitive" works on the same subject. Think of all we would miss.

Excellent News Notes. Interesting articles, especially Paul Allen's.

Darrell Schweitzer  
Chateau d'Leng  
Averogne, France

My first reaction of FC No. 9 was that you must do something about the small and blurry print in parts of the magazine. It seems to me that

various offset presses have limits of smallness beyond which they cannot go without loss of clarity. The larger typeface is fine, but the smaller, used for the symposium and the news column is too small, especially on those pages which are underinked and grey rather than black. The result was very genuine eyestrain, watery eyes & a headache, something I am not normally susceptible to. I would suggest that you stick to the larger typeface even if it means a loss of wordage.

The cover: Certainly it's striking, but when one looks closely it seems the hirsute gentleman is about to lose his mammoth-hide jockstrap. Also he doesn't have hair on his body, but outright fur, quite unlike any European Caucasian I've seen. Perhaps he is an Ainu from northern Japan, who was blown far away while sailing. . . (The Ainu are the hairiest people of the world. They're an isolated pocket of Caucasians.)

"The Half Men of Chikanda" by Charles Saunders was certainly the most interesting piece of fiction in the issue, and perhaps the best written, but I was disappointed. Imaro can be summed up as a black Conan. Simple as that. The story could have happened in Conan's world, among white people of a different time and culture, with no changes at all. Saunders is doing a very good thing in bringing African lore into sword & sorcery fiction. (I would be very surprised if sub-Saharan Africa does not have a vast store of heroic legendry like most other places). But I wish he would get away from stock sword & sorcery elements. For his stories to be anything but barbarian epics of a different hue, he must 1) make characters and situations derive from African history, culture, and legendry so that they could not happen elsewhere and elsewhere, and 2) make his supernatural elements do the same, and be sufficiently intrinsic to the story that if they were withdrawn there would be no story. Anything short of that is costume fiction. So far he is only promising to bring fresh material into the field. He hasn't yet delivered.

By the way, I'd be curious to know how much of the background is history, and when the story is taking place. I would guess, from the presence of Chinese traders in eastern Africa, it must be during Ming times, circa 1360-1644. The Ming dynasty did send fleets that far, but short-sighted rulers eventually decided it wasn't worth the bother. If they hadn't things might have been much different in the following cen-

turies, and the Chinese would have perhaps discovered and barged in on the Europeans, not the other way around.

Eddy Bertin's story is fine, but also standard stuff. And again I'm wondering where the setting is taking place. The names seem to be English but the currency is francs.

Steve Riley  
18 Norman Dr.  
Framingham, Mass.

**FANTASY CROSSROADS 9** -- arrived some time ago, so I'll just remark on a few things -- mostly my reaction to your editorial remarks. I think you stated your beliefs excellently and really got to the heart of the matter in mentioning the sterility of classicized art versus the more realistic (and erotic) type of art that touches us deep within. I can't say for certain how the readership reacted, but I imagine a few souls came down on you for your stance, because, to use your own words in the editorial, "your stance was not the way they prefer life to be pictured." (I paraphrased it.) I think you handled the aspects of censorship in conjunction with being an editor and the ensuing responsibilities very well. In all sincerity, your editorial is one of the best I've seen on this subject. Objectively honest and to the point.

The above also leads into the cover illustration. I wonder how many of those who panned issue 8's cover thought that this one was much better, more in the vein of "true fantasy". Yet, I find this cover more startling than the last. There's no beauty or sensuality there. Instead, it's a gory, starkly realistic portrayal of a scene that's been played out too, too many times under different situations -- that of war and carnage. (I wonder how many too were disturbed even further when they noticed the cross. This, to me, makes it even more grimly real -- too close to the horrifying reality of what has gone on. In historical terms, I imagine the cover scene happened many, many times when the Visigoths and Huns swept out of northern Europe and overran Rome.) Yet for all the above, I feel Corben's painting is a real work of art. (Art doesn't have to make us secure -- see Goya's "The Disasters of War" for example.) Corben's painting really drives home for me the real horror of war and for that alone (not to mention the technical excellence of his style) imparts this work with genuine value.

((Editor's note: This letter refers back to the Steve Riley Portfolio in FC No. 7 and Gregory Nicoll's letter in FC No. 8)).

Some comments: I'm flattered by the overall favorable response to my Lovecraft portfolio. Note to Gregory Nicoll: regarding "Imprisoned with the Pharaohs", I read the passage the same way he did, but decided to illustrate what the narrator really saw, not what he thought he saw. It's very much like walking by a dark room and taking a quick glance inside. At first impression, you might think you see something out of the ordinary, but when you stop and take a look, you realize that the darkness, your movements (walking by the room), and your imagination all combined to make you think you saw something that really wasn't there. That's how I interpreted the story: the narrator thought the paw was a monster in itself, but when the entire sphinx emerged from the doorway, the narrator realized what he saw at first in the darkness and excitement was only the forepaw. I do thank Gregory for his kind remarks and for taking time to comment.

I know what Gregory Nicholl is saying in regard to Gene Day's work but I think he has his terminology wrong. I like Gene's work very much myself, but I would say it is neither realistic nor surrealist. Gene's work could only be described as being in the comic school of art -- terms like realism and surrealism aren't appropriate to describe his style -- although cinematographic is, due to Gene's use of lighting, angles, and composition.

"Realism" can be defined as: "the representation of nature or social life as it actually appears." Realistic artists are such

people as Gustave Courbet (the first realist painter), and the Ashcan school of American painting -- Maurice Prendergast, John Sloan, Edward Hopper, etc. It's not so much whether something drawn or painted looks like the real-life object (representational), but more the presentation of such, feeling of weight in the objects depicted and subject matter. Fantasy art can hardly be termed realistic no matter how well done it is. Even Andrew Wyeth is not a realistic painter in spite of his almost photographic qualities. Wyeth seems closer to surrealism than realism, due to the extreme calm and silence in his paintings -- they're almost eerie because of this.

"Surrealism" is: "a school of art and literature which expresses the subconscious mind in art form, excluding balance and conventional design." Artists such as Salvador Dali, Max Ernst and Man Ray fall into this category. Subject matter usually deals with the subconscious -- images of dreams, use of unconventional modes of expression that tie in with reality yet are not real, etc. **Fantasy** can play a big role here but **not** heroic fantasy or any branch of the genre we're interested in.

Art terminology is funny because it doesn't necessarily mean what it implies as in the use of the above terms. It's a genuine philosophy with its own system of usage and logic. I've had it pounded into my head for a few years so when I saw Gregory's letter, I felt I had to comment.

Fantasy art is pretty much that -- fantasy art -- mainly because most of it produced is illustrative (requiring an accompanying text to fully understand it even though the art may be appreciated on its own.) Some art terms can be applied, even the above in some cases, but in the case of Gene Day's work, I would say no. Wrong terminology.

Enough of that. The rest of the issue is really fine and I particularly enjoyed the art of Gene Day (of course), Clyde Caldwell (his logo is superb!), Steve Fabian and Ric Cruz -- his style is particularly distinctive, indeed the illustration on page 39 is one of the finest in the issue, methinks.

Gregory E. Nicoll  
3535 Gleneagles Drive  
Martinez, Georgia 30907  
October 2, 1976

Congratulations on another fine issue of **FANTASY CROSSROADS**. Number nine provided me with plenty of good reading. I don't know how you managed to fit so much into one magazine, but I sure hope you keep doing it. Yog!

I whole-heartedly agree with Loay Hall as to the merits of Basil Copper's fiction, especially his short story "Amber Print". Copper is a master at creating atmosphere and anyone who (like myself) collects films can appreciate Copper's accomplishment. I recommended Cooper's collection **FROM EVIL'S PILLOW** to anyone who likes good horror stories in modern settings, and I think anyone who enjoyed Lovecraft's **AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS** would appreciate Cooper's inventive imitation of it, **THE GREAT WHITE SPACE**, which just came out in paperback.

Bertin's "A Whisper of Leathery Wings" was a very effective exercise in horror. I hope you can unearth more stories as good as that one; it was just what the doctor ordered as far as we who don't like heroic fantasy are concerned. As for Charles Saunders' stories, they wouldn't be half as tedious if he wasn't so hung up on drowning the readers in unpronounceable names. And it is pretentious enough to invent an entirely new language for use within a story, but when the author insists on using it to write his titles as well. . . .!!! I can't help but feel that Saunders is laughing at us through those titles -- the one in number nine looks like 'NUTS TO YOU, YA CHICKEN' or something.

Speaking of Saunders, he wrote me a long letter attacking my statement of HPL's harmlessness as far as being a racist was concerned. His argument was that HPL perpetuated racist feelings in America by depicting Negroes as all sorts of grave-

robbers and wizards in stories such as "The Call of Cthulhu". (I can think of more offensive examples as far as that is concerned, particularly the description of Buck Robinson in "Herbert West--Reanimator"). I don't think this particular approach will hold up; Lovecraft had just as many degenerate Caucasians in his works -- The Whateleys, the Marshes, the Gilmans. . . hell, most of them bred with fish and assorted monsters from other dimensions. If that isn't degenerate (especially to an old gentleman like HPL) what, pray tell, is?

Charles R. Saunders  
Creator of Imaro  
Architect of Nyumbani  
Afro-American Fantasist  
Unemployed Psych. Teacher  
Border-line Psychotic  
(I practice what I teach)

I'm sure the Swahili-speaking peoples of Africa will be delighted to learn that their language is "pretentious" and "unpronounceable". To most fantasy writers, an invented language enhances the construction of the setting. As for Nicoll's interpretation of the title, in this case whatever is in the eye of the beholder is also in his mouth. . ."

Dennis ABeln  
208 W. 4th  
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Regarding your suggestion of having awards in the Sword & Sorcery field, I find the idea interesting BUT there are so many awards in the literary, music, entertainment and what-have-you fields, and so much HYPE accompanying each one, that I am very skeptical--cynical at the mere mention of "Awards". The problem with them all is they're too often given NOT necessarily out of merit, but out of popularity, commerciality, and just plain stupidity. Besides, it seems a bit unfair for a group or organization to say that "Such & Such" was the best "So & So" of the year in this category and that. It's all so subjective, but then I guess everything is. Naturally, everyone has their favorite movie(s), record(s), book(s), but for someone or something to say that that was the "best of the year" is more than a little presumptuous and egotistical.

That is not to say I'm against the idea of S & S awards. I'm not. But it seems that awards, in the long run, no matter how well-intentioned they might be, cheapen the fields and genres they are given in.

I do think heroic fantasy should be given its due. And maybe some type of awards would be the answer. Just thought you'd like to know. Thanks, Jon.

10-6-76  
Mark Mansell  
15120 Ragus St.  
La Puente, CA 91744

I have just received FC No. 9. I have to say that it is the most beautiful of any fantasy adventure magazine on the market. In my opinion, if you ever went pro with FC, you could easily out sell FANTASTIC and AMAZING.

The artwork was superb. The high spot was the front cover. Corben draws an excellent barbarian. This brings to mind a thought about how barbarians are pictured. It's a fact that barbarians aren't nice (for lack of a better word). They aren't people you'd care to have in your living room, face it, they are hard people for a hard life. They shouldn't be pictured as Redford or Reynolds with a loin cloth and sword. Gene Day's art was also great, though he didn't show Conan's face at any time.

The story's were fantastic. "The last laugh" was minor Howard, yet it seemed to be more of a first draft than a completed story. About Charles Saunders' Imaro, what can I say.

The man is great! His new viewpoint about barbarians and heroes will gain him a large following for his Imaro stories (he's already got me). All I can say is more, more!

It is a great idea not to be tied down by REH's style of fiction, but to cover larger areas. REH's stories will run out sooner or later, and those magazines that don't use anything but REH stuff will be out in the cold. FC will be one to survive I'm sure.

The round-table discussion wasn't bad, but your comments were of the most interest. Reading Scithers', I get the feeling you wrote him a long letter, and he sent back a one-line post card. The others ranged from mildly interesting to inane. I'm glad that yours were there to treat the subject seriously.

The column on "swords and sorcery" is a definite plus. On the strength of his comments, I tried BLOODSTONE by Karl Edward Wagner (whom I've just started corresponding with). It is superb S & S! So alive and perfect! Try to get a Kane story for a future issue of FC.

Keep up the News. FC is to S & S news what WHISPERS is to horror news.

In recent months, I've been drawn more and more to 'little magazines.' As I think of it, I realize its because they're so much more personal. Instead of aiming at a wide audience, they want a smaller, more enthusiastic, intimate audience. Its like having a lot of friends who share your interests.

P.S. Recently WHISPERS, WEIRD BOOK, FANTASY AND TERROR, and 3 others got together to do a special sampler of horror fanzines. I thought it was an excellent entertaining idea. (It was called TOADSTOOL WINE). Why don't you; AMRA; REH:LSF; REH; TGR; MIDNIGHT SUN, DARK FANTASY, HOWARD REVIEW, HOWARD READER, CHACAL and PHANTASY DIGEST get together and do a special sword and sorcery (REH oriented) sampler. Maybe Glenn Lord, and Hamilton and Warfield would also contribute a special HOWARD COLLECTOR and CROSS PLAINS for it. . . This would be fascinating in many respects. Sword & Sorcery buffs would eat it up. REH fans could be made happy by each magazine reprinting the Howard story or poem that had been most popular in their regular issues. It would provide great advertising for all your magazines. Each sampler (about 10 pages) would give a taste of your respective magazines. I think a TOADSTOOL WINE format would be the best and easiest way to put it out. For about \$5.00 (about 110-125 pages) it would be an incredible project and bargain. I wouldn't consider it except with you as coordinating editor since your FC is the best (you must know what you're doing.) I hope you think about it, anyway.

((Thanks for your comments on FC No. 9. The round robin was really compiled by Wayne Warfield. All editors--publishers were sent the same set of questions and they were asked to respond. As is obvious responses to the article were completed and presented to me for publication. No changes were made after I received it from Wayne Warfield.

Your idea of an anthology put together by all the REH--S & S mags is a good idea, but right now I'm so swamped it'd take a year to get into the planning stages. I'll see what response is to the idea, though. OK?

My planned bibliography is a long way off now. It's just an incredible task to even keep up with what's coming out each week. But if and when I publish it, it is my intention to publish a listing of everything REH ever wrote (verse, fiction, non-fiction) as well as anything written about him or his work. . .)

Robert Barger  
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Evensville, Tennessee 37332

I received the latest FC today. I didn't like the Corben cover at all. Last issue's blue cover came off pretty good I thought, being a watery sort of thing, but this just doesn't come across to me. First off I guess the Corben illo itself is not as good, or not as

pleasing as the work he usually does. Secondly the red ink detracts quite a bit and overall I just find it sort of repulsive. I mean it hurts me to say this, on account of FC being one of my favorite zines, and Corben being an artist that I rate on a level with and maybe even a little above Frazetta, but I is just a callin'em as I sees em. . . .

Also, the fiction I tried to read but I just don't enjoy the fiction you've been printing. With the exception of the REH stuff. Also Charles Saunders' story -- I haven't had time yet, but I do plan to read his story. Saunders is going to be a fine writer someday if he keeps working at it.

That's about all that I didn't like in this issue. What I did especially enjoy was Paul Allen's column, and the roundtable discussion between the REH fan-eds. This was I guess the highlight, and I'm disappointed that it had to be split in two parts. I'm looking forward to the rest of it. Letter page was good too.

I must say that your editorial about the Corben cover on issue No. 8 is something you should do more of. I mean, like Geis' SFR, I really enjoy it when an editor puts his--her personality into their magazine. You covered the issue pretty well. About the nekkid lady on the cover that is. But I personally wouldn't say that the thing was really erotic, sensuous is more the word.

I don't really agree with you as far as pornography goes. What you say is true, in many instances. But then again, Vaughn Bode's work can be viewed by many as "porno" and did appear in many of the "men's magazines" and so forth, and yet it doesn't take the "basest emotions of one of the most beautiful human experiences and drag it thru the mud". Well, very rarely anyway -- and when he did it was to usually to illustrate a point.

As to the establishing of awards in the S&S field. . . Look at all the awards around now for fantastic fiction. Hugo, Nebula, World Fantasy Award (Lovecraft?), Gandalf Award. There are too many already. This lifetime award stuff, like the Gandalf is a bunch of crap. Granting a lifetime contribution award each year for such a small field of fiction as fantasy in general is ridiculous. Eventually every fantasy author alive will have one of the things. But despite all this, I am for the establishing of a S&S award. There is a whole lot of trash floating around under the title of S&S and maybe it would serve some purpose to single out the best yearly contributors to the field and give them an award or something. The only thing near this now, really, is the Gandalf (which I repeat is a meaningless award, or eventually will be) and Carter's YEARS BEST FANTASY STORIES which is anything but that. Which is not to say Carter does not have some good stories in his collections in this series, but to be the "best of" there is an extraordinary amount of trash and "published here for the first time" stories. And in this year's book, there are two stories by Carter himself included! If establishing awards in S&S could do anything towards straightening out this awful mess, then I do definitely support it!

#### L. Sprague de Camp

On p. 5 of FC9, Mr. Connors speculates about my sympathy for HPL and REH. Since some have voiced strong opinions on my private feelings, without having asked me about my own views, I should like to say a word about these feelings.

When one has never known a man personally, one cannot have feelings about the man himself. All one can have are feelings towards the mental image or construct, which one has built up by hearing and reading about him. If one forms such an image and then meets the man, one may find that he does not fit the image. That is now impossible with HPL and REH.

I never knew them and only became seriously interested in them and their works after 1949. Since then, I have read most of what has been published by and about them, so I have a fair (though not perfect or infallible) idea of what sort of men they were. Assuming they were as I picture them, I have some sympathy for both. I have a bit more for HPL, because I see in

him some of the faults I possessed as a youth. I have striven to overcome or compensate for these faults, with what success is not for me to say.

On the other hand, I rather admire REH the more of the two, because he had qualities that in my own youth I should like to have had but lacked. At the same time, along with their notable virtues, I am aware of their grievous shortcomings. Some of these men's admirers resent my writing about their faults. Sorry about that, but I try to call my shots as I see them and am always willing to be corrected in errors.

Having written one story each involving HPL and REH, I have no plans for using them again in fiction. There are many other things to write about; so many, in fact, that I couldn't get around to all of them in a thousand years.

Frank Belknap Long

It was kind indeed of you to send me FANTASY CROSSROADS with its abundance of intellectually and aesthetically stimulating material and a transcript of an important paragraph in my recent letter to Sprague de Camp.

The reviews of "The Dreamer" have been so contradictory in general it has left me a little stunned -- I anticipated disagreement, for HPL was, and remains a highly controversial figure, but never to quite such an extent. It has been praised in the highest terms, and roundly denounced, one reviewer proclaiming that "it put me to sleep!" In HPL circles the reviews were 70 percent -- perhaps 75 percent -- extremely favorable, however, and what gratified me the most were the letters I've received from all but one of the "Circle" as it existed 40 years ago -- Galpin, Munn, Ed Price, Conover, etc. Ed wrote that he liked it better than all of my stories and poems etc. Only Shea was in agreement with about 30 percent of the younger group of fan reviewers. It received a nice review in the Los Angeles Herald Examiner, and in two other literary supplements. Since it was simply HPL as I remembered him, written two years before Sprague's book appeared. -- In Frierson's fanzine, dating back about 4 years now, I discussed, in an interview with Schiff, my memories of HPL, and "The Dreamer" do not depart, even slightly from the general trend of what I said at the time -- I can hardly be accused of joining a "coverup", as Connors has pointed out. I feel -- and will continue to feel -- that far too much emphasis has been placed on HPL's "racism". In his conversation with me and others there were long periods when he did not even mention his "Nordic superiority" myth views and they did not influence his general outlook anything like as much as commonly supposed, despite what he wrote in a few of the letters.

Thank you again for several hours of great reading pleasure.

I thought "A Whisper of Leathery Wings" a most impressive story -- somber and restrained in style, and with a "just right" approach to the horrific.

Brian Earl Brown  
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Mishawaka, Ind. 46544

FC No. 9--Cover: maybe it's just me, but I find red the hardest color to look at. Tho I'm not half Harry Warner's age. I'm beginning to

voice his usual complaint against too greatly reduced type. The size you used to set Saunders' story is fine. The type used on your editorial takes a bit of straining. I think you're going to have to come to terms with the fact that you can't print as much as you'd like to in each issue of FC. There are physical limitations to everything. Alas!

I snigger at John Saxon's opinion that Howard's S&S was better than Leiber. Leiber could write rings around Howard. The man is gorgeous. Of course Howard would respond to this by chopping Leiber in half since Howard was a very direct and unsubtle writer. Of course there have been better writers of S&S and it's foolish to pretend that better S&S can't be written. But the better writers of S&S--Leiber, Moorcock and Wagner--have

little interest in doing the kinds of things Howard was doing so you can't simply compare story to story. You have to understand what each writer was up to.

I was more than a little amused by McHaney's vehement contention that BLOODSTAR was not a comic book. As someone who's read comic books for ten years I know one when I see it, even if it is published in hardcovers. Despite it's \$15 price tag, it is not an advancement over the typical comic book-- except for length of its continuous narrative and the superior reproduction of the artwork. Corbin, while a great artist and possibly unrivaled with the use of the air-brush, is not unequaled in the comics field. John Buscema-- if he had taken the time and had the same enthusiasm as Corbin could have done as fine a book-- as could have Russell, Smith, Ploog, John Severin, Marie Severin, Neal Adams, Paul Gulacy and Wally Wood to name some just off the top. The writing is as bad as ever. A planet enters the solar system and the news media poo-poops it for months? And scientists can't calculate where it is going to go? With the computer power we've got today they can approximate all the variables of that planet's course to within a few thousand miles. They damn well would know where it was going and damn well would know what would happen. The prolog reads like a resurrected piece of 30's sci-fi. It's not in the Howard original so it's Jakes and Corbin's fault for this piece of wretchedness. And the story is a mass of cliches. So's LOVE STORY and that never kept it from becoming a hit, either.

Graphic Novels (a term that sounds too like a euphemism for a porn novel) and all the other experiments in alternate comic book formats are not new things, only variations on old ideas. The writing is not superior to the comics field - there are individual examples of surpassing literacy and intelligence -- Chris Claremont and Don McGregor both come to mind. Lastly, it's ridiculous to think that the graphic novel will ever become popular-- it simply can't be cheap. We're talking about high-quality printing with expensive screening processes for the best reproduction of detail. We're talking about an artistic investment of time and energy far superior to the hacking of the comics field-- where the best talents usually drift out of the field in search of a better return for their effort -- such as commercial advertising. Sales will not be in the hundreds of thousands. Comic books are cheap because they are mass marketed. And newsprint is cheap. When you start talking about comics of a dollar or more, you're talking about a very limited market. A comic is not as deep as a novel. Even BLOODSTAR rates as no more than a novelet in length of fiction. Nor is it as vivid as a movie, or as cheap as television. It's a bastard medium and will never really become popular.

I liked Alan's column on S&S characters.

Wagner is getting so much attention today that I fear that he, like Delany, will fall into ways of self-indulgence and produce succeeding lesser works than he is capable of. Kane at over 6 foot and 300 pounds is not so impossible to one who is 6-2 and 240 pounds. Since Kane is said to fill doorframes (usually 6-6 is the door opening) he is probably a little over six foot to the tune of 6-6, for which a beefy man could easily weigh 300 pounds. This far better than the hero in MAHARS OF PELLUCIDAR who is said to be 6-6 and weight 180 pounds. He is also described as having a magnificent physique. Maybe for a basketball player.....

Lin Carter is so out of it when it comes to instructions on how to write good fiction, that Allen wastes his time to even refute him. Better are the comments of Le Guin in "From Poughkeepsie to Elfland." Her point is that the language of fantasies should have an aura of fantasy about them. If you can change a few names and produce a piece of mainstream fiction (as Le Guin does to a passage from a Katherine Kurtz novel to striking effect) it's not a good piece of fantasy writing. I think Wagner does meet this standard even when using somewhat modern forms of expressions. What his characters said and did were indubably fantasy. Jane Gaskell, as I recall not only used modern terms like noncom and snafu, but wrote a story

that could easily be 20th century contemporary. She fails.

The Roundtable Discussion, like all gossip was interesting, but not really illuminating. Well, it did illuminate the fact that most REH publishers are not really "fans". Fandom, science fiction fandom has a forty year old tradition and of the publishers, only Scithers shares this tradition with me.

"The Role of Fandom in Society" -- Fandom is an escapist fantasy world where real problems don't exist. It's only role in society is therapeutic. (And I love it!)

A fanzine is a zine done by a fan for the love of it. CHACAL, PHANTASY DIGENT, FC are semi-pro zines, which is a fan of a different color. Fandom is also something of a voluntary masonic order, which is why money is such a bigaboo. How can you charge--demand money from a fellow mason?

REH: LSF--CHACAL is my idea of the best REH zine. FC is nicely fannish in tone. CROSS PLAINS never offered enough for its money until the last couple issues.

Continued from page 17

#### ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

SASSER: I think E. Hoffman Price is long overdue for a big fan boom. Since he was a close friend of Howard's, many fans might turn to him after they have pursued Howardia to the limits.

SCITHERS: Your premise is wrong, of course. There is a possibility that interest in Howard will wane. This is not the same thing as a decline in "Howard fandom," primarily because of over-exploitation, but I cannot predict who might "succeed" him.

WARFIELD: I see no clear favorite right now. Authors who should have an active fandom include Mike Moorcock, Henry Kuttner, Karl Wagner and Thomas Burnett Swann. I, personally, would prefer more interest in the genre as a whole, than in single authors, however.

Question: How important do you think your contributions are to the genre? How important do you think you are to the genre?

BACON: I wouldn't be publishing if I didn't feel I could make a contribution to the genre. As to how important that contribution is... well others will need to decide. As an individual, I'm not important. The importance is relative to what FC aims at accomplishing and what it actually does accomplish. I'd hope that we would do the followings: 1) provide a training ground for those interested in creative works in the fantasy genre and specifically the sub-genre labeled Heroic Fantasy; 2) introduce new writers and artists to the fandom audience; 3) assist in getting the Howard "canon" of fiction, verse and letters into print so that it may be studied, and enjoyed; 4) provide a forum for debate within our letters pages for fandom and pros; 5) encourage more fiction and verse from the professionals by commissioning works and or publishing "new" works in the several sub-genres under the general heading of Fantasy (i.e. S & S, horror lit., and possibly, SF).

FENNER: I don't feel that either REH: LSF or myself are terribly important to the genre. I do believe that some of our features (outside of the Howard fiction) and outlooks are a shot of penicillin to the field, mainly because of our honesty -- some might say our "nastiness". We're not trying to stomp on people's toes; just trying to give a different point of view. Still, I'm sure no one will mourn REH:LSF when it dies -- I daresay there'll be those who'll be happy to see us go. We've just tried to provide a form of entertainment.

HAMILTON: Based upon the letters I received from CP subscribers I would say that my contributions were of im-

portance and I assume I was of some importance, though the latter is immaterial.

**McHANEY:** Anyone who makes rare, desired material available to the public - even if that "public" is only a few thousand -- is doing something important. As far as my own importance goes, a fan editor is no more than what he does and gives his reader. I do consider myself a lot more competent in many areas, because my educational background was aimed at magazine journalism--I know what I'm doing. When I screw up, I'm the first person to realize it, and I don't need some jerk to remind me of it. Most fan editors who don't go on to some area related to the field are almost completely forgotten a year after they do whatever they are doing. Some are forgotten while they are still around. There are several I wish I could forget.

**ROARK:** Relatively unimportant, save for the fact of supplying the public with something they want. I feel our contribution has been upfront honesty, if not always good judgment. Frankly, I think I'm the Messiah of Fandom -- though a cult has not yet grown up around this belief. Plenty of guys have offered to crucify me in the past -- kinda makes one wonder, ya know? I stay out of dark alleys.

**SASSER:** According to the supporters of **REH: TWO GUN RACONTEUR**, I am contributing something. Though, as an individual, I'm just another Howard fan and am not that important, but **TGR** is.

**SCITHERS:** Impossible to answer without seeming either a wittold or a braggart.

**WARFIELD:** Again, this is impossible to judge unless one is suffering from ego inflation. I do not feel that any one publisher is, at the moment, all-important to fandom. Once, **THE HOWARD COLLECTOR** was the only **REH** zine, as was **CROSS PLAINS**. For many years, **AMRA** was also important. As for today, I believe anyone who cares enough to do a zine deserves our attention, but no one is indispensable!

**Question:** What rules govern the content of your magazine? What standards do you judge your work on?

**BACON:** I judge contributions on a two point criteria: a) is the work well written or eye pleasing and of interest to me, b) will readers react favorably and enjoy the work. **FC** is a product of Jonathan Bacon's creative energies (however minimal they may be). I publish it because I derive a certain amount of joy from doing so. Therefore, as ego-centric as it sounds, I publish those things which I enjoy.....in the hopes that others will agree. If I find no interest in a given subject, why the heck should I publish it?? Secondly, I try to respond to the likes and dislikes of my readers. Without them **FC** would cease to exist or dwindle in print run. That doesn't mean I go by a majority vote or that I respond to every request. Both are impossible to do. If the majority of readers wanted me to drop the artwork of Gene Day or Steve Fabian.....I'd refuse. They're my two favorite artistic contributors. On the other hand, I'm constantly bombarded by a) a group that wants **FC** to deal only with **REH** b) a group that wants **FC** to deal only with H. P. Lovecraft, c) a group that feels we should deal with all **S&S** authors currently alive, d) a group that feels we should deal only with **WEIRD TALES** authors, etc., etc., etc. You get the idea. It's impossible to do **EXACTLY** as your readers dictate.

**FENNER:** Naturally we're influenced by a number of amateur and pro magazines (both in and outside of the genre) and pattern some of our policies after them -- with our own twist, of course. But other than that no real rules or standards govern the magazine. Surely, there are some self-inflicted limits -- we avoid censorship, but simultaneously we attempt to keep a sense

of good taste throughout our contents. Unfortunately, our tastes don't always run in the same line as those of some of our readers. In the long run, practically anything goes; that is, as long as it's done well.

**HAMILTON:** Since I don't publish a zine anymore I don't feel the need to answer.

**McHANEY:** Before I started putting together **HOWARD REVIEW** No. 5 (in Jan. 1976) I never had any real rules for myself. I used what I liked. Besides, if I make my own rules, I can always change them or break them, and who'd know? No one is gonna write me, and say "Hey, so-and-so stinks. You broke the rules!" Silly question. As for standards, for the **REVIEW**, I've simply arrived at a goal locked deep in my brain which is higher than anything else I've seen, and everytime I fall short of that, it's the skids as far as I'm concerned. I've done plenty of jumping without reaching the top of the fence.

**ROARK:** Is it good? Is it of interest to our audience? Does it fit into the format of our publication? If so, anything is considered fair game. Our biggest problem is agreeing on something.....Arnie and I are like Fire & Water, so this usually proves difficult. Compromise has become a way of life. Some of the most asinine crap has caused a lot of yelling. When all else fails, Fenner cheats by using logic (shudder!) on me.

**SASSER:** My main rule is: is it interesting and--or informative. I'm aiming at newcomers to **REH**, but try to achieve a balance of topics and such so **TGR** will appeal to all Howard fans. As far as standards go, I ask myself would I buy it if someone else was putting it out and is it worth the money. I don't like to get ripped-off and don't want to do that to anyone else.

**SCITHERS:** Rules? No really -- it's a matter of what seems to fit.

**WARFIELD:** I try to balance what I believe readers will enjoy, and what seems to fit based on my own experiences. Correspondence plays a big part also.

**Question:** Do you think fans are being exploited? If so, are you getting your share of the dough?

**BACON:** Fans are being exploited **IF** they allow themselves to be. The rash of Howard books, booklets, fanzines, etc., exists because there is a demand for it. Fandom controls the marketplace by buying or not buying. Howardana is in the vogue now. If anyone who publishes his works and takes advantage of the boom is exploitive then we all are. There are some Howard completist and they probably are being exploited but they do that willingly. I know, I'm one of 'em. I'll buy or trade for anything with a relationship to **REH** and that includes (in my collection) posters, art portfolios, T-shirts, paper cups, fanzines, books, foreign anthologies (in languages I can't even speak!!!), and lots more. But I do it willingly. No one forces anyone to buy.

**FENNER:** It seems that fans have always been exploited, no matter where their interests may lie. High "special collector's" prices on a new publication have always burned my ass and I believe that it's high time to stand up as a group and tell some of the chief villains to shove it! But we probably won't -- just the way fans are, I guess. Some might classify us as exploiters -- I wouldn't agree, but I doubt if my feelings would be all that objective. But, no **REH:LSF** isn't making that much money; probably losing some if we itemized everything. Hear that Mr. Taxman? Seriously, I wish we were making enough of a profit to branch out or improve our distribution, but we're not.

**HAMILTON:** I don't think that fans are being exploited by the zines though I know of a certain Fred Cook who is selling pirated

copies of **ETCHINGS IN IVORY** and **THE HOWARD COLLECTOR** at ridiculous high prices.

**McHANEY:** Fans are definitely being exploited, but obviously, they either love it or are too stupid to realize it. I don't think you'll find any fanzine, though, that really makes a noticeable amount of money. The jerks that are doing it are the guys selling five or six lousy drawings for \$20 or \$25 by artists who used to be available for 25c for twenty pages. Those are the cretins that are going to kick the bottom out of the whole mess, and I hope it happens very soon. First, though, I think they'll kill off comics completely. 95 percent of the decent artists don't have to do comics any more because there are fools that are dumb enough to pay large sums of money to various crooks who hide their rip-offs behind a cover of "limited editions." They should limit the prices! My share of the dough? If the trends go on like they are now, I'll probably get into the limited edition art folio bit. I've worked a lot harder than any of the art folio crooks so why shouldn't I get a share? I'm not down on folios totally. I think de la Ree and a few others are putting out "bargains" compared to what you'd expect to pay now.

**ROARK:** Everyone is exploited in some way or another, but only if they condone it. Unless you let it happen, it can't. Without naming names, there are several people who I feel are ripping off fans; naturally, we've been accused of this heinous crime in the past. Anyone who does a fan publication will have this charge leveled against him one time or another. As a personal statement, I'm a virtual pauper -- all the revenue taken in for one issue is used to put out the next.

**SASSER:** REH fans, for the most part, are too smart to get burned more than once. An article in my second issue tells fans how to buy and collect Howard material without getting taken. My share of the dough goes into the next issue of **TGR** or related projects; not into funds for, say, trips to Bermuda and the like. I may sound stupid, but I really don't care much for money -- merely recognition for my work in Howard fandom.

**SCITHERS:** Fans are getting exploited. Second part of the question is rather vicious.

**WARFIELD:** Anytime you have a sellable product, you will have those who seek to exploit it. What profit I've ever made (which has been near zero) always went back into the next project.

#### **RAMBLINGS**—— Continued from page 1

There is more I could add, but I think this will give you an idea what it takes to get into these respective organizations. SFWA membership fees are \$12.00 per year, which gives you voting rights, subscription to their monthly newsletter, and they will act in your behalf on legal matters. In SFWA the writers vote for the awards themselves, and who knows more about sf than the writers. (This is evident to anyone who has read the annual anthologies of the Nebula Award Stories).

It is my idea that an organization of writers, artists and poets (in the semi-pro field) be formed using the same basis as the SFWA. There would be awards given, such as the NOVA (for lack of a better name) for different categories, voted upon by the general membership. Membership fees will be \$2.00 per year, with the money going to purchase membership cards, awards and to print up a monthly or bi-monthly newsletter.

Suggested requirement for membership: An artist, writer or poet must have sold or had published, something in one of the semi-pro magazines that meet the organization's requirements. Requirements: A semi-pro zine must pay some monetary payment to a contributor (not copies), for fiction, poetry and

art, and must publish at least three times in a given year from Jan 1st to Dec 31st.

The following categories are suggested for the awards:

- 1 - Best Novelette;
- 2 - Best short story;
- 3 - Best artist;
- 4 - Best Editor;
- 5 - Best semi-pro zine;
- 6 - Best poet.

Since the first writing of my proposal, it has been suggested by Chris Marler of **ASTRAL DIMENSIONS** that a separate award be given for **Horror and Fantasy**, such as the Gandalf award in the pro field.

Semi-pro zines, writers and poets **need not** be members of the organization to be nominated for an award, but you must be a member to vote.

You may be reading this in one of the semi-pro zines which have agreed to support the conception of my idea; so far I have three of them behind the idea and pushing it in their respective mags. I have contacted several of the zines qualified as semi-pros and hope to gain their support also. They are: **ART & STORY**, **WHISPERS**, **DEADSPAWN**, **MYRDDIN**, **MOON-BROTH**, **FROM OUR WORLD**, **SPACE & TIME**, **DARK FANTASY**, **GALLILEO**, **PHANTASY DIGEST** and **FANTASY CROSSROADS**. The zines already supporting the idea are **THE DIVERSIFIER**, **BLACK LITE** and **ASTRAL DIMENSIONS**.

There may be others that I have neglected to mention or don't know qualify as semi-pros, if so they are welcome and will be considered also.

I truly believe this could be a very valuable and helpful organization for all involved; I hope all of you reading this will feel the same way.

**DO NOT** send any money at this time, as everything is still on the drawing board. Write me and let me hear any ideas you might have; any suggestions for improving the organization. Most of all tell me whether you'd be willing to support the idea. Once I'm sure enough people are interested, I'll start the membership drive and get things going.

Let's make **SPWAO (SEMI-PRO WRITERS AND ARTISTS ORGANIZATION)** a reality.

I do support Chet's proposal in a general way. I have some reservations about certain aspects of the proposal but I'm sure they'll be worked out satisfactorily. As an example, Unlike the SFWA (which requires publication by the writer within the last 3-5 years) Chet's proposal basically allows membership for life if the person is published once in a semi-prozine. On the other hand, the proposal is very tight by requiring semi-prozines to publish at least three times a year. Frankly, frequency of publication seems irrelevant to me. Or at least, three issues per year seems steep. FC has always put out four issues per year (except for 1974 when our first issue came out in November) and I know the kind of hard work it is to meet that type of frequency. Except in the area of best semi-prozine, the mags shouldn't be judged based upon ANYTHING, after all, the awards should be based upon the quality of the artwork, fiction or verse. . . not what format it is printed in. A gem of a story can shine even if published in a crud-zine.

Nevertheless, I support the formation of SPWAO and urge you to write Chet at: PO Box 2078, Oroville, CA 95965.

My support of Chet's series of awards does not in any way diminish my desire to see a fantasy award established via my suggestions last issue. The field will never grow and mature unless recognition (via awards, etc) is available for achievement in the genre. I still feel a need for awards to be established based upon a poll of all elements of the genre, i.e. editors, contributors and the readership. Arnold Fenner of **CHACAL** and I have been corresponding on the awards and have even established a basic format. The **BALROG AWARD** will be an annual award with several categories (still being defined). The one major difference is that voting will be open to everyone active in the fantasy genre. Award ballots will be run in cooperating magazines as well as in **THE BUYERS GUIDE**. Unlike most other awards currently established, no reader or

fan will be dis-enfranchised. In the near future, a joint publishing project will be announced to finance the BALROG AWARD. Fenner and Stygian Isle Press will jointly publish an item for collectors with all profits going to cover the expenses of establishing the BALROG. The final decision was for the award to cover all aspects of the fantasy genre. The BALROG will not be exclusively a Heroic Fantasy award, nor will it be strictly for recognition in high fantasy or horror—weird literature. All areas of the field will be eligible.

Your comments are again solicited on both the BALROG and Chet Clingan's proposed SPWAO.

On another matter: What follows is a guest editorial. John Rieber ran across an old issue of FANTASY CROSSROADS (No. 7 to be exact) and promptly sent off a letter of comment (LOC). Unfortunately, we've published two issues since then and the issue he discussed might be considered dated, but I prefer to think readers might be interested in yet another voice in the de Camp—Mosig debate issue. The following was written by John Rieber of 301 La Vista, McAllen, Texas 78501. Read on:

Lovecraft and Howard are storytellers, weavers of fantastic dreams. Neither intended to set himself up as a Dark Mohammed, a subject for literary cults' warfare; neither intended to provoke the Black Crusades.

Yet, since the publication of LOVECRAFT: A BIOGRAPHY, it's become more and more fashionable for fantasy readers to snarl at other fantasy readers across lettercols, book reviews, and reviews of book reviews. It's in vogue to boil personal preferences down to labels like "totally uninteresting" and slap them on story-cycles that have sold thousands of hardbound books, paperback books, and magazines as well as inspiring many a pastiche and fanzine.

Why?

The H. P. Lovecraft whose mind and perceptions are a source of awe to many a sworn enemy of Cimmerians wrote in a letter to Donald A. Wollheim

"This is really magnificent stuff--Howard has the most magnificent sense of the drama of "History" of anyone I know. He possesses a panoramic vision which takes in the evolution and interaction of races and nations over vast periods of time. . ."

The H. P. Lovecraft who wrote SUPERNATURAL HORROR IN LITERATURE praised Howard's skill in describing lingering atmospheres of "prehuman fear and necromancy which no other writer could duplicate," stating that Howard "was almost alone in his ability to create real emotions of fear and of dread suspense. . ."

And guess who eulogized "Brother Conan" in the selfsame letter?

Since south Texas suffers from a severe shortage of published REH letters, the obvious must serve: "The Black Stone", "The Fire of Asshurbanipal", "The Thing on the Roof", "The Children of Night" and "The Worms of the Earth", each arising from or containing an ebony seed planted by Lovecraft, but each shaped into a hauntingly twisty bonsai by Howard. From the collaboration on the history of Von Juntz's UNAUSPRECHLICHEN KULTEN to the Pictish curse, "Black gods of R'lyeh, even you would I invoke to the ruin and destruction of these butchers!" Lovecraft's shadow hand was there.

In spite of little things like these, the verbal slugfest goes on--not that either HPL or REH is in any position to care. Others are driven up proverbial walls, one way or another.

"Mr. Sprague de Camp's stories are quite a bit more entertaining than Lovecraft's." To some readers, certainly. But I doubt that such a generalization holds absolutely true, considering the notoriously divergent tastes of fantasy fans; it obviously does not seem to work in the case of Professor Mosig.

"He (Sprague) is a much better writer than Lovecraft was. Could Lovecraft have written THE BRONZE GOD OF RHODES

OR THE TRITONIAN RING?" I have a hard time comparing Sprague with HPL, much less deciding that he's a "better writer"--unless one is speaking of financial success. de Camp's nonfiction, from his archaeological studies to his painstakingly-researched biographies, never fail to delight me; his fiction entertains while it bites. But his style and subject matter differ so radically from Lovecraft's that comparison is difficult. But why does one have to choose a "better writer" in the first place? Why not just let L. Sprague de Camp write as L. Sprague de Camp writes, and let Lovecraft be Lovecraft? The pertinent question seems to me to be not could HPL have written ANCIENT RUINS AND ARCHAEOLOGY or THE FALLIBLE FIEND, but would HPL have wanted to. Does de Camp want to write twenty pages of personal correspondence daily, THE COLOUR OUT OF SPACE, or TO QUEBEC AND THE STARS? As much as I enjoy de Camp's writing, bookstores would not be nearly such fascinating places if everyone wrote in his style. I'll allow subtlety to fend for itself and remark that the same line of analysis can be applied to Howard and Lovecraft as well; variety may not be the spice of life, but it is the lifeblood of fantasy.

"No! No! The whole thing is going to see print in yet another zine." By Crom, this sentence was beautiful to my eyes. Although Professor Mosig's conception of the role of the biographer agrees with mine--at least the viewpoint expressed in FC No. 7's lettercol does--I think that a toned-down book review followed up by a more detailed private correspondence with Sprague would have been much more effective insofar as he wished to encourage de Camp to revise his book. I doubt that Sprague hates HPL or wishes to assassinate his character; it wasn't necessary to hand down some kind of public conviction in order to force Sprague to consider reasonable revision.

Sprague should be commended for the calm open-mindedness that he maintained through the controversy. I only hope that his forthcoming TO QUEBEC AND THE STARS will be received as objectively.

John's letter is interesting not only for its obvious meaning but also because it brings to light the whole concept of (hopefully) friendly disagreement within fandom. I'm not a person who thrives on conflict, neither am I the sort who will go backwards for miles (figuratively) to avoid conflict. Conflict (I have learned over my 28 years of life) is a sign of possible growth. There was a time when I would keep my mouth shut rather than make a statement that would create conflict. More recently I've found that such a practice is more dangerous than facing the conflict head-on. Silence is construed to mean consent. I've heard too much bull-dung passed off as wisdom because no one dared be obnoxious enough to confront the jack-a-napes in our society.

That's why I disagree with certain parts of John's letter. It would ideally seem nice to have fandom avoid conflict and think as one mind. It's a nice peaceful vision. However, the mechanics of being human require that we constantly assess and test our beliefs. Argument and conflict are necessary facets of the genre if we're to be thinking humans. Therefore, I look to fandom for disagreement. I encourage debate until such time as it becomes personal affront instead of conflict of views. I commend both Dirk Mosig and L Sprague de Camp for their bravery. It is difficult to place one's views in print for the whole world to take pot shots at. "A toned-down book review" would have been an act of cowardice.

One must remember that fandom communicates thru its publications. There was no other means by which the mass of fandom would have become aware of both sides of the HPL issue without the Mosig review followed by the inevitable rebuttals. Again, debate and conflict are necessary facets of growth, and communication in fandom.

Let's we become complacent: here's another issue. In the recent issue of NIGHTSHADE (No. 3, see News Notes for or-

dering instructions) editor Ken Amos talks about the harm that the new rash of magazines can cause. He mentions such zines as **WHISPERS, FANTASY AND TERROR, MIDNIGHT SUN, MYRDDIN, WEIRD-BOOK** and **TOADSTOOL WINE**. To quote Ken: "These zines, when they become large in number, start to swallow up the first-class talent. Contributors naturally tend to submit work where they are paid in preference to giving away their work." **NIGHTSHADE** does not pay contributors other than giving them a copy of the magazine their work appears in plus the next subsequent issue. Many fanzines tend to thrive by only giving contributors copies. **FC** began that way. In fact we still do not compensate for non-fiction (i.e. articles, reviews, news info) except via a contributor's copy. We don't even give contributor's copies for LOCs. Letter writers get absolutely no compensation. We've begun (with **FC** No. 8) paying ½c per word for fiction and 10c per line for verse (with some exceptions) and that move was **NOT** forced upon us. We had dozens of accepted manuscripts by fictioneers and poets on hand for which the agreement was no compensation other than a contributor's copy. Of course, we are not holding those contributors to that out-dated agreement, they receive the same compensation now.

I realize that very few pro-writers will contribute material free (though de Camp received no compensation for his part in the extended debate). Despite that drawback, I feel there is an abundance of semi-pros and fans who only desire to see their work in print. The editor who cannot find first-class talent isn't looking hard enough. I'm rejecting work submitted to **FC** not because it isn't worthy of publication but because I don't want to bury it in my backlog. I brought out **FANTASY CROSSWINDS (FCW)** in order to get rid of a backlog. My backlog is even greater now than before I began **FCW**. In fact, I'm no longer accepting unsolicited manuscripts until after July 1, 1977. There is ample room in the genre for a multitude of quality fanzines and semi-prozines. No. one should be lacking for material. I just can't believe that ½c per word makes that much difference for most fan-contributors.

There's a new book out by Avon Books titled **THE FANTASTIC IMAGINATION**. It's edited by Robert Boyer and Kenneth Zahorski. The book is just barely in print and runs 304 pages. I have an uncorrected proof and the probable price listed is \$2.25. I don't know if that is the final price. The Boyer-Zahorski edited book is subtitled "An Anthology of High Fantasy". Obviously the book is edited with classroom use in mind. It includes a smattering of short fiction (including excerpts from novels and short stories) covering what the editors have termed **high fantasy**.

If I have a quarrel with the anthology at all, it is in the use of the term **high fantasy**. I recognize the need for categorization in literature. It's difficult to come to terms with literature or any area of studies without discussing similarities and dissimilarities of various works. We better understand when comparisons can be made and differences evaluated. Generalization and categorization are integral parts of life. Ignoring the abuses sometimes incumbent upon these functions, they are necessary to the living process. (i.e. without a Sword and Sorcery label how would the reader be able to specifically locate work in that genre to read and study). My argument is not with the process but with the term. The editors state that high fantasy consists of myth based tales and fairy tales. Respectively, examples are given as Alexander's **THE FOUNDLING AND OTHER TALES OF PRYDAIN** and **THE HOBBIT**.

If we have high fantasy then there must needs be low or at least medium fantasy. Boyer and Zahorski point out that it is sometimes easier to indicate what is not high fantasy. The ghost stories of Edgar Allen Poe are listed as not high fantasy. Are they then low fantasy? To my mind, a comprehensive study of all forms of fantasy needs to be done with terms established that do not themselves denigrate various forms of fantasy literature.

I'm sure in an academic setting it is easier to gain support for programs and courses of studies that deal with high fantasy.

After all, the title itself indicates that these stories are above the mass of looked down upon fantasy fiction. Let's arrive at some better labels.

By the way, I'm in no way trying to reflect negatively upon the character of editors Boyer or Zahorski. They've shown their skill and knowledge with a very enlightening collection of fiction. I applaud their efforts and recommend **THE FANTASTIC IMAGINATION** to you. I exist in an academic setting and know what fantasy fans must endure in the typically snobbish and elitist academic community. I just don't like giving the snobs fuel for their fire. All fiction should be judged upon its merits not upon its sub-genre or genre title.

The anthology includes work by Johann Ludwig Tieck "The Elves", George Mac Donald "The Light Princess", James Branch Cabell "The Music from Behind The Moon" and additional work by C. S. Lewis, Alexander, Buchan, Stockton and others.

## LIGEIA MAE

By Steve Troyanovich

for Robert Bloch

what with all them commemorative  
e-vents and hell-raisin' celybration,  
i suppoze that they'll eventually  
forgive you, Ligeia Mae. after all  
it weren't really your fault. you  
didn't invent those damn Bicen toilet  
seats or them rent-a-July-the-Fourth  
hearse---and as for killin' him, hell!  
how was you suppozed to know ol' George's  
blood count was so low? now, i know what  
your'e gonna say. true, Jeff was a good  
ol' boy and he did warn you about that---  
but hell, it were partly his own fault  
anyhow---what with those halfass inventions  
of his'n. why, Ligeia Mae, if it weren't  
for ol' TJ tell'in you that he'd fix your  
teeth for half price with his new machine  
between polytickin' i do believe that you'd  
be alright today. but like i was sayin',  
don't you worry about that---cause if you  
wanna re-tire we got us a passel of blood-  
suckers in Washin'ton that can take your place.

# DARKSHIRE'S MONSTER

By Howard (Gene) Day

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He had not always been alone; left to wander the expanses of the cool forest overlooking and surrounding the village of Darkshire. No, not always.

Yet the era of the Eaters was so deeply lost in the misty recesses of time that they existed now only as vague memories in the mind of He Who Ate. Often those ancient visions would curl their talons into the stuff of his dreams; and once there, The Eater would toss the night in agony at what had been forever lost. Only then, wracked by those intense nightmares, would the Eater cry, then and no other.

But now was not the night. It was the day, and the days filled the Eater's foggy mind with visions of only food, images to spark his ravenous, terrible hunger throughout every waking hour.

Great Darkshire was like some musty, deep ocean of greenery, splashed with the brilliant gold, purple and crimson that marked the presence of a host of glorious and often deadly floral and fauna.

This grand stage, with its towering oaks and elms and gerbans, was the Eater's domain. Here, it was that he reigned supreme. Here, it was that he ruled and ate. Yet he was not completely without the poacher, nor was he without enemies.

The hairless ones tormented him continuously, striving to implant their horrid sting sticks within the warm bulk of his flesh. And only by continual stealth had the Eater managed to stay alive to rule, within the massive expanse of the forest of Darkshire. Only stealth -- and the fact that the hairless ones feared him to the point of madness.

The very thought of this fear, and the fear of the beasts of the forest, exhilarated the Eater's appetite to a new high. It was the feeding of this fear, so heavy he could almost taste it, that enabled the Eater to carry on in the face of impending doom at the hands of his would-be usurpers.

Such was the Eater's state of mind when he first saw the female hairless-one.

She stood waist deep in the icy waters of the lakeside, bathing in the magical sun-glistening pool of lapping waves and waving fronds. Overhead the golden orb of Sol dried the tiny beads of blue that ran down her exposed upper body.

Even the Eater was stirred, as he watched her from his shadow-infested place of concealment some hundred yards away. Her full young breasts bobbed freely as she frolicked about among the lilies and horn-toads.

The Eater pushed these petty feelings aside. More important matters filled his thoughts, true emotions awakened to their fullest extent. "Here lies food," they told him. And he had not yet dined this day.

Like some large feline cat, the Eater slid from the stygian dark of Darkshire's foliage and edged forward, his great humped back hunched and aching. Breath slowly whistled from his twisted barrel chest, his breast rising ever so slightly as he moved.

Still the human female-one was unaware.

She sang.



Ailm Urbhur crashed through heavy, biting thorns until at last, cursing, he broke through into a clearing in the wood. He turned, wiping steamy sweat away from his sun bronzed brow, to observe the brothers CulHain breaking from the dense blanket of green Darkshire.

"Come on, you laggards," Ailm called to the pair, his voice taunt and as hot with anger as the sun, high above in the August air. "That thrice damned beast is still out there and we are no closer to killing the slimy monstrosity now, than we were some ten days back!"

"Canna be helped!" It was Klon speaking. He, like his brother, Klin, appeared to be physically opposite from the characteristics that marked the black maned, boisterous Ailm. They were both slight of build, blonde tossed and frail of colour and limb. But their appearance was deceiving, for they were both huntsmen and could fling a spear as deadly as could any man.

It was Klin's turn to speak. "Me brother's right, Ailm. We've followed you through this green inferno until our feet fairly rot with blisters. . . and still no sign of the creature."

Ailm grunted his displeasure and disgust at Klin's words, but nodded in defeat.

"Aye, ye are both right. And I hunger to return to the village and my new wife. The damn beast has lead us a merry chase for sure, for we are now not more than an hour's march from the village itself. What say you? Do we return and to the hells with whoever the thing's next victim be?"

The brothers CulHain grunted their grateful agreement.

Dampened by depression in spirit, the three moved forward from the clearing and into the swallowing green-black pit that was Darkshire.

The Eater stopped but once during his skulking of the smooth skinned female thing. A rodent, small and insignificant, chanced to flit across his stealthy path. The sight of food so close, drove the Eater into a frenzy. All caution tossed to the wind, he half-grunted -- half-roared as he quickly grasped the rodent within the hold of his hairy twisted hands, and from there popped the living beast into his gaping, slaving mouth.

It was during that moment of weakness and that uttering of his hunger, that the female became aware of his presence. Jerking her eyes upward in his direction, the female spotted his matty fur among the branches of the thicket. And she screamed the scream of nightmares as she recognized his ugly, misshapen form, recalled from horror tales told each night around the ring of the campfire.

Still screaming, she turned and crashed through the previously still surface of the sunwarmed lake of Darkshire.

But the Eater was already finished with his tiny, poor meal and his attention was once again resting upon the lithe, supple form of the fleeing hysterical female. Her smooth skin beckoned



and a new feeling came welling up within him, tearing his brain in two. And for the first time, his feelings of hunger were overridden.

Never before had the Eater known the dreams of the day, but even now visions of the nightmares he so often had, flooded his dim mind. Visions of what had been, with other females. Not smooth-skinned creatures like the one in the waters before him, but of others, similar more to himself, than to the hairless ones. They had existed in a time when his kind had been slightly altered from the way he appeared now.

And for the first time in many long and grueling centuries, the Eater did indeed thirst for more than food. He lusted.

He was nearly upon the screaming girl, for he had merely to reach out and pluck her from the waters. His hand a blur of movement, he felt his talons groping, ripping, seizing the soft, pink flesh of the hairless female. He screeched in a language he did not understand -- the voice of his past, and howling with glee threw himself upon the swooning human thing.

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"A girl!" Ailm cried. "By the gods, I hear a girl's screams!" He broke from the party and began racing frantically in the direction of the cool, lake breezes. From ahead of him, buried somewhere within that mass of twisting roots and bent boughs the screams continued.

Klin and Klon were hastily gaining at his heels as the three raced at breakneck speeds through the damp, groping foilage and underbrush of Darkshire, tripping and stumbling their way towards the lakeshore.

Ahead the screams continued, reaching a new pitch of . . . revulsion? It was difficult to determine what could rip such cries of pitiful anguish from human lips.

The party broke from the living hothouse into a small clearing that lead to the cool, lapping surface of the blue lake of Darkshire Loch. And there lay the source of the screams which had just now become silent.

The Eater looked up slowly from where he stood over the cringing, unconscious female to where the intruders stood frozen in horror. Hairless males! And with sting-sticks! He must flee!

The scene brought a cry of anguish and torment from Ailm's sun-blistered lips.

"By the gods. . . NO! Tis my wife! MY WIFE!" Sickness flooded his muscular form. "He has slain her!"

"Better that he had, Ailm," whispered Klin CulHain. "The thing's not used her for food. . . but made her his mate!" The mere thought of that slaving, foul creature and what had transpired between it and his slender, frail wife was enough to break the mind of Ailm Urbhur. He stepped forward in what would have been a charge of revenge, but stopped dead, and screaming once in horrible torment, fell headlong to the earth in a convulsion of lunacy.



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Knowing him beyond their help, the brothers CulHain ignored their slobbering companion and set forth to the slaying of the monstrosity.

The Eater knew he was to die. The deadly sting sticks would kill him for sure before he could flee to the concealment of the shadows of Darkshire. Doomed. Being in such a position, his mad, bizarre emotions left him with but one alternative.

With a roar so terrible, it froze the CulHain brothers in their footsteps, the Eater tore at the flesh of its chest, ripping it into gory raglike shreds. And tearing its still pumping heart from its own torso, managed to drive that gruesome organ down its gaping maw before it fell dead upon the waving grasses of the lakeside.

With him died the memories of a hundred centuries. Died the visions of lust and love and the hunger for food. With him died. . . the Eaters.

#### 5 - Epilog

Some months later, it is said, the wife of Alim Urbhur did call upon the village mystic to give aid in the birth of her child. She was pregnant, the villagers said, but not from the loins of her own betrothed for he had died stricken with madness, after his trek into the woods in search of the Eater (from which he never actually returned). Beyond that, was the fact, that the pregnancy had lasted no more than four turns of the moon.

The village Mystic had shoved those facts aside when agreeing to aid her, coming to his own conclusions that she had no doubt been a lusty wench and had mated with some hamlet young lad before her wedding feast. And so he had went to aid her in the bearing of the child.

After that, it seems, the story is lost in haziness and half-guesses. None knew, or wished to know, the complete truth.

But it is said, that at birth, the Mystic had held the baby in his withered old arms and carried it into the torchlight. And on doing so, had screamed, tossing the child back upon the bed where its mother lay.

Once there, the child had opened its great yellow eyes and slowly looked about, and uttered its first and only word.

"Food?" It had sputtered and then had commenced to feast upon the flesh of his mother, the mystic and several observing rodents that had previously been hiding, frightened and rightly so, somewhere in the fool, dark corners of the chamber.



# THE TEMPLE OF NEPHRENKA

By Philip J. Rahman & J.A. McKraken  
(dedicated to Robert Bloch)

Lt. Degreve stood motionless, resting his hand on an ancient column while his eyes adjusted to the shadowy tunnel. Slowly, the cool basaltic walls seemed to catch the dim light of the lanterns that had been set up that morning and the murky passage materialized.

Degreve strode down the long colonnade with sharp, quick steps. Dr. Brumaire had sketches and measurements enough for one day, he thought. If they did not pack up now, they would have to end their ride back to the garrison in El Fayium by dark.

"Brumaire!"

The lieutenant's tone had not been loud, but the dusky grey stone caught his voice and sent it rebounding. Degreve scanned the black shadows of the myriad pillars that flanked either side of the ageless fane. Brumaire was nowhere to be seen. Degreve waited a moment for the familiar shuffle of the old doctor's feet to sound on the hard, stone floor from behind the massive idol that dominated the temple or out of one of the dark alcoves hidden amid the pillars.

Degreve snorted. The doddering old fool must be lost in his work again. The lieutenant stepped further into the ancient hall and glanced fleetingly on the stone titan that sat enthroned at the end of the colonnade. The unsteady light of the torches and lamps played over the falcon-headed god, casting liquid shadows that endowed the stiff features of the idol with a discomfiting illusion of life.

"Brumaire!" he called again more sharply.

The echoes fairly exploded, startling the young officer with the violence of their retort. The lieutenant swallowed a breath of air and waited for the verbal thunder to recede. As the last echoes died, a jarring clatter of heavy boots sounded behind him.

The lieutenant spun on his heels toward the entrance of the temple. Rushing into it came the lumbering figure of his private, Carnot, and their guide, a slight fellow called Farabi. Pvt. Carnot hastily saluted and after an awkward pause inquired after the shouting.

"That fool Brumaire is either asleep or deaf," said the lieutenant. "Find him and tell him we are leaving immediately." Carnot saluted hastily and shuffled off into the shadows.

The oppressive atmosphere of the temple had put an edge on Degreve's growing impatience and a scowl hardened his features. He turned at the sound of returning feet.

"He is not here, Lieutenant," reported the French private.

"Not here? Impossible!" Degreve waved Carnot away. "Search the temple again!"

"If I might speak, effendi," Farabi whispered. "I warned Dr. Brumaire of the evil reputation of this valley and the temple it conceals.

"The shrines of the ancient kings are abominations in the sight of Allah and are haunted by unclean spirits and evil djinn. To linger here is to put your body, mind and soul in terrible peril, for those wretched few the djinn do not put to death, the Black Messenger enters and makes his own."

Carnot's voice echoed from the back of the oblong temple, hushing the words of Farabi.

"Lieutenant," the private called, "I've found Brumaire's notebook!"

The massive infantryman looked like a small child beneath the huge granite statue of the falcon-headed god. Near the idol glowed a set of several lanterns that had been moved there to illuminate the hieroglyphic inscription on its base.

Degreve flipped through the doctor's notes and frowned. There was nothing in it but meaningless transcriptions, the last of them abandoned half finished. They searched about the base

of the stone god and then examined the walls for any concealed passageway the doctor might have accidentally discovered.

"There is a trick used by certain tomb robbers," offered Farabi reluctantly. "It is said that often a small draft may be detected from concealed tunnels if a torch is passed slowly across the wall where it is hidden."

"Well, do so," snapped Degreve, ordering Carnot to fetch three torches from their supplies. When the private returned, the lieutenant thrust one into the Arab's brown hand and took another for himself. The guide stepped toward the north wall where the streak had pointed while Pvt. Carnot inexpertly checked the east wall behind the statue.

Lt. Degreve passed his torch around the corners of the plinth and altar of the idol. The torch revealed nothing but dusty shards of shattered vessels, broken by past looters. Quietly, he cursed the missing scholar for his carelessness, himself for not posting Private Carnot to watch Brumaire, and General Bonaparte for ever encouraging civilians to join his Egyptian Expedition. Brumaire was a man not without influence; it would look very bad if he did not return with him.

"Effendi!" called the Egyptian excitedly. "Observe." Farabi passed the torch slowly across the roughly carved stones. There was a faint stir at one point, hardly noticeable. He passed the brand back and forth slowly as the slight flicker repeated itself again at the same point along the wall.

The deft hands of the Egyptian felt the stones for some kind of hidden catch. He pressed on a smaller block with a basrelief of an eye. A sly grin touched his lips; it gave way. The eye slid six inches into the block and then stopped. Farabi returned to the spot where the torch had not been disturbed and motioned the two soldiers to help him push.

A section of the wall swung freely on a pivot, releasing a stale, charnel draft from the black aperture revealed. The light of Farabi's torch disclosed a narrow doorway at the end of a short, roughly hewn corridor.

Lt. Degreve looked at Carnot and then back at Farabi in disbelief. He began to take an impetuous step over the threshold when Farabi's quick hand shot out and grabbed his arm.

"Have caution, effendi," he nervously warned the lieutenant. "If your doctor went down this passage, it could not have been of his own volition. The fellahin tell many terrible stories of men who have wandered near this place and not returned. This valley belongs to the arch-demon, Iblis, and to forgotten gods older than he."

Degreve grunted for silence. He had no more respect for the superstitions of the fellahin that he did for the ancient heathens that had created the temple. He ordered Carnot to fetch the rest of the torches and a length of rope in case the doctor had fallen into a pit.

When all was prepared, Degreve entered the dark corridor first followed by the reluctant Farabi, sandwiched between the lieutenant and Pvt. Carnot.

"Do not go before the light and take care where you place your feet," counselled Farabi. "The old race of Egypt built many hidden pits and cunning deathfalls into their sacred temples to discourage thieves and desecraters."

Carefully moving the torch about the mouth of the tunnel, the young officer took a tentative step. He listened, but heard only the soft rustle of his two companions as they cautiously followed.

The corridor was short; they reached the narrow doorway with a dozen halting steps. Thrusting a torch before them, they peered into the secret chamber. The smooth, gesso-coated walls blazed orange in the torchlight, although their true color was a deep saffron. Crowded upon them were strange glyphs and fierce portraits of polymorphic deities. Towering over all was a terrible, divine sentinel carved of black granite. The ibis-headed god stood squarely confronting the three men, his arm stiffly extended as if to command them to abandon their sacrilegious intrusion.

Farabi's lemuroid eyes swelled in superstitious wonder as he

prayed in Arabic that his young, foreign god, Allah, might shield him from the indignation of the Forgotten Ones.

Lt. Degreve shook off the awe that momentarily froze him and scanned the room for any sign of the missing scholar. It contained nothing but inscrutable frescos and the mute tutelary. Behind the twelve foot statue, buried in its quaking shadow, was an ornate bronze door, stained with verdigris. As the torches were moved closer, they found it hung ajar. Three feet into the adjacent chamber loomed a rugged wall that ran from either wall and flush with the ceiling. The stones were so poorly dressed and fitted as to suggest great haste in its erection.

Degreve was on the verge of conceding that Brumaire had been spirited off the earth by demons when he began to notice that the all-pervasive, mephitic stench seemed stronger in the blocked room.

"There, in the corner--a hole." Lt. Degreve moved his torch toward the roughly excavated opening in the southwest corner of the barricade.

"Brumaire must have gone through here," said Degreve, kneeling beside the opening.

"This is madness," said the Egyptian, his voice dry with fear. "Brumaire has been taken by ghouls. We must flee this place before the same fate befalls us."

Degreve scowled irritably; the boundaries of reality and myth, so basic and essential to a European were totally lost upon the Moslem.

"Do you think I might persuade my captain that your superstitions are an excuse for failure in Bonaparte's army?"

"Die if you wish, effendi, but let me go back. This place is accursed: it bares the brand of the demon Iblis--the Black Messenger of Karneter, the Stealer of Souls."

"Legends! Can you utter nothing but legends?" the Frenchman snapped.

Degreve angrily drew his cavalry saber and held the tip menacingly at the throat of the paled guide.

"You will not leave here until we do. Until then, you will follow."

Lt. Degreve crouched beside the tunnel and explored its opening with his torch. The jagged hole shrank to a diameter of less than three feet before it passed through the thick wall.

"Send Farabi in after me," he ordered. "Shoot him if he tries to desert."

Degreve stood up and tried to catch his breath in the dense, unreal atmosphere of the chamber. Already, the narrow tunnel that opened by his feet was orange with the light of Farabi's torch. Then, as the smooth gesso walls caught his light, he noticed a dark silhouette sprawled on the floor of the chamber, perhaps thirty feet away.

Ordering his men to hurry, Lt. Degreve rushed to the prostrate, gangly figure of Dr. Brumaire, who lay lifelessly beside his extinguished torch. The young officer rolled the scholar onto his back and listened for his heartbeat. Seizing the doctor by his shoulders, he shook him to consciousness.

An eye flickered and the grey-bearded antiquarian moaned softly. For a long moment the doctor stared into the tense face of Lt. Degreve without seeming to recognize him.

"Forgive me. . ." he muttered, "this air--I must have passed out." Brumaire awkwardly felt about his coat and found his pince-nez.

Surrounding them in lurid colors and a style alien to any of the hieroglyphs or paintings they had previously glimpsed were scores of shocking murals.

In a large panel that commanded attention was depicted a pindly pharaoh on a tall, ornate throne. To him came men dressed differently than the Egyptians, a pale-skinned embassy with long, black hair that trailed to the base of their spines and tendrils that hung down in front of their ears and over their chests. The leader of the embassy, a prince who wore a plumed headdress, presented to the king a strange, black jewel of many facets that rested in a yellow box of odd geometry.

"What manner of place is this?" muttered the lieutenant, drinking in the vivid portraits and nightmarish scenes.

"They form a historical narrative," offered the doctor. "One so startling I am forced to connect it with legends of the heretical pharaoh, Nephren Ka, whose terrible history is hinted of in the fragments of Manetho preserved by Africanus."

In a series of vignettes, slaves were seen erecting a new temple filled with crude, elongated idols of alien design. The images of the venerated gods of Egypt were smashed and cast from their pedestals and new, more terrifying gods elevated. In the new temple, the mad pharaoh was depicted brandishing a curved blade and putting slaves to death with the aid of scarletclad acolytes. Behind him towered a new figure, a dark man of cyclopean dimension, robed in blood red and of terrifying evil and unyielding visage.

"The pictures portray Nephren Ka's abandonment of the traditional gods of Egypt for the Dark One." See how the old priests are blasted by the Dark One or fallen upon by his legion of subordinate demons.

These hordes were the most terrible images depicted. They filled the latter panels, attacking people, stealing children and defiling the embalmed dead. Farabi recognized them as the most feared djinn of the desert, remembered even to his generation, and known to the Bedouin as **qutrubs**. In paintings that must have been even more abominable to the death-revering Egyptians, the scrawny, gibbonous ghouls crawled about performing nauseating acts of defilement and desecration.

They were hook-beaked, black and shaggy with apish bodies and long talons. With these, they ripped apart the cotton wrappings of royal mummies, dismembered them, and feasted on the dry fragments. In one insane mural the Pharaoh was seen actually taking part in this necrophagia.

Tearing his eyes from the walls, Degreve turned once more to the bland, unmoved figure of Brumaire and demanded an explanation of how he had gotten to this hidden room of blasphemies.

The doctor paused to gather his thoughts. "The entrance was partly open. I noticed it while copying the inscription on the statue of Horus in the Hall of Pillars. I must have sprung some ancient trap--it closed behind me and I was forced to go forward until I found this room."

Degreve scowled in exasperation. He cursed his ill-fortune that he should be assigned to watch over such a senile fool, who knew no responsibilities save his pointless research.

"I should have listened to Farabi and left you here to die."

While the lieutenant took the doctor to task, Pvt. Carnot decided to explore the strange chamber. It was a long room with a downward sloping floor ornamented with macabre mosaics whose themes were as grim as those of the murals. Toward the far end of the room was a curious structure shaped like a squat, truncated cone some eight feet in diameter. Upon examination, he found it to be some kind of shaft or well. He bent over to peer into its foul-smelling depths as Lt. Degreve called him back. Reluctantly, he turned to rejoin the company.

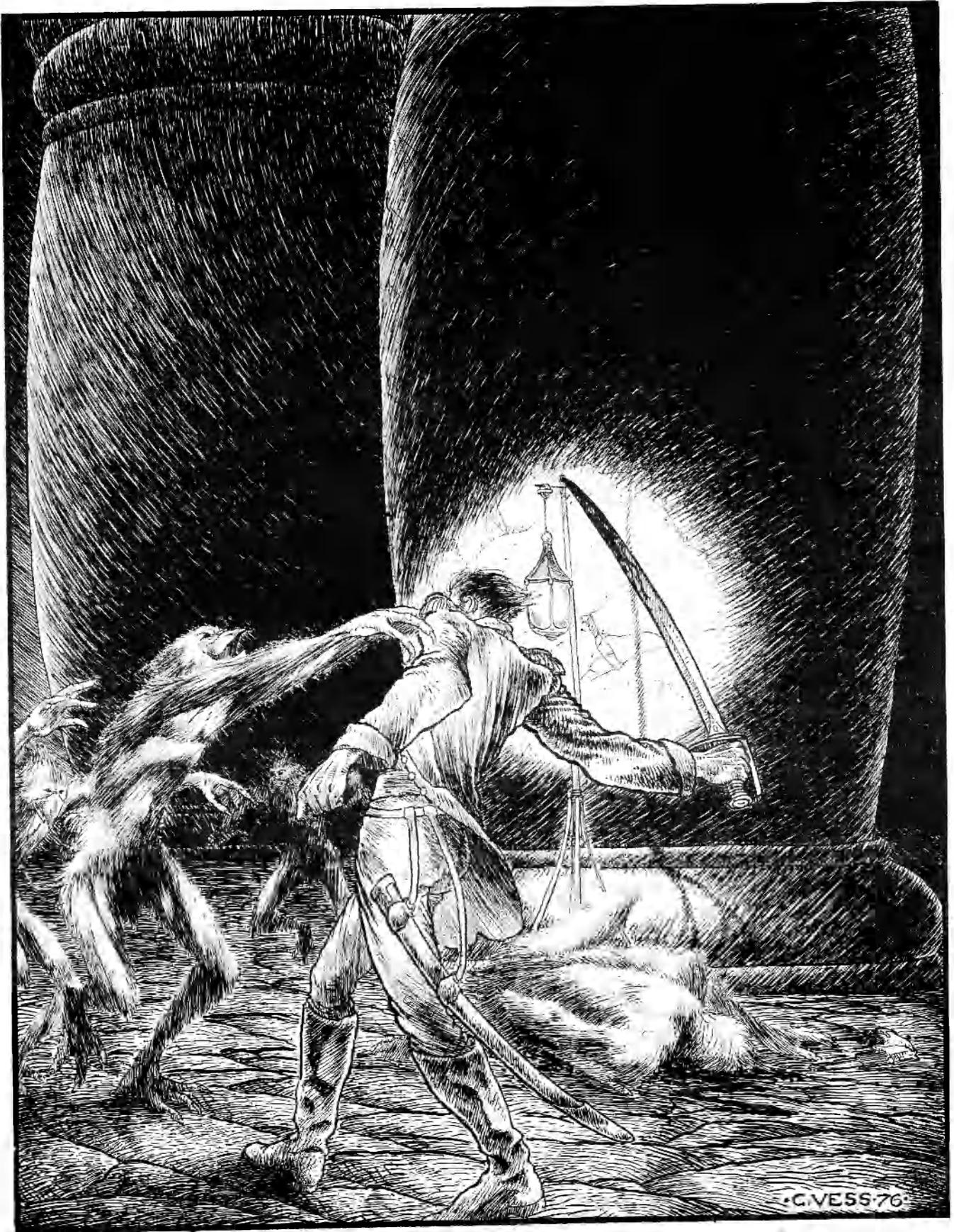
Farabi had already slipped through the tunnel, eager to escape the horrible murals. Brumaire, still protesting that he should have more time to study the paintings, followed.

Carnot hurried to the lieutenant, reporting his find and muttering something about a rustling noise he heard issuing deep below the shaft.

"Nothing more than rats. Now, follow me."

When Degreve reached the other side, he handed his torch to Brumaire and offered his hand to help the unwieldy Carnot through the narrow opening.

Suddenly a strange pallor swept across the face of the private and he twisted his features in a hoarse scream. Carnot's hand closed crushing upon Degreve's. Carnot cried and jabbered for help, but he lost his grip on the startled lieutenant and slid into the black hole.



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Degreve jerked back his torch from the doctor after cocking his pistol as the private's lunatic, guttural wails poured from the other side. As a shaggy hand reached through the tunnel, Degreve flung himself away from the opening, firing blindly. A shrill screech sounded that jarred the young officer out of his fear-inspired torpor. Seizing the old doctor by his wrist and screaming an inarticulate warning, he fled the walled-up room as unseen hands pulled the dead monstrosity back into the darkness.

With their hearts rising to their throats, the three men bolted through the saffron-colored room, through the narrow corridor and back into the Hall of Pillars. Degreve caught a breath of what he hoped would be clean air, but was almost strangled by the intensity of the stench.

A shrill hoot assailed his ears at the same instant that a fetid black shadow leaped at him. The lieutenant staggered back as crooked talons ripped through the blue fabric of his jacket and gouged deeply into the flesh beneath. His stumble threw him against Brumaire whose body steadied him long enough to allow him to bring his still smoldering pistol down crushingly into the hideous beaked face of the scrawny thing of bone and coarse fur.

While Lt. Degreve pulled himself loose, Farabi gasped and was knocked to the floor as another creature leaped at his throat. The frailer Egyptian was fallen upon by yet more of the hellish beings lunging from the shadows.

Degreve struck wildly with his saber, first at his own reeking attackers and then at the obscenities that crouched over the fallen guide. Slowly, sanity rallied inside his brain and he leaned against the column for support when he realized the fight was over.

Brumaire bent over the prostate, bloody Farabi and slowly examined him. Degreve shut his eyes and turned from the sickening sight revealed in the dim light. The Egyptian lay twisted with his throat torn out; beside him lay one of the slain ghouls with his dagger buried deeply into its chest. About him sprawled two other slaughtered devils, more hideous in flesh than in a thousand tomb paintings. Shaggy, wattled and vulture

beaked--Farabi had called them **qutrubs**, eaters of the dead.

Brumaire softly touched one of the dead ghouls and sighed. "My poor slave," he said gently.

"What's the matter with you?" The fouled, clawed lieutenant looked at the venerable Parisian scholar. "Have you been driven mad?"

But when the man calmly looked up at him, he saw not the face of Brumaire, but a cruel, swarthy visage bearing an ironic, uncompromising smile. Degreve shrunk back toward the mouth of the accursed fane.

The dark man rose to his full height and followed after the lieutenant. "A pity you could not read the warning above the image of Thoth," he said.

The young officer whirled and bolted into the night. What he had brought out of the secret fane was not Brumaire but an undying devil. His hopes of escape shattered when he saw the slaughtered horses. He hurriedly loaded his pistol as he fled over the sand.

At the top of a dune he turned toward the entrance of the temple and pulled back the hammer of his weapon. For an instant his finger froze in astonishment as the dark, pursuing shape began to swell in the fainter light and take on a nightmarishly inhuman silhouette, but then the lieutenant saw no more as the powder exploded in his face and a sheath of fire burst from within him and enveloped his screaming body in roaring flames.

The dark man lingered at the edge of the conflagration, his features lean and reddened in the light of the blaze. The charred body broke and crumbled upon the sand.

Slowly the tall figure turned from the pyre and strode toward the mouth of the tunnel where the hook-beaked ghouls awaited him. He regarded them quietly in the dying glow of the cremation as they gathered about him in the dark mass. Then, as the night breeze scattered the remaining ashes of the invader, he motioned them silently and they followed him back into the temple of Nephren Ka.

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This is an unexpected news item that I frankly had not expected to ever announce. I've just been informed that due to dropping enrollment at Graceland College and a top heavy administration (i. e. too many administrators) that the administration is being re-organized and my responsibilities will be handled by other personnel.

Effective July 1, 1977; I no longer have a job. Therefore, for the foreseeable future **STYGIAN ISLE PRESS** is closing its doors. There will be no further issues until I find a new job and get situated in it. That may be months or years. I thank you all for your support in the past two years of publishing. You've all been very supportive. One final thing, **FANTASY CROSSWINDS** No. 3 will be ready about the same time as this issue. If I can't get **FCW** No. 4 printed within another month, I'll be refunding money for it. The **ALMURIC PORTFOLIO** by Fabian will definitely see print before May 1977. Thanks again for your patience and support.

Editor

