A CIMMERIAN WORTHY OF THE NAME, PART TWO

Leo Grin’s first editorial of his prozine’s second volume is ebullient:

It’s the end of The Cimmerian’s first year of existence, and the numbers are impressive. Five issues published in nine months. Hundreds of copies sold. Thousands of dollars pumped into Howard studies. For the first time ever, Howard fans have a thriving, paying market to contribute to. Readers have embraced the journal to a degree that bodes well for the future, making it well worth the time and effort to continue publishing at a steady pace.

... 

For far too long, Howard studies has been comprised of a motley assortment of sluggish publications that have faltered, stumbled, and remained stagnant, while journals in other areas of fandom—Lovecraft Studies, Crypt of Cthulhu—marched steadily forward. Friends, those days are over. The momentum is ours.

(p. 3)

And so it would be, for a while. The second volume of TC is decorated outside (in green) and in with art of the new illustrator, Joe Woo Kim. Its limited edition covers are also green in color.

REHupan Rob Roehm opens the sixth issue (February, 2005) with “Howard’s Ruin,” an account of the discovery, by him and his father Bob, of the very spot Howard had had his photograph taken in 1933 at Fort McKavett near Menard, Tex., a visit to which Grin himself had described in TC’s fourth issue (see the previous installment in this series). Rob had been inspired to make the quest by the cover of The Dark Man #7 featuring the postcard photo, despite the failures by others to discover the exact location and despite the lengthy drive required from California and back. The article describes the Roehms’ first visit to the Cross Plains area and the Howard Museum, and then the detective work they did to identify the exact spot of the photo based on close examination of the brickwork background. Of course they finished off with a photo of Rob standing in the same spot, as several REHupans did a couple years later.

This article won Roehm the first-place 2005 Cimmerian (“Hyrkanian”) Award for Best Essay. [1] As Grin commented, “Just like with the Howard House, it’s great to have another place of
pilgrimage to go to, where fans can connect with Howard’s ghost in a palpable manner.” [1, p. 39]

The next essay, “Inspirations from Life” by REHupan Gary Romeo, is an insightful examination of a possible source of inspiration for the Conan adventure “Red Nails.” When asked where they get their ideas, fiction writers typically say, “From life.” When Howard gives such an answer to his girlfriend Novalyne Price, she replies that she hasn’t seen any 10-foot rattlesnakes and naked women screaming for help lately. REH replied, “Oh, but I have.” Was he referring just to products of his active imagination, perhaps as escape from the mundaneness of everyday life, or was he extrapolating from the Texas landscape and history with which he was so fascinated, in order to add realism? He had worked Texas history into his fiction before (changing character and place names), such as the creation of Lake Brownwood in “Wild Water” and the life of gunfighter Hendry Brown in “Vultures of Wahpeton.”

Romeo sees a parallel between Billy the Kid’s involvement in the Lincoln County War in 1878 New Mexico and the bloody tribal feud taking place in the isolated, haunted city of Xuchotl depicted in “Red Nails.” Howard describes the War in a 1931 letter to Lovecraft: “Truly the bloody Lincoln County War is the saga of the Southwest; glory and shame and murder and courage and cruelty and hate flaming into raw, red primitive drama, while through all stalked the gigantic shadow-shape of Billy the Kid, dominating all—as if that crimson feud were but the stage set for his brief stellar role—his star that flamed suddenly up and was suddenly extinguished.” (p. 14) REH finally visited the area and, in July 1935, the same month that he submitted “Red Nails” to Weird Tales, he wrote a long letter to HPL about his trip, stating how profoundly the area had affected him and describing the long, serpentine Hondo Valley supplying the woods, orchards, and fields with life-giving water. “The verdant green offers a strange contrast to the grim and savage bareness of the hills that rise on either hand. Semi-tropical luxuriance gives way abruptly to gaunt nakedness ... And so in the still laziness of a Mexican mid-morning we came to the ancient village of Lincoln.” (p. 15) This is certainly suggestive of the wilderness surrounding Xuchotl. Howard continues:

Lincoln is a haunted place; it is a dead town; yet it lives with a life that died fifty years ago ... I think geography is the reason for the unusually savage and bloodthirsty manner in which the feud was fought out, a savagery that has impressed everyone who has ever made an intelligent study of the feud and the psychology behind it. The valley in which Lincoln lies is isolated from the rest of the world. ... The people in Lincoln lost touch with the world. Isolated as they were, their own affairs, their relationship with one another, took on an importance and significance out of proportion to their actual meaning. Thrown together too much, jealousies and resentments rankled and grew, feeding upon themselves, until they reached monstrous proportions and culminated in those bloody atrocities which startled even the tough West of that day ... I have heard of people going mad in isolated places; I believe the Lincoln County War was tinged with madness. (p.16)

This also seems similar to the hate-fueled conflict between the isolated tribes of the Tecuhtlians and Xotalancas in “Red Nails.” Valeria thinks, “It was a ghastly, unreal nightmare existence these people lived, shut off from the rest of the world, caught together like rabid rats in the same trap, butchering one another through the years, crouching and creeping through the sunless corridors to maim and torture and murder.” (p.17) REH even describes Billy the Kid in terms much in the same vein as he does Conan: “... he was a cold-blooded murderer ..., but he was loyal to his friends, honest in his way, truthful, possessed of a refinement in thought and conversation...
rare even in those days, and no man ever lived who was braver than he. He belonged in an older, wilder age of blood-feuds and rapine and war.” (p. 13) Romeo would add this story to other pop-cultural works inspired by Billy the Kid (though he misspells “Copland”).

In his “Hyborian Genesis, Part III,” dated 2005, Louinet advances the same theory for the inspiration of “Red Nails.” If he was aware of Romeo’s essay, he does not mention it. We noted similar deficiencies in the references of the Conan of Cimmeria books in our previous installment, though in this case Louinet’s essay might have predated Romeo’s. Louinet also points out that an undated synopsis for a Steve Harrison detective story (including a feud) bearing strong similarities to the Conan tale was found among Howard’s papers. [2]

In discussing Howard’s ideas regarding the conflict between civilization and barbarism, Louinet calls “Red Nails” the story of a civilization’s decadence and decay carried to its logical conclusion. He also sees parallels to REH’s life at the time:

Written at a time when Howard’s mother’s health was declining at an alarming rate, her body slowly decaying under her son’s eyes toward a conclusion that was as inevitable as it was obvious, the last Conan story is a tale which is particularly rich in resonance with the terrible events that were happening in Howard’s life and mind at the time he was composing the story. [3]

In “Hyborian Genesis, Part III,” Louinet continues:

Xuchotl is an “unnatural” city ... To be civilized is to be entirely removed from nature and its forces. This is the reason why the city is not only cut off from the rest of the Hyborian world and its barbarian tribes; it is also, and equally importantly, cut off from nature itself: Xuchotl is completely paved, walled and roofed; the light is artificial and so is the food ... As to the Xutchotlians [sic] themselves, all—save Tascela—were born in the city. Xuchotl is the epitome of a decayed civilization as Howard conceived it. It is the place where, as he had it, “the abnormal becomes normal.” Given these premises, the outcome of the story is not a surprise. [4]

REHupan David A. Hardy expands on this in an article on the psychological themes in “Red Nails,” saying that the story reveals an understanding of how people exist in relation to the savage inner core of man’s nature, which is shaped by his surroundings. [5]

One of L. Sprague de Camp’s strengths was his knowledge of the history of early civilizations. This and his familiarity with Howard’s fantasy, of which he was one of the first editors, enabled him to notice the similarity between the attempted assassination scene in “The Phoenix on the Sword” and the successful assassination of Spanish conquistador Don Francisco Pizarro in 1541 Peru. In the fanzine Amra, de Camp advanced the thesis that REH had drawn the inspiration for that fight from his intense readings of history, which he had the talent for absorbing, modifying, and utilizing in his own writing. [6] “[H]is reading was the solid bedrock on which he built his extravagant castles of imagination,” Hardy observes in the next entry in this issue of TC, his “Conquistadors of Doom.” Hardy traces the events that led the larger-than-life Pizarro to his bloody end and compares the action and dialog in “Phoenix” to those recorded in Peru, as did de Camp, but also to those in “By This Axe I Rule!,” the rejected Kull tale that essentially served as a first draft for the Conan story. Hardy finds that de Camp’s thesis stands up well in both cases, confirming REH’s use of William Prescott’s historical account as his source.
Hardy wonders what appealed to Howard about Pizarro, considering the Spaniard’s unbridled greed and brutal imperialism in the name of progress and civilization, which made him so unlike REH’s heroes and so at odds with Howard’s own contempt for historical conquerors. Hardy decides that the appeal lies in the fact that Pizarro, Kull, and Conan were all warriors who had risen from the lowest strata of society to make themselves kings. REH might have also intended to make his protagonist the mirror image of Pizarro, carrying out usurpation in order to restore justice and to replace a tyrant who had forfeited any right to rule. Hardy states: “The conquistador is much like any other conqueror in the real world. But in fiction we see the world as it should be. That is Howard’s great strength as a writer, in a fictional world as corrupt and cruel as the real one he posits heroes of great strength who can use that to right wrong. He could arrange his fiction any way he liked, and he gave that great drama of death and struggle to a hero who has our undivided sympathy.” (pp. 20 & 21) Hardy also takes advantage of recent archaeological research that finally led to the locating of Pizarro’s bones, which bear witness to the conquistador’s violent end. The scientific case for this identification was made by Dr. William Maples, a forensic anthropologist whose analysis allows Hardy to paint a vivid tableau of the assassination. In fact, Hardy had enjoyed a lecture by Maples when an undergraduate at the University of Florida.

Grin follows in the issue with announcements and rumors of upcoming REH projects, many for the 2006 Centennial; most of the publications indeed appeared. After that is a poem by Darrell Schweitzer, “The Companion’s Tale.”

Closing the issue is the letter column, “The Lion’s Den,” which starts with a letter from REHupan, writer, and book and magazine seller James Van Hise of Yucca Valley, Cal., editor and sometimes publisher of numerous books (by far mostly paperbacks), including The Fantastic Worlds of Robert E. Howard (Van Hise, 1997, which reprints several of the best articles from REHupa Mailings), The Fantastic Worlds of H. P. Lovecraft (Van Hise, 1999), Edgar Rice Burroughs’ Fantastic Worlds (Van Hise, 2005), many books about Star Trek, several magazines, 39 issues of the zine Rocket’s Blast Comicollector (RBCC) in the 1970s, and 50 comic books. Van Hise declares in his letter that he won’t be purchasing any more issues of The Cimmerian after #5 because it had become “a Don Herron zine.” (p. 29) In his contemporaneous REHupa zine, he states:

My reason is that whatever talents Don Herron has, he’s submerged them beneath a veneer (or perhaps it’s deeper than a veneer) of viciousness. His review of the Wandering Star Conan in The Cimmerian #1 is just one of many examples. He doesn’t review something so much as he sneers down his nose at it from the height he imagines he occupies. [7, p. 2]

Moreover, Van Hise says that he’s decided to create his own fanzine, Sword & Fantasy, and that he’s open to contributions by others. His first issue appeared in January 2005, and the zine has so far run, four times a year for the first 2 years and now irregularly, through 10 issues by February 2012. It is 8½ × 11 inches and side-stapled, running about 84 pages plus slick color covers with B & W contents, which consist of art, articles, reviews, interviews, and convention transcripts, mostly reprinted from his own and others’ zines in REHupa Mailings, magazines, and other fanzines about REH, other fantasists, and artists. In his first editorial, Van Hise says that “Sword & Fantasy will be devoted to exploring the kind of creativity exemplified by Robert E. Howard, Karl Edward Wagner, and by the field of sword and sorcery itself, whose rich history is well worth exploring.” [8] S & F’s mostly reprinted fare, lack of quality typesetting, and side-stapled binding keeps it from attaining semi-pro status, though it is consistently interesting and
sells well. The zines are priced between $12 and $20, and all issues are available from Van Hise on eBay.

Van Hise was born in 1949 and is married. He was already a member of the Edgar Rice Burroughs APA (Amateur Press Association) and PEAPS (the Pulps APA) when he joined REHupa in April 1994 (Mailing #126). His zine, The Road to Velitrium, has appeared 84 times as of August 2013. It is unique in its predominant focus on pulp history and art. In April 1994, he wrote publisher Donald M. Grant and obtained the first admissions of the racial bowdlerizations that Grant had made to his editions of Red Shadows (1968), The Pride of Bear Creek (1966), and Mayhem on Bear Creek (1979). [9] Van Hise was following up on expurgations first noticed by REHupan Steve Trout. [10] These bowdlerizations are part of the
many textual impurities finally emended by the pure-text Wandering Star/Del Rey editions. In Mailing #176 (Aug. 2002), Van Hise published his 114-page *The History of the Robert E. Howard APA — #1-175*, in which he reviews the first 175 Mailings and deals with a lot of the internal politics of REHupa. He still sells copies of this.

The second letter in *TC*, Apr. 2005’s letter column is from Romeo, who echoes Van Hise in minimizing Herron’s contributions. REHupan Scotty Henderson follows, correcting Rev. Bob Price’s statement (in *TC*, Vol. 1, #4, p. 8) about *The Dark Man* journal being a renaming of *Cromlech*, when it was really just inspired by it. REHupan Mark Finn is next, answering Schweitzer’s criticism (in *TC*, Vol. 1, #4) of Finn’s calling Bob Weinberg a “book nerd” (in Grin’s “Cross Plains Memories”) by admitting that a “fish out of water” would have been more appropriate. Then REHupan Chris Gruber praises *The Cimmerian* in general and its *Dark Barbarian* retrospective in particular. With Herron’s *The Barbaric Triumph*, “[t]hese two volumes represent Howard scholarship at its finest and *The Cimmerian’s* focus on such things cements it as the Howard journal to read.” (p. 31) REHupan Damon Sasser notes he had only omitted Herron’s “Yours for faster hippos” closing remark to de Camp from the former’s *REH: Two-Gun Raconteur* #3 article for reasons of space, not as a judgment call. Former REHupan Steve Harbin writes in, saying to Grin, “You’ve truly produced a real magazine, one worthy of Howard’s memory. I’m convinced that it will raise the level of literary criticism being penned about REH more than any of the other various zines and lit-crit type publications currently competing in the field.” (p. 31) He particularly enjoyed Charles Hoffman’s essay, “Hard-Boiled Heroic Critic.”

Herron pens the next missive, attributing the success of his *The Dark Barbarian* to its high standards and insistence on closely editing every submission. He singles out Hoffman as the most productive and perceptive of the recent REH critics. After offering other remarks about the previous issue, he scores Schweitzer for declaring Sword & Sorcery dead, pointing out the work of David Gemmell and others. “We have either Howard of Conan as a staple in publishing and RPGs (and RPGs now make more money annually than films released by Hollywood, and Hollywood makes much more money than publishing.)” (p. 34) Herron adds that Schweitzer may be right about *Weird Tales* surviving because editor Farnsworth Wright neglected paying the printer, but only because the printer actually got, not cash, but a percentage of interest in the magazine.

Schweitzer writes in next, defending Wright’s dithering on accepting stories by Lovecraft as being his reaction to stories he didn’t understand but wasn’t sure his readers wouldn’t appreciate. He refutes Morgan Holmes’s claim the previous issue that Wright’s rejections resulted in an absence of HPL in *WT* from 1931 to 1936, noting that “Dreams in the Witch House” appeared in 1933. Schweitzer does concede that Wright had deficiencies as a businessman, but cites several actions by him that were still savvy enough to keep *WT* alive throughout the Depression. He adds that Wright bought a lot of Howard and, though he for a time owed REH thousands of dollars, he did eventually pay off the debt, though after Howard’s death.

Then German fan Cornelius Kappabani, who had released many musical compositions set to REH poems via his alternative rock band Bifröst, notes that some of Howard’s poetic innovations have counterparts in Scandinavian poetry. John Haefele appears next lauding TC, Grin’s objectivity as editor, and Herron’s revelatory article “He Was Deadly,” especially the disclosure that REH’s voice sounded like Humphrey Bogart’s. Finally, Clark Ashton Smith scholar and romantic poet Donald Sidney-Fryer concludes the issue, praising TC’s inclusion of new, well-crafted poetry, in particular Richard L. Tierney’s, which he says is worthy of Howard.
In the second issue of *The Cimmerian*’s second year (Vol. 2, Apr. 2005), Grin announces that the theme of this and the next issue would be the five REH hardback and softback volumes released in 2005 by the University of Nebraska’s Bison Books, namely *The Black Stranger and Other American Tales, The Riot at Bucksnort and Other Western Tales, Boxing Stories, Lord of Samarcand and Other Tales of the Old Orient, and The End of the Trail: Western Stories*, whose genesis and objectives would be discussed by their editors. As Grin says in his editorial, “Each was a labor of love that ultimately reflected their own sensibilities as much as Howard’s.” (p. 2) The volumes complement the Wandering Star and Del Rey books in making available pure-text versions of Howard’s less-known stories.

First up is the late REHupan Steve Tompkins, who edited and introduced *Black Stranger*. Grin calls Tompkins perhaps the single most well-read person he has ever known, and this is reflected in the content and erudition of his essay. Tompkins explains that his book was designed around, not a character or sub-genre, but a common setting, namely the New World. “The Black Stranger” story is set on the coast of Pictland during the Hyborian Age, standing in for the American West. Tompkins agrees with critic Paul Seydor that American literature often evinces a fascination with the exotic, the foreign, the criminal, and the wild, earning it such critical labels as Frontier Gothic. He recommends three lit-crit books that he deems essential for understanding such literature, especially Howard’s: D. H. Lawrence’s *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923), Leslie Fiedler’s *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1966), and Richard Slotkin’s *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the Frontier 1600-1860* (1973). These studies reveal common psychological threads in American literature that concern the dark threats of the unknown frontier; its aboriginal, often violent, inhabitants; and the isolated individuals among the settlers who seem to share in the magical knowledge of those inhabitants. To quote artist Mark Schultz:

“We are lucky enough to get the old world tradition of the heroic epic as interpreted through the sensibilities of a Texan steeped in the lore of his home state—the violent history of its blood feuds and Indian wars, as well as its rich Southern United States folk storytelling tradition, with all its ghosts and swampy horror.” [11]

Yet, for all the many and varied contributions REH made to that literature, Tompkins cites many relevant studies and anthologies that ignore him completely, e.g. Brian Attebery’s *The Fantasy Tradition in American Literature: From Irving to Le Guin* (1980), Don Graham’s *Texas: A Literary Portrait* (1985), Joyce Carol Oates’s *American Gothic Tales* (1996), Robert Silverberg’s *Fantasy Hall of Fame: Chosen by the Members of the Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America* (1998), Tom Pilkington’s *State of Mind: Texas Literature and Culture* (1998), and Brian M. Thomson’s *The American Fantasy Tradition* (2003). (I can at least interject that this neglect is now showing signs of amelioration, given the inclusion of Howard in the recent anthologies *American Supernatural Tales* (Penguin, 2007) edited by S. T. Joshi, *Heroes in the Wind: From Kull to Conan—The Best of Robert E. Howard* (Penguin, 2009) edited by John Clute, and *American Fantastic Tales* (Library of America, 2009) edited by Peter Straub, though REH still needs and deserves a complete volume by Library of America.) Tompkins observes that academia has generally ignored or dismissed Howard as an important American writer, and too many REH fans have returned the favor by ignoring the opinions of academics. (Unfortunately, Tompkins didn’t live to see the recent inroads being made in academic awareness of Howard recently, often by REHupans and other Howardists, at conventions and in critical publications, though much remains to be achieved.)
Tompkins’s aim in doing the book was to compile a story sequence that exemplified what Slotkin discerns in Hawthorne’s fiction, namely an “image of the wilderness as the land of the terrible unconscious, in which the dark dreams of man impress themselves upon reality with tragic consequences.” (p. 8) Tompkins goes on to say:

Classic American literature is thronged with revenants from the broken and desecrated tombs of this continent, and so, whether literally or figuratively, are the stories in The Black Stranger and Other American Tales. But the cumulative effect is not that of a via dolorosa of victimization; any notion of political correctness is left as dead as most of the characters in these stories. Howard’s Indians exhibit no stigmata but rather the bloodied hands of men who dispossessed before they were in turn dispossessed. (p. 9)

In the name of pure-text honesty, Tompkins restores the racial and sexual excisions that had been made to “Black Vulmea’s Vengeance” (by Grant) and “The Thunder-Rider.” Sadly, he mentions some projects he envisions doing that we know he would never live to tackle, but does list some current authors whom Herron could have adduced for his argument that Sword & Sorcery is not dead. Tompkins ends his essay with an appendix listing useful publications of American literary criticism.

The second article in the issue on the Bison books is by REHupan David Gentzel on The Riot at Bucksnort and Other Western Tales, which he edited and introduced. He had gotten involved by having amassed e-texts of Howard stories while proofing Joe Marek’s New Howard Reader zine and Bran Mak Morn and Conan tales for Wandering Star. The topics of his essay and Tompkins’s only have story selection in common, the rest of Gentzel’s being about the nuts and bolts of editing an anthology rather than lit-crit. He paints an interesting picture of the pressures of being caught between a demanding day job, looming deadlines, and a publisher who limits Gentzel’s control over his product. One outcome of the latter was that the book’s title does not reflect the fact that all the stories are humorous tall tales, which had always been among Gentzel’s favorite REH. He ends with a list of books a completist would need to pick up the stories Gentzel had been forced to omit due to space, as well as with a roster of all the humorous westerns sorted by protagonist (Breckinridge Elkins, Pike Bearfield, and Buckner J. Grimes).

Next on deck is REHupan Rick McCollum with a puff piece on the types of Hyborian Age pastiches he would find more interesting than the ones that had actually been penned. While he has some interesting suggestions, most of them, such as stories about daily life aboard Bêlit’s ship or the economy of a Pictish village, exemplify the kind of mundaneness that most people read fantasy to escape.

Project Pride veteran Era Lee Hanke appears with a news note about the sales and availability of remnants of the original picket fence surrounding the Howard Museum, which had been damaged by a storm and, after replacement, been repackaged by Project Pride as mementos for visitors. She is followed by a poem, “The Blades of Hell,” by Herron.

“The Lion’s Den” leads off with a letter from collector Bob Lumpkin, who praises the contents of the previous issue, except for the fact that it contained “too much Don Herron, who I find to be pompous, opinionated and pedantic.” (p. 30) In particular, he finds Herron’s criticism of de Camp misplaced and tedious. Lumpkin enjoyed de Camp’s pastiches. “I also think the non-Conan Howard stories that de Camp converted were the next best thing to original Howard. Nobody was publishing non-Conan Howard material at that time, so at least I could read these great stories that de Camp modified. Howard’s stories were never improved by politically correct
editing, but on the other hand such changes were probably necessary for broad distribution in the late 1960s, and the damage was usually minor. Considering how de Camp popularized Howard’s work, I think all Howard fans owe him a debt of gratitude.” (p. 30) REH fan Jack Jones is next with a plea for a push to get a Library of America volume devoted to Howard.

Brian Leno, currently an REH blogger, writes in, wondering at the cause for Joshi’s antipathy toward Howard. “The man’s a scholar, no doubt about that. But it seems, once again [in The Dark Man #8], that Mr. Joshi has problems with Howard scholars.” (p. 31) Leno also questions the merit of Joshi’s dismissal of Wildside Press books as unworthy of academic consideration, his swipes at REH fans in his biography of Lovecraft, his disdain for Howard’s boxing stories, and his lack of appreciation that REH could be a great writer, just not in the same way as was HPL. Joshi responds in the next missive, generally belittling Leno’s views and expertise. “[I]n my judgment, most REH fans, and even scholars, do not appear to have the breadth of knowledge in general literature to make a sound case for REH’s literary standing. This goes for Mr. Leno also ...” (p. 32) Then Dr. Michael Levy of the University of Washington submits a response to Chris Gruber’s characterization last issue of Levy’s old review of The Dark Barbarian as the reaction of a snooty academic, saying that he disagrees very little with that statement, but that he did and does value Howard’s work and believes that fans and academics can profitably listen to and learn from one another.

Schweitzer comments that, though he disagrees with Van Hise that Amra was largely a de Camp zine, de Camp’s The Conan Reader (Mirage, 1968), which collected his essays about Howard, was the first book of any kind about REH and was truly a pioneering effort. Returning to the debate about Farnsworth Wright’s abilities as editor of Weird Tales, Schweitzer claims that writers who worked with Wright generally had a high opinion of him, citing Manly Wade Wellman to that effect. Steve Harbin then extols the sixth issue of TC, especially the give and take in the letter column. Regarding Wright, Harbin notes that Robert Weinberg’s The Weird Tales Story (FAX, 1977) included mixed reviews as to Wright’s competence by his contemporaries. “My own inclination is that any editor who would turn down Donald Wandrei’s “The Red Brain,” HPL’s “The Call of Cthulhu,” and Fritz Leiber’s “Adept’s Gambit” ... doesn’t deserve all the accolades he’s been given in the past.” (p. 34)

Herron closes the issue with a letter praising Roehm’s and Hardy’s articles in the previous issue, but criticizes Romeo for not appreciating the fact that the quality and success of The Cimmerian was the direct result of the departure of Grin and himself from The Dark Man journal in order to implement the very reforms that the management of TDM had refused to make. He also derides Romeo’s low opinion of The Dark Barbarian and his statement that it had nowhere near the impact of Conan the Adventurer, as if a volume of lit-crit could even be compared to a mass-market paperback. Herron then reengages Schweitzer, pointing out several contradictions in the latter’s defense of Wright and declaring that Wright’s rejection of HPL’s “At the Mountains of Madness” and Leiber’s “Adept’s Gambit” set those authors’ careers back years. As for Wright reprinting a lot of Lovecraft, Herron says that Wright did so because he didn’t have to pay for the reprints. “[Darrell], do explain how you think Wright was such a terrific editor with Lovecraft dead at age 46, essentially from starvation, when Lovecraft was one of the most popular writers in the Weird Tales stable.” (p. 37) Herron adds that the fact that Wright owed Howard lots of money was surely a contributing factor to his suicide, at a time when Wright had enough money to always pay Seabury Quinn.

The next issue (Vol. 2, #3, June 2005) continues the symposium on the new REH Bison Book releases. Its first article is “Born to Edit Boxing Stories” by Gruber, who edited and introduced that volume and who explains all the work he did doing so. This included restoring the name
“Steve Costigan” from “Dennis Dorgan” throughout, since Howard had only used the latter name to get some of the Costigan stories published in *The Magic Carpet Magazine* rather than Costigan’s normal venue, *Fight Stories*. Gruber also found that Glenn Lord had turned up a copy of the story “Iron Men” in 1966 which was about 10,000 words longer than that published in 1930 as “The Iron Man.” “Iron Men” was the original version that REH had complained to his friend Tevis Clyde Smith about being forced to cut so extensively for *Fight Stories*; this version first sees print in *Boxing Stories*. Gruber’s account of his work is couched in a captivating summary of his own life, which includes eagerly learning about and watching professional prizefighting; becoming an amateur boxer himself; discovering and being enthralled by Howard, especially by his boxing tales; and joining REHupa. “Howard’s characters were everything I wanted to be as a man.” (p. 7) Grin states in his editorial, “Of further interest is the fact that Chris’s life reads like a capsule history of Costigan himself. Boxer, street fighter, pit bull trainer, Howard fan—the resulting convergence of literature and reality is fascinating.” (p. 3) In his introduction to *Boxing Stories*, Gruber endeavors to express how important the sport of boxing was to Howard. “He lived for boxing. He wrote about it, studied it, and to some degree defined himself by the standards of its devotees. His characters seemed to be refined and remodeled manifestations of himself, or perhaps as he would like to have been seen by others. Understanding this link underscores the importance these stories had to him.” (p. 13) REH was certainly a master of the sport, enabling him to craft believable fight scenes. And the depth and content of stories like “The Iron Men” and “They Always Came Back” put the lie to the assertion that Howard was one-dimensional and supposedly lacking in creativity the further he strayed from fantasy.

For this essay, Gruber won the third-place 2005 Cimmerian (“Hyrkanian”) Award for Best Essay. [12] And for discovering and publishing REH’s original version of “Iron Men,” he won the 2005 Cimmerian (“Black River”) Award for Special Achievement. [13] Starting in 2004, Gruber and fellow REHupa and boxing stories aficionado Mark Finn often staged a popular, on-site talk about Howard’s boxing, entitled “Howard at the Ice House,” at the annual Howard Days festival in Cross Plains. Gruber has published a written version of this talk (in French) [14].

The last article on the Bison books is on *Lord of Samarcand and Other Adventure Tales of the Old Orient* and *The End of the Trail: Western Stories* by REHupa Rusty Burke, who recounts his response to a request for him to arrange a set of REH books in Bison’s Frontiers of Imagination series:

In February 2003 I was in a Howard lull, meaning that, aside from working with Patrice Louinet on the second Wandering Star Conan book, preparing the Solomon Kane book for Del Rey, writing entries on REH for the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* and a new *Encyclopedia of Supernatural Literature* (for which I was writing other entries as well), being interviewed via e-mail by Mark Finn for a chapter on REH in a book called *Conversations with Texas Writers* [Univ. Texas, 2005], writing a reminiscence of Cross Plains raconteur Jack Scott, who had recently passed away, beginning preparations for my panels and tours for Howard Days, spending a few days at the Library Congress going through microfilms of *Fight Stories* for Glenn Lord, working on my zine for the Robert E. Howard United Press Association, performing ongoing work on the biography of REH, and the usual daily rounds of questions and comments from colleagues and fans needing information, I was actually finding the occasional spare minute free. (p. 17)
Bison is an academic press (at the University of Nebraska) and so represented an opportunity to showcase Howard to a wider audience outside the confines of the fantasy genre. Bison books are generally inexpensive, yet of high quality, and would be done in both hardcover and paperback. Burke recruited Gentzel to edit a volume of humorous westerns, Gruber to edit a volume of boxing stories, and Tompkins to do a book he’d proposed on New World historical fantasies, as we have seen, but Burke still got stuck doing two other books. He’d wanted to compile the straight westerns, but also ended up doing a volume of what he preferred to call historical Oriental adventures rather than what they were usually called—“Crusader stories”—since some of them have little to do with the Crusades. He enlisted Louinet to write the introduction. Lord of Samarcand contains an unpublished version of “The Road of the Eagles,” as well as some unpublished fragments, while End of the Trail includes two stories that had never seen book publication. A common problem to all of the REH Bison editors was the publisher’s short timeline for the project, which precluded doublechecking whether Bison had made the galley corrections the editors had requested. This allowed some errors to creep into all the volumes, but the only serious one was the substitution of “Travis Clyde Smith” for “Tevis Clyde Smith” as Howard’s co-author on “Red Blades of Black Cathay” in Lord of Samarcand. In his introduction to The End of the Trail, Burke makes the case for REH as a western writer:

Those [non-humorous westerns] in which he mingles horror elements with the western, such as “The Dead Remember” and “The Man on the Ground” are excellent, and I believe that—in stories like “Gunner’s Debt” and “The Vultures of Wahpeton”—he was a good ten years ahead of the field, with protagonists who weren’t all white hats and chivalry, who shot their way through bloody climaxes that don’t resolve much of anything in standard pulp or Hollywood fashion. As Steve Tompkins once pointed out, “Vultures” is really a hard-boiled western, Dashiell Hammett’s Red Harvest transplanted to a Montana mining camp. Howard’s interest in western gunmen—Billy the Kid, John Wesley Hardin, Ben Thompson, King Fisher, and many others—infused not only his westerns with raw realism, but also his many other stories. In a sense, Conan is just the baddest gunslinger in the Hyborian Age. (p. 22)

Burke has developed a greater and greater admiration for Howard as a writer and artist, whether it is for his narrative pace, poetic language, inventive use of history and themes of barbarism, resentment of authority and injustice, or, because “[w]hen Bob was clicking on all cylinders, as he is in the five volumes of the Bison series, I think he was the greatest adventure writer of all time.” (p. 24)

Finn contributes a short feature on nine Costigan issues of Fight Stories which surprisingly, despite their only passable conditions, had just sold on eBay for between $84 and $333 each, far more than they used to and far more than issues not containing REH. The extreme demand for and popularity of Howard in original issues of Weird Tales are, thus, spreading to pulps of other genres.

After a poem, “Demeure Exotique” by Sidney-Fryer, the letters column opens with Schweitzer, who says he is not inspired by McCollum’s article last issue to start cranking out Hyborian pastiches and, besides, “Howard’s actual world-building was not his strong point.” (p. 31) (Really? Does he not realize that REH was one of the first fantasists to do so, and deliberately incorporated real geography and historical peoples into his Hyborian world for the purpose of expeditious storytelling, rather than endeavoring to impress readers with sheer imagination—which he does, in other ways, anyway?) Schweitzer does speak out for Wildside Press, advising
Joshi to take a look at their recent releases, which have been impressively produced and well received.

Herron writes in to support Leno vis-à-vis Joshi. “To refer to at least one point raised, Joshi’s idea that Mark Finn in ‘Fists of Robert E. Howard’ doesn’t convince [one] that the boxing tales ‘are of high literary substance’ is akin to saying that an essay on the frontier writings of Samuel L. Clemens—such as ‘The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County’—would be out of place in a critical anthology on the author of Huckleberry Finn.” (p. 32) Leno himself then addresses Joshi:

... I’ve corresponded with enough Howard scholars and fans to know they are a bright, well-read group of people. Some of course are better read than others, and God knows there’s plenty that have read more than I have. But most Howard fans have a love of reading and of history, and are always willing to learn more. One needs only to glance through a typical copy of The Cimmerian to see that—witness Steve Tompkins’s article in the last issue, to take one example of many. I’m not disputing that Mr. Joshi should be able to give us his opinion on different areas of interest that deal with the subject of his books. But it’s a fun and intriguing exercise to wonder why he’s continually compelled to go out of his way—and he does, make no mistake about that—to obsessively tell Howard fans how “ridiculous” they are. (p. 33)

Novelist and former REHupan James Reasoner says, in the next letter, “I suspect that it’s a waste of time trying to persuade Mr. Joshi to appreciate Howard’s work or the efforts of Howard scholars and fans. Howard’s writing simply doesn’t resonate with Mr. Joshi.” (p. 33) Reasoner also defends the quality and value of Wildside Press books.

After a fannish missive from Flensing Hlanith, Kappabani writes in again, this time to second Romeo and Hardy in their opinion that REH drew inspiration from historical events and characters, and suggests two intrepid Scandinavian men whose exploits might also have influenced Howard: Harald III Sigurdsson and Egil Skallagrimsson. Harbin returns to speak against those who denigrate all pasticheurs and says he hopes competent pasticheurs might take on some of the topics McCollum suggested.

Glenn Lord then comments that, not only did one Alistair Durie turn up a copy of the Jenkins A Gent from Bear Creek (1937) in a London bookshop recently, but that Durie had mentioned, in correspondence with Lord, that Jenkins often put out cheaper editions of his earlier releases, increasing the probability that such versions of Gent exist.

Longtime REHupa Official Editor Bill “Indy” Cavalier writes in to tell Grin: “The Cimmerian is as fine a Howard publication as can be found these days, as you equally cover topics for not only Howard scholars but for fans as well. Interesting reading, timely news, reporting of ongoing Howard projects and events, and a fun place—The Lion’s Den—where opinions, discussions, and blowhardiness are all as varied as the letter writers themselves. Most importantly, you maintain a consistent bi-monthly publishing schedule.” (p.36) Tompkins ends the issue with a tribute to the fantasy of David Gemmell, Matthew Woodring Stover, and others, mustering them as proof that, contrary to Schweitzer, Sword & Sorcery is not dead. “Sword-and-Sorcery is a mongrel, the bastard spawn of several genres, and one advantage to such a crowded parentage is that the amounts of DNA donated by fantasy, horror, and historical fiction can be adjusted so as to expedite the subgenre’s ability to morph or mutate.” (p. 38)
The fourth issue of Vol. 2 (Aug., 2005) begins with a poem, “Crazy Son,” by REHupan Frank Coffman and continues with Grin’s detailed, profusely illustrated coverage of Howard Days 2005. As Grin describes the festivities, he features quotes by REHupans Sasser, Scott Hall, Romeo, Burke, Reasoner, Finn, and Herron; journalist Rick Kelsey; fan Tom Verhaaren; and filmmaker Ethan Nahté. Besides the usual events mentioned for HD 2004 in our previous installment, this year also included a tour of Cross Plains Cemetery, a local bus tour hosted by Project Pride old-timer Alton McCowen, Grin’s presentation of the first annual Cimmerian Awards (see below), and a screening of the 1961 “Pigeons from Hell” adaptation from the Boris Karloff-hosted TV series Thriller. The Guest of Honor was Wandering Star publisher and former REHupan Marcelo Anciano from London, who gave a passionate speech about how WS got started, what its ultimate plans were for the Howard book series, and the lengths he and the artists went to in order to achieve the top-quality products they did. The panels included talks on pulp preservation (by attorney, collector, and REH bibliographer Paul Herman), on “Writing a Howard Biography” (by Burke and Finn), on what REH might have gone on to do had he lived (by Cavalier and Reasoner), and how the Wandering Star books were put together (by Anciano, Burke, and artist and REHupan Jim Keegan). There was even an impromptu set of Howard poetry and prose readings that prefigured what would become a regular event at later HDs. Of that Grin says:

I’ll bet Howard never suspected that seventy years after his death there would be people at his house reciting his longest poems from memory, and other[s] cheering them on, entranced. It’s moments like this where the true magic of Howard Days reveals itself, and one realizes the full measure of the event and what it means. Lovecraft and Smith fans, secure in their knowledge that Howard wasn’t half the writer their heroes were, have nothing on their side of fandom that compares to Howard Days. (p. 17)

The Cimmerian Awards were an annual set of trophies presented at HD for REH-related contributions of scholarship, artistry, and publication, constituting a legacy from Grin that endures, though renamed, to this day. Prototypes of such awards, called the Cleos, had been conceived by Coffman, voted on by published Howard experts, and awarded in 2001, but were visually undistinguished and discontinued thereafter. Grin decided that Howard fandom should bestow accolades on a regular basis in a form befitting the achievements they were intended to honor and promote. So, at his own expense, he designed and produced a 5-pound helmeted-skull-topped statuette in black resin and marble with a laser-etched metal nameplate in black and gold, commissioning artist Ken Neiderer to sculpt the skull. The awards were as handsome as any being given out at science fiction or fantasy conventions. Grin defined the categories himself and conducted the nomination and voting process by TC readers, weighting their votes by the numbers of issues purchased, and presented the trophies at HDs 2005 through 2008 for achievement in the previous year. If there was only one entrant in a category, voters could choose to approve or disapprove. [15]

To his annual six monthly issues plus index, Grin added another illustrated, 40-page Awards issue to his schedule that would describe the voting and spotlight the victors. As told therein, the awards certainly had their intended effect of impressing and energizing the Howardian audience toward the goal of scholarship and productivity that would grow the base of REH’s critical reputation and public awareness. Voting participation was good, and the results did not favor authors in any particular publication (such as TC). The most prestigious, the Black Circle Award for Lifetime Achievement, naturally went to Glenn Lord for his decades of unflagging service to REH scholarship and fandom expansion, as described earlier in this series and by others. [16-20] (Lord was to die 31 Dec. 2011.) The Atlantean Award for an Outstanding Book by a Single Author was won by REHupan Dale Rippke for The Hyborian Heresies (Wild Cat, 2004). [21]
The Valusian Award for Outstanding Anthology was given to Don Herron for editing *The Barbaric Triumph* (Wildside, 2004). [22] The first-, second-, and third-place Hyrkanian Awards for Outstanding Essay went to Mark Finn for “Fists of Robert E. Howard” in *The Barbaric Triumph* [23], Rusty Burke for “Travels with Robert E. Howard” in *The Robert E. Howard Companion* (Seele Brennt, 2004) [24], and Steven Tompkins for “The Past Is Dead, the Past Is Deadly: Three Dragons in One Hour” in *The Dark Man* #7 [25]. The last essay was about *The Hour of the Dragon*, concerning which Tompkins wrote, in accepting his award:

I would sincerely and specifically like to dethank or anti-thank L. Sprague de Camp, who did not bother to include the REH verse-epigraph that leads into *The Hour of the Dragon* when the time came for the Lancer Conan the Conqueror, failed to realize what a spectacularly un-apposite title Conqueror was, and further outed himself as a superficial and slapdash reader/editor by insisting that there was no justification for Howard’s title in the text of the novel. [25, p. 24]

Grin won the Aquilonian Award for Outstanding Periodical (*The Cimmerian*). [26] Paul Herman was given the Stygian Award for Outstanding Web site (HowardWorks.com). [27] This REH bibliographical site was an essential step toward winning greater literary recognition for the author, along with the pure-text publication of all his works. In accepting the award, Herman said:
HowardWorks is very much a team project and a lot of people have done a lot of work over the years. The two hardest workers have been Todd Woods and Bill Thom, who have had to load all the information, organize it, clean it up, format it, add the hyperlinks, etc. An incredible number of hours of work, all just to do it. Amazing. And of course the information itself has come from a number of sources, starting with Glenn Lord, and including folks like Rusty Burke, Patrice Louinet, David Gentzel, and Joe Marek. And literally dozens of others have contributed an item here and an item there over the years. [27, p. 30]

Herman has published hardback (Hermanthis, 2006) and updated softback (Wildside, 2008) versions of his compilation as The Neverending Hunt: A Bibliography of Robert E. Howard. Herman also mentions his endeavor to edit and publish all of REH’s public-domain works as pure-text hardback and paperback volumes from Wildside. The publisher ran out of steam on it before quite completing the series, but it consists of The Complete Action Stories (2001, introduced by Herman), Graveyard Rats and Others (2003, introduced by Herron), Waterfront Fists and Others (2003, introduced by Finn), Gates of Empire and Other Tales of the Crusades (2004, introduced by Fred Blosser), A Gent from Bear Creek and Other Tales (2004, introduced by Herman), Shadow Kingdoms (2004, introduced by Finn), Treasures of Tartary (2004, introduced by Reasoner), Moon of Skulls (2005, introduced by Finn), People of the Dark (2005, introduced by Joe R. Lansdale), Gardens of Fear (2006, introduced by Benjamin Szumskyj), Valley of the Worm (2006, introduced by Reasoner), Wings in the Night (2006, introduced by Herman), Beyond the Black River (2007, introduced by Sassor), Hours of the Dragon (2008, introduced by Herman), Black Hounds of Death (2009, introduced by Finn), and A Thunder of Trumpets (2010, introduced by Finn). The last four and Gent were never printed in paperback.

Herman was a member of REHupa long enough to produce two issues of his zine Certiorari Accepted in Mailings #s 158 and 160 (Aug. & Dec. 1999). He has six issues of his zine Another Thought posted at REHEAPA (www.robert-e-howard.org). He also edited and introduced the paperback Blood of the Gods and Other Stories (Girasol, 2005). In 2007, he was the secretary/treasurer of the Robert E. Howard Foundation and published its newsletter that first year; he is still a member of its Board of Directors. He also tracked down Howard’s old writing table and arranged for its eventual donation to the Howard Museum [28], as well as what was probably REH’s original typewriter. [29] He is currently going through Glenn Lord’s collection, scanning selected items for publication, e.g. in The Robert E. Howard Foundation Newsletter.

The Venarium Award for Emerging Scholar went to Mark Finn (a pseudonym for Mark Farr-Nash). [30] Born in 1969, Finn is now a married theater owner in Vernon, Tex. and a writer, formerly of comics and now of science fiction and fantasy. Debuting as a member of REHupa in February 2002, he produced 31 issues of his zine Outnumbered & Alone between Mailings #173 and #214 (Dec. 2008). The contents pertained to REH’s boxing stories, Texicana, reviews, trip and convention reports, his own stories (including some examples) and REH-related projects, and mailing comments. Selections from this zine have been published in the 2006 chapbook The Very Best of Outnumbered & Alone, of which 100 signed, numbered copies were printed for distribution at the 2006 World Fantasy Convention in Austin, Tex., at which one of the themes was to the celebration of REH’s Centennial. After a short hiatus, he started putting out, in Mailing #218 (Aug. 2009), a zine entitled The Howard Guerrilla, numbering 24 issues as of Dec. 2013 (Mailing #239; Vol. 3, #2 was skipped), with similar contents to Outnumbered, aside from story examples.

A dedicated Howard scholar and activist, Finn is constantly engaged in public outreach promoting REH’s reputation among the public and academics, not to mention defending Howard
against attacks in online forums. He produced the only definitive, full-length biography of REH, *Blood & Thunder: The Life and Art of Robert E. Howard* (MonkeyBrain, 2006; Robert E. Howard Foundation, 2011), which was a finalist for the 2007 Locus Awards for Best Non-Fiction and earned him the 2006 Cimmerian (“Atlantean”) Award for Outstanding Book by a Single Author [31]. Besides the aforementioned “Fists of Robert E. Howard,” the interview in *Conversations with Texas Writers*, the Wildside book introductions, and his articles in TC, Finn has also contributed articles and introductions to *The Apes of Wrath* (Tachyon, 2013); Boom! Comics; *Conversations with the Weird Tales Circle* (Centipede Press, 2010); *Cross Plains Review*; Dark Horse Comics; *The Dark Man* #8, Vol. 2, #1/2, and Vol. 3, #2; *The Howard Review* #14; *The Man from Cross Plains: A Centennial Celebration of Robert E. Howard* (McHaney, 2006); *Projections: Science Fiction in Literature and Film* (MonkeyBrain, 2004); *REH: Two-Gun Raconteur* #s 12 and 14; *Return to Bear Creek* (McHaney, 2007); and *REH’s Sentiment: An Olio of Rarer Works* (Robert E. Howard Foundation, 2009). He conducts “The Monkeyhouse: The Mark Finn Forum” at www.clockworkstorybook.net, is a contributing editor at www.revolutionssf.com, and has his own blog, “Finn’s Wake,” at marktheaginghipster.blogspot.com.

REHupa
Mailing #188
(Aug., 2004),
with cover by Finn.
He is also the creative director of and a performer and scriptwriter for the Violet Crown Radio Players old-time-radio troupe, with whom he has aired and recorded reenactments of Sailor Costigan yarns and other stories. He has presented several papers at pop-cultural conferences and, in 2007, was nominated for World Fantasy Special Award: Professional. He often participates in presentations at Howard Days, notably “Howard at the Ice House.” He has just finished editing, with Gruber, an upcoming set of four volumes of Howard’s complete boxing stories from the Robert E. Howard Foundation.

Finn is author of much fiction of his own, including contributions to www.clockworkstorybook.net that have been collected in The Clockwork Reader, Vol. 1 (Clockwork Storybook, 2001), Gods New and Used (Clockwork Storybook, 2001), and Year of the Hare (Clockwork Storybook, 2002), and individual stories in Adventure, Vol. 1 (MonkeyBrain, 2005), Cross Plains Universe: Texans Celebrate Robert E. Howard (MonkeyBrain, 2006), and Dreams in the Fire: Stories and Poetry Inspired by Robert E. Howard (REHupa, 2011, which he co-edited with Gruber).

Artists and spouses Jim and Ruth Keegan won the Black River Award for Special Achievement, namely The Illustrated World of Robert E. Howard (Wandering Star, 2004) and “The Adventures of Two-Gun Bob” strip in REH-related Dark Horse comics. [32] Finally, Neiderer was chosen by Grin to get the Crom Award for sculpting the Cimmerian Award skulls. [33]

The issue continues with “The Mysteries of the Treasure Room,” Roehm’s further chronicling of the trip to Texas he took in 2004 with his father Bob which later included his visit to Fort McKavett that we recounted earlier. This time Roehm describes their stop at the Walker Memorial Library of Howard Payne University in Brownwood, Tex., or Howard Payne College as it was known back in the 1920s when Howard took typing, shorthand, and bookkeeping courses there. After his death, his father Dr. Isaac M. Howard donated REH’s personal collection of several hundred books and many pulp magazines. Each book was logged into an accessions list that is still extant and each had a bookplate pasted in it that designated it as being part of the “Robert E. Howard Collection.” Unfortunately, for a time the books were put into general circulation, and some of the pulps may have been trashed during the accession process. Dr. Howard reclaimed what was left of the pulps when he discovered how they had been mishandled. The books were reassembled at the request of de Camp when he visited the campus during his writing of Dark Valley Destiny: The Life of Robert E. Howard (1983), but by that time all but 68 had been lost or stolen. Steve Eng’s list if 51 held by HPU published in The Dark Barbarian has been incorporated into the 68 in Burke’s “Robert E. Howard Bookshelf” list at www.rehupa.com. Some of these had even been donated to the collection after REH’s death by admirers. Roehm discovered that one of the books had been misfiled, one had been omitted from Burke’s list, and one had been lost since the list was compiled. Such a list is important because it aids scholars in tracing Howard’s literary sources and influences. Roehm appends an updated list of the HPU books. In 2012, the books were donated to the Howard Museum, where they currently reside.

Book and coin dealer Joseph Linzalone contributes an article on the subject of a purchase he recently made on eBay, namely the book Bundling: Its Origin, Progress and Decline in America by Henry Reed Stiles, which Howard had inscribed in pencil to his friend Clyde Smith.

Leading off in The Lion’s Den is Edward Blohm, who is pleased by the contents of TC and looks forward to the publication of even the most obscure REH. Sasser’s wife Alma writes in to express her enjoyment at reading Gruber’s “Born to Edit Boxing Stories.” Collector James Barron observes how pricey any pulps containing Howard have gotten at recent pulp conventions.
Al Schroeder presents what Grin calls a “blissfully fun and loopy example of Wold Newton ‘fan scholarship’” (p. 31) that attempts to link the universe of the Thurian and Hyborian Ages with that of Tolkien’s Middle Earth. Lumpkin returns to praise Gruber’s article and to concur with Schweitzer about the high quality of Wildside books. He says he does not find Herron’s overblown pedantry or confrontational rhetoric to his taste, nor Tompkins’s pretentious erudition, but he has no problem with footnotes.

Schweitzer pens a letter ridiculing Herron for suggesting that Farnsworth Wright’s failure to pay REH was a significant factor in his suicide, rather than emotional issues. Schweitzer believes Howard had excellent prospects had he lived, whether in fantasy elsewhere than Weird Tales or in westerns.

Is it such a revelation that a marginal business like Weird Tales, in the very depths of the worst depression the country has ever known, got behind on its payments? It seems to me much more noteworthy that WT not only paid all its debts eventually, but survived. Is it otherwise news that authors don’t always agree with editors who reject their work? But when you consider how much Howard material Wright actually did buy, and how prominently REH was featured in the magazine, it becomes clear that Farnsworth Wright was the most supportive editor in Howard’s entire career, and that if anybody “made” Howard, it was Farnsworth Wright. Without Wright and WT, would Howard have even persisted trying long enough to sell anything? Without WT, if Howard had only sold westerns and boxing stories and a few adventure stories, would anyone have ever heard of him? If you imagine an alternate universe with no Farnsworth Wright and no Weird Tales, this is also a universe with no Robert E. Howard. (pp. 36 & 37)

Kappabani reappears to ask Joshi exactly what constitutes Great Literature, if not adventures spun by common people who dared to stretch the rules of narrow-minded critics, at doing which REH was at least as good as Homer. Roehm finishes off the issue, saying he was grateful for the Bison books, but wishes the stories had been chosen with more of an eye to finally book-publishing stories that had never seen print except in ephemera.

The October issue of The Cimmerian (Vol. 2, #5) commences with the essay “Blood Lust” by versatile, insightful critic Charles “Chuck” Hoffman, who analyzes Howard’s foray into the last of the several genres he was to undertake before his death, namely the seamy, sexually frank adventures showcased in pulps that often featured “spicy” in their title. Due to the mores of the times, stricter of course than today’s, some skill was required to maximize the titillation factor while not being overly explicit, and editors of such magazines enforced guidelines that spelled out the allowed degree of exposure and activity that could be described, as well as such prohibitions as interracial sex (unless the male was white), sadomasochism, and, ironically, monogamy. Desperate for reliable sources of income as the medical expenses of his tubercular mother mounted and payment from Weird Tales lagged, REH followed his friend and fellow pulp writer E. Hoffmann Price’s advice and started submitting “spicy” stories under the name “Sam Walser.” Most of the other writers for the spicy pulps used such pseudonyms. REH quickly mastered the form, incorporating his trademark violence and frequently exotic locales, but his spicies are not among his better works, probably because of the limitations of the form and because he didn’t regard them as being worth much effort. The pay was relatively good, prompt, and reliable. The sexual depictions are tame by today’s standards, but were considered racy at the time. Even so, it seems he was consciously pushing the envelope as far as the restrictions and violence involved.
Between October 1935 and January 1937, Howard had five stories published in *Spicy-Adventure Stories* and completed three more, plus a synopsis of a fourth, that were not printed until the 1970s and 1980s. Six of the completed ones featured Wild Bill Clanton as the protagonist, who was portrayed as so amoral and rough with women, to the point of rape, that one wonders what was in Howard’s mind. Hoffman suggests that the pseudonym Walser allowed him cover to vent his darker impulses, perhaps as an antithesis to the good-natured but foolish character of Breckinridge Elkins, whose humorous western adventures he was chronicling at the time. And of course the worsening condition of his other probably cast a pall that visibly darkened the mood of his spicy tales as time went on. Hoffman details the circumstances of each story’s publication and comments on its stylistic and psychological aspects and possible biographical implications. Regarding one entitled “Desert Blood,” he says:

It is admittedly possible that Howard had a certain ex-girlfriend in mind when he created the schoolteacher heroine of this tale, Augusta Evans. Augusta’s embarrassing predicament at the end of the story—[she’s] last seen riding naked on a runaway donkey headed back towards town—could even be viewed as a sadistic humiliation fantasy. On the other hand, taking a pompous character down a peg has long been a staple of slapstick comedy. I tend to favor the latter notion. (p.12)

(I favor the former notion. It would be more strange than not if Howard, not experiencing meaningful sexual affection and possibly any intimacy at all, did not harbor some bitterness and resentment toward the female of the species, if not necessarily toward one in particular.)

For this essay, Hoffman received the 2005 third-place Cimmerian (“Hyrkanian”) Award for Outstanding Essay, about which Grin says:

[What] often separates Charles from the pack: he actually has something to say. We’ve all slogged through endless pieces that are little more than story summaries ... We’ve also muddled our way through reams of indecipherable academic theories and speculations that seem to have little bearing on what’s actually happening on the page. In “Blood Lust,” Hoffman brings his considerable erudition to bear on a series of ideas that blaze with originality and truly feel as if they’ve organically grown out of a reasonable and perceptive reading of the stories themselves. That to my mind is the very best kind of criticism. ... In the final analysis, it should make a writer just plain better in the eyes of readers, forcing them to walk away newly impressed with the talent on display and at the artistry that infuses the work. [35]

The late Leon Nielsen makes his REH fanzine debut next with “Asgard, Vanaheim, and Cimmeria,” in which he traces the history of the actual Cimmerians, identifying them with the Cimbrians (or Cymbri) and stating that they served as models for Conan’s barbaric countrymen. An ardent student of history, Howard used it and inspirations from it in much of his fiction, including, Nielsen claims, the account of this tribe that had originated in the Jutland peninsula of Denmark and been forced by climatic changes to wander south around 120 BC to sunny Italy, where they became the first Germanic tribe to encounter the Romans. While negotiating for land on which to settle, the Cimbrians were ambushed by the Romans, who however had underestimated the hardy, warlike people and were soundly defeated by them. The Cimbrians wandered into what is now France and Spain, always trouncing the Romans, massacring 120,000 of them in 105 BC. The Roman army under Gaius Marius finally wiped them out in Italy in 101
BC, since even the women fought valiantly and killed themselves and their children rather than be taken as slaves. Their heroism, Nielsen argues, must have impressed REH, who reviled the Roman Empire and was sympathetic to those who resisted it, such as the Picts and Celts.

In a letter the next issue, however, REHupon Morgan Holmes declares that Howard’s Cimmerians were more likely inspired by a passage in Homer’s Odyssey. Historically, he says, the Cimmerians were a people who had lived in what is now the Ukraine in early classical times and, being driven south by the Scythians, raided the Assyrians, Phrygians, and Lydians until the latter destroyed them around the end of the eighth century BC. “Howard’s Cimmerians, historical Cimmerians, and the Cimbri are not one and the same.” (p.38)

After news notes from Grin, Hardy returns with “Trail of the Veiled Prophet.” In the essay “Hyborian Genesis,” Lounet had noted that REH’s villain in “Black Colossus,” Natokh the Veiled One, was based on the tale of Mokanna the Veiled Prophet, found in Sax Rohmer’s 1932 novel The Mask of Fu Manchu. [35, pp. A18 & A19] Hardy traces the Veiled Prophet legend back through Thomas Moore’s poem “The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan” from Lalla Rookh (1817) to its origin as the historical figure al-Muquanna, an eighth-century heresiarch and rebel against the Abbasid Caliphate of Persia. While Moore’s character, Mokanna, and the historical al-Muquanna both hid their faces supposedly because it was deformed and both were revered by a cult after his death, REH inverted the story so that the death of a thief enables the resurrection of wizard king Thugra Khotan, the villain who uses a mask to masquerade as a cult-leader and sorcerer Natokh, the letters of whose name are even inverted. “Black Colossus can thus be included among the stories Howard spoke of as the “zestful ... rewriting [of] history in the guide of fiction.” (p. 23) The story is referred to in a letter, reproduced on the next two pages and unfortunately unsigned, which dates from around Nov., 1932 and which I purchased from Clyde Smith’s heir Ray Barkley in 2002. In it, REH writes to Smith, “My heroes grow more bastardly as the years pass. One of my latest sales concluded with a sexual intercourse instead of the usual slaughter.” [36, p. 485]

Hardy adds, “Howard was taking a long step away from the self-denying and idealistic characters of his earlier tales. Howard made a unique contribution to modern fiction by smashing the conventions of tame and sentimental heroes (like Akin [of Lalla Rookh]) with his lusty, blood-spilling barbarian.” (p. 24)

Reasoner follows with a one-page note on a photo and reminiscence by Novalyne Price Ellis of her time teaching fourth and fifth grades at a school in Zephyr, Tex., in 1929-30. Then artist Anthony Avacato presents a poem, “That Bed beneath the Stars.”

The letter column starts off with Holmes, who wonders why no supernatural fiction books are listed in “The Robert E. Howard Bookshelf,” especially Poe, Machen, and the UK anthologies Grim Death (1932), Keep on the Light (1933), and Terror by Night (1934), which contained REH’s first hardcover appearances, namely of “The Black Stone,” “Worms of the Earth,” and “Rogues in the House” respectively.

After short letters from Burke and Lumpkin, Herron reviews the previous issue, returns some lobz at Lumpkin, and tears into Schweitzer again, criticizing him for being inconsistent and not recognizing that Howard would have been successful even without Farnsworth Wright publishing him in Weird Tales. “You acknowledge his western, adventure, and boxing yarns but ask if anyone would have heard of him today. Gee, I don’t know ... Has anyone ever heard of Zane
Fear Finn:

Well, I finally get around to answering your letter after so long a time.

Lines to G. B. Shaw.

Oh, G. B. S., oh, G. B. S.,
You lousy son of a bitch,
You lift your yarp across the world
Like a bullfrog in a ditch.

I would that by that foliage which
Your scholarly philz thatches
Tied to a smoking stake you were
By a tribe of wild apaches.

You could deride them in that style
Of which you’re so enamored,
While someone with a tomahawk
Your lordly cranium hammered.

And several thousand dancing braves,
The more the merrier,
Were sticking Spanish Daggers in
Your antequate' posterior.

The readers took well to my "Worms of the Earth" story, much
to my surprise. I didn't know how they'd like the copulation touch.
My heroes grow more bastardly as the years pass. One of my latest
sales concluded with a sexual intercourse instead of the usual slaughter.
My sword-wielder grabbed the princess — already considerably stripped
by the villain — and smacked her down on the altar of the forgotten
gods, while battle and massacre roared outside, and through the dust the
remains of the villain, nailed to the wall by the hero, regarded the
pastime sardonically. I don't know how the readers will like it. I'll
bet some of them will. The average man has a secret desire to be a
swaggering, drunken, fighting, raping swashbuckler.

A Yick in Israel.

Old King Saul was a bold old scot
He readed his sword in aishod's gut.
The warriors of Gaha shook in their shoes,
Their fingers twitched till they spilled their booze.
And every husky and every John
Shook at his name in askalon.
The warriors of Gath went after him
To hang his scalp on a hickory limb.
They went — when they came limping back
They carried their guts in a gunny-sack.
And basted noses and blackened eyes
And cheated-up ears were as thick as flies.
And before they could unbar their gates,
They felt his hobnails in their nates.
His eyes were blue as the ocean's base,
His hair was red as a dancing blaze.
He always drank his whiskey straight
And he had a gut that could carry the freight.
For music he had an elegant ear,
Especially after the fifteenth beer.
He'd sprawl on the throne with a stein in his mitts
And his feet propped up on a keg of Schlitz,
With a jeweled scepter beating time
To the beat of the rhythm and the rhyme,
While David on his harp would lean
And Samuel swore by bed and bell
The kingdom was going straight to Hell.
Half the babies born in his reign
Had blue eyes and a crimson mane.
The reason Samuel didn’t enthrone—
He was making nicks out of all the Jews!

Ah, hell, I feel unusually futile. Our artistic friends give them selves airs over us toilers and boozers. They fancy they have discovered the meaning of life, even while persisting on the meaning less of it. If life is meaningless, then it’s as meaningless to write a poem, paint a picture or pen a philosophic essay as it is to play football, guzzle beer, or fiddle a whore.

Musings.

To every man his trade
And the tools of his trade thereof;
To every man his hate,
To every man his love.

If I draw a jewel out of the sea
And nail it to a star,
I am no greater than the man
Who welds a metal bar.

If I fall in the gutters of the world
Where the dregs of liquor run,
I am no baser than the man
Who writes his name in the sun.

Well, after these fruitless mumerings, I have still said nothing; if you wait as long to answer this letter as I waited to write it, your name will be mud.

Anvay.

Write whenever you get the chance,
And if it is not soon,
I’ll give you a lusty kick in the pants
By the light of the silvery moon.

Fear Dunn.
Herron points out that REH, Lovecraft, Donald Wandrei, Clark Ashton Smith, and others were critical of Wright’s capricious story rejections, and that Wright only published one new HPL story during the years 1931-36, when the author was at the peak of his talent, but published a new HPL story or poem every issue for over a year after Lovecraft had essentially starved to death. As for Schweitzer’s dismissal of Wright’s failure to pay REH as a reason for his suicide rather than personal reasons, Herron declares that “for Howard, his career—not being paid for his work—was as weighted with personal emotion as anything else in his life.”

(p. 36) Herron quotes REH from a letter to Clyde Smith and from Novalyne Price Ellis’s *One Who Walked Alone; Robert E. Howard: The Final years* (Grant, 1986) to back this up. (But I think a quote used by Hoffman earlier in the issue is even more cogent:

Glenn Lord notes, “By the spring of 1936, he was enjoying an all-time high in sales.”  David Drake echoes this ...: “By 1936, Howard was selling regularly to Argosy, one of the top three pulp markets of the day. Robert E. Howard was thirty years old, and his career was about to take off.”

... But how did Howard himself feel about it?  In another letter to Novalyne Price, written in late February 1936, he speaks of “my mother’s life ebbing away before my eyes, with my father breaking and aging before me with the worry and strain we both labor under, and I myself faced with the wreckage of all my life’s plans and labors, and the utter ruin of my career.” (p. 14)

Reasoner pens a missive in which he adds to the speculation about what REH might have gone on to do had he lived.  From the early 1920s, Howard was submitting stories to a variety of markets, such as Argosy and Adventure, and was in fact selling to such magazines at the same time and even after he had stopped writing for Weird Tales.  Disagreeing with Schweitzer that no WT would have meant no REH, he states: “[w]ithout Weird Tales he just would have made himself a successful writer in some other genre.  He as a pro through and through, he worked at his writing with a professional attitude even before he began to sell, and there were a lot of pulp markets out there.” (p.38)  The issue closes with letters from Kappabani and fan Andrew Steven.

Making his TC debut in the December 2005 issue (Vol. 2, #6) is rare book collector John D. Haefele with a survey of all the REH-related articles in the amateur Necronomicon Press.  NP’s books and journals are difficult to categorize and even harder to collect, but they have a fair share of Howard first appearances, memoirs, and criticism, chronicling REH studies in the 1980s and 1990s.  NP was founded by Marc Michaud and his brother in 1976 to publish rarer pieces by Lovecraft (hence “Necronomicon”) and HPL-related criticism.  Starting with amateurish, fan-oriented reprints, it went on to print the journals *Lovecraft Studies* and *Studies in Weird Fiction* and broadened its purview to encompass chapbooks and periodicals about REH, Clark Ashton Smith, Donald Wandrei, Ramsey Campbell, Fritz Leiber, and other fantasists, edited by Michaud, Joshi, and others, and illustrated by artists like Jason Eckhardt, Mark King, and David Ireland.  NP published nearly 400 items in just over 20 years.  By far most of its output was 7 × 8 ½-inch or, occasionally, 5 ½ × 8 ½-inch saddle-stapled softcovers produced first by a dot-matrix printer and, in the 1990s, by a laser printer.

Howard first shows up in the Necronomicon Press with the poem “Solomon Kane’s Homecoming” in its facsimile edition of *Fanciful Tales of Time and Space* (1977), along with an announcement about REH’s death.  Its first non-HPL booklet were 750 numbered copies each of *The Illustrated Gods of the North* (1977) and *The Illustrated Challenge from the Beyond* (1978), the first being a reprint of “Gods of the North” from the original *Fanciful* fanzine of 1936 and the second being a reprint of the round-robin novelette that C. L. Moore, A. Merritt, HPL, REH, and
Frank Belknap Long had done for the zine *Fantasy Magazine* in its September 1935 issue. Both *Gods* and *Challenge* were 6 \( \frac{5}{8} \) \( \times \) 9 \( \frac{3}{4} \)-inch booklets with yapped covers stamped on 6 \( \times \) 9 \( \frac{1}{2} \)-inch, 80 lb. textured paper and sell now for about $50 each. “Challenge” was also reprinted in the anthology *Beyond the Wall of Sleep* (Arkham, 1943), a rare Fantasy Amateur Press Association chapbook in 1954, the collection *Horrors Unknown* (a Walker 1971 hardback and a Berkley 1976 paperback), and a non-illustrated version by NP in March 1990. In NP’s short Fantasy and Science Fiction Fragments series, #3 was REH’s *Voices in the Night and Other Poems* (Nov. 1977), the other poems in it being “Song at Midnight” and “Always Comes Evening”; it’s a 4 \( \frac{5}{8} \) \( \times \) 7-inch side-stapled booklet in a numbered run of 500 that sells now for about $100 each.

References to Howard turn up in several NP books about Lovecraft. Reviews of REH books appear in NP’s *Studies in Weird Fiction* #s, 2, 6, 7, and 8, *The Dark Man* #s 1-4 (which we surveyed previously [37]), and *Necrofile* #s 1 and 22. Many REH letters were published for the first time in *Selected Letters 1923-1930* (Oct. 1989) edited and introduced by Glenn Lord with Burke and Joshi, and *Selected Letters 1931-1936* edited by Lord, Burke, and Steve Behrends (Haefele omits Behrends) with a controversial introduction by Rev. Robert M. Price that we discussed before. [38] Burke compiled NP’s *Day of the Stranger: Further Memories of Robert E. Howard* (July 1989) based on his interview of Novalyne Price Ellis. Ellis supplies the introduction to NP’s *Report on a Writing Man and Other Reminiscences of Robert E. Howard* (Oct. 1991) by Tevis Clyde Smith, also edited by Burke and which includes nine photos of REH, Smith, etc., some published for the first time. Robert M. Price published four issues of NP’s *Robert E. Howard’s Fight Magazine* between March 1990 and October 1996, part of an aborted...
attempt to issue all of REH’s boxing stories. About 1990, NP started offering the entire stock of Price’s Cryptic Publications. [39] Finally, NP’s *Ghor Kin-Slayer: The Saga of Genseric’s Fifth-Born Son* (1997) was a round-robin novel comprised of chapters written by REH and 16 other authors, which we discussed previously. [40] Haefele appends a list of all the Necronomicon titles that contain or relate to Howard.

Donald Sidney-Fryer is again on stage, this time not with poetry but with the commentary “In Defense of ‘Little Boys’,” provoked by Schweitzer’s statements in the June 2004 issue of *TC* to the effect that neither Howard, Lovecraft, nor C. A. Smith lived what could be called a normal life, mostly because they didn’t marry while remaining with their mothers or mother surrogates, hence supposedly never fully growing up. Sidney-Fryer takes issue with all of Schweitzer’s points, arguing eloquently and empathetically that all three of the *Weird Tales* titans did not lead lives very different from what was the norm at the time. “Young people often continued living in the family home even after attaining adulthood, even after marriage, for a variety of perfectly good reasons.” (p. 15) Fewer people then lived as far away from the rest of the family as is common now, and many people, then and now, choose not to marry and/or have children. The main reason the three writers continued living at home with parents or parent surrogates was probably financial, but it also allowed them to take care of their parents as the latter aged and became ill or frail, doing so out of both filial duty and genuine love. These strong family ties, plus the peaceful environments, gave stability to their lives that was beneficial and probably
essential to the achievement of their literary ambitions, something that has not often been available to many people throughout the ages, especially writers, poets, and others of a sensitive nature. Describing the familial and financial situations of each of the three authors, Sidney-Fryer maintains that such closeness and mutual assistance are not necessarily indicative of any psychological abnormality, much less the Oedipalism that Schweitzer invokes. In particular:

Howard clearly became despondent because of a variety of things: the lengthy decline and impending death of his mother (the chief person to have encouraged him in his literary creation, and to have awakened in him as a child a great love of great literature by reading to him); then his inability to do any sustained writing because of the attention that perforce he had to lavish on his mother ...; and—not at all insignificant—Farnsworth Wright easily owed Howard over $2000 for stories published in Weird Tales but not yet recompensed. We need not emphasize what a large sum $2000 represented in the mid-1930s, almost a small fortune. However, this despondency sounds much more like clinical depression ... [I]t is not surprising that under the circumstances he committed suicide. I personally doubt that any Oedipal element had anything to do with it. (pp. 19 & 20)

It is their artistry, Sidney-Fryer declares, that should absorb our attention, not the often pathetic details of their private lives.

McCollum appears again with an essay entitled “At the Mammaries of Madness,” in which he considers the oft-made assertion that Howard was crazy, frequently in connection with his suicide, despite the fact that suicide is almost a tradition among literary figures. McCollum acknowledges that REH was eccentric, in that his action and lifestyle were contrary to accepted local norms, but that such a person knows what he is doing. McCollum finds a Freudian Oedipus Complex too superficial a diagnosis for Howard’s relationship with his mother, Hester, noting that such cases are rare, usually outgrown, and generally rooted in the trauma of youthful sexual abuse, for which there is no evidence in REH’s case. “Misplaced or extreme devotion to one’s parents does not have to equal sexual desires. Sometimes the cigar is truly just a cigar.” (p. 22) McCollum then compares Howard to two mentally ill acquaintances of his, as if Howard’s eccentricities, intense aspect, composing aloud, passionate monologs, supposed paranoia, mood swings, and belief in reincarnation necessarily imply that he was schizophrenic or something equally deviant. (I disagree, since REH seemed to always be in command of his faculties, and was known to engage in exaggeration and play acting. Bipolar disorder and clinical depression would seem to be the most serious mental disturbances that could be attributed to him, and even these aren’t certain.) McCollum also suggests that adult-onset diabetes and the associated blood-sugar fluctuations could explain erratic behavior and would fit the family history and some of Howard’s symptoms.

McCollum goes on to consider the implications of REH’s suicide:

The common myth is that Howard blew his brains out because he couldn’t live without his mother. Like many of you, I reject this. It implies that Howard was weak and tied to his mother’s approval. As one who has cared for the sick, I can tell you that to be able to do so for so long meant that Howard was strong. Very strong. And, I don’t think Howard hung upon Hester’s words of approval—his drinking and prolonged dating of Ms. Price prove that he could and would defy her wishes. I fall into line with those who feel that Hester’s death allowed Howard the freedom from responsibility that let him kill himself. Howard feared growing old. I feel that his mother’s lingering gave him extra time in life. He
might well have killed himself earlier; he spoke of it often enough. Such talking is considered a warning sign which should always be taken seriously. (p. 24)

McCollum concludes that Howard’s “craziness” only makes him more like many of literature’s outstanding creators, and that it should not be treated as having any effect on the impact and importance of his work.

(I believe that a major psychological factor in REH’s decision to take his own life is the exquisite sensibility of such a literary figure, especially a poet, as he was, to the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune that we common dullards are better able to slough off. I think that we have no idea how much, behind his tough façade, he suffered from loneliness, disappointment, and rejection. And oversensitivity is hardly tantamount to craziness. Escape from pain is as likely a motive for suicide as anything else.)

After a poem, “The Unseen Gods of Ancient Egypt” by Stanley C. Sargent, The Lion’s Den begins with a letter from Tompkins, who, in disputing Kappabani’s letter in the August issue, insists that Homer could be as subtle, sophisticated, and sublime as the best of later writers. Tompkins then tackles Romeo’s claim, in “Napoleon’s Triumph?”, that the best REH biography had already been written, namely de Camp’s Dark Valley Destiny. “Gary even permitted himself the amazing assertion that ‘... largely due to the breadth and depth of de Camp’s presentation, Robert E. Howard became as fascinating to his fans as his characters were.’ ... It could not have been Howard, who only lived the life and produced all the poems and letters, who attracted the attention of the fans on his own; no, they must have been ‘largely’ entranced by de Camp’s ‘presentation’.” (p.28) Tompkins cites many times that de Camp intrudes himself into his discussions of Howard’s and Lovecraft’s lives and emphasizes Conan at the expense of many of REH’s other characters (not even mentioning “Worms of the Earth”), never admitting the possibility that Howard could have ever achieved wide recognition without de Camp’s self-aggrandizing popularization of Conan, despite the existence of others who would have been ready to do so. Tompkins errs, though, when he claims that de Camp was wrong in saying “Kings of the Night” was Bran Mak Morn’s “first appearance on paper.” This tale appeared in 1930, before any other Bran story, aside from an unpublished poem REH never completed.

Romeo writes in the next issue, conceding there are certain faults in DVD, but defends de Camp’s right to make money off his own work and claims that even Tompkins inserts himself into his own essays. Romeo argues that DVD is properly Conan-centric because most of fandom was and is that way, and that de Camp does mention many of Howard’s other works in a favorable light.

Next in the Den is a reprint of a 1984 letter from de Camp extracted from REHupa Mailing #70 that related how he and his wife found Howard books donated to Howard Payne University which contained REH’s markings on tales of white women who were abducted by Indians, as if indicating some special interest on his part, but Novalyne Price Ellis told them that he had looked for them at her request.

Roehm follows with speculations about who might win the next Cimmerian Awards; a revelation that Chuck Hoffman’s quotes about REH and the spicies originated not from Glenn Lord but Hoffmann Price; and an expression of doubt that all of Howard’s book donations were included in Howard Payne’s accessions list.

Schweitzer returns to the fray, finding flaws in Al Schroeder’s attempt to link the Hyborian world to Middle Earth, branding Herron a contrarian turned crank who resorts to ad-hominem
attacks, and going into a long sketch about his experiences editing *Weird Tales*. He insists that Conan was such a unique, outstanding creation that, had it not been for Farnsworth Wright and *Weird Tales*, Howard would probably never have attained the lasting popularity that he has.

The letters continue with ones from Lumpkin, who dismisses Herron as a bore; fan Armin Kruspel, who asks if a third Wandering Star Conan volume will be forthcoming (Burke assures him it will); Kevin Cook, who praises *The Cimmerian* and wants to know more about the current boom in the prices of pulps containing REH; Romeo, who observes that the violence and sexual aggression toward women in Howard’s spcies were only harbingers of a trend in popular culture exemplified by such writers as Erskine Caldwell; Holmes, whose comments about Cimmerians were mentioned previously; and finally Sidney-Fryer, who says that the October issue maintained the high quality that *TC* has consistently demonstrated and that he tends to side with Herron in the *Weird Tales* debate, opining that Wright’s capricious dealings with Clark Ashton Smith added quite a bit to the disgust that led Smith to cease writing fiction.

As if six bimonthly issues, an index issue, and an issue spotlighting special awards of his own conception were not enough, Grin decided to start his own blog, www.TheCimmerian.com, celebrating Howard and other fantasists, in August 2005. Initially consisting of his own posts, he soon recruited a stable of scholarly contributors who helped him make it into one of the most impressive fantasy-related blogs ever over the course of its almost 5-year run. Well designed by Grin himself, the site featured a *TC* trophy and a rotating selection of Howard-related quotations on its masthead. More diverse in focus and more casual in style than the journal, the site commenced with Grin’s “Heart’s Blood” essay, followed by reviews of the Sci-Fi Channel’s magazine, *Dark Valley Destiny*, Neil Gaiman’s *American Gods*, Hunter S. Thompson, the latest REHupa Mailings, anti-REH sentiment in the *Cross Plains Review*, *The Selected Letters of Clark Ashton Smith*, Randy Broecker’s *Fantasy of the 20th Century*, and Howard’s *Blood of the Gods and Other Stories* (Girasol, 2005); reprints of REH-related newspaper articles; and news about the 2006 World Fantasy Convention and about Howard rarities on eBay. The Cimmerian Blog ended up being twice nominated for a World Fantasy Award. The Blog’s history has been surveyed by Harron [41-45].

And yet there was still more to come, as Grin, to celebrate the Centennial of Howard’s birth, decided to do nothing less than double his publication rate, as we will see next time.

REFERENCES


"Lord of the East!" his voice rang like a trumpet-call, "welcome to the fellowship of kings! To the glory and the witch-fire, the gold and the moon-mist, the splendor and the death!"

---Robert E. Howard, "The Soovers of the Thunder"---

Heart’s Blood

Tuesday, August 23, 2005

Posted by Leo Gain

In brute historical terms, Robert E. Howard amounts to little more than a brief flash illumining the cultural fabric of the early twentieth century.


Van Hise, James, “Sword & Fantasy—A New Robert E. Howard Fanzine Joins the Fray” in The Road to Velitrium #55, p. 24 in REHupa Mailing #191 (Feb., 2005)

Van Hise, James, “Mission Statement” in Sword & Fantasy #1 (Van Hise, Yucca Valley, Cal.), p. 3

Van Hise, James, “Racism and REH” in The Road to Velitrium #3, pp. 4-8 in REHupa Mailing #128 (Aug., 1994)


Grin, Leo, “The Hyrkanian [Award]; Outstanding Achievement—Essays: Chris Gruber for ‘Born to Edit Boxing Stories’” in The Cimmerian Awards 2006 (Leo Grin, Playa del Rey, Cal., 2006), pp. 34 & 35


[27] Grin, Leo, “The Stygian [Award]; Outstanding Achievement—Website: Paul Herman for HowardWorks” in The Cimmerian Awards 2005 (Leo Grin, Playa del Rey, Cal., 2005), pp. 28-30


[33] Grin, Leo, “The Crom Award; Editor’s Choice: Ken Neiderer for Sculpting the Cimmerian Award Skulls” in The Cimmerian Awards 2005 (Leo Grin, Playa del Rey, Cal., 2005), pp. 6-8


[39] Ibid., pp. 6, 8-11, & 17


32
THE ROBERT E. HOWARD BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SECONDARY SOURCES, PART XIV

The list of articles below is complete insofar as it contains all items relating to Howard, excepting those by Howard himself (being primary references and cataloged elsewhere) and those inspired by Howard, such as poems by others (being primary references by those authors). It is in alphabetical order by author and then by title. The abstract, if any, is in brackets.

*The Cimmerian, Vol. 2*
(proazine edited by Leo Grin)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUTHOR</th>
<th>REFERENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finn, Mark</td>
<td>“<em>Fight Stories</em> Feeding Frenzy” [surging popularity of REH’s boxing pulps on eBay] in <em>The Cimmerian, Vol. 2, #3</em> (Leo Grin, Downey, Cal.), pp. 25 &amp; 26 (June, 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentzel, David</td>
<td>“A Gent up Bear Creek” [his experiences editing <em>The Riot at Bucksnort and Other Western Tales</em> (Univ. Nebraska/Bison, 2005), with a list of REH’s humorous westerns] in <em>The Cimmerian, Vol. 2, #2</em> (Leo Grin, Downey, Cal.), pp. 16-22 w/photo (Apr., 2005)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grin, Leo


Grin, Leo

“The Black Circle Award; Lifetime Achievement: Glenn Lord” in The Cimmerian Awards 2005 (Leo Grin, Playa del Rey, Cal., 2005), pp. 37-39 w/photo

Grin, Leo

“The Black River Award; Special Achievement: Jim and Ruth Keegan for The Illustrated World of Robert E. Howard and ‘The Adventures of Two-Gun Bob’” in The Cimmerian Awards 2005 (Leo Grin, Playa del Rey, Cal., 2005), pp. 33-36 w/photo

Grin, Leo


Grin, Leo

“The Crom Award; Editor’s Choice: Ken Neiderer for Sculpting the Cimmerian Award Skulls” in The Cimmerian Awards 2005 (Leo Grin, Playa del Rey, Cal., 2005), pp. 6-8 w/7 photos

Grin, Leo

“The Hrykanian [Award]; Outstanding Achievement—Essays” [Mark Finn for “Fists of Robert E. Howard”; Rusty Burke for “Travels with Robert E. Howard”; & Steven Tompkins for “The Past Is Dead, the Past Is Deadly: Three Dragons in One Hour”] in The Cimmerian Awards 2005 (Leo Grin, Playa del Rey, Cal., 2005), pp. 15-24 w/4 photos

Grin, Leo

“The Stygian [Award]; Outstanding Achievement—Website: Paul Herman for HowardWorks” in The Cimmerian Awards 2005 (Leo Grin, Playa del Rey, Cal., 2005), pp. 28-30 w/photo

Grin, Leo

“The Valusian [Award]; Outstanding Achievement—Anthology: Don Herron for The Barbaric Triumph in The Cimmerian Awards 2005 (Leo Grin, Playa del Rey, Cal., 2005), pp. 12-14 w/photo

Grin, Leo

“The Venarium Award; Emerging Scholar: Mark Finn” in The Cimmerian Awards 2005 (Leo Grin, Playa del Rey, Cal., 2005), pp. 31 & 32 w/photo

Grin, Leo


Gruber, Chris

“Born to Edit Boxing Stories [Univ. Nebraska, 2005; development of his interest in REH, boxing, bulldogs, writing, & editing] in The Cimmerian, Vol. 2, #3 (Leo Grin, Downey, Cal.), pp. 4-16 (June, 2005)
Gruber, Chris  

Haefele, John D.  

Haefele, John D.  

Hanke, Era Lee  

Harbin, Steven R.  

Harbin, Steven R.  

Harbin, Steven R.  

Hardy, David A.  
“Conquistadors of Doom” [validation of & elaboration on de Camp’s thesis that the assassination attempt in “By This Axe I Rule”/“The Phoenix on the Sword” was based on Pizarro’s assassination] in The Cimmerian, Vol. 2, #1 (Leo Grin, Downey, Cal.), pp. 18-23 (Feb., 2005)

Hardy, David A.  

Henderson, Scotty  

Herron, Don  
Letter [comments on de Camp’s & Schweitzer’s defense of Farnsworth Wright] in The Cimmerian, Vol. 2, #1 (Leo Grin, Downey, Cal.), pp. 32-34 (Feb., 2005); see letter by Cavalier in #3

Herron, Don  


Joshi, S. T.  Letter [rebuts of Leno’s criticism on pp. 31 & 32 of his review in The Dark Man #8 of The Barbaric Triumph (ed. Don Herron; Wildside, 2004)] in The Cimmerian, Vol. 2, #2 (Leo Grin, Downey, Cal.), p. 32 (Apr., 2005); see Leno’s reply & Herron’s letter in #3


Kruspel, Armin
Letter [asks when Wandering Star’s 3rd Conan volume will be published] in The Cimmerian, Vol. 2, #6 (Leo Grin, Playa del Rey, Cal.), p. 36 followed by a response by Rusty Burke (Dec., 2005)

Leno, Brian
Letter [criticizes S. T. Joshi’s review in The Dark Man #8 of The Barbaric Triumph (ed. Don Herron; Wildside, 2004)] in The Cimmerian, Vol. 2, #2 (Leo Grin, Downey, Cal.), pp. 31 & 32 (Apr., 2005); see Joshi’s reply on p. 32 & Herron’s letter in #3

Leno, Brian

Levy, Michael M.

Linzalone, Joseph

Lord, Glenn

Lumpkin, Bob
Letter [reviews TC, esp. Vol. 1, #5, which he found overly Herron-oriented] in The Cimmerian, Vol. 2, #2 (Leo Grin, Downey, Cal.), p. 30 (Apr., 2005); see reply by Herron in #3

Lumpkin, Bob

Lumpkin, Bob

McCollum, Rick

McCollum, Rick
Nielsen, Leon  

Reasoner, James  

Reasoner, James  

Reasoner, James  

Roehm, Rob  
“Howard’s Ruin” [discovery of the spot at Ft. McKavett, Tex., where a 1933 photo of REH was taken] in The Cimmerian, Vol. 2, #1 (Leo Grin, Downey, Cal.), pp. 4-11 w/9 photos, incl. REH (Feb., 2005)

Roehm, Rob  

Roehm, Rob  

Roehm, Rob  

Romeo, Gary  
“Inspirations from Life” [finds basis for “Red Nails” in Billy the Kid’s life & the Lincoln County War] in The Cimmerian, Vol. 2, #1 (Leo Grin, Downey, Cal.), pp. 12-17 (Feb., 2005)

Romeo, Gary  

Romeo, Gary  

Sasser, Damon  
Schroeder, Al  

Schweitzer, Darrell  
Letter [rebuts Herron’s criticism in *TC*, Vol. 1, #6 of Farnsworth Wright] in *The Cimmerian, Vol. 2, #1* (Leo Grin, Downey, Cal.), pp. 34-37 (Feb., 2005); see Herron’s reply in #2

Schweitzer, Darrell  

Schweitzer, Darrell  

Schweitzer, Darrell  
Letter [disputes Herron in *TC*, Vol. 2, #2 that lack of payment by *Weird Tales* was a factor in REH’s suicide, speculates about REH’s future had he lived, & defends *WT* editor Farnsworth Wright’s publ. choices] in *The Cimmerian, Vol. 2, #4* (Leo Grin, Playa del Rey, Cal.), pp. 34-37 (Aug., 2005)

Schweitzer, Darrell  

Sidney-Fryer, Donald  

Sidney-Fryer, Donald  

Tompkins, Steven  
“How the West Was Wondered” [his intentions editing *The Black Stranger and Other American Tales* (Univ. Nebraska/Bison, 2005) to spotlight the effect of the New World on the prose of REH & others, with a list of related lit-crit] in *The Cimmerian, Vol. 2, #2* (Leo Grin, Downey, Cal.), pp. 3-15 w/photo (Feb., 2005)

Tompkins, Steven  

Tompkins, Steven  

© 2013 Lee A. Breakiron