

THE SHADOW SINGER

AN ONLINE ARCHIVE OF ROBERT E. HOWARD STUDIES

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This issue of *The Shadow Singer* is going to end up being a simple collection of musings and brainstormings about various matters Howard-ian. I will also put forward some suggestions – as always, eager for feedback and the general “mulling over” of such notions.

Thought #1: How about using REHupa funds or setting up a few dollars each in a special fund to place ads trying to come up with either photos or digital scans of photos of Cross Plains, Brownwood, and environs that can be dated back to the 1920s and 30s? We could announce it’s for historical and literary research and possible “pry loose” some hidden old family gems of long unlooked upon photos of the milieu of REH. Heck! Who knows? Maybe even a previously unknown shot that includes old “Two Gun” will show up?

Thought #2: Speaking of historical research, has all that can possibly be done been done regarding the attempts to reacquaint (or at least track down) items from the Howard household (especially items belonging to Bob)? I’m thinking of the desk especially (whittled down to a coffee table as I understand it, but possible recoverable?) and so forth. Could the provenance of the supposed REH typewriter be further tested? Are we in touch with the owner of that machine? The huge beer mug? (anyone know a supplier for “fishbowls” that size by the way?) Or the big, black, beaded sombrero? I won’t mention the gun – whoops! I guess I just did.

Thought #3: I know the general belief that a digital archive of ALL of REHupa collections is either too difficult to accomplish or just a plain reprehensible idea in the first place, BUT how about each current member suggesting 5 to 10 “classic” zines or even single “essays” or “articles” from REHupas past. That would make a good archive – even for posting on the REHupa web site. Sure, clear permissions on

republication, etc. But you all know my “Don’t keep our light under a bushel” philosophy. Moving on –

Thought #4: Does Project Pride need some genuine help in the immediate future? The foreseeable future? I know we don’t have the funding to support a “Curator” of sorts, but could some one of few of us donate efforts each year (I mean besides the “usual suspects – especially Rusty and others who habitually donate time and do talks, walks, etc? Are there any money-making schemes that we haven’t thought up yet to help out with this?

Thought #5: Speaking of “Howard Days” types of activities and support, what is the status of 2006? We have to be a driving force in helping the centennial to be special and significant. It’s certainly not too early to begin planning for presentations, panels, publications, advertising, promotions in general. It seems that things are definitely picking up in book sales, the definite new “fantasy boom” – Tolkien AND Howard back to the fore, etc. Lots of new books being published and new journals beginning to circulate. It reminds me of the late 60s and 70s. Are we doing all we can to maximize this for the advancement of our own causes?

Thought #6: I’m either in possession of, have created myself, or am aware of lots of digital etext material re: Robert E. Howard. In fact, time permitting with my dissertation on Chesterton needing to be finished pretty much by end of summer, I’m beginning to do more intensive stylometric tagging and sorting of some of the Howard texts – beginning with the Conan corpus. Do any of youz mugz have digital texts of pastiches? I’m interested in these for the compare/contrast aspect of my projected work – in other words, it’s one thing to contend or suggest that the pastichists fall short of Howard or don’t match his style and writing patterns in general – it’s another thing to PROVE it! With stylometry and the existence of texts to compare/contrast with true Howard, I can be precise about how the pastiche writers differ from the original. So, those of you with digital archives or folks who’ve done a lot of OCR scanning (or would like to ;-)) give me a shout: dfcoffman@sbcglobal.net OR fcoffman@pobox.com OR 847.289.1403 OR 985 Deborah Avenue, Elgin, IL 60123-1918 [new address].

Thought #7: The REHupan General Library Project!?! Why don’t we all go back to our own personal “holdings” and try to – if you haven’t already done so – document all the REH zines, journals, books, versions, related stuff we have. Then – we publish a list of who has what – not for “loan” necessarily, but for contact regarding specific questions in the effort to simply help each other out in whatever investigations we may be up to. Also, those who find they have duplicate or triplicate

or more-plicate copies of certain items might work WITHIN REHupa to have a sort of clearing house or in-house market (fair prices suggested of course) to distribute these within our rather special circle of Howardians.

Thought #7: As a money maker to support our association in general and to help us in furthering our own goals and promotion of REH in general, might we not publish a BEST OF REHUPA book(s), the proceeds going to the associations general fund? Again back to the potential usefulness of identifying “classic” zines and articles.

Thought #8: Does anyone have extra copies of some of the rarer REH poetry books: specifically *Ghost Ocean*, *Night Images*, *Voices of the Night*? I have some of the individual poems from these, but there is at least one important preface or intro and several poems I have neither in print nor digital form. I’d be more than happy to buy any extra copy of these or work to acquire a photocopy or two or more (heh heh).

Thought #9: Some need-to-be-explored areas of study and some new critical approaches in Howardiana. What impact has *The Whole Wide World* had on the image of REH, the popularity of his work, the rise in sales, his reception among women readers? I don’t know of any feminist studies in Howardian scholarship per se. Some have talked around the subject. What has been the influence upon Howard (I mean by citing specific references, quotes, parallel plots or passages, etc.) of any of various earlier authors: London, Burroughs, Doyle, Mundy, and even some that haven’t really been suggested – like the classics or Shakespeare, etc.? A book on Howard as seen through the letters and *Post Oaks and Sand Roughs* would be an interesting study. Certainly the argument could be made that he is the most “self-revealing” in his letters with Smith and others? In his autobiography? Of course, I think it’s true of his Poetry also. We see Howard behind various masks (personae) in his fiction. I think we see more of his true “face” in the poems, letters, and autobiography.

Thought #10: As part of my stylometric and CALC (Computer-Assisted Literary Criticism) project (in the works, a “work in progress,” an “opus methodicus plodicus”) I’m interested in what is usually called “reader response theory.” If any of you would like to e-mail me by contributing your favorite passage(s) of Howard’s prose (any of the stories in any of the genres he covered) and maybe add a bit about just WHY they are favorite passages – it would be of great help. Photocopy of a page or pages, copy and paste from a digital text, etc. However you might send along a favorite or favorites would be nifty.