



BUSTED RIBS AND BROKEN ENGLISH

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Go West, Young Man

I'm presently spending most of my Howard time (at least that which is not spent scanning and proofing texts) doing research for what I hope will be a fairly exhaustive article on Howard's humorous western stories. While I have done a lot of information gathering, there is still much to do. My (as yet tentative) plans are:

- 1 Give a complete listing of all of the people and places from all of the stories.
- 2 Compare the stories which make up *A Gent from Bear Creek* with the original *Action Stories* appearances.
- 3 Contrast the three series to see how alike or different they truly are.
- 4 See what changes were made by modern publishers to the original magazine appearances.

I have all of the book appearances, and many of the magazine appearances. I expect to have all of the magazine appearances before I complete my work. Glenn has been, as always, invaluable in supplying both information and assistance.

One area where I would use the assistance of my fellow REHupans is in locating previous works on this subject. I have not yet made it through my entire collection of fanzines and other publications, but that continues. Nor have I been able to bring myself to go through *Dark Valley Destiny*, although that unpleasant task is unavoidable. Here is what I have discovered thus far:

“A Gent from Cross Plains” by Glenn Lord

- (in *Amra* #1 (with correction in #3) and *The Blade of Conan*) — A great article!
- “The Western Fiction of Robert E. Howard” by Ben P. Indick (in *The Dark Barbarian*), pages 107-113 — Interesting, but short on substance.
- “Ridin' the Range with REH” by Byron L. Roark (in *REH: Two-Gun Raconteur* #4) — Slight.
- “Ultima Thule” Numbers 2 & 3 (reprinted in *Bicentennial Tribute to Robert E. Howard*) — Contains a rejection letter for “The Peaceful Pilgrim”.

I would appreciate knowing of anything I've missed here. I'm sure there has to have been more written about these popular series. I would be especially grateful for information on previous works published in REHupa, as I don't have access to many of these and lack (as do we all) any complete index.

With any luck (and sufficient time), I hope to have this work in good enough shape to act as my submission for mailing #156.

Editorial Fireworks

Those of you who subscribe to the REH-fans Internet mailing list have had the dubious pleasure to have experienced several very heated exchanges in recent weeks. One of the most contested, and one in which I took somewhat of an active role, was debating the place of the editor the publishing of Howard's works.

Howard certainly had his share of editors during his lifetime. Some were difficult on ol' Two-Gun, but the most prominent editor, Farnsworth Wright of *Weird Tales*, was the model of how an editor should deal with his writers. While some excellent stories were reject by Wright for personal reasons (such as "The Frost-Giant's Daughter"), and he did occasionally return a typescript with suggestions for revisions, he allowed Howard to make revisions himself, or to decline to do so if he desired (although his financial situation generally made that a moot point).

But what about posthumous editors? There were many unpublished tales left at Howard's death. And there is no way (despite the plethora of psychic 900 numbers) to allow the author to make corrections or revisions.

Well, we know the treatment Howard has received from his most infamous posthumous editor, L. Sprague de Camp. While many of us (rightly, in my eyes) rant and rail against the treatment Howard has received at his hands, I do have to say one thing for Mr. de Camp: he has generally been honest and forthright about his changes (although not always the motivations for such). His two articles "The Trail of Trancos" and "Editing Conan" go into significant detail regarding the style and substance of his editorial hand.

But lest we think that resistance to Mr. de Camp's generally gratuitous editing is a recent phenomenon, I herewith reproduce from *Amra* V2 #50 (May 1969), the response by Archie Mercer to de Camp's "Editing Conan", which appeared in *Amra* V2 #48 (mid-August 1968). For those of you without this issue of *Amra*, the article is more readily available in *The Blade of Conan*. I think you will find Mr. Mercer's comments fairly perceptive. There is also a brief note from *Amra* editorial staff.

On Editing
by Archie Mercer
De Camp's article "Editing Co-

nan" [*Amra* v2#48] I found of particular interest. Not so much for the "Conan" angle as for the "Editing" angle, of course, the light thrown an the murky recesses of publishing houses being considerable. I have heard tell of style-books before, of course. De Camp mentions preferring "towards" to "toward" -- I seem to recall reading once of a publishing house that deleted the terminal "s" on all "wards" words as a matter of course.

Such things, to my mind, are entirely unnecessary. So long as an author's usage is both legitimate and consistent, he should be the one to do the using.

Where I really took exception to the back-room editors, though, was on the matter of punctuation. All this talk of "predicates" (I've never entirely understood this word anyway, and still feel no need to) is entirely beside the point. I agree that "John and Mary ate" requires no post-Johnian comma, though not for the reason given; the phrase reads naturally without one, and clumsily with one. The main purpose of punctuation is to make the text easier for the reader, resolve possible ambiguities, make the whole "flow". Thus a short group of words, other things being equal, requires less punctuation than a longer group, even though the two groups may grammatically be exactly equivalent.

Take the passage cited: "Without hesitation he glided down the passage, and crouched like a stalking panther beside the door." De Camp's back-room pendants want to move the comma to follow "hesitation", if it's to be there at all. Put the comma there, and it promptly contradicts itself. "Without hesitation" followed immediately by the hesitation of the comma. The gliding should follow the lack of hesitation immediately. At the other end of the sentence, the crouching cannot take place until the gliding has finished. The comma in the original text thus represents the passage of the passage, and is in exactly the right place.

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[We're inclined to think that the "... " is the recognized way to indicate lapse of time in narration, whereas the ", " is for dividing logical elements. For example, it helps to know what to expect when, part way through a sentence, one finds ", and", irregardless of how rapidly the action being narrated may be progressing.]

Mailing Comments

#153

Glenn:

Much thanks for information on the planned Barlow poetry collection. I guess we can now say with some degree of confidence that every appearance of this poem since 1936 (over a dozen appearances!) have been flawed. Kind of sobering.

I realize that it would be a truly daunting undertaking, but do you have an index of all of the Howard papers in your collection?

Gary:

No offense, bud, but a 'zine consisting solely of bad pastiche info and comments from the most overrated SF author of our time? Yeesh! You've done better before, and I'm sure you will again. Liked the mailing comments at least.

Joe:

Great stuff with the letter index. It will be very gratifying to see the unpublished section shrink significantly once Rusty finishes his Lovecraft work.

Ed:

Interesting stuff on the APAs. Now you can take it the logical next step and write the exhaustive history of REHupa, including a timeline of membership changes. He he.

Morgan:

Interesting story on "Roads". A couple of years ago, I got the stupid idea to try to pick up every book listed in Moorcock and Cawthorn's *Fantasy: The 100 Best Books* (I have since given up this silliness). One of the books listed was *Roads*. A quick (and obviously flawed) search turned up only the Arkham House edition. So I purchased the cheapest one I could find, I think for about \$65. As a bonus, it was signed by Virgil Finlay.

A few months later, I discovered that the story had been anthologized in *Worlds of Weird*, which is available quite cheaply. So I sold the Arkham House book, thanks to the Finlay signature, at a very handsome profit. More \$ for Howard books!

Although not even vaguely S&S, I hold Kuttner's Gallagher stories as possibly the best humorous SF ever written.

Carl:

For more on the tremendous respect which HPL had for Howard, here is a quote from a letter from HPL to Don Wollheim, ca. 1936, as printed in *The Coming of Conan* (and possibly elsewhere): "Howard is without question the most vigorous and spontaneous writer now contributing to the pulps—the nearest approach (although he wouldn't admit it himself) to a sincere artist."

Indy:

Pretty damn good rogues gallery! I look downright sinister. Is there some ominous significance to the prone positions of Keegan and Preece?

Tim:

You have truly boggled my mind! That there may be as yet undiscovered REH works lurking in dark corners is an inspiration to us all.

J.D.:

I think the ultimate comment on Howard's suicide is that, fascinating as it is to study, we will

just never know. So long as we accept this, and hence view de Camp's and others "facts" as nothing more than opinions, all is well.

Rick:

I look forward to your "serious" articles. You already put more into just your Mailing Comments than my entire 'zine! Although the amount of work yourself, Rusty, and a few others put into their 'zines can feel utterly intimidating to us relative newcomers (echoes of "We're not worthy!" reverberate in the distance), if we have the balls to stick it out, I think it ultimately inspires us to improve, improve, improve.

Jim:

To make a long story short, Rick is the one making mountains out of molehills. He is doing the very thing to your book that he accuses you of doing to de Camp: concentrating on trivialities to the exclusion of the big picture.

And congratulations on selling out of your obviously fatally flawed and negative book!

Rusty:

Part of the reason my collection was in boxes was to make room for you to sleep! It is often (as now) scattered in piles around the room.

And allow me to **strongly** second your compliment of Gary Gianni. The time he gave us (to the exclusion of some much **bigger names**) was wonderful.

James:

I haven't read the Kirby O'Donnell stories in many years. I'll have to queue it into the already overwhelmed reading pile.

Graeme:

I had just recently reread *The She Devil*. While I found the stories somewhat interesting, they are really pretty uninspired by REH standards. "The Dragon of Kao Tsu" has some good moments, but overall they are quite forgettable, titillation or no.

Charles:

It's nice to see someone with a background in psychology wade into the mental health argument.

Recent Aquisitions

Certainly my most significant recent find has been a copy of *Modern American Poetry 1933*. This hardcover poetry anthology was a "vanity" anthology to which Howard contributed two poems: "To One Who Walks At Eventide" and "To a Woman". In true Two-Gun Bob fashion, Howard refused to play the "now you have to buy a bunch of books" game, but they published the poems anyway.

As you would probably expect from a vanity anthology, most of the poetry is dreadful. It is primarily of the "flowers and love" style. Ironically, this serves to make Howard's poems, already darker than average, even more hard-hitting by comparison.

Despite the low quality of the collection, I do admit to coming across one one very brief poem which actually made me laugh out loud when I read it. And it makes a fitting conclusion to this issue. By W. Caldwell Henwood:

Remorse

Unasked, you made your vow.
You kissed me as you said,
"I love you, Dear."
And now—
I wish that you were dead.

"There," says Joshua sourly, "goes the most hen-pecked pore critter in the Humbolts. For sech I has only pity and contempt. He's that scairt of a woman he don't dast call his soul his own."