

The Hyborian Review

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Produced by Garret Romaine

*What the *&%\$ is this?*

I finally figured out what I want to do with my REHUPA membership...I want to continue. But I don't want to just ship out *The Hyborian Review* each issue. I want a chance to break out, to try new things, to write essays instead of articles. So, here I am.

In many ways, membership in REHUPA is an opportunity to experiment, and even a chance to fail. It isn't even clear to me that I can pull this off. Between writing *The Hyborian Review*, posting infrequently on the REH mailing list, and now creating this thing, that's a lot of Howard. Perhaps perilously close to overdose.

It doesn't matter that none of this pays. Other stuff I do pays the bills -- isn't that what day jobs are for?

So, bear with me.

- Garret Romaine

Purpose Statement:

This publication is dedicated to the most enduringly popular character ever produced by Robert E. Howard.

While other characters and ideas will pop up from time to time, the main thrust of this publication is to document the intricacies of a barbarian's barbarian, Conan of Cimmeria.

Comics, movies, magazines, Internet, and other resources will be discussed. And of course -- when time permits -- mailing comments...

A Preliminary, Expanded Index for *One Who Walked Alone*

Written by Novalyne Price Ellis

If there is a shortcoming to the book, other than it's sad ending, it is that it could be much more scholarly. Here, then, is a first cut at indexing the book, by noting the pages where Conan is discussed and quoting 'em.

p. 20

"Do you begin with a character or a description of a place or with a plot?" I asked.

Bob thought a minute. "Every way, but mostly with a character, I suppose. I've got a character going now --"

"Conan the Barbarian," Clyde interrupted. "A ruthless barbarian who loves, fights, and battles the supernatural."

Bob took off his cap and twisted it in his hands. His eyes were smiling. "That Conan's the damndest bastard I ever saw. He gets himself into all kinds of scrapes. I sure don't try to give him advice when he tells me all that junk. I just sit back and listen."

"Do you know what he's telling you?" Clyde says. "He's telling you that a real character has a mind of his own, even in a story."

p. 47-48

"Do you always tell your stories as you write them?" Again, he ran his fingers through his hair. "A hell of a noise, wasn't it? Well, yeah, I do. I find that if I talk them out -- hear the words as I put them down, the yarn goes a little smoother. Sounds better when you read it."

"I know what you mean," I said eagerly. "The voice brings words to life."

"That's right," he said. "You're absolutely right. And back to this selling bit, and you don't write unless you sell, I'm working on a Conan yarn right now. I don't know whether it will sell or not, but I'm working on it. I figure the law of averages will give you sales if you keep pounding them out."

p. 50

"You knew I was coming?"

"Oh, yes. I was going along with ol' Conan and all that bunch of cr--stuff, and, all of a sudden, you popped up out of the typewriter."

<snip>

p. 50

He talked then about his character Conan and the scrapes he'd gotten himself into. "That's the damndest bastard...the damndest bastard who ever was."

p. 59

Bob started talking about Conan and one of the stories he had written. He mentioned Kline, his agent. He was getting warmed up. So was I. I moved so that I wouldn't fall out of the door on my side of the car.

"Is Kline a good agent?" I asked.

"So-so." Bob jerked his cap off and threw it in the back seat. "Sometimes I think he might work a little harder for me. Chances are that I could sell my stuff as well as he can, but selling things myself takes too much time. I'm thinking about trying someone else though. I'm working on a yarn right now that will go straight to Wright."

"Another Conan story?" I asked.

"Yeah," he answered. "He's my bread and butter. I do bang out a western or adventure yarn now and then, but, mostly, I go along with Conan."

"What's that story about -- the one you brought me to read?"

"The Devil in Iron." He seemed a bit defensive about it.

"I don't guess you'll like it."

p. 62

I hesitated. "You don't care for ordinary people stories?"

"No, that's where we're different," he said. "But maybe you're right. Illegitimate children are the product of civilization with its myriad problems, its rules and regulations. Civilized man makes rules against his nature, then beats his damn brains out because he can't live up to them. I write a lot of my yarns about a different age, a different way of life."

"Like 'The Devil in Iron' where a man fights an enormous snake?"

He nodded emphatically. "And against a strange pagan god. But that's my formula -- man struggling to survive in an elemental way. Life and death in a new world."

p. 63

"I don't think you're going to like 'ol Conan. His struggle is big, uncomplicated with civilized standards. The people who read my stuff want to get away from this modern, complicated world with its hypocrisy, its cruelty, its dog-eat-dog life. They want to go back to the origin of the human race. The civilization we live in is a hell of a lot more sinister than the time I write about. In those days, girl, men were men and women were women. They struggle to stay alive, but the struggle was worth it."

p. 65

"Bob," I interrupted finally. "Don't you ever write about modern times? Modern heroes? Do you always write about barbarians -- about past history?"

"Sure," he said. I write about several other characters. Stephen Costigan, John --"

"What kind of problems do they face?"

He laughed. "Magic. Voodoo. Oriental magic."

p. 77

"I've been trying to pound out another yarn."

"Another Conan story?"

"Yeah, but this may be my last one. I'm getting a little tired of Conan." He made a sweeping gesture with his arm. "This country needs to be written about. There are all kinds of stories around here."

<snip>

"When you tell a story and someone listens to it, you are really publishing it. Then when you sit down to write, it just doesn't come. You're not excited about it anymore. You're not trying to discover something new."

p. 83

Bob says I worry too much about the "whys" and "wherefores" of things, and he may be right. He says it's better to take life the way Conan does. Conan fights bigness, ugliness, badness because it's there, but he can shake off his involvement and go on to new fights and new adventures without worrying about *why* things were as they were.

p. 84

She looked at me as if I had the measles. "Poe is a good writer," she said. "I was pointing out what a wonderful choice of words he had; I was trying to get my students to enjoy using words carefully to improve their writing." "Bob has a wonderful choice of words, too," I insisted, "and as far as the content of his stories and of Poe's, they write the same kind of nightmarish stuff. The main difference is that Poe's works are in the literature books and Bob's aren't...yet. Someday, some English teacher will be telling kids to try to write like Bob."

"I was working on my car this morning, trying to get it cleaned up for tonight. While I was working on it, like a fool, I was talking, trying to figure out something about a yarn I was stuck on. I wasn't talking too loud, but I got to a place where 'ol Conan was fighting, and I said, 'Fool. Dog of Hell. Die!' About that time, a timid little voice said, 'Robert, is your mother home?' I turned around and there was your friend, Mrs. Jackson, looking as if she didn't know whether to run or stay there. I wanted to go through the ground or grab my gun out of the car and shoot myself." He shook his head, laughing ruefully.

p. 107

I thought about his story, "The Devil in Iron." Hadn't he described in detail how the castle looked to the fisherman? I was not trying to argue; I was trying to understand.

He talked on for nearly a page about stories in general -- something, he said, I might think about. One thing he wanted to stress was that stories had to be real and important; the characters -- real people with real problems, important problems. He was sure, he said (and he was right) that I wondered how Conan could be a real person, but I needed to remember that deep inside every man there was something of the barbarian, something that civilization could not destroy. A man reading his story about Conan, then, would feel again in the depth of his being those barbaric impulses; consequently, Conan acted as they felt they would act in similar circumstances.

p. 140

"A fool writing!" Bob raised his voice even higher. "Girl, I'm working on a yarn like that now -- a Conan yarn. Listen to me. When you have a dying civilization, the normal, accepted life style ain't strong enough to satisfy the damned insatiable appetites of the courtesans, and finally, of all the people. They turn to Lesbianism and things like that to satisfy their desires...I'm going to call it 'The Red Flame of Passion.'"

p. 143 (on researching)

Some people might think that Bob is just loafing around and not working at anything at all. But that's not true. His mind is hard at work. Although he doesn't get too far from home, he drives around over the country, thinking of stories, talking them out loud to himself. He'll stop the car on some little hill, get out and walk around, listening to the wind blowing across the prairies. He says that on the wind he hears the tuneless little whistles cowboys made as they rode, stretching themselves now and then, throwing a leg over the saddle horn to ride sideways to relieve the strain, being almost unseated when the horse shied at a prairie dog or a rattlesnake. These are the things he wants to write about...someday.

While he's riding around in the country, he may see an old man sitting on a porch by himself. Bob stops the car, gets out and visits with the old man, just to hear his stories of the country when it was new and fresh and uncluttered with the trappings of civilization.

<snip>

He also brought a recent magazine with a Conan story in it. I read two paragraphs in that one. I wasn't about to read of a lurid light with a human head in it.

p. 178

Bob began to talk. But he was not berating civilization; instead, he was praising the simple things that

civilization had to offer: standing on street corners, talking with friends; walking with the warmth of the sun on your back, a faithful dog by your side; hunting cactus with your best girl.

"I sold Wright a yarn like that a few months ago." He turned and looked at me, his eyes turbulent. "I'm damned surprised he took it. It's different from my other Conan yarns...no sex...only men fighting against the savagery and bestiality about to engulf them. I want you to read it when it comes out. It's filled with the important little things of civilization, little things that make men think civilization's worth living and dying for..."

<snip>

He began to rave and rant, and I had a hard time getting him back on the story he'd sold to Wright -- the one which, he said, was not the usual Conan story. He was excited about it because it was about this country and it sold! He had a honing to write more about this country, not an ordinary cowboy yarn, or a wild west shoot 'em up, though God knew this country was alive with yarns like that waiting to be written. But in his heart, he wanted to say more than that. He wanted to tell the simple story of this country and the hardships the settlers had suffered, pitted against a frightened, semi-barbaric people -- the Indians, who were trying to hold on to a way of life and a country they loved. Since he'd met me, he didn't feel so bad about Indians. But a novel depicting the settlers' fear as they tried to carve out a new life, and the Indian's fear as they tried to hold on to a doomed country; why, girl, all that would make the best damn novel ever written about frontier life in the Southwest.

Suddenly, he shook his head. Such a book probably would never be accepted as a great novel or even a good one. He said that two-bit, sophisticated, pseudo-intellectual critics would never consider a novel about this part of the country as a great novel. The damn fools.

"Write it anyway," I said placatingly. "Tell the critics to go to hell."

He shrugged his shoulders. "I wouldn't say this to anybody but you, but, by God, I know what I can do. I love this country, and I know damn well I can write about it. I know damn well I can write a novel that will move, be about people facing real odds." He became exuberant. "I tried that yarn out to see what Wright would do about it. I was afraid he wouldn't take it, but he did! By God, he took it!"

p. 201

We talked about cowboys. Then Bob volunteered that he wasn't through writing Conan stories. I was sorry about that, for I don't care much for Conan, what little I've scanned through.

Bob said he had an idea for a Conan yarn that was about to jell. Hadn't got to the place where he was ready to write it. All he'd done so far was make a few notes, put it aside to let it lie there in his subconscious till it was fully built up.

"What's this one about?" I asked.

"I think this time I'm going to make it one of the sexiest, goriest yarns I've ever written. I don't think you'd care for it."

"Not if it's gory." I looked at him puzzled. "What do you mean, 'sexy stories?'"

"My God. My Conan stories are filled with sex."

<snip>

"You have sex in Conan yarns?" I said unbelievably.

"Hell, yes. That's what he did -- drinking, whoring, fighting. What else was there in life?"

I thought of a story he'd brought me a couple of months ago. I couldn't think of the name of it, and I hadn't read it closely. If he got technical and asked me what was in it, I wouldn't be able to tell him. About the only thing I remembered was there'd been a naked woman in it.

"I don't see anything sexy about a naked woman dancing around on a ship."

"You don't? For God's sake!" Bob barked the words out.

"No," I said, and it was all I could do to keep from laughing.

He took an audible breath. "My God, she danced the mating dance. What could be more sexy?"

"I thought she was crazy," I said. "There she was captain of a pirate ship, and running around naked. Naked in front of all those slaves or whatever you call them -- soldiers, sailors. Anyway, those black men around her."

Question his story and Bob becomes belligerent. "What you don't understand was they were black."

"All eunuchs, I suppose," I said. That struck me as being so funny I began to laugh and couldn't stop.

Bob seemed stunned at first. He said that in such a situation the black slaves thought of the girl as a goddess. He explained, emphatically, that when people were dedicated to a particular belief, the belief makes the impossible normal.

p. 205

"Baloney," I said scornfully. "Let me tell you what's going to happen to all these things you're writing. Someday, people will begin taking one of your stories apart. Like the one you say is coming out in *Weird Tales* -- the one you like about the Picts."

"Yeah," Bob said. "The triumph of a dog and the barbarian."

"Someday, some biographer will come along, and when he reads that story, he'll say, 'Who was this Robert E. Howard? He couldn't have written these stories. Why he was not college bred! Remember, when he went to Howard Payne, all he did was sit around writing yarns, trying to break into *Weird Tales*. He didn't even try to get a college degree! But isn't it written somewhere that

he dated a school teacher who dreamed of being a writer?'"

Bob was listening with a broad grin on his face.

"He'll say: 'That school teacher wrote those yarns, every single one of them. Wrote 'em and didn't have nightmares at all.'"

p. 223

He told me about a story that he had either written, or was going to write. It sounded better than a Conan story to me. Alexander the Great had established colonies in the territory he conquered. As he had marched through the territory, capturing it, he established Greek cities and kingdoms which were to be the bearers of Greek art, culture, and civilization in the conquered territories. Bob thought that if one of those old Greek cities had somehow lasted to the present time and maintained its Greek language and customs, it would make a "hell of a yarn."

p. 245

I took a deep breath. I would not walk out. I would say there. Let people stare. They would not stare long. They would go about their business, more intent on their own thoughts than upon a drama in a drugstore. Even the man who had seemed interested in the bloody story of Conan, where a long dead man had been brought back to life and proved to be a ferocious enemy, was not interested now. He walked away.

p. 289

I sat for a minute, thinking of the Conan story Bob had liked so much. Funny, his main character in that story wasn't Conan. Another fellow in trouble was the hero. You didn't have time to get bored.

p. 293.

He suggested that instead of trying for a real town I think of a number of towns, study them, read about them, read their histories, then create a town that was a composite of several towns...That made sense to me. He had told me of his doing something similar to that before he began his Conan yarns. He wrote about the land where Conan lived, the age in which he lived and the people he'd known, the sorcerers he'd met.

Mailing Comments for REHupa 149

First off, what an issue! I absolutely worship the Gianni work. Marcelo, you are the gold standard. You da man!

Glenn: Thanks for the insight into 'residuals.' I know it's impossible, but I'd sure like to see the next three decades of dollar figures. Especially how much the estate has made on movies, tv, and Halloween costumes...The \$1,000 for Almuric sure jumps out. I have to imagine that if Bob knew he'd get a grand for one of his yarns, or that they'd make a Conan costume for kiddies, he'd be smiling all the way to the bank...

Quill Nod: That video has to come down eventually. I can corroborate your reporting; I got the same story from my video outlet. Congrats on the job shift! Seems to be the season for it...I switched jobs in December/January. No less demanding, but closer to six figures...Tobar looks like a pretty goofy effort. Hated it...

Day Glo-Keefe: Give up, already. If you boys can't get along, shut up. Both of you. Sheesh. Put the effort into your 'zines. Hey, Jim: love the new layout. Now that you are a WP pro, give us a masthead and some page numbering in a footer. I had no idea where your effort started. BTW: Sorry, indeed, for your financial troubles. I do think you've gotten a raw deal lately, and having someone in an amateur rag chewing on your leg probably didn't help. But there is a waiting list, so we all have to keep our end of the log up, I guess. Tough crowd...

IMALICENSEPLATE: Cool that you boned up for your Howard dose. Shows good initiative! I like your reviews. You don't try to re-tell the story, you add your own interpretations. I like that in a review.
Re: your MCs -- I totally and wholeheartedly agree -- keep the pure stuff alive. I would like to see some Weird Tales reprints or something. It is so difficult to access original Howard work.

Humble Servant: I'm really jealous you have an REHupa member within hailing distance. I can imagine you and Venerables had a great discussion. Re: your suggestion to get cracking on the keyboard, I don't know if you subscribe to my Hyborian Review, but I pounded in the entire text to The Curse of the Golden Skull this issue. Building up that electronic collection, like you suggest!

Beltric Charges: Related to Pickett! Way cool. Congrats on your new job; I mentioned in comments to Aquilaman that I have new employment as well.

James Charles: Your drawings lack a certain flow and smoothness. They look like first drafts. Sorry you got a Christmas Card from Jim, El Grincho. But, he has a

point. Oh, and put a footer on your zine, and design a masthead. It's a pretty jerky transition from the previous one...but you are coming along.

Jim Van Grinch: My, my. You've been busy. Unofficial Sergeant at Arms? I got your mailing about the potential for CDs to degrade over 50 years. I'd point out that with 500 of them circulating around, and with a gold disk master, or other mastered device, the possibility of losing all of the archive over time is about .000001. Plus, copy it over to a new DVD device and you're safe for much longer. Paper is great, but...

Anyway, thanks for the BIO. You really have made an outstanding contribution to the comic industry. Very impressive. Was Real Ghostbusters the fake one? I could never keep that straight.

Your pages were all out of order in my copy of the 'zine, but I worked it out. Lin Carter looks like a bloated little toad of a man. Part Hobbit, possibly? Thanks for a high-quality, high-quantity effort.

Waterman Finale: Bye, Ed. See you on the REH list.

Ramona and Joe: Nice timeline. Liked that map, too. But what really blew me away was making the book covers big enough to actually see them! I am very guilty of using thumbnails in my stuff.

Not sure what to make of the *Return of Red Sonja* comic. Shudder. I didn't care much for it.

Bocci-boy: Not much Howard stuff there.

Marcelo: Wow. Gorgeous. You are the best thing that has happened to this group since I've been here. Suitable for framing.

Bunsnip: Another job changer. Good luck!

Larry in the Hood: What a telling comment that how Brak's creator didn't make a map, didn't put much effort into the creation. Sheesh.

Keep checking at Powell's, by the way. I just picked up *Dark Valley Destiny*, *The Book of Robert E. Howard*, and *Always Comes Evening*. They get stuff in all the time, and have some hard covers sitting on the shelf right now. PS: Thanks for your kind comments.

Rough Edges: What a great job you did on the El Borak stuff. I liked it a lot. Wish I'd had it before I launched into my review of an El Borak story earlier this year!

Glad you liked the boxing quote. I like Howard's boxing stories; they have that right respect for the savagery of "The Sweet Science."

Your 'zine is beautifully laid out. Good job.

Jaggy Zen: Your 'zine always sets my teeth on edge. Single sided, ancient cover, and the last five pages had nothing to do with Howard. You're such a fine writer and researcher, I'd like to see you sink your teeth into some good Howardian essays and drop the jokes...but it seems like I'm always picking on you, so here's a pledge: I'll stop. Now. Do what you want. It's just free advice anyway, and we both know what that's worth.

You were dead on with your insight about how far we've come when the Tor pastichers quote from de Camp and Carter, not Howard.

Let's both hope the new Cross Plains Comics boys do a great job. I bet they will. I'm a 'glass is half full' kinda guy, though.

I'd like to keep putting some effort into the Evolution of a Torso story; I found a new graphic to add just a few weeks ago. Look for a "phase two" effort.

Raffy: I want that Pict. E-mail attachment would be ever so cool. Gromaine@aol.com works fine.

By this axe: Very nice, scholarly 'zine. Excellent layout and writing. Gauchos rule.

HighwayFan: If even the German fans are protesting, that says something. But the way the show is all over the world sure points out the potential they had. You did a good job getting us that interview. Put things in perspective for me.

Not Forgotten Morgan: Nice work on the series. Good research material. The kind of stuff that makes hanging on to these zines so important.

So you boxed, eh? I tried it, but ended up thumbing my best buddy in the eye and generally looking foolish. I, too, keep in mind that Conan's father was a blacksmith. Your comment about pounding out spear points on the eve of battle rang true. Howard had Conan tending to his sword edge often...

Cold Steel: I really like your work. I don't care if it's hand-done, it has a really special feel to it. When I look at it from far away, it still has a beauty to it.

You're right about the BWS Conan having too much clunky jewelry. I remember in like, Conan #14 or so, the

Cimmerian is putting his hair up into a pony tail. A bit of a sissy, me thinks. But, hey. Art nouveau, and all that.

Seanchai: Howard did seem to slink into the role of town misfit. Good job picking that out. Having just read One Who Walked Alone, I know the part you're referring to.

It's for people like you that I'd like to put more work into the Index idea for OWWA. I had to take the cover off so that I wouldn't worry about tearing it up too badly every time I work with it.

Iron Harp: Compare and contrast *Dark Man* and *Night of the Wolf*? Sounds like a plan...

The Robert E. Howard Newsletter, by Dennis McHaney: WOW! I don't know where to start, but I love your work. Certainly one of our best 'zines -- you put mine to shame. One quick comment: Marvel seems to be on a better track with their newest 3-issue effort. The first two were abominable, but I've liked the latest. I'll be passing my feeble judgement on it in *The Hyborian Review* in April.

Once I pay my taxes I'll get a check to you for some of the cool stuff you listed at the back. When I left my last job, I had to exercise my stock options, and the tax bite hurts greatly. Like, five figures...

Thanks to all who contributed a fine effort for the last few mailings. It's an honor to be here, spurred to greater efforts. Now that I'm at Tektronix, I'll be pumping out pages from the PhaserJet for my next effort.

- Garret

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