

AMRA
v2 #59
S&S





© 1973 by the Terminus, Owlswick, & Ft Mudge Electric Street Railway Gazette: Amra, Volume II Number 59 for February 1973 [we were tempted to hyphenate "1973" to make the line come out even, but ...]; lithographed in the United States of America; all rights reserved. Published at Box 8243, Philadelphia PA 19101. Subs of 10 ish: \$4. Single copies and back ish (#44 thru 58), 50¢ each. Great Britons and Erse may send £1.60 to our Great Britannic and Erse ArchAgent, Archie Mercer, 21 Trene-

thick Parc, Helston, Cornwall. Amra is published from time to time; sometimes more often, sometimes less. Amra is running low on Street Railway centaurs and Limericks again.

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From time to time, folk ask us where they can get S&S books; some assume we publish them. We do publish LET'S DRINK TO THAT, A CALENDAR OF NOTABLE DATES OF INTEREST TO FANS OF SCIENCE, FICTION, AND SCIENCE FICTION (\$2), and we are promoting an anthology of material from Amra, to wit: THE CONAN GRIMOIRE (\$6.95); frankly, we have a financial inter-

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est in both. They're both good, nonetheless. But for books of S&S, we've had good luck with the F&SF Book Co, Box 415, Staaten Island NY 10302, who publishes a catalog and gives a discount on quantity orders. Don Grant, West Kingston RI 02892, not only sells other publishers' books, but also publishes some of his own. Glenn Lord, Box 775, Pasadena TX 77501, publishes The Howard Collector, a fanzine specializing in Robert E Howard and his works. The Magazine Management Co, 625 Madison Av, New York NY 10022, publishes a Conan comic book, Conan the Barbarian, at \$2.75 for 12 ish. The Lancer editions of the Conan saga should be too well-known to bear repeating here; at this time, they are the definitive history of Our Hero, all but two with spectacular covers by Frank Frazetta. Phil Seuling, 621 Ave Z, Brooklyn NY 11223, sells poster-size copies of some of these covers as well as an extensive stock of ancient&rare comic books



While the definitive parody of S&S has not yet been written, and while we're waiting for the Cervantes of Heroic Fantasy to materialize, John Jakes's MENTION MY NAME IN ATLANTIS (DAW Books, NY, 1972: 95¢) is the best thing along that line yet to appear. Although it includes a science-fictional element and doesn't manage to puncture all of the S&S clichés, it's a fun book. ("Conax the Chimerical" indeed!!)

Do we edit Swackles and other material? Yes, but do try to keep it a secret. We exercise personal insults, praise of Amra (we like praise; we just don't publish it), extraneous topics, and most spelling errors.

#####

by Mark Walsted

In all discussions of swords in *Amra* I have seen nothing about the *best* swords in the world: the Japanese samurai swords. They are better in design, construction, and material than the almost legendary Toledo and Damascus blades, and are the most sophisticated hand weapons in history. They were to be used against armor, so the smiths had the same problems faced in other parts of the world. A sword must be light to carry. It must not bend, but it must not break either. It should have a uniform cutting efficiency along its whole length. The Japanese solved these interlocking problems in a unique way.



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The first step in forging a sword was a prayer to a patron deity, repeated at the beginning of every working day. Then iron of suitable quality was forged into a flat plate. This was heated until malleable, folded, and pounded flat again. This process was repeated many times, sometimes as many as thirty. Two pieces which had been forged and folded separately could be fitted together at the last folding to form a sword of softer steel at the core and harder steel on the skin. The final plate was pounded into the shape of a stick and then shaved and filed into final form. The whole blade was covered with clay, scraped thin at the cutting edge so the temper will be greater along that edge. Then the blade, clay and all, was heated to a specified, exact temperature and plunged into water. The sword was next ground to its final shape with a coarse stone. Then the tang was finished and inscribed with the smith's name. Final polishing, sharpening, and mounting were done by other specialists.

In looking at a good sword the first impression is that it is extraordinarily bright. The final polishing puts a mirror finish on the blade. As one looks along the cutting edge it appears as straight as the eye can judge. Indeed the whole sword has a remarkable symmetry. The most beautiful part of the sword is the tempering edge. Most of these are irregular, wavy lines, running the length of the sword, showing where the highly tempered steel of the cutting edge changes to the less tempered steel of the body of the sword. The grain of the metal, caused by folding, may show up under special polishing treatment, but in general it is not visible. The advantages of this construction are a highly tempered edge that holds its sharpness and a backing of softer metal that will not break, even when used against armor.

There is a Japanese training film made during World War II which shows a man cutting the barrel of a machine gun in two with such a sword. Don't try it. It can be done by an expert, but you may ruin a fine sword if you strike wrong.

All these advantages are nothing compared with that given by the mounting. The result is a sword which can cut or thrust, which can be used two handed or single handed with equal ease. The hilt is as long as the breadth of three hands, giving the user a remarkable degree of control.

For a sword so well adapted to thrusting it is surprising that there is only one thrust used in Japanese swordplay. It is forbidden in formal fencing because it is so dangerous. This is a thrust at the neck. For a demonstration of this see the movie *SAKURO* if you get a chance. There, the thrust is coupled with a fast draw, and it is all over before you realize that anything is happening. Everything sort of explodes.

Fast draws are as highly regarded in Japan as in the American Old West. One exercise in contests goes like this: One man will draw, cut off a branch of a tree over his head, and sheathe the sword before the branch hits the ground. But don't try this yourself; you may stick yourself in the stomach!

I can't but wonder what would happen if Cyrano de Bergerac fought Yoshitsune, but I wouldn't bet on Cyrano.



THE OTHER CIMMERIAN: by John

Captain Cassio Nepos, commander of the border fort of Thendarium, was a hard-bitten realist. He did not expect a let-up in the continual Cimmerian attacks on the northern marches of Aquilonia, even though the King of Aquilonia had for the past nine years been a Cimmerian, an adventurer named Conan. The same haughty independence which made the Cimmerians less likely than the Picts to enter into widespread leagues for the plundering of civilized lands ensured that they would not remit their continual warfare against the frontiers of Aquilonian civilization.

As he stood on the northernmost point of the five-pointed wall of Thendarium, Cassio Nepos peered out over the dark Cimmerian hills. These hills, he knew, rolled on and on into the North, until the pine-forested glens of Cimmeria gave way to the icy wastes of Nordheim. In their depths lurked the most feared of all the barbarian races who surrounded the northern and western frontiers of Aquilonia -- the tall, brawny, black-haired, grim Cimmerians, who seemed to delight only in warfare with anyone they met. Thendarium was the absolute northernmost point which Aquilonia could defend, and then only at the cost of maintaining a garrison of hundreds of men within the frowning walls of the greatest fort ever built north of Tarantia. Twenty miles to the North, Cassio Nepos knew, were the bat-haunted ruins of Venarium, where in his youth Aquilonia had attempted to probe further into the Cimmerian forests. Venarium had gone down in a howling tide of Cimmerian savages, when Cassio Nepos had been stationed there as a raw young graduate of the Royal Aquilonian Military Academy.

At the memory, the captain growled and spat over the battlements. Thirty feet away, a young guardsman grinned behind his shield and guessed correctly that Cassio Nepos was thinking about the humiliating defeat which he had suffered. The fall of Venarium had been the young officer's first campaign, and he had been on watch at the time. At the head of a squad of soldiers he had met the howling charge of the barbarians, and had broken and run as the first Cimmerian, a youth even younger than himself, was within ten feet of him. Thirty years of honorable and heroic service against Picts, Kothians, Zingarians, and Nemedians had not wiped out the memory of this humiliation from the soul of the captain.

Now, beneath the controlled and rugged face of the commander of Thendarium, his soul seethed for revenge against Cimmeria. A new Cimmerian attack was brewing. Two nights previously, a badly wounded Pict gasped for admission to the fort's gates. He told the Aquilonians that he was the sole survivor of a band of Picts who had been taken prisoner by their hereditary Cimmerian enemies and forced to run the gauntlet. Only he had survived this brutal application of Cimmerian humor, and he died a few hours after he had gasped out his story to Cassio Nepos and his officers.

"But as I awaited my turn," he had said, "I heard the Cimmerian brutes boast that they would treat you as they treated us, on the eve of the next new moon."

That night would be upon Thendarium when the sun set. Cassio Nepos had made his plans. An additional regiment of soldiers had been hastily summoned from Gunderland. Three different officers had made three separate inspections of the outer and inner walls. Lead had been melted in the huge siege kettle, and Pictish arrow poison had been purchased from a friendly tribe to anoint the Aquilonians' weapons.

It did not occur to Cassio Nepos that he was in an equivocal position, defending the Cimmerian king of a Hyborian kingdom against the attacks of his Cimmerian kinsmen. The captain was a pure soldier, Conan was his king, and Aquilonia his country; and he defended them with all the considerable resources of a body hardened and a brain sharpened by three decades of almost continual border warfare.

"Alvio!" he called to the nearest guardsman.

"Yes, sir!" the man replied.

"Look you at that gap between those two oak trees!" the captain ordered. "See you a man with a bow?"

Boardman

"No, sir. Ah -- Yes, just barely. But surely, sir, a bowman cannot be dangerous at that range?"

"No Shemitish or Kothic bowman, soldier," said the captain. "But these are Cim--"

The air hissed, and suddenly Alvio lay dead, a long Cimmerian arrow through his throat. Simultaneously a long, ululating cry came from the edge of the darkening forest.

"The Cimmerians!" cried men from within Thendarium. Aquilonian soldiers poured out of the barracks as the unearthly cry continued, and hundreds of towering Cimmerians emerged from the forest. With deliberate slowness, Cassio Nepos strode to his place of command atop the fort's keep.

At that period in Hyborean history, the Kingdom of Aquilonia stood at the pinnacle of military success. Its armies, under the inspired military leadership of King Conan, Count Trocero, and the Generals Prospero and Pallantides, had smashed challenges to Aquilonian hegemony from almost every other nation between the Western Ocean and the Sea of Vilayet. But the Cimmerians practiced no military science and ignored its refinements among their enemies. Without regard for enfiladed fire, poisoned spears, or two catapults which poured caltrops into their horde, they swept over the open field around the fort, down to the base of the walls, and up the steep battlements.

As Cassio Nepos watched in growing horror, two Cimmerians planted their heels at the base of the northwest wall and raised a third to their shoulders. An Aquilonian soldier thrust a halberd into the man's face, turning it into a great bleeding gash. But before the Cimmerian toppled to the ground, he wrenched the weapon from his slayer's hands and smashed his skull with the butt of it. Another barbarian took his place, balanced on his mates' shoulders. Yet another swarmed up this human tower as a panther might climb a tree, and planted his hands on the edge of the battlement. An Aquilonian chopped off one hand with an axe; but with the other the Cimmerian grabbed him by the elbow and dashed him to the ground below, where other Cimmerians quickly smashed the soldier's skull.

Before more soldiers could be rushed to this point of the wall, the Cimmerians were pouring over the edge. The skill and hardihood of the Aquilonian veterans were no match for the tremendous size and vitality of the great barbarians. The captain saw from his vantage point one of his most experienced sergeants stab a Cimmerian in the belly with his shortsword and turn the weapon savagely in the wound. The Cimmerian skewered both the sergeant and a man behind him on his claymore, then turned and bashed the skull of another Aquilonian with a mace before he fell. On another section of the wall, a Cimmerian fought and slew four Aquilonians, despite the fact that a spear passed completely through his thigh and well into the other leg. Hastily Cassio Nepos signaled his men to relieve the beleaguered northwest wall. But as he did so, another tide of barbarians rolled over the east wall, howling their war-cry.

The sun setting in the west scarcely colored the sky less red than were the battlements of Thendarium. All that the science of the military engineer and the skill of the veteran soldier could do was done, yet Cassio Nepos saw his career closing as it had opened in the bloody sack of a fort by Cimmerians.

"Pylades!" he called to his orderly.

"Yes, sir!" The young soldier appeared at his elbow.

"Get my sword. I'm going wolf-hunting!"

"Beg to suggest, sir --"

"Yes?" Cassio Nepos raised his shaggy eyebrows.

"If I may say so, sir, the king has more need of your skill and experience. You can barricade yourself in the wine cellar under the officers' mess. When these barbarians have plundered all they can, you can make your escape."

"And you also, you craven scoundrel?" The captain accepted his sword, but threw aside the scabbard.

"No, sir, not at all." Pylades began to back down the stairs.

"Nonsense. But come with me."

The captain and his orderly ran down the hewn wooden steps of the keep and into the officers' mess. The regimental cooks lay dead of axe wounds, beneath a huge Cimmerian whose skull was split with a kitchen cleaver.

"Roll out a couple of wine barrels," the captain snapped. "If they stop to get drunk on that, so much the better!"

Cassio Nepos and Pylades rolled out two barrels, then crawled into the wine cellar and barricaded the door with two more barrels. As they worked, a flicker of flames came through the kitchen windows. The horrible war-whoop of the Cimmerians was drowned out from time to time by the agonized cries of dying Aquilonians.

These cries penetrated even into the musty little cellar where Cassio Nepos and Pylades hid. On and on into the night they went. Once the loud voices of Cimmerians were heard from the kitchen, and then came the unmistakable sounds of the broaching of the wine-barrels. These noises were followed by snatches of drunken song, drowning out the cries of agony from Aquilonians.

The two soldiers did not dare emerge from the cellar until long after the last sounds had ceased. When, with many false starts and careful peerings, Pylades opened the door, the sun was already beginning to peer above the eastern forests. Not a living man was in sight, nor a dead man in one piece.

"Let's get out of here, sir," Pylades whimpered. "We can ride logs down the river to --"

"I am His Majesty's Captain at Thendarium!" Cassio Nepos replied. "I will leave this fort in my own time, render His Majesty a report on its fall in my own words, and accept from him his judgement on my defense of it!"

Cautiously Cassio Nepos looked about the ruins and marveled at the havoc which a few hundred Cimmerians had wrought in less than twelve hours. Two sections of the wall were breached clear to the ground. Everything wooden had been burned, and crude biological symbols had been scrawled on the surviving parts of the wall with burned sticks. Every meat and draft animal in the fort had been roasted over the ruins and devoured. And the wine casks had been reduced to their component staves, many of them badly gnawed.

"Hey, captain," Pylades called in a throaty whisper. "They left one of their dead behind!"

Cassio Nepos walked around the ruins of the wine-barrels and saw his orderly very slowly and cautiously approaching the body of a monstrous Cimmerian. The barbarian was at least eight feet tall and wore only a cloak made from a quarter of a mammoth hide. He lay sprawled on his back, covered with old and new scars.

"How did they kill him, I wonder," the captain mused as he approached the body. He raised the monster's right arm to inspect one of the wounds, and the Cimmerian emitted a mighty snore. With a squeal of terror Pylades scuttled behind a heap of bodies, and Cassio Nepos drew his sword from his belt. But the Cimmerian awoke not. Winestains in his hair explained his condition.

"Come with me to the smithy, Pylades," the captain ordered. "We'll take this prisoner with us to the king."

The two Aquilonians went to the fort's smithy. Stepping over several pieces of the smith, who seemed to have been dismembered by bare-handed Cimmerians, they picked up a collection of heavy iron fetters and returned to the unconscious barbarian. Working swiftly, they chained his massive limbs to one another and to a huge ring set into the whipping post at which military discipline had been maintained.

As they completed the job by fastening a ring three inches wide and an inch thick around his neck, the Cimmerian awakened. Pylades once more scuttled behind a pile of corpses.

As consciousness seeped back into the barbarian's brain, he realized that he was fettered even beyond the ability of his gigantic thews to break free. A lion's roar leaped from his iron-ringed throat, followed by curses in the names of a dozen gods

against his captors. The curses were followed by threats: "Unloose me, you effete sons of caterpillars! Let me at you so I can cut off your manhood and cram it down your throats!"

"Good. You speak Aquilonian," Cassio Nepos said.

"And why not? My father, Baldu son of Fergs, took three Aquilonian women prisoner; and they lived in our lodge for nineteen moons, until my mother smashed their skulls out of jealousy." The barbarian strained again at his bonds. A link snapped in one of the three chains which held his left arm, but the other three restrained him.



"What is your name?"

"Brom son of Baldu, you effete Hyborean worm!"

"And why did you attack a fort belonging to the King of Aquilonia?"

"These woods belong to the Cimmerians. Everything belongs to the Cimmerians, for the Cimmerians alone have the power to take it!"

"And what do you know of Aquilonia?"

The Cimmerian spat. "It is a land of weaklings, and from weaklings it is lawful to take all."

"Our king is a Cimmerian, and yet he lives as a civilized man."

"Your king?" Brom roared. "I don't believe it. It's un-Cimmerian to live that way."

"It is true," said Cassio Nepos, "that I have heard of no other Cimmerian in the civilized lands. Even in the tales of his past life, which the king tells to Arquel the scribe for inscription among the annals of Aquilonia, he mentions meeting no other Cimmerians in the course of his wanderings."

Brom wrinkled his shaggy brows. "What is the name of your king?" he asked.

"His name is Conan," the captain replied. "His father was a blacksmith, but I know not his name. King Conan is about five-and-forty years old."

Brom threw back his head as far as his chains permitted and roared with uncontrollable barbarian laughter. "Ho ho, so it was he! It was he!" he gasped between guffaws.

"He -- *who?*" demanded Cassio Nepos as Brom's laughter slowly died.

"'Tis a tale they tell around the campfires to this day," Brom chuckled. "Some nine-and-twenty years ago, a lad named Conan was exiled from his tribe and from all Cimmeria, in disgrace. For know, O men of feeble thews, that all Cimmerians upon coming of age must meet certain tests of strength, stamina, and courage. These tests Conan failed so miserably that the poor, feeble runtling was sent forth from Cimmeria in disgrace, to wander all his life in the degenerate world outside!"

#####

Swackles

On Naïve Heroes:
by Douglas K Howard

L Sprague de Camp speaks, in *Amra* v2#55, of the barbarians (let's call them that for the sake of convenience) as "big, dumb, blundering,..." Hmmm, I'm not so sure about this. Let's stop and look at this again.

Big? Certainly, for the most part, overlooking the Gray Mouser. This follows in the muscular tradition. A good, big man will always outduel a good, little man. Besides, readers have been brainwashed from the Dawn of Time that a mighty man was a BIG man.

Dumb? This is a rather iffy point. The fittest are the only survivors, out in the boonies. Hard experience will have given these men quick wits and reflexes, or will have weeded them out. The survivors are by no means stupid. Mr de Camp, I'm sure, actually meant to use "naïve" when describing men from the wilderness wandering about in an urban civilization.

Blundering? Not likely, particularly when the woods are full of things breathing up your loincloth wanting you for dinner. [*That strikes us as unusually uncomfortable place for the thing to begin.*] We have plenty of evidence of how Conan moved through the Hyborian jungles. Thongor was no dimwit, either. Brak and Kothar are never adequately described in text, as to their abilities; but it's safe to assume that experience has left its mark. So then what do we have to work with? Observe our barbarian now: a grown man, raised in the wilderness, who grew up in competition with animals and others of his kind, probably some of whom were even more barbaric, being further down the ladder of development. Our barbarian has, of necessity, learned how to use arms of almost every variety. His pet weapon remains, in most cases, a good, sharp sword, preferably of the hacking variety. Being more or less footloose, he can wander as the whim suits him, not really concerned about tomorrow. That will take care of itself. In the time being, he'll wander and look, and sell his sword to any likely bidder. A good fight is a healthy diversion, preferably on the side of right. When times are tight, of course, he's not going to be choosy at all. By sense and instinct, he'll be able to normally penetrate the ridiculous smokescreen thrown up by most "civilized" people. He's lived too close to nature, human or otherwise, to be fooled by many glib tongues. Not being diplomatic for the most part, he'll call a damn fool a damn fool. At first, wandering in cities will be a disaster for him. Given a little time and his own sharp wits, he'll soon figure out what makes city-dwellers tick. He may leave in disgust; but thereafter he will always know that a potential for some minor or major larceny exist, if he *really* gets hard up.

And how about women? Hoo, boy, will he cut a trail! Of course, you have to remember that all women the barbarian meets are beautiful beyond words, if they're good; or disgustingly ugly, if they're evil. There does exist the lovely, wicked kind, but as a minority. Naturally, all beautiful women are going to feel their hearts go thumpity-thump while looking at the big ape; and he will undoubtedly wind up in a cool, dark boudoir with a lady love pretty quickly (assuming that he takes a bath first [*assuming baths to be fashionable that season*]). Some of Conan's exploits leave you with the impression that his privates must have been roughly the size of bowling balls. [*Aha! That explains the thing's choice of beginning place...*]

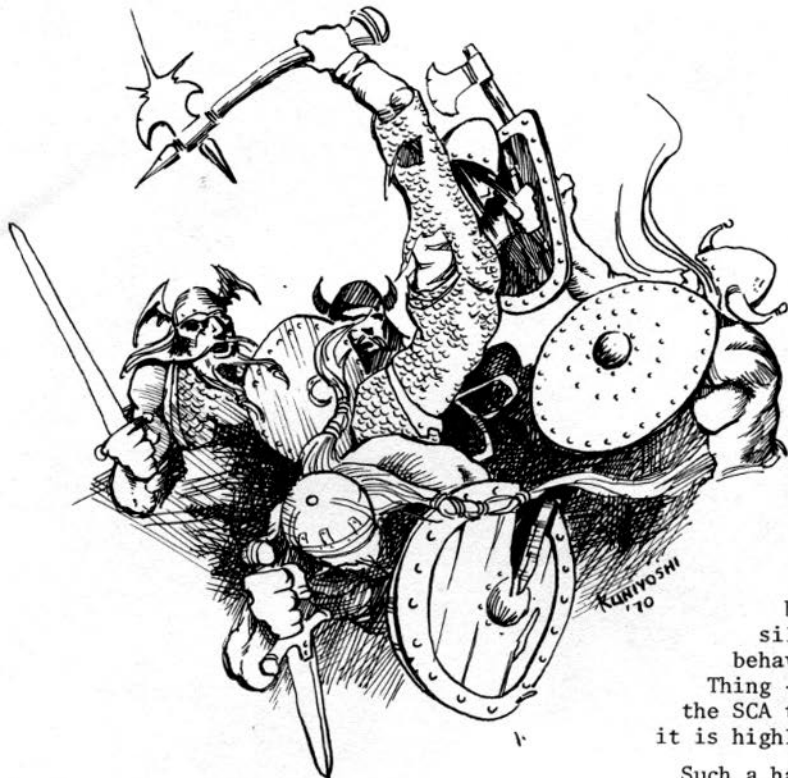
#####PSC Box 3421, Fairchild AFB WA 99011#####

On Tarantia/Tamar

by Ray Capella

Memo to your "Man about Tarantia": Conan ruled Aquilonia from Tamar in "The Scarlet Citadel" (see the hardcover *KING CONAN*) but his later chroniclers and translators must have thought it less confusing to place him in Tarantia (see the same story in the Lancer *CONAN THE USURPER*). However, this does not deny that both king and scribe were in their cups when the war against Koth and Ophir was described.





But they could hold
 their liquor.
 #####874 Reinita,
 Country Club, Rio
 Piedras PR 00924#####

On Knitted Armour:
 by Lee Burwasser

Concerning Michael
 McQuown's "Armoury in
 the Theatre", Amra v2
 #56; I have seen an ex-
 cellent faked hauberk,
 worn by a member of the
 Society for Creative
 Anachonism in Ann Arbor.
 [Anne Arbour?] Oddly
 enough, it was not of
 metal at all, but heavy
 cord, knitted with
 large diameter needles.

As near as I could make
 out, it was then painted
 black and highlighted with
 silver-grey. While it does not
 behave *exactly* like the Real
 Thing -- we have some of that in
 the SCA too, for easy comparison --
 it is highly effective from a distance.

Such a hauberk (or byrnie, or what-
 ever style you like) has one of the same
 drawbacks of the Real Thing: it fits only one
 person well. In addition, since it is nowhere

near the proper weight, the actor would have to fake the proper stance, walk, et cetera
 when wearing thirty pounds of metal hung from his shoulders. However, it is less costly
 to make (a good mail shirt costs \$100 to \$150), and there are more knitters around now-
 days than armorers. Unfortunately, I have no idea what stitch is used. Still, an exper-
 ienced knitter should be able to narrow the possibilities by mental examination and test
 what's left in fairly short order. Also, there are more actors willing to fake it than
 there are willing to wear thirty pounds of chainmail.

To us Society snobs, of course, it's rank inaccuracy. But -- as we Society snobs
 never weary of pointing out -- the Society is not Theatre.
 #####3683 Severn Rd, Cleveland OH 44118

On Current Conans:
 by Albert A Nofi

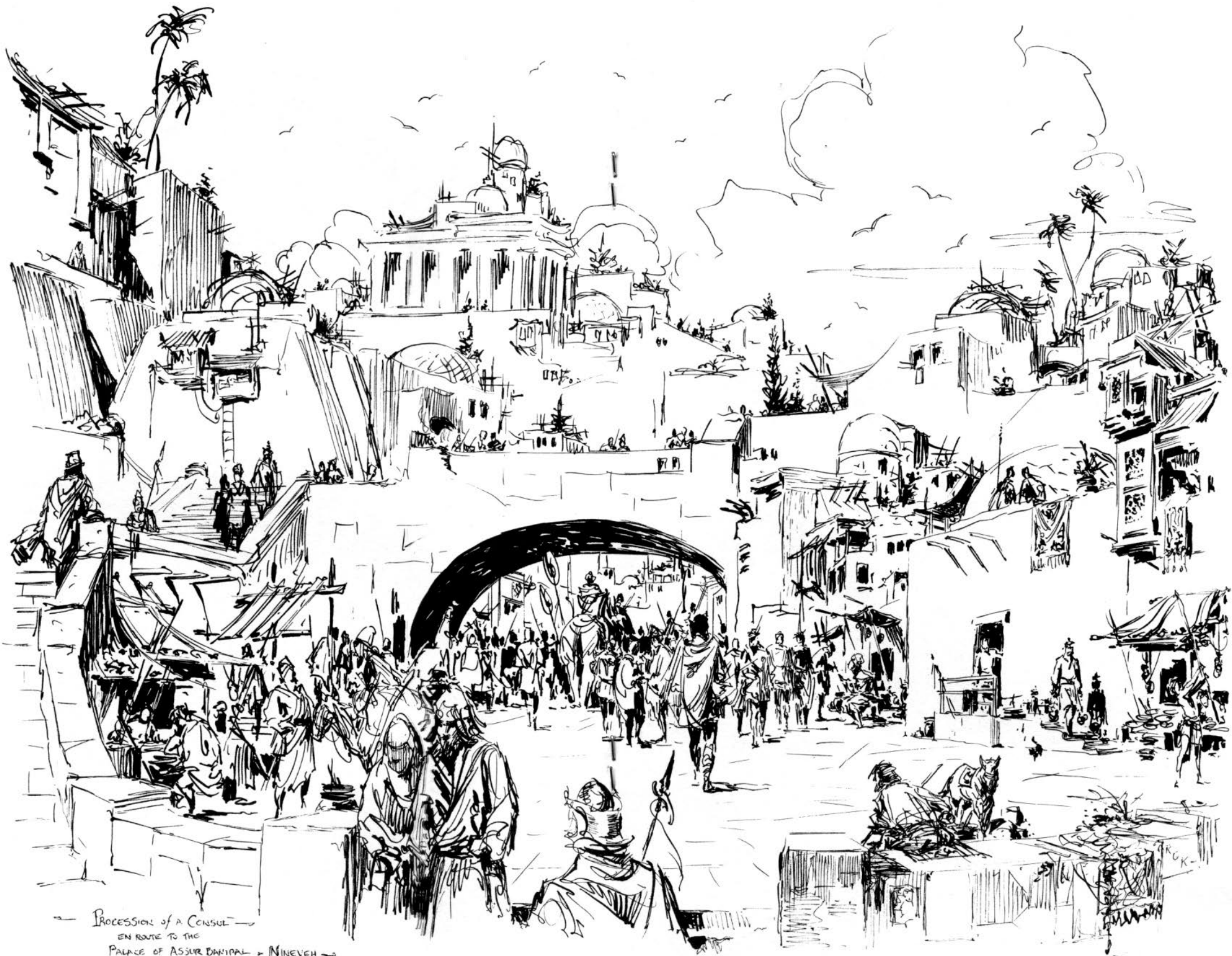
Research in a weighty tome recently delivered by courier to my doorstep (i.e., *THE
 MANHATTAN TELEPHONE BOOK* for 1972-1973) reveals further heretofore unknown descendants of
 Conan I. Notable is that, while the book lists seven persons named "Conan", there is not
 one "Amra".

The seven are: Abraham, Desire, Frank, Lucien, Neal, Rene, and Vivian. The flavor of
 several of the given names would seem to indicate the Breton branch of the Conan family.

Just thought you'd like to know.
 #####85-17 91st Av, Woodhaven NY 11421#####

[Some of the Editorial Horde were a bit taken aback to discover that the son of
 their high school English teacher named his son (the hsE teacher's grandson) Conan Fleeer.
 The Bretons had nothing to do with this one; young Conan's parents have been reading
 about our Conan's exploits, and . . .]

The Curse of the Undelivered Amrae, and how to avoid it: When you move, be sure to
 send us both your OLD address (with ZIP code {because that is how we file addresses}) and
 NEW address (again with ZIP code). If you don't, the Post Office bounces your Amra, to the
 vast expense and inconvenience of everybody in sight, including the bounced copy! #####



PROCESSION OF A CONSUL
EN ROUTE TO THE
PALACE OF ASSUR DANIPAL - NINEVEH -

Barbarians I Have Known

by and ©1973 by
L Sprague de Camp

The argument over barbarians in heroic fantasy, between Messrs Carter and May, suggests the question: What are real barbarians like? Would they in fact make good heroes?

My own acquaintance with such people is far exceeded by that of any practising anthropologist. But, in my travels, I have had some small contact with living barbarians: Amerinds, Polynesians, Mongols, Assamese, Africans, &c. Perhaps a word about them would not be out of place.

What is a barbarian? Once, *barbaros* meant a non-Greek speaker. Then the term came to mean any outsider -- a person outside the speaker's cultural group. Since most men regard their own culture as the best, the word came to mean (*selon WEBSTER'S*) "a man in a rude, uncivilized state". Still later, the XIX century American anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan gave it the meaning: "A state between savagery and civilization."

Time has dealt harshly with Morgan's simple scheme of human cultures, but there is still a grain of truth in his classification. The most primitive folk live as all men did before -10,000 [10,000 BC], by hunting, fishing, and food-gathering. We may call this the "savage" or "theratic" stage of culture.

Then came the Neolithic Revolution, with the discovery of how to raise plants and animals to eat (the "georgic" stage). Around -6,000 to -4,000, villages grew onto cities, men learned to work metals, and writing and arithmetic were invented. When people had writing, arithmetic, metals, and cities, they were by definition civilized (the "astic" stage). The georgic stage, between the theratic and the astic, fits Morgan's "barbarian" classification. People in that stage may appropriately be called "barbarians", with no implication of their being better or worse as individuals than men of any other culture.

Examples of barbarians are the Gauls, Germans, and Britons of Classical times; the Central Asian nomads who, as Huns, Turks, and Mongols, plagued the civilized Old World from +400 to 1400; and more recently most of the Pacific Islanders, American Indians, and African Negroes.

When barbarians come under the influence of civilization, such classification loses meaning. For one thing, the barbarians suffer a catastrophic loss of their own techniques. A tribe may successfully weave their own cloth, mold their own pots, and hammer out their own hoes and spearheads. Then a civilized trader sets up shop. He can so drastically undersell the native products with machine-made goods -- British or Japanese textiles, aluminum pots and pans, and rifles and shotguns -- that the native skills are soon forgotten. The tribe, from a self-contained, self-supporting, self-respecting, well-organized mini-nation, becomes a mob of illiterate, unskilled workers.

Heroic-fantasy writers make sweeping statements about barbarians and base stories on broad assumptions about them. Robert E Howard, in *CONAN THE CONQUEROR* (Lancer ed., p92) says of his hero: "Now the barbaric suggestion about the king was more pronounced, as if in his extremity the outward aspects of civilization were stripped away, to reveal the primordial core. Conan was reverting to his pristine type. He did not act as a civilized man would act under the same conditions, nor did his thoughts run in the same channels. He was unpredictable."

Others, too, stress the barbarian's supposed unconventionality, unpredictability, and freedom from civilized tabus and inhibitions. From all I can learn, it seems that barbarians are on the whole **more** conventional, predictable, and inhibited than civilized men. The force of custom has to be greater, to enable them to get along on a





basis of tribal life, since they do not have our elaborate framework of legal codes and procedures and of police and courts to keep disorderly people in order. What barbarians lack in tabus covering one aspect of life -- say, sex among the Polynesians or violence among the Comanches -- they more than make up for by rigid rules about other phases of behavior. Etiquette -- e.g. among the Arab *badawfn* -- is often elaborate indeed.

But let me tell about a few barbarians whom I have known -- not long or intimately, but better than a mere nodding acquaintance. I would not call any a close friend, but my contacts with them were close enough to give me an idea of what sort of men they were. None would qualify as a barbarian in the strictest sense, since all had been exposed to civilized influences. But to find an "unspoiled" barbarian nowadays, one must go to the interior of New Guinea or some place as remote.

First there was Joe, the Iroquois, with whom I worked on a survey gang in my youth. I was a chain man; he was one of the lumberjacks. Joe was middle-aged, fat, and jolly, with a low sense of humor. He kept the gang laughing at his dirty jokes. He said: "Naw, I can't read and write; but I can do more t'ings dan men who can!" He liked to boast of the number of children he had begotten. As soon as this job was done, he said, he would hasten home to make another; "I got de machine all ready."

Next was Juma, the Mganda who chauffeured me around Kampala, Uganda, in 1960. Juma was fiftyish, physically rather slight, and a good man: devout, conscientious, and fairly intelligent. A pious Muslim, he once asked me to find the direction of Mecca with my pocket compass so that he could aim his noontime prayers accordingly.

Among the sights that Juma showed me were the tomb-palace -- an oversized thatched hut with red-painted woodwork -- of Mtesa I, who reigned in sanguinary splendor a century ago when Speke and Grant came through. Juma's mother was a hereditary keeper of this shrine. Muslim or no, Juma dutifully prayed to the spirit of Mtesa. He also showed me the pool in which Mtesa had people who vexed him fed to the royal crocodiles.

Juma told me his story. He had had a wife, by whom he had several children. Then the wife died. Being then old enough so that the lusts of the flesh no longer were compelling,

Juma decided not to marry again, but his mother had other ideas. She put pressure on him to marry and put his cousin and his best friend up to urging him also. In Africa, one's family's wishes are not lightly disregarded. At last Juma gave in and told his mother that, if she found him a nice girl, he would marry her. She did, and he did. Now he had another crop of children to rear. He asked me seriously: "Mista de Camp, you sink I did light?"

Coming from one only a generation from tribal barbarism, that was a hell of a question to answer. My reading in the classics saved me. I remembered what an ancient Roman had replied when his friends asked him why he had divorced an attractive wife. I said:

"Do you see that shoe, Juma? It looks like a good shoe, doesn't it? But only I, who wear it, can tell you whether it is comfortable or whether it pinches. Now you, who live with this woman, are the only man who can tell whether you did right."

He thought and said: "Well, see give me no trouble. I guess I do light."

I later met the girl and gathered that Juma was really quite fond of her, although no well-brought-up African male would lower his dignity by publicly displaying affection.

My third barbarian was Tejani, the Sudáni. He was the young Khartúmi who drove me from Khartoum down the Nile to the site of ancient Meroé, with its pyramids. This is a 15-hour round trip, and one needs a four-wheel drive because of the stretches of soft sand. Tejani was in his early twenties, married, fairly tall and well-built, and inclined to be garrulous, although my limited knowledge of Arabic restrained this tendency.

Seeing dead camels lying by the roadside with the vultures tearing picturesquely at them, I thought that what I needed to add to the junk in my study was a well-bleached Sudanese camel's skull. I tried to explain to Tejani but, not knowing the Arabic for "skull", I said I wanted the head of a camel. Oh, said he, that was easy. We'd stop at Shendi, where I could buy a camel, cut off its head, and take it with me. My wife is glad that I did not follow up this suggestion, then or at any other time.

What with the starter's giving out, so that we had to re-start the jeep by pushing it through soft sand, we got to Meroé at two, in blistering heat. Tejani became bothersome, demanding money. This is a common form of extortion in tourist lands. The theory is that the tourist will be so terrified of being abandoned in the waste that he will fork over without protest.

Having been through all this in Egypt, I merely said: "Ba'dên [Later]." Tejani subsided. Most Sudanín are not like that, being a warrior race with the virtues and faults of such. The Sudan is the only Muslim country where I have had tips refused, not once but several times.

On the way home, we were still nowhere near Khartoum a couple of hours after sunset. Tejani swerved to avoid an ass, which had wandered into our headlights, and lost himself in a grassy field. He came to a pair of ruts and, tired and confused, started to turn the wrong way, back towards Meroé. I said in Arabic:

"The road is to the left."

He made the correct turn and found the road. But, when he started to slow down in a





patch of deep sand, I added: "Bi sur'a! [Faster]"

Tejani lost his temper and burst into a stream of abusive Arabic, flapping his hand before my face. Although he spoke too fast for me to follow, from the few words I caught I gathered he was telling me to mind my own damned business; that he was the driver, whereas I knew no more about the roads than a blind man. So relations between us were cool thereafter.

Well, there they are: a jolly, sensual woodsman; a devout, conscientious, patriarchal moralist; and a bright but grasping, hot-tempered, and rather obnoxious youth. They all had their good and bad points like other men. None, however, bore the least resemblance to Conan.

In fact, if you want real-life adventurers who are unconventional, uninhibited, versatile, and adaptable, who wander the earth, and who get mixed up in hair-raising escapes, affrays, and imbroglios, you must look among civilized men. The people who really lead Conanic lives are those like Eudoxos of Kyzikos (whom I made the hero of a historical novel), ibn-Batuta, Marco Polo, Miguel de Cervantes, Hernán Cortés, Samuel de Champlain, Sir Francis Drake, Captain John Smith, Sir William Dampier, and Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton. Civilized men, every one of them, and several of them noted littérateurs as well. (I can hear Poul Anderson saying: "How about Harald Hardraade of Norway?" True, but how many barbarian heroes of his caliber do you find?)

That is why I make my current s&s hero, Jorian, not only a civilized man but also one who becomes indignant when he is hailed as a barbarian savior. Nonsense, he says; I can read and write as well as the next man! Want to make something of it?

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SCROLLS:

Mark Amory: *LORD DUNSANY: A BIOGRAPHY*, London: William Collins Sons, Ltd., 1972, £2.75.

This should be of the liveliest interest to lovers of heroic fantasy, for it offers a full-length portrait of one of the greatest modern fantasists, an extraordinarily rich and versatile character. Amory tells some fine stories. For instance, in 1911 Dunsany came over to take part in the coronation of George V. At the last minute, he discovered that he had left his coronet behind in Ireland. Uproar in the Dunsany family, with Dunsany refusing to go at all; situation saved by his borrowing the coronet of a fellow peer who was away at the time.

The author, who has had the run of the family memorabilia, brings up many interesting points. For instance, the family suffered in the anti-Catholic persecutions of the late +XVII. In 1713, the then Baron Dunsany was converted to Protestantism. The subject of the book, however, was a skeptic or atheist -- although, after his hairbreadth escape from Greece in 1941, he did not mind going to the cathedral in Cairo to give thanks.

His mother was a cousin of Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton, the swashbuckling Victorian soldier, explorer, scholar, writer, linguist, diplomat, swordsman, and general man of the Renaissance. Dunsany and his mother-in-law were much given to mutual ribbing. When Dunsany asked, "I believe you knew a relation of mine, Richard Burton?" She snapped, "Yes. He drank." That ended the subject.

Aside from Amory's book, I recently got a used copy of Dunsany's one science-fiction novel, *THE LAST REVOLUTION* (London: Jarrolds, 1951). It is a conventional story of a man who invents a robotic machine, which looks like a gigantic crab or bug. Almost too late, he finds that the machine is making duplicates of itself to take over the world. Nothing remarkable -- but the novel is an exquisite example of skilled storytelling. Atmosphere is laid on and tension builds up in almost miraculous fashion, making it one of the most readable SF novels I have read in a long time.

Admirers of H P Lovecraft will find surprising parallels in the characters of Lovecraft and Dunsany. Lovecraft heard Dunsany lecture in Boston in November, 1919. He was so captivated that many of his early stories are patent Dunsanian imitations. (He never actually met Dunsany, being too shy at the lecture to introduce himself, ask for an autograph, or otherwise do ungentlemanly pushing as the other lecturees were doing.) HPL had, however, written the Dunsanian "Polaris" before he ever read any Dunsany, so the "imitation" is partly a case of parallel development.



There were, of course, many differences between Dunsany and Lovecraft. Dunsany was an athlete, sportsman, and enthusiast for games and sports: fox hunting, shooting, tennis, cricket, chess, and so on; all such activities bored HPL. Dunsany flared up easily but soon got over it and bore no grudges; HPL never lost his temper but, when angered, became coldly polite. HPL was austere reserved: Dunsany, boyishly boisterous.

But consider: Like HPL, Dunsany was abstemious; he smoked and drank very little and had no interest in gambling. Amory says of his marriage (to Beatrice, daughter of the Earl and Countess of Jersey): "She knew nothing of sex, he scarcely more; it was never important to them." (The marriage seems still to have been happy.) Like HPL, Dunsany had a materialistic view of the cosmos and did not take his supernatural fictional figments seriously. His earlier stories, like all HPL's, have little or no connection with the real world. Like HPL, Dunsany took a romantic, anti-intellectual, anti-commercial view of artistic creation. He hated advertising and other egregious forms of commercialism. Like HPL, he was easily discouraged by adverse criticism. In later life, like HPL, he was oppressed by a feeling of having been born out of his time. The time to which he looked back, however, was merely that of his Edwardian youth, not the powdered-wig era beloved of HPL.

Although Dunsany made a respectable living from his books, plays, and lectures, he could get started in the first place by having ancestors who invested shrewdly in land and coal mines. So one wonders: What might HPL have become if he had had a secure and ample income? Alas, that alternate time track is closed to us mortals forever, and we can only speculate.

--- L Sprague de Camp

Raymond H Ramsey: *NO LONGER ON THE MAP: DISCOVERING PLACES THAT NEVER WERE*, New York: Viking, 1972, xii + 276pp, \$10.95.

This work explores the field of geographical error, concentrating on non-existent places which actually appeared on the map at various times. The author excludes places such as Atlantis and Mu, since neither was ever mapped as being contemporary with the mapmaker. What is included is remarkable, however: places which never existed at all, such as El Dorado & the Straits of Anian and Quivira; places which do exist but not quite in the configuration or the location they were shown, such as Greenland and the Northwest Passage; places which existed once but don't now, like the islands of Buss and Mayda, which were attested to by reliable observers but probably disappeared as the result of vulcanism; places long listed as doubtful but actually do exist, like Bouvet; and places which may exist but seem to have been misplaced.

Ramsey not only discusses the various discoveries and descriptions of these places, but also looks into the factual or mythological bases of most of them. He traces a Medieval legend, that a group of Portugese refugees fleeing the Moors set out across the Atlantic and founded seven cities, and shows how it combined with legends of Amerindian cities of great wealth to produce Cibola, which is what Coronado and his company were looking for. In addition Ramsey makes some interesting observations and draws conclusions about these places that have left our maps. He suggests that the Spanish colonial authorities kept the legend of El Dorado alive for years so that whenever the rowdies and ne'er-do-wells in Lima and Bogotá and Mexico City got out of hand, they could be sent off in search of El Dorado in hopes they wouldn't come back. Most didn't. Interesting!

The author mentions disappearing islands. I once encountered one doing the reverse. In the Canary Islands, between Roca del Este and Lanzarote is a rocky islet, La Roqueta. The charts show it as about 50 feet across and 20 high; but when I saw it a few years ago, it was about three times that in both dimensions. The area is volcanic, the particular strait not well frequented, and word of the islet's growth never seemed to have gotten around. And as I understand it, with the advent of steam, some 90% of the ocean surface formerly crossed now and then by sailing ships is unvisited by man, which supports Ramsey's suggestion that many places believed not to exist may still be there in the lonely reaches of the oceans.

NO LONGER ON THE MAP is well-written, well illustrated, and extensively documented, including mention of de Camp's and Ley's *LANDS BEYOND*. Altogether it is an interesting book.

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--- Albert A Nofi

Another Chronology:

by Kevin Miller

also out of sequence, since it should be listed as following "Rogues in the House" rather than preceding it.

I also have some dark thoughts on "The Black Stranger" ("The Treasure of Tranicos") and a question why it doesn't precede "The Pool of the Black One", since "The Black Stranger" ends with Conan embarking with the Barachan pirates in Howard's original. I suspect the problem here lies in how Conan got to the beginning point of the story. Since I haven't studied the later tales as much, I'll leave it at that.

In defending my two audacious conclusions, I appeal to Robert E Howard himself. His only discussion of Conan's chronology that I have found is his letter to John D Clark and P Schuyler Miller, which was published in *CONAN*, pp16-20. I draw on this heavily.

At first, FD would seem to fit into the Saga whenever Conan returned from his wanderings to his homeland. The argument for this is REH's statement that Conan returned thence "from time to time" (*CONAN*, p19). The only argument that this tale takes place after his youth is in the references to Conan as a "man" in *CONAN THE CIMMERIAN*, pp54&56.

For my argument that he was in his *youth*, I go to the end of the story FD, where an old man says that he had had a similar experience with Ymir's daughter when he was a boy, implying that Atali works her wiles on young men who survive such frays. As to why Conan is elsewhere in the story referred to as a man, Howard's letter again states that at 15, "He stood six feet in height and weight 180 pounds" (*CONAN*, p18), which was man enough as any Gunderman at Venarium could have testified. If he was 15 at Venarium and "about 17" entering Zamora, he would be about 16 when he joined the Æsir. In this letter REH specifically describes Conan's first journey from home:

There was a space of about a year between Vanarium and his entrance into the thief-city of Zamora. During this time he returned to the northern territories of his tribe, and made his first journey beyond the boundaries of Cimmeria. This, strange to say, was north instead of south. Why or how, I am not certain, but he spent some months among a tribe of the Æsir, fighting with the Vanir and the Hyperboreans, and developing a hate for the latter which lasted all his life and later affected his policies as King of Aquilonia. Captured by them, he escaped southward in time to make his debut in print.

What did REH mean by this last sentence? Earlier in his letter he wrote Conan "... was introduced to the public in 'The Tower of the Elephant'" (*CONAN*, p17). Surely he didn't mean TE was the first Conan story published. He could only have meant that, to the public, TE chronicled the earliest adventures of his hero. In Howard's lifetime, FD was only published once, under a different title, in an obscure magazine, and ascribed to a "different" hero. But de Camp himself tells us that the tale was *original*-





ly a Conan tale, and further, that it was "... one of the first Conan stories that Howard wrote ..." (*THE CONAN READER*, p21). It could quite possibly be the first Conan story written as a Conan story. Although this is no criterion for its chronological position within the Saga, it seems likely that REH had this early tale in mind when he wrote that paragraph I quoted above. FD is the only Conan tale to take place in the far North! And Conan in league with the Æsir against the Vanir is more than a coincidence. Also the condition in which Atali and the cold left him in at the end of the story FD could account for his falling captive to the Hyperboreans immediately afterward.

A further argument against placing the tale where the Informal Biographers put it, at Conan's first return home, is Howard's saying that this first return home was for a "brief period" (*CONAN*, p19). Too brief, I would think, to go raiding as far north as he did.

Now to my second conclusion, about "The God in the Bowl", I feel this tale immediately follows "Rogues in the House" and does not precede it. Referring again to that letter, we read Howard's statement: "Shortly after [the events of 'Rogues in the House'], he returned ... to Cimmeria." (*CONAN*, p19.) Now even in the almost timeless Hyborian Age, two years of Turanian toil as set forth in the "Informal Biography" is a pretty long "shortly". I believe that Conan rode from the house of the rogues, along the Road of Kings, and straight into his adventures with the bowled god.

Numalia, where the story takes place, is on the way home and not out of the way, as the "Biography" makes it seem. The "Biography" has Conan leaving Zamora for Nemediá, then returning through Corinthia (through which he had to pass to get to Nemediá), and from thence to Turan! No! Howard clearly meant that Conan traveled from Zamora to Corinthia, shortly after which he headed for home (*CONAN* p18-19). The story "The Hall of the Dead" easily fits where the Biographers put it: in Zamora and preceding RH. But I see no reason for interpolating GB in there also, necessitating a sashay back and forth between Nemediá and Corinthia. True, Conan was a wanderer; but was he such an aimless wanderer?

Furthermore, consider the internal evidence in GB: After the excitement is over, we find Conan fleeing, "... nor did he slacken his headlong flight until the spires of Numalia faded into the dawn behind him." (*CONAN*, p130.) Since the dawn usually occurs in the east, Conan must have been riding west to be riding away from it! There is now plenty of time after this first return home for the "missing Turanian years", as P Schuyler Miller calls them in the *SWORDBOOK*, p51; although I've never seen a story by Howard himself that suggests that Conan spent two years in Turan. But what I'd really like to know is how this chronology compares with the original Miller-Clark outline approved by REH.

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≡ B L A N D E R S ≡

We have all sorts of good excuses for being so late this time; but since so few got really vexed with us, we'll save 'em 'till next time. (One chap who was unusually rude, we hear, was subsequently devoured by a pair of dragons at Hollywood and Vine the other afternoon; but hardly anyone noticed at the time, so we're not sure of the exact date..) As for our own consciences (O, you hadn't noticed?), we remind ourselves that perhaps this erratic schedule helps us to be the second-oldest generally available fanzine still in existence. On the other hand, the oldest G A F, *Yandro*, has a lot more regular rate of publication than *Amra* has ever managed. (s*i*g*h)

PHANTOMS AND FANCIES (Mirage Press, Baltimore MD, 1972: \$5.00) is a book of poems by L Sprague de Camp, illustrated by Tim Kirk. Several of the poems appeared in these pages, but even folk with a complete *Amra* file will find this volume worth while.

The point of the discussion, in thisish and the one just before, on oriental sword-making, real barbarians, and rearmed paratimetravelers, seems to be that a modern man who chronoports modern weaponry and methods into any reasonable, quasi-medieval world of fantasy, is Going To Have Problems. The old-timers were pretty good at arms themselves.

Although improvement in swordly and sorcerous arts has been lacking in recent centuries, modern athletes have been beating old records very consistently. Differences in diet (both quality and continuity ((that is, not having famines whilst growing up))), exercise, and so on have made modern athletes into powerful giants compared to most ancient heroes, except for such peculiar (ahem) exceptions as Richard I. Perhaps the best preparation for a trip to a s-ǻ-s setting is an intensive body-building course; our chronoported hero, then, should be a weight-lifter with wanderlust rather than a clever fencer. Even if the time machine fails to send along one's sword, helmet, battleaxe, and so on, it can probably be depended on to chronoport our hero's musculature intact.

Once there, our massively muscled modern Heracles -- to continue to be realistic -- is going to have trouble keeping himself fed, unless he lands where game is plentiful, because of depopulation, game laws, or vegetarianism. Even then, catching game with a sword -- or just bare-handed -- isn't easy. But if he could throw a baseball and could do as well with rocks, he might make out pretty well. More likely, though, his first adventure would be caging a full meal from a suspicious tavernkeep. What do you think? ####

