History in Robert E. Howard's Fantastic Stories:

From an Age Undreamed of
to the Era of the Old West and Texas Frontier

（要旨）

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Robert E. Howard (1906-1936) was an American pulp fiction writer, who is credited for inventing the Fantasy subgenre "Sword & Sorcery," as well as the representative character of this genre, the pop culture icon Conan of Cimmeria. Other pulp fiction writers of the early 20th century, such as Howard's friend H. P. Lovecraft, have received academic recognition for their literary work and influence on fantastic literature. This is not the case with Howard, who still suffers the reputation of being a simple pulp fiction writer who has produced nothing more than formulistic and violence glorifying genre fiction without literary merit. This is a surprising fact since "Sword & Sorcery," together with "Epic Fantasy" in the vein of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, defined the newly emerging literary genre of Fantasy for most of the 20th century. Moreover, though not through Howard's fault, but due to the volume of poor quality imitations of Howard's seemingly simple genre templates, "Sword & Sorcery" is regarded as formulistic genre fantasy without artistic merit.

This thesis argues that Howard also deserves recognition as an influential American writer. This argument though is not based on Howard's above-mentioned achievements of having created an influential literary Fantasy subgenre and an iconic literary character that transcended into a pop culture icon, but by addressing an overlooked novelty aspect of his work: the aspect of history which features prominently in Howard's stories. This thesis identifies and analyses the diverse forms and aspects of history in Robert E. Howard's fantastic stories. By doing so, it demonstrates how Howard created various forms of history and how he has also integrated aspects of American and Texas history in his stories. Hereby the thesis substantiates the claim that with these achievements, Howard takes on another, presently unnoticed, pioneering role in the field of fantastic literature.

The thesis demonstrates this claim in two steps. The first part deals with his creation of a fantastic pseudo-history. It identifies and analyses the various phases in Howard's writing career that led to the creation of his essay "The Hyborian Age." This essay, which Howard originally intended to be used as a data base for his Conan of Cimmeria series, describes a fictive age in a prehistoric past and is usually dismissed as nothing more than the result of Howard's imagination gone wild, resulting in a crude mix that lines up various ancient cultures at different stages of their development combined with anachronisms. I am arguing to the contrary that "The Hyborian Age" is in fact not the simple product of an unrestrained imagination, but instead a disciplined, creative process that resulted in the first plausible and concise pseudo-history in the field of fantastic fiction.

Moreover, I am demonstrating that "The Hyborian Age" is also the first case of building a secondary world based on such a pseudo-history. I am proving this claim by showing the development that led to the writing of "The Hyborian Age" and Howard's becoming a creator of his own history. This comprises an analysis of this process' early beginnings, which includes Howard's documented fascination with history and the mystic

race of the Picts. All of these elements merged into Howard's creation of an alternative history for the Picts, which was then followed by a period in which he wrote historical short stories and realized the importance of realism in his fantastic work. I am demonstrating the creative process that then led to the composition of "The Hyborian Age" by identifying the various scientific and other sources that were used. Furthermore, I am also identifying and analyzing Howard's literary influences by giving detailed examples of their impact on his work. I am finishing this chapter by putting Howard's creation of literary pseudo-history in the historical context of the historic development of fantastic literature, focusing on the secondary world building strategies by other authors of fantastic fiction, such as William Morris, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Arthur Conan Doyle, E. R. Eddison, and J. R. R. Tolkien, thereby verifying Howard's pioneering role in creating a secondary world based on the pseudo-history he had developed.

I am substantiating my claims by working with Howard's original, unedited texts taken directly from his original, extant typescripts. I am also using sources such as articles published in magazines, journals, and fanzines that are mostly unavailable to the general public. Furthermore, I am also using formerly unpublished draft versions of "The Hyborian Age".

The second part of the thesis addresses the influence of real-world history on Howard's work. I am demonstrating the influence the history of Howard's native state of Texas had on his fantastic fiction. I am focusing in this part on Howard's stance about the era of the Old West and the Texas frontier and how these views collided with the changes the early 20th century oil boom brought to Texas. I am demonstrating in this section that apparently juvenile aspects that feature prominently in Howard's work, such as the conflict between 'barbarism and civilization,' are in fact based on Howard's image and love of the era of the Old West and the Texas frontier. I am demonstrating that these aspects of his work are Howard's reflections on the historical changes early 20th century Texas underwent. With this, I am showing another currently unnoted aspect of Howard: the fact that he is not just a simple pulp fiction writer, but also a writer of local color.

Finally, I am demonstrating how Howard integrated these aspects and episodes of Texas history in his fantastic stories. With this I will prove that Howard's fantasy stories are more than simple, escapism and entertainment produced for the American pulp fiction market, but in fact a rendering of aspects of American or Texan history in a fantastic setting. This again raises these stories, as well as Howard's achievement as a writer, above their presumed state of being simple entertainment literature without any further depth or merit.

The thesis hereby establishes the following results: first, it demonstrates and establishes Howard's pioneering role in the field of fantastic literature as being the first writer to create a concise and plausible pseudo-history which he used for his secondary world building. This

achievement, in addition to the already established fact that Howard created the influential "Sword and Sorcery" subgenre, as well as the iconic character Conan of Cimmeria representing this genre, clearly substantiate my claim that Howard deserves to be recognized as one of the most influential writers of 20th century fantastic fiction.

Second, the thesis proves the strong influence of the history of Texas on Howard's work. It shows that Howard integrated Texas history into his fantastic stories and that Texas history also was essential in Howard's stance on the aspect of 'barbarism versus civilization' that features so prominently in his work. This not only proves the depth of Howard's work, it also allows the recognition of Howard as a writer of local color. This is another aspect that is currently unnoted with Howard's work.

All of this supports the argument that Howard was not just the simple pulp fiction writer as which he is widely perceived, but that instead he has much more influence on American fantastic literature than is currently realized. This again supports the original claim of this thesis that asks for Howard to be recognized as a critically influential American writer.