

Robert Erwin Howard: 1906-1936

Szerző: Howard Phillips Lovecraft • Év: 1936

Through the sudden death of Robert E. Howard on June 11th the phantasy world received a major blow. Mr. Howard stood alone among writers of phantasy. Always a champion of barbaric simplicity against civilised subtlety, he shewed his nature in the vigour and sincerity of his work. He put himself whole-heartedly into everything he wrote, so that even his most commercial products have a zestfulness and tang of authenticity lacked by the usual run of pulp fiction. The emotions in his stories ring true, whether they be of adventurousness and conquest, or of awe and fear.

Mr. Howard was born at Peaster, Texas, on January 22, 1906, and has always lived in the Southwest; his final residence being in Cross Plains, Texas. He was an ardent devotee of the traditions of his native region, and an authority on its history.

Mr. Howard began to write at the age of 15, and his first published work appeared in *Weird Tales* four years later. His rise to popularity was rapid, and his name soon became a byword for vigorous stories of strife and bloodshed against a background of elder ages, necromantic horrors, and the mystery that lurks in primordial ruins.

"The Shadow Kingdom", published in *Weird Tales* in August, 1929, marked the first appearance of that consistently portrayed prehistoric world which Mr. Howard was soon to make famous. The later age of that world—with its memorable hero Conan the Cimmerian—made its debut in 1932 with "The Phoenix on the Sword".

But Mr. Howard was likewise active outside weird fiction. His prizefight stories were a standby of many sports magazines, while numerous vivid Orientales embodied very forcibly his peculiar skill in describing scenes of battle. During the past year he had begun to put his own native scenes in fiction—a sound tendency which would probably have led to his development as a serious regional author. Readers of *Weird Tales* are also aware of Mr. Howard's substantial gifts as a poet.

Robert Howard was unmarried, and dwelt with his parents in a semi-rural home on the outskirts of Cross Plains. His father, a physician of wide reputation, was one of the pioneers of the Central Texas plateau. Robert was a graduate of Howard Payne College in Brownwood, and writing formed his sole occupation. In literature he preferred the adventurous to the analytical, and in scholarship he inclined toward Southwestern, Celtic, and Oriental history. He was an amateur athlete of distinction, and deeply devoted to sports of every kind. Literary and aesthetic cults and cliques he always despised, and his chief respect was reserved for strength rather than erudition. Of his fellow-fantaisistes he had met in person only the brilliant E. Hoffmann Price, though his correspondence among other authors was wide, voluminous, and philosophically acute.

In appearance Mr. Howard was very much the athlete—nearly six feet in height, and weighing 195 pounds. He was very dark of complexion, though blue-eyed. His temperament was hearty and hospitable, and he admired active and convivial living. His passing forms an incalculable loss, for no heir to his mantle is in sight.