



## Shadow Kingdoms

*Robert E. Howard*

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## **Shadow Kingdoms** Robert E. Howard

SHADOW KINGDOMS is the first volume of the Weird Works of Robert E. Howard, presenting all of Howard's work for the pulp magazine *Weird Tales* meticulously restored to its original magazine texts. Edited by Paul Herman. Introduction by Mark Finn. Cover by Stephen Fabian. This volume contains: "Two-Gun Musketeer: Robert E. Howard's *Weird Tales*," by Mark Finn; "Spear and Fang," "In the Forest of Villefhre," "Wolfshead," "The Lost Race," "The Song of the Bats," "The Ride of Falume," "The Riders of Babylon," "The Dream Snake," "The Hyena," "Remembrance," "Sea Curse," "The Gates of Nineveh," "Red Shadows," "The Harp of Alfred," "Easter Island," "Skulls in the Stars," "Crete," "Moon Mockery," "Rattle of Bones," "Forbidden Magic," "The Shadow Kingdom," "The Mirrors of Tuzun Thune," "The Moor Ghost," "Red Thunder."

## **Shadow Kingdoms Details**

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Author : Robert E. Howard

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## From Reader Review Shadow Kingdoms for online ebook

### Rick says

Howard is the master of the pulp tale. This volume had a few stories I have not read before, including the great Skull-Face. Also has a few good Kull stories, though he is my least-favorite REH character. And it also had some nice Soloman Kane stories too, who sometimes challenges Conan in my mind for the best REH character.

The only disappointment for me was the first story in the volume, "The Lost Race," which I thought was a weaker Howard story. That, and I cannot say I am a huge fan of poetry, even if Howard was the writer.

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### Andy says

One goal of mine is to read all the big name authors from Weird Tales -- Lovecraft, Smith and Howard especially. Howard is the one author I have neglected thus far. Before reading this, I'd read a handful of his stories.

I'm only going to give this collection 3 stars because a lot of this is early work, it's fun but often predictable. However, this is only the first volume of ten, and I could see how Howard improved greatly. There are still some very good stories here too, "Wolfshead," "Sea Curse," "Skull in the Stars" and "The Shadow Kingdom" in particular. The dozen poems here didn't really do much for me, although I can respect their craftsmanship.

If you're interested in Weird Tales, this ten volume set of Howard's works is a goldmine. All of these stories and poems were published in Weird Tales, except the poem "Red Thunder." Also if you're interested in Weird Tales, I'd suggest joining the Yahoo group PulpScans which currently has about 150 issues scanned!

**Spear And Fang** - This is an early piece obviously, but still I enjoyed it as a fast-paced tale and an example of Howard's early work. Word of a Neanderthal man in the area has a tribe of Cro-Magnon's on edge. After a maiden is kidnapped by the brutish creature one of their brave men sets out to rescue her.

**In The Forest Of Villefore** - A short werewolf story, decent atmosphere here. A man traveling in a deep werewolf-haunted forest comes across a strange companion.

**Wolfshead** - About as politically incorrect as you can get, it's fairly predictable, but still great, fast-paced R.E.H. fun. A group visiting a Frenchman in a fortified castle on the west African coast discover there's a werewolf in their midst.

**The Lost Race** - Another good adventure story, the first story of the Bran Mak Morn series. A celt trying to elude bandits as he makes his way home is captured by a race thought to be pure myth.

**The Song Of The Bats** - A poem on Solomon capturing demons into the form of bats.

**The Ride Of Falume** - A poem on a macabre late night ride.

**The Riders Of Babylon** - A poem on the riders of Babylon who shook the world, but are now forgotten.

The Dream Snake - Nothing overly original here, but this was interesting because it's a far more conventional horror story, and brings to mind many premonition stories. A man tells of a recurring nightmare where he is cornered in a house by a giant serpent.

The Hyena - A nice, fast-paced action story, the horror element is quite predictable. A man living on an African plantation suspects a sinister fetish-man is more than what he seems.

Remembrance - Brief poem of a man haunted by a man he murdered.

Sea Curse - This is one of the best stories in this collection -- an atmospheric revenge story, very effective for it's brief 3,000~ word length. An old witch gets vengeance against a murderous sailor in very eerie fashion.

The Gates Of Nineveh - Poem wherein a great warrior muses on all things returning to the dust.

Red Shadows - The first Solomon Kane story, a good pulpy adventure which makes time for one memorably horrific moment. Solomon Kane pursues a bandit known as The Wolf across the globe, finally cornering him in an African village where he has found favor with the tribal chief.

The Harp Of Alfred - No idea what this poems about.

Easter Island - Poem speculating on the Easter Island monoliths.

Skulls In The Stars - I liked this one better than the previous Kane story, although it's much shorter. It has a good atmosphere and creative "ghost." And I like anything set on desolate moors! Kane struggles with a hideous, vengeful spirit on a moor.

Crete - Another poem on a long forgotten race.

Moon Mockery - A poem wherein a man is transformed by the moon.

Rattle Of Bones - This is a good story, not among the very best here, but better than the average. Kane and a companion stay the night in a creepy, isolated tavern and uncover several dark secrets.

Forbidden Magic - Poem about a nightmare, seemingly.

The Shadow Kingdom - Another stand out in this collection, and the first appearance of King Kull. Of the longer stories here, this is the best. King Kull has seized the throne of Valusia, but is soon informed that a sinister race of sorcerers is hidden among those whom he rules.

The Mirrors of Tuzun Thune - This story brought the work of Clark Ashton Smith to mind, with it's wizardry and somewhat more ornate language. King Kull becomes entranced by a wizards mirror.

The Moor Ghost - Poem about a murderous ghost of a hanged man.

Red Thunder - The best poem in the book, full of powerful imagery about loosing Satan on the world.

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## **David Meditationseed says**

Tales full of mythological aspects mixed with mystery and horror.

This book features a marvelous selection that can read in a brightly lit populous city or in a warm small house at the foot of a mountain. It instigates and inspires a fireplace, with a good drink to let the imagination go to the worlds of the existence of supernatural and immemorial beings living in our planet long before the existence of the human being. But when we access them, its not like a beautiful rainbow crossing a calm sea.....

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## **MB Taylor says**

Early stories by the creator of Conan. According to the back cover this is the first volume in a series to reprint "the complete fantasy works of Robert E. Howard from the legendary pulp magazine *Weird Tales* (and several other classic publication. ... and are for the first time presented in order of original publication." It seems like every few years some publisher starts printing another one; I know I have at least two other multi-volume sets of his work. This is the only volume I have in this series (although I recently ordered three others).

*Shadow Kingdoms isn't great but it's not bad. The collection contains about a dozen of Howard's poems (which have never really appealed to me) and a dozen short stories (three are Solomon Kane stories and two are Kull). The fourth story, "The Lost Race", isn't from a series and isn't one I remember having read before and is pretty good. For some reason Solomon Kane has never been one of my favorites and two of the three stories here are OK but do nothing to change my opinion; however, the third, "Rattle of Bones", is pretty entertaining. On the other hand, I thought both Kull stories ("The Shadow Kingdom" and "The Mirrors of Tuzun Thune") were quite good. "The Mirrors of Tuzun Thune" is particularly moody and very un-Conan-liken and I liked it a lot. And since they were the last stories in the collection, it ended on a high note for me.*

*While looking through my shelves I discovered another collection of Howard's that I hadn't read: *Wolfshead*. I think I'll read it next. It should be a short read; it's only 6 stories and one ("Wolfshead") I just read in *Shadow Kingdoms*.*

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## **Wes says**

Robert E. Howard is my favorite author of all time. This collection of his early short fiction and poetry was perhaps the most inspirational book I've ever read. Howard wrote for practically all of his very short life and had such a flair for language. Never have the most violent, gruesome and weird ideas been communicated with such beauty and finesse. My favorite selections from this collection are: "The Dream Snake", "The Hyena", "Sea Curse", "Red Shadows", "The Mirrors of Tuzun Thune", and "Red Thunder".

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## **Rosa Sophia says**

This book is the first of a ten volume set. All of Howard's stories that were originally published in pulp

magazines have been restored and re-published in the order in which they were printed. This book (and the collection in general) are great for long-time fans as well as new fans. The book includes well known stories as well as lesser known tales, and introduces some of Howard's most memorable characters, such as King Kull and Solomon Kane. The book also includes Howard's poetry.

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### **Lou Gall Jr. says**

Alright! The first volume in a series that presents Howards fantasy and weird fiction in the order that the stories were published and in the original un-altered form. No de Camp/Carter/Nyborg revisions here, 100% pure Howard. Also included (and my first chance to read many of them) is Howards poetry in the same vein. Having grown up with Conan & REH's fiction in general and never having stopped enjoying them, this is a special treat. Even the very early stories, while somewhat clumsy and pulp formulaic at times, show the natural storytelling ability that was Howard's strongest suit. My only minor quibble with the first volume is that the back page notes are a little confusing; from reading them I expected only his "Weird Tales" material(the last story "The Voice Of El-Lil" was published in "Oriental Stories", definitely not complaining here!) and lists the first story as "Spear and Fang" (the first story in the book is "The Lost Race", possible alternate titles?) but these are definitely minor quibbles indeed. Good stuff, recommended for fans of Howard, Sword & Sorcery, fantasy in general or good old fashioned no-holds-barred pulp writing, as done by one of the best.

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### **Alan says**

3/5 because I really liked the Solomon Kane stories but found Kull somewhat dull.

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### **Tom Fredricks says**

Read this because I enjoyed the Conan stories of Howard so much. The stories in this collection did not disappoint. There are a number of horror stories in here. They remind me of the old school radio horror and are well executed. Locations are exotic and the action, as always with Howard, moves at a fast pace.

There are also some Howard poems in here. They read a little like heavy metal lyrics, but I rather enjoyed them.

Good sampling of Howard's non Conan stories. I would warn that there is a bit of a racist bent to some of Howard's writings. I think more a factor of the times and attitudes he lived in than on any conscious effort on Howard's part.

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### **Rob McMonigal says**

Date read is a guess. Once I realized that I liked Howard, I managed to see this on the library shelves. Holy archival material, Batman! This is the first in a planned 10-volume set of all the stories the great Howard had published in Weird Tales. Here we get the first Kull story, the first Solomon Kane story, and other tales that

show Howard's growth as a writer.

Of all his creations, I think Kane may have been one of the best, perhaps even better than Conan. Howard creates a man who contradicts everything about himself--a man of god who attacks, a person who claims to deny himself pleasure but clearly takes pleasure in his actions. But then again, contradictions are the name of Howard's game in most of his fiction.

The final story in this collection, about Kull in a house of mirrors, may be the best of the set. Again, the theme of identity comes up, and it's clear that the gay and troubled Howard was expressing his problems in the only way he knew how--by writing.

There's a bit of latent racism here and there that causes me to wince, but still, for any fan of speculative fiction, this is must-reading! Howard was so far ahead of his time, it's not even funny. If you only thing of the movie Conan, you're missing so very, very much. Put this on your reading list and see for yourself.

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### **Johnny says**

I purchased two volumes of these reprints from Howard's early writings and I wish I had purchased the entire five volume set. The store where I found them is sold out and now, I'll probably have to go to another store or online to get the rest. But I will get the rest. I was never a huge fan of Conan. Oh, I read some of the volumes of Howard's most famous works and watched the collateral damage of the movies and the comics, but I was never a huge fan. I knew that Howard had also written about an ancient Valusean king of Atlantean descent named Kull and a mysterious figure named Solomon Kane, but I never figured they would really interest me. But when I picked up *Shadow Kingdoms*, I was surprised. Here were stories from *Weird Tales* and *Oriental Stories* from 1927-1930. I was even more surprised to read the poetry (mostly from *Weird Tales*, but at least one from *JAPFM: The Poetry Weekly*). It turns out that I'm more intrigued by Solomon Kane than with Conan and that the poetry, though not in a modern style and not always in a coherent meter, evokes fascinating images of darkness and mystery.

One of these stories had a twist on the werewolf trope that delighted me because it wasn't about the curse or even the power of the beast/man; it was about the uneasy cohabitation of the ancient idea of power with the modern idea of exploration and exploitation. Deconstructionists would have a field day with the implied politics of this short story, yet it was written years before such a political intent would have been likely. At any rate, I haven't seen the theme elsewhere in Howard's work, so I find it curious, but not emblematic. This is especially true when Howard revisits the trope with a different shifter in a 1928 story in the collection. The story celebrates the power of the beast-man, but doesn't really deal with the "why" or the desperation. As a reader, I liked the earlier one better.

Certainly, one would expect the stories where the psychological and the supernatural intertwine as seamlessly as in the work of C. G. Jung. "The Dream Snake" is such a story and I'm glad I didn't read it as a junior high school age reader. At that time, I was convinced that what happened to us in our dreams didn't merely inform us of what was troubling us or challenging us but that they could harm us. This story would have kept me unsettled for weeks. Now, it only gave me pause for a few minutes, but it was good enough to make me smile and think about my former philosophies.

In fact, this theme of shadow and reality showed itself again in "The Mirrors of Tuzun Thune" (1929). I liked the monologue from the wizard with its near-Platonic idea: "Man must believe to accomplish. Form is

shadow, substance is illusion, materiality is dream; man is because he believes he is; what is man but a dream of the gods? Yet man can be that which he wishes to be; form and substance, they are but shadows. The mind, the ego, the essence of the god-dream—that is real, that is immortal.” (p. 187) But what really bothered me about this story was the feeling that this struggle somehow foreshadowed Howard’s suicide. Indeed, in one of the most interesting stories in the volume “Skull-Face,” the protagonist is thinking of suicide and when the beautiful female protests, he replies, “Better to go out clean while I have the manhood left.” (p. 232)

But what can I say about Solomon Kane? I confess that I don’t know what to make of him. The stories seem to occur contemporaneously with Howard’s timeframe, but the story itself states, “...he shuddered—a rare thing for him, who had seen the deeds of the Spanish Inquisition and the witch-finders.” (p. 110) I guess I could Google the name and see what people have compiled about this character, but it’s more fascinating for me to speculate. I don’t know if I’m reading it wrong to perceive these adventures as set in a more modern milieu or whether Kane is set up to be the immortal Puritan who has seen it all and strives to right wrongs that have overstayed their time. I don’t even care if my initial impression (based on these two stories) is wrong because you can tell that the character intrigued me.

And even Kull was more interesting than I thought he would be! I thought he was simply proto-Conan, but he was a marvelous study in how uneasy hangs the crown. Here is someone who has conquered all, but has mysterious enemies who can undergo a metamorphosis into doppelgangers of the most dangerous kind—one’s trusted advisors and allies. I wasn’t surprised at the events in this story, but I really liked the way they pulled together. And, in the afore-mentioned “The Mirrors of Tuzun Thune,” Kull struggles with realities far beyond what one would expect of Conan.”

Before closing this review, please let me share both a line I enjoyed and one that may have quite a different meaning than when Howard wrote it. The line which may reflect an archaic usage (but would have a different implication today) occurred when a beautiful woman turns the door knob of the protagonist’s/narrator’s room in “Skull-Face.” Howard wrote, “I sprang erect with a gasp. Red lips, half-parted, dark eyes like limpid seas of wonder, a mass of shimmering hair—framed in my drab doorway stood the girl of my dreams.” (p. 216) Please forgive my ribald impression of that sentence.

I really enjoyed a statement by one of the characters in the last story. It seems to express the skepticism of a positivist/empiricist attitude that might have been present in Howard’s own mind. “He was of that class of scientists who have the universe classified and pigeon-holed and everything in its proper little nook. By Jove! It knocks them in a heap to be confronted with the paradoxical-unexplainable-shouldn’t-be more than it does common chaps like you and me, who haven’t much preconceived ideas of things in general.” (p. 339)

Prior to reading this collection, I always thought Howard was important but overrated. I hereby officially rescind my prior opinion and suggest that Howard is not only paradigmatic for weird fantasy, but worth reading for lots more than Conan. Some of the stories are predictable, but they were all worthwhile.

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### Virag says

This was a book my brother got for Christmas years ago and has been obsessed with ever since. While I do love the boy I tend to avoid anything he touches....  
But anyway, while I was in Hungary for three weeks, well, I wanted to read something in *English* dang it, so

this was my only choice.

Surprisingly, I loved some of these stories.

*The Lost Race, The Kane Chronicles, The Dream Snake, The Hyena, Skulls in the Stars, Crete* , and several others were an excellent 5/5 stars. However, there were about three that I absolutely could not get into because of the writing style at the begining. naturally I hated those.

So overall this book is a 3/5 because of those really bad stories, but the rest were excellent and I'm looking forward to more *Weird Works*.

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In the Forest of Villefère - ?????????? ?????????? ??????. - 3/5

Wolfshead - ?????????? ?????????? ?? ?????????? ??????, ??-????????????? ??? ? ?????? ??-?????????. ??  
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The Lost Race - ?????? ?????????? ?? ?????????? ?? ?????? ?????? ?? ?????????? ???, ? ?????? - ??????. ??????  
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The Dream Snake - ?????, ?????? ??????, ?? ??? ?????? - 3/5

The Hyena - ??????????-????????? ?????? ? ??? ?????? ??????, ?????? ?????? - 3/5

Sea Curse - ?????? ?????????? ????? - 3/5

Red Shadows - ?????? ?????????? ?? ?????? ??????. ??? ?????????? ?? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?????? ??????  
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Skulls in the Stars - ?????? ?????? ?? ?????? ?????? ?? ?????? ?????? ?????? ??????. ??-????? ??? ?????, ?? ??????  
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Rattle of Bones - ?????? ?????? ?? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?????? ? ?????, ??? ?? ?????? ?????? ??-????????? ??? ??????  
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The Shadow Kingdom - ?????? ?????? ?? ???, ??? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?? ?????? ?????? ?????. ??? ??????  
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The Mirrors of Tuzun Thune - ??? ??? ?????? ???, ?????? ??-????????? ?? ?????? ??? ?????????????? - 4/5

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## **Mike Flinchum says**

My dad has been a lifelong fan of Conan. You can feel the writing style of when this was published.

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## **Roland Volz says**

*Shadow Kingdoms* is the first volume in a series dedicated to collecting all the published material of Robert E. Howard, one of the greatest pulp authors of all time. This book collects the first short stories and poems of his career, collected in unedited form.

It is interesting to use these stories to chart Howard's development as a writer. After several generic Pulp stories, he developed the character of Solomon Kane, three stories of which can be found in this collection. He also makes the first mention of the Atlantean king of Valusia, Kull, who would be a precursor to his most famous character, Conan the Barbarian.

Rounding out the fiction are a number of interesting poems. Most of them are short martial forms, meant to be stirring in nature.

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