



The Sowers of the Thunder

Robert E. Howard

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Robert Ervin Howard (1906-1936) was an American pulp writer of fantasy, horror, historical adventure, boxing, western, and detective fiction. He is well known for having created the character Conan the Cimmerian, a literary icon whose pop-culture imprint can be compared to such icons as Tarzan of the Apes, Sherlock Holmes, and James Bond. Voracious reading, along with a natural talent for prose writing and the encouragement of teachers, conspired to create in Howard an interest in becoming a professional writer. One by one he discovered the authors that would influence his later work: Jack London and Rudyard Kipling. It's clear from Howard's earliest writings and the recollections of his friends that he suffered from severe depression from an early age. Friends recall him defending the act of suicide as a valid alternative as early as eighteen years old, while many of his stories and poems have a suicidal gloom and intensity that seem prescient in hindsight, describing such an end not as a tragedy but as a release from hell on earth.

The Sowers of the Thunder Details

Date : Published 1973 by Donald M. Grant Publisher, Inc.

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Author : Robert E. Howard

Format : Hardcover 285 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fantasy, Adventure, Fiction, Pulp, Short Stories, Science Fiction, War, Action

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From Reader Review The Sowers of the Thunder for online ebook

Rainerlee says

It's good, not great, but good. I admit it's no Conan but it's still an enjoyable rump through middle east inspired wars. Also I had a wolfish grin with the last page.

Jim says

I picked up this edition as my other one was falling apart. The same 4 excellent historical, sword swinging stories as other editions & some excellent pen & ink artwork that was very distracting. I almost took off a star for it. I LIKE it, but I don't like where it was placed. All too often it's in the middle of sentences so that there is a word or two on either side. Other pictures were big enough that one margin would have a single word per line running down the side. Yuck!!!

The four stories are:

"The Lion of Tiberias"

"The Sowers of the Thunder"

"Lord of Samarcand"

"The Shadow of the Vulture" has Red Sonya in it. It's the only original Howard story I've read featuring her that I can think of.

All the stories feature famous figures in turbulent historical times & feature heroic deeds. No sorcery or fantastic elements, unless you count their prowess & endurance. Some of his best stories ever.

Zechy says

I give this book five stars cause I just love it so much

Charles says

In my opinion, the single best collection of Howard's work. These are all historical fiction stories, primarily set during the Crusades. Some of Howard's absolutely best writing. The illustrations by Roy Krenkel aren't bad either.

Derek says

[is actually Baibars of Cairo (hide spoiler)]

Timothy Boyd says

Robert E. Howard is my all time favorite writer, but for many years much of his work was heavily edited. This is another of the heavily edited collections of Robert E. Howard's stories. I am a purist when it comes to a writers works. I know some of these stories are no longer PC but they should be read as Howard wrote them and understood that he wrote in another time period. Don't read this book unless you just can't find any others of Howard's unedited books to read. Message me if you need a list of what is good from this awesome fantasy and action writer.

Ian Banks says

Not Mr Howard's best work, but an entertaining way to spend a few hours. Four vaguely linked novellas set over about 350 years telling about key moments in the history of the Middle East/ Eastern Europe. Blood and thunder, sound and fury, told by an enigma.

Kione says

With 200 years of the Crusades as the background setting, Robert E. Howard unleashes his characters to fight, conquer, kill and be killed.

David Fackelman says

The Sowers of the Thunder is a collection of four outstanding short stories by the great Robert E. Howard, creator of Conan. The book includes the stories:

The Lion of Tiberias
The Sowers of the Thunder
Lord of Samarcand
The Shadow of the Vulture

All the stories are set within the timeframe of 1100 to 1500 AD and focus on the struggles of European heroes against the might, ambition and intrigue of the rulers in the Middle East. To some degree it is regrettable that Conan has overshadowed the incredible talent of Robert E. Howard. REH had an amazing ability to create tangible and rich worlds, heroes, mystery, magic, intrigue and battles, battles and more battles with such an impressive economy of prose. The stories included in The Sowers of the Thunder don't disappoint.

Jeff Wyonch says

This is historical fiction set during the Crusades. Not Howard at his best.

Jim says

This is the first edition I bought new & it is now falling apart. The same 4 excellent historical, sword swinging stories as other editions & some excellent pen & ink artwork that was very distracting. I almost took off a star for it. I LIKE it, but I don't like where it was placed. All too often it's in the middle of sentences so that there is a word or two on either side. Other pictures were big enough that one margin would have a single word per line running down the side. Yuck!!!

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Leothefox says

This is a Zebra volume that includes 4 Robert E. Howard historical fiction pieces that all appeared in Oriental Stories. Like most of the Zebra editions it has awesome Jeff Jones cover art, and unlike most of them it is full of Roy Krenkel illustrations. Seriously, these illustrations are on like every page, this is almost a comic book!

The last story, "The Shadow of the Vulture", introduces Red Sonya, who was the basis for Barry Windsor-Smith and Roy Thomas' Red Sonja, the basis of the Brigitte Nielsen film. The character doesn't dominate the story, in fact she's in less than half of it.

The historical tales have Turks, Arabs, and Mongols which threaten "Christendom" as well as a slough of white heroes taking them on in the name of Frankistan. We get an Englishman, an Irish king, a Scotsman, and finally a German. Howard's well worn self-destructive muscleman champion theme is in full tilt, as well as the classic "mighty whitey" trope. Although, none of these mighty caucasian barbarians really gets to shine, as they are buried under a weighty ocean of battles and historical detail.

"The Lion of Tiberias" and "Sowers of the Thunder" are probably the best of the lot, since they are the more focused and the note of tragedy is well directed. "The Lord of Samarcand" does contain a rollicking potboiling adventure for its Scotish swordsman, however the thread does get a little lost in what feels a bit like a mood-swing.

Howard was a master of many genres, and his historical fiction is no exception. These four stories represent the moodier Howard, although this is also a Howard not armed with the fistful of invention that made the Kull stories work so well.

This book does deliver the following: heroic deaths aplenty, Mongol conquerors, Sultans, Egyptian raiders, madmen holding off raiders in doomed cities, secret identities, flashbacks, doomed love affairs, death by corpse, severed heads, wenches in every state of dress, musclemen mowing down their foes “like ripe grain”, mustachioed slayers out of the past, drinking binges, drunken duels, cannonballs, battles that dwarf cities, sabotage, faces whipped off, secret revenge, and lots and lots of pictures.

The binding is coming apart, as if the book is trying to go back to the void that gave it birth.

Ronald says

read some time between 5-24-75 & 12-31-75

Frankie Roxx says

An excellent four story collection of historical fiction that takes place during the bloody and turbulent two hundred year struggle known as the Crusades. This particular era of history has always fascinated me—man at it's darkest whilst fighting for religion, power etc. and it's clear that Howard was more than a little captivated by this era as well. The four stories contained herein are as follows.

1. The Lion of Tiberias--a powerful tale that explores matters such as love, treachery and the lengths and bounds that sheer hatred and a promise of revenge can go to. I immediately lost myself in this particular story; greedily devouring it and finding myself nodding along in appreciation with the stories end. It's tragic and moving in it's own way. I felt for the character of John Norwald and found myself both marveling at as well as pitying the man. Revenge is a powerful motivator and this story deftly reminds us of that.
2. The Sowers of Thunder--A darkly tragic tale that draws the reader in and allows us to glimpse at the carnage and suffering that ran rampant during the Crusades. Cahal Ruadh O'Donnell steals the show in this story in my opinion, his strength, madness and drive mark him as a classic character as only Howard can deliver. Without giving spoilers I found this tale's ending to be somberly fitting and I enjoyed this one quite a lot.
3. Lord of Samarcand --A depressing and somber tale. Though I enjoyed this one the least of the four stories that doesn't mean it wasn't still a well written story in it's own right. The problem for me at least with this story was that it was so somber and tragic that it lacked a certain zeal to hype me up as the other stories did. Still a story I'd recommend to any Howard fans that haven't read it though hardly his best work in my humble opinion.
4. The Shadow of the Vulture –The last tale contained in the book and, in my opinion, the gem of this already incredible collection. This tale is brought to life by the drunken knight Gottfried von Kalmbach and, even more so, by Red Sonya of Rogatino who later became the inspiration for Red Sonja. It's a shame that this was the only Howard penned tale that Red Sonya ever appeared in as I quickly found myself enraptured by the character and her devilish “charms”. The end of this tale had an especially enjoyable twist and served to really make this collection of four stories all the more remarkable.

In closing this review I cannot stress enough how much I loved this book and recommend it to fans of Howard's other works or fans of well written historical adventure.

Robin says

3.5 stars

Four short-ish stories dealing with various conquerors/empire builders during the Crusader/Medieval era. Very dark, almost-epic, existential mood to the stories. I liked reading these, but I doubt I'll ever want to reread them.

Didn't realize until halfway through the book that Robert E. Howard was the original author of 'Conan'.
