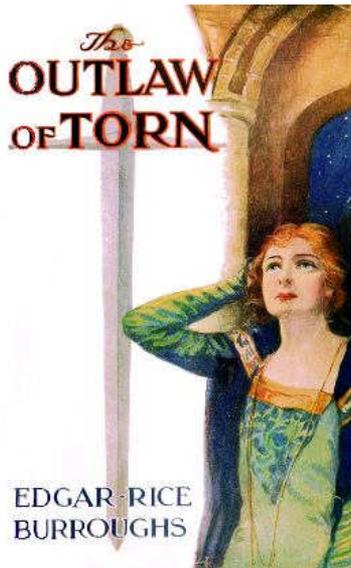


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The Warlord of Torn



Although it was not published until a bit later, *The Outlaw of Torn* was actually the second novel penned by Edgar Rice Burroughs, after he had written *Under the Moons of Mars*. Thus, it is not surprising that the story of Norman of Torn is a kind of preview of the character traits and story lines that would characterize some of ERB's subsequent works. The title character in the first such later work, *Tarzan of the Apes*, ERB's most

famous creation, can certainly be compared in several ways to Norman of Torn.

Like the ape man, Norman was separated from his true parents at a very young age and nurtured by a foster mother, that "mother" being Sir Jules de Vac, master swordsman, who disguised himself as a woman during the first several years of Norman's life. Tarzan was raised by Kala, the she-ape.

Tarzan had no memory of his parents or his early life. When he stumbled across the jungle cabin years later and saw the skeletons of his real parents, they meant nothing to him. Likewise, Norman remembered nothing of his days in the palace, and the only thing he could recall about his early life with De Vac was fencing lessons.

A contrast in these two characters was the behavior of their foster parents. Kala, a wild ape, was caring to Tarzan; but De Vac, a so-called civilized man, was uncaring to Norman of Torn.

Tarzan, by virtue of the necessity of survival in the jungle, learned skills he never would have learned otherwise. Norman of Torn would certainly have learned swordsmanship growing up under his father, King Henry, but probably would not have attained the skill he did under the tutelage of De Vac.



Tarzan learned early that every living thing outside his own tribe was an enemy. The tribe of Kerchak would celebrate, at the Dum-Dum, victories over enemy apes and, of course, the first time that Tarzan saw a human being

he saw him as an enemy, since that human had killed Tarzan's mother.

Norman of Torn, meanwhile, was raised by the French De Vac to hate and, when possible, kill all Englishman. It seems a bit odd that De Vac could pull that off, since the country in which they lived was, after all, England, and everyone, therefore, was an Englishman! It seems that Norman didn't actually count the common man as "English," but used the term to apply mainly to those affiliated with royalty.

Tarzan eventually came to the point where he was accepting of and even made friends with other humans, including the party of marooned whites whose numbers included Jane Porter, his future bride, and the Waziri tribe, whose members became his lifetime friends.

Norman of Torn also came to have a liking for certain people, even though they were part of English royalty. So he was able to overcome his enforced childhood prejudices as well.

Since there are a number of points of comparison between Tarzan of the Apes and ERB's American Indian character, Shoz-Dijiji, the black bear, in the two "Apache" novels, then it follows that some of those same comparisons would exist between Shoz-Dijiji and Norman of Torn.

Like the other two, Shoz-Dijiji was taken away from his true parents at a very young age and raised in a way that he would never have been raised had he grown up a white man. From the Apaches he learned the Indian ways, the Indian skills and the hatred of the white man.

Tarzan had his tribe, the Tribe of Kerchak, which later became the tribe of Tarzan himself; Shoz-Dijiji belonged to the Apache tribe, and Norman of Torn re-

cruited his own faithful followers to be part of his outlaw band.

Tarzan eventually became king of the apes.

Norman of Torn led his outlaw band—

—and Shoz-Dijiji became a war chief.

Tarzan's true identity was eventually discovered, and he inherited the estate of his parents along with the title of an English lord. Norman's true identity was unveiled, and he was restored to the royal family of England as a prince. In contrast, Shoz-Dijiji had no inheritance to reclaim, having been born of poor parents, but he did win the love of Wichita Billings.

There are also comparisons that can be made to characters such as Billy Byrne, "The Mucker." He was raised in a more civilized setting, the streets of Chicago, but it was no picnic there and Billy learned the skills of street-fighting.

While Tarzan always seemed to have a sense of right and wrong (he wouldn't eat human flesh; he didn't take an ape mate; he helped those apes less fortunate than himself). Billy Byrne didn't have a shred of decency, even joining in the insulting of women whose only crime was walking too near the gang of Windy City thugs.

Eventually, Billy Byrne did a complete reversal of his attitudes, as did Norman of Torn.

But what of John Carter, probably ERB's second most-famous character?

John Carter is not merely somewhat *like* Norman of Torn. It is possible that John Carter *is* Norman of Torn!

John Carter says, in the opening to *A Princess of Mars*, that he recalls no childhood. Norman of Torn didn't have a real childhood. He had forgotten his time

in his real family, and the “childhood” he had the rest of the time was nothing but sword-fighting practice.

John Carter stated that he did not know how old he was, for he had never aged as other men. Obviously, if he had once been a child, unless he had been dropped onto the earth a full-grown man in some kind of bizarre alien experiment, he would have had a childhood. He just couldn't recall it.

Instead, he could only remember that he had always been a man of about 30, a few years older than Norman of Torn was at the conclusion of *Outlaw of Torn*.

But the one thing he recalled for sure was that his sword had been red with blood in the service of many a king of the past.

Norman had a sword that was red with blood. At first, it was red with the blood of many innocent ones, whom he had been deluded into believing were his enemies. Since the story ends with the King and Queen of England discovering that Norman of Torn is really their Richard, their long-lost son, presumably he had the opportunity to swing that sword in service of King Henry. We don't actually see him fighting for King Henry in the book, but we can imagine that opportunities for that were next on the horizon for him.

Indications were, at the end of *The Outlaw of Torn*, that Richard/Norman would soon marry the fair Bertrade. But we are not told if that marriage ever came off. If it did, then all it means is that John Carter, under the name of Prince Richard, had been married and, obviously, eventually left a widower, long before he ever went to Mars and claimed the fair Dejah Thoris as his bride.

One can imagine Prince Richard, at some point, experiencing the mystical and miraculous event that stopped his aging process and made him practically immortal. Whatever happened, that event took place when Norman was around 30 years of age, the age John Carter says he has always seemed to be. Poor Bertrade would start to get older and older. We can imagine Prince Richard's faithfulness to this first wife, in spite



of that. Perhaps he even added gray dye to his hair in order to appear to age along with his beloved wife.

Or, since there are no sequels to this book, it is equally possible that the marriage never took place. Prince Richard may have led a contingent into some battle for the king and come by misfortunate in the way of an injury resulting in permanent amnesia. This would account for John Carter's inability to remember a childhood, or his origin. His intended may have thought him dead while poor Richard recovered somewhat and went on to have other adventures, oblivious to the fact that he had left someone behind.

Both John Carter and Norman of Torn exhibited the same traits in adult life: Loyalty to friends and ruthlessness against enemies.

And so, there's the possibility: Norman of Torn (Prince Richard) and John Carter—are they one and the same?

If what ERB wrote was true, then there is one passage in *The Outlaw of Torn* that clearly, unequivocally settles this question.

It comes halfway through Chapter XIX, the chapter in which De Vac's and Norman's true identities are both revealed. ERB writes:

“The world's two greatest swordsmen: teacher and pupil—the one with the strength of a young bull, the other with the cunning of an old gray fox; and both with a lifetime of training behind them, and the lust of blood and hate before them—thrust and parried and cut until those that gazed awestricken upon the marvelous sword play scarcely breathed in the tensity of their wonder.”

And there you have it. At that time, in England, according to ERB, the “world's two greatest swordsmen” engaged in a duel to the death.

If they were the two greatest, then which of them was No. 1? We know now that it was Norman of Torn, the victor in the duel.

Fast forward to the late 1800s when John Carter went to Mars. He was often called the greatest swordsman of two worlds—Earth and Mars. Sometimes others called him that. Other times, he quite readily admitted his status himself.

In *Llana of Gathol*, he says,

“I am not bragging. I only state facts. As a matter of fact, I often realize that in speaking of my swordsmanship, it may sound to others as though I were bragging but really I do not feel that I am bragging. I know that I am the greatest swordsman of two worlds. It would be foolish for me to simper, and suck my finger.”

If John Carter was the greatest swordsman on both Earth and Barsoom, and Norman of Torn was the greatest swordsman on Earth, then simple logic, plus John Carter’s long life, leaves only one possibility: Norman of Torn and John Carter must be the same person.

Hey—it’s what ERB wrote!

Passages in the Martian Novels expressing "greatest swordsman" and "two planets" regarding the prowess of John Carter...

CHESSMEN:

Daughter of a world's greatest swordsman, she knew well the finest points of the art.

Again:

As she watched him she could not but compare his swordplay with that of the greatest swordsman of two worlds her father, John Carter, of Virginia, a, Prince of Helium, Warlord of Barsoom and she knew that the skill of the Black Chief suffered little by the comparison.

LLANA (Carter speaking)

I should have killed him and gone on about my business, but suddenly a spirit of bravado possessed me. I would face them all, let them see once more the greatest swordsman of two worlds, and let them realize, when I had escaped them, that I was greater in all ways than the greatest of the First Born. I knew it was foolish; but now I was following the warrior toward the banquet hall; the die was cast, and it was too late to turn back.

Again:

Presently I noticed that she was laughing, and I asked her what amused her. "More than any other man on Barsoom, Hin Abtol feared you," she said, "and he had you in his power and did not know it. And he pitted against you, the greatest swordsman of two worlds, a clumsy oaf, when he might have loosed upon you a full utan and destroyed you. Though he would doubtless have lost half his utan. I only pray that some day he may know the opportunity he missed when he permitted John Carter, Warlord of Barsoom to escape him."

Again:

"I am not bragging," I said; "I only state facts." As a matter of fact, I often realize that in speaking of my swordsmanship, it may sound to others as though I were bragging but really I do not feel that I am bragging. I know that I am the greatest swordsman of two worlds. It would be foolish for me to simper, and suck my finger,

Swords of Mars:

Scarcely ever before in my life have I felt so futile, so impotent. Here was I, the greatest swordsman of two worlds, helpless in defense of my friends because I could not see their foes.

Burrough's Second Novel: *The Outlaw of Torn*

"I think it is the best thing I ever wrote.
.."
— Edgar Rice Burroughs

Irwin Porges, through his concentrated research on ERB documents at ERB, Inc., pieced together the interesting evolution of Ed Burroughs' second novel—The Outlaw of Torn. Highlights of these findings follow:

Following ERB's success with his first story, *Under the Moons of Mars*, Thomas Metcalf of "All-Story Magazine" suggested that Ed should consider creating his next story in a different setting. "I was thinking last night, considering with how much vividness you described the various fights, whether you might not be able to do a serial of the regular romantic type, something like, say *Ivanhoe*, or at least of the period when everybody wore armor and dashed about rescuing fair ladies. If you have in mind any serials, or anything of that sort, and if you think it worth your while, I should be very glad indeed to hear from you in regard to them.

So, somewhat reluctantly, Ed returned to the thirteenth century to write a pseudo-historical romance about a gallant outlaw. Amazingly, he completed the story within three weeks. In his letter of November 29, 1911, Ed reported the dispatch, by United States Express, of *The Outlaw of Torn*.

He explained that the story was set in medieval England. About his hero, the fictitious second son of Henry III, he wrote,

"The story of his adventurous life, and his love for a daughter of the historic Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, gives ample opportunity for thrilling situations, and hair raising encounters... while the story hinges, in a way, upon certain historic facts in connection with The Barons' War of that period, I have not infused enough history, scenery or weather in it to in any way detract from the interest of the narrative."

The plot, quite ingenious, and with no actual basis in fact, concerns the incredible revenge of Sir Jules de Vac, French fencing master in the household of Henry III, for the insult he has suffered from the English King. To a critical reader, however, *The Outlaw of Torn* was nothing more than a ragged patchwork of assorted characters and incidents, hastily conceived and ineffectively bundled together. Even as a picaresque romance with the customary string of loosely related adventures it was a failure. The semblance of a medieval atmosphere, which Ed attempted to create through brief descriptions and bits of historical reference, was completely unconvincing. Metcalf, on December 19, 1911, offered a summary of the novel's defects:

"I am very doubtful about the story. The plot is excellent, but I think you worked it

out all together too hurriedly. You really didn't get the effect of the picturesqueness of *Torn*. Opportunities for color and pagantry you have entirely missed. The worth of some of the figures of which you might make a great deal, you do not seem to realize. As, for instance, the old fencer whom you use for about three chapters and then ignore entirely until the very end of the story. In him you have a kind of malevolent spirit who might pervade the whole book."

Ed promptly sent a letter in defense of the rejected *Torn*. His belief had been that *All-Story* would want something with a good plot and "as rapid action as possible, so as to not entail too much matter." He conceded that since this story was completed so soon after his first one, a reader might receive an impression that it was hurriedly written; this was clearly not the case, he insisted.

"I work all day and late into the night studying my references and writing alternately. An experienced writer would doubtless cover much more ground in the same time."

He stressed that the flaws that Metcalf had pointed out in *The Outlaw of Torn*, were "errors" subject to speedy correction.

"I can see no reason why I cannot make the story satisfactory to you, for the errors you cite are purely of omission, and they can easily be remedied."

Ed's confidence was shaken somewhat when Metcalf responded with a devastating analysis of the novel. "I think you have neglected great opportunities." He believed that Ed's first chapter should have been

"full of color and excitement." After a brief summary of the plot, Metcalf referred to the ending:

"I am not sure that there is any particular value in the happy ending. It seems to be more legitimate to have both De Vac and the outlaw die in the end, leaving the lady dissolved in tears, possibly on her way to become a nun."

He followed this up with a series of specific suggestions.

With the rejection of *The Outlaw of Torn* Ed had become dubious about his writing ability. As a result, he now had little faith that "Tarzan," the story that he had started writing after his first draft of *Torn*, would be accepted.

"... When I finished it I knew that it was not as good a story as *The Outlaw of Torn*," he commented, "and that, therefore, it would not sell...."

Metcalf's appraisal of the manuscript evidently convinced Ed of the necessity for careful, studied revision, for he now worked slowly, not returning *The Outlaw of Torn* until February 2, 1912.

For this revised manuscript Ed had devised two separate endings for the story, "one happy and the other tending toward the opposite, but leaving the matter somewhat in the reader's hands. For business reasons I lean to the 'happy' one, because as all classes read fiction purely for relaxation and enjoyment, I imagine they do not care particularly for stories which leave a bad taste. However, I leave it to your greater experience."

A month later, Metcalf sent word that although he liked the plot, he could not use *Torn* in its present form ... but he would be willing to buy the story for \$100 and have one of his staff writers who was more experienced in medieval history do a re-write as a co-author. Ed responded:

"I am very sorry that you do not find 'The Outlaw of Torn' available in its present form; but I thank you for your alternative offer, which, however, in view of the time I have put on the story, I cannot see my way to accept... . I really think your readers would have liked that story. I am not prone to be prejudiced in favor of my own stuff, in fact it all sounds like rot to me, but I tried the Mss on some young people; extremely superior, hypercritical young people, and some of them sat up all night reading it. [I am convinced] that nobody knows anything about the manners, customs or speech of 13th century England. . . . So who may say that one story fairly represents the times and that another does not? If I had written into *The Outlaw of Torn* my real conception of the knights of the time of Henry III you would have taken the Mss with a pair of tongs and dropped it in the furnace. I made my hero everything that I thought the men of the time were not.

After another rejection Ed let the *Torn* project lie dormant until October when he renewed his efforts:

"Am working on *The Outlaw of Torn* and think that I am whipping a good story out of it. Do you really think it worth while submitting it to you or would you suggest that I fire it to some other magazine?"

After Metcalf's promise to consider the story again Ed sent the revised script on November 19:

"Please don't return it to me. When you are through with it let me know and I will send you a shipping paster and the coin to forward it elsewhere. I know that you will not like it any better than you did before. It's funny too, for everyone who has read it except yourself has thought it by far the most interesting story I have written."

Following yet another rejection, Ed responded:

"I am going to do it over again when I have time—I shall stick to *The Outlaw of Torn* until it is published—I come of a very long lived family."

There were now three versions: the original long-hand story of 215 pages; a typed manuscript, quite similar but with small corrections; and the expanded, detailed form. The revised manuscript of 1912, a collection of hand-written and typed pages, exhibited changes that were based upon additional research. Ed's first two openings were discarded, and in the final published version of *The Outlaw of Torn* a more leisurely introductory section appeared. Ed's persistence eventually paid off eight months later when A. L. Sessions, Editor of the "New Story" magazine, accepted the story for publication.

Ed's belief in his beleaguered second novel was vindicated thirteen years later when McClurg published *The Outlaw of Torn* on February 19, 1927. To the literary editor of the *Sacramento Bee*, on March 15, Ed recalled that this story drove him to the hardest "labor" he had ever done. He also noted that McClurg's then editor, Joseph Bray never cared for the story, but de-

scribed him as "one of the princes of the publishing world," and added, "I dedicated this one to him, as you will note from the flyleaf, to make him like it." A few months before publication Bray had been made president of A. C. McClurg & Company. Ed's faith in *The Outlaw of Torn* appeared justified with the report, on March 28, that the 5,000 copy first edition of the book had been sold out—a gratifying record for so short a period. For the window display of *The Outlaw of Torn* for Brentano's Book Store in Chicago, Ed sent a photo of himself at the Tarzana Ranch with the yearling filly named Dejah Thoris. Concerning the novel, he wrote to Maurice Simons at McClurg:

"I think it is the best thing I ever wrote, with the possible exception of *Tarzan of the Apes*, and next to it, I believe will rank *The War Chief* of the Apaches."

Throughout the late thirties Burroughs and ERB, Inc. secretary Rothmund conducted a persistent campaign to persuade the motion picture companies to consider various stories as film vehicles. ... Those most determinedly marketed were *Jungle Girl*, *Outlaw of Torn*, *The Mucker*, *Apache Devil*, and *The War Chief*. All of the stories were judged unsuitable for film production.