



CONTACTING THE WORLDS OF EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

Lost Virgil Finlay Tarzan Illustration Found!

by Robert R. Barrett

The Dean of Science Fiction Illustrators, Virgil Finlay, executed four illustrations for one of Edgar Rice Burroughs' Tarzan serials, "The Quest of Tarzan," including one cover and one interior drawing for each of the three parts, and published in *Argosy Weekly*, August 23 through September 6, 1941. It was the first and only time that Finlay would illustrate one of Burroughs' stories, and it would not have occurred if not for fantasy writer Abraham Merritt.

A. Merritt became familiar with Finlay's work through the pages of *Weird Tales* magazine. As a result, Merritt, editor of the popular newspaper supplement, *American Weekly*, hired Finlay to illustrate for the supplement. In 1938 *Argosy Weekly* reprinted Merritt's *The Ship of Ishtar*, voted by readers as the best story they had run in 58 years. The reader response was so positive that *Argosy Weekly* decided to reprint another Merritt fantasy, *Seven Footprints to Satan*. Merritt asked that this serial reprint be illustrated by Virgil Finlay, having convinced them that no story of his could be properly presented unless Finlay illustrated it. Later that same year, Merritt's novels began appearing in Munsey's new reprint magazine *Famous Fantastic Mysteries*, with Finlay illustrations.

Finlay continued to illustrate stories in *Argosy Weekly* until it was purchased by Popular Publications. Finlay produced illustrations for *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* and its sister publication, *Famous Fantastic Novels*, as well as *A. Merritt's Fantasy* until their demise in the early 1950s.



The interceding by Abraham Merritt to *Argosy Weekly's* editor to allow Virgil Finlay to illustrate his stories proved a boon to



Silently the titanic struggle took shape, muscles of iron against writhing coils of steel. The girl watched in horrified fascination.

The Quest of Tarzan

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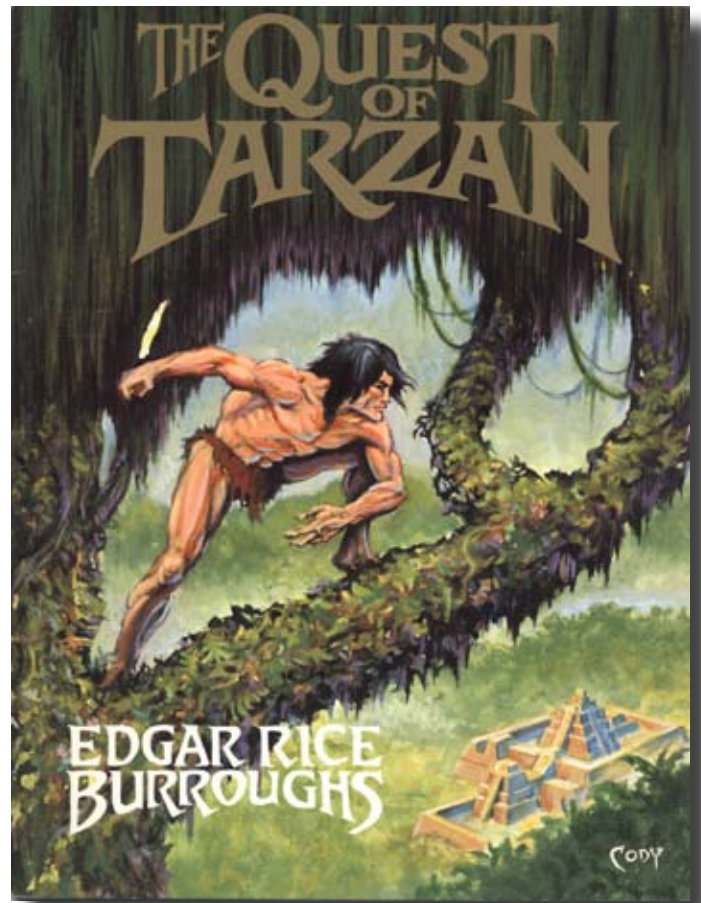
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Finlay, a breakthrough which gained him entry into a prestige publication.

Until now, Finlay's Tarzan illustrations have been presumed lost. However, recently a well-known auction house (Hake's Americana) offered his double-page illustration for part I of "The Quest of Tarzan." Interestingly, the auction house was unaware of what the original illustration was for, offering it only as a Virgil Finlay illustration. The 7-1/8 x 15-1/8 inch original is now a part of The Howard Otis Barrett Memorial Collection of Edgar Rice Burroughs Illustrators.

Notes On "The Quest Of Tarzan"

The editor of *Argosy Weekly*, A. Worthington Post, not only changed ERB's title of *Tarzan and the Castaways* to *The Quest of Tarzan*, but he rewrote sections of the story, including the scene of Tarzan fighting the snake which was illustrated by Virgil Finlay for the first installment of the story on August 23, 1941. I was curious to know if the artist had included Tarzan's left elbow in the original drawing, so I called Bob Barrett to find out. He said the artist had left out this detail because it came in the middle of the two-page illustration and would not be published if included in the original. The other Finlay illustrations for this ERB serial have never come up for sale on the market, so their



location is still unfortunately a mystery.

Back in May, 1989, Mike Conran, editor of *ERB News Date-line*, published a reprint of *The Quest of Tarzan* as a supplement to issue #34 of his fanzine. It is a fine reprint, with a new color cover by Mike Cody (above), but including the *Argosy Weekly* serial and all of the Finlay illustrations. In searching for additional samples of Finlay's pulp magazine art, we found his cover for *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* for July, 1942 (lower left) which illustrates Charles Stilson's "Polaris of the Snows," a story originally published on December 18, 1915, with cover art by P. J. Monahan (see Roger Hill's excellent article on Monahan in *Burroughs Bulletin* #8, October, 1991).
... "Ye Editor"



New Dum-Dum Guest

Scott Wirth with the Iowa Comic Book Club has lined up an excellent guest for the Comic Book Jungle Show on the 26th, running concurrently with the Dum-Dum! Thomas Floyd has illustrated several of the Bison editions of ERB books, including *Tarzan of the Apes* and *Pirates of Venus*. Visit the Dum-Dum website to find more details (<http://www.free-webs.com/dumdum2008/index.htm>).

