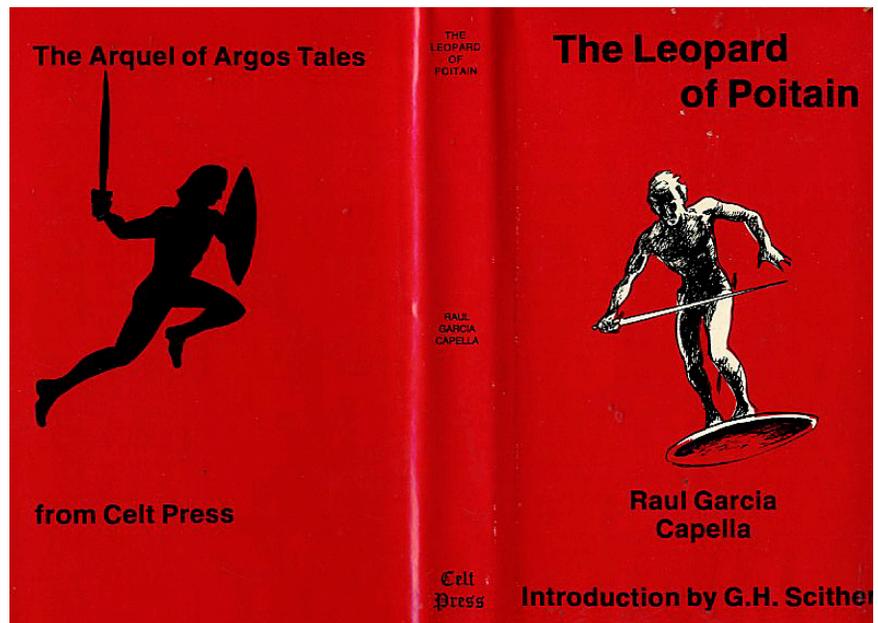


THE LEOPARD OF POITAIN

by
Raul Garcia Capella

Jim Kelly, Celt Press (1985)



The Leopard of Poitain is a book containing the adventures of Arquel of Argos during the time Conan was King of Aquelonia. The book was published by Celt Press in 1985, which is me

My interest in Conan and Robert E. Howard began in the late 50's, when a friend suggested I read the Conan books in our local Colum-bus GA Library. Needless to say I was hooked from the first book.

I have been reading Conan the Barbarian stories since the 6th grade. I liked this form of fiction written by Robert E Howard who died in 1936. In the 1970's this author was popular and there was a fan magazine called "AMRA" which was one of Conan's nicknames in several stories. In this AMRA Fanzine I read several short stories by Raul Garcia Capella about a character named Arquel

of Argos who lived at the same time of Conan. I really liked these stories. I wrote to author and asked if I could buy the publishing rights to his stories. He agreed and said he had an unpub-lished story that tie everything to-gether. I bought the rights for \$500 I also contacted George H. Scithers, the editor of the Amra fanzine and he wrote the introduction to the book.

I received his manuscripts, edited them and sent them off to be typeset. Received the blue copies from the typesetter and reviewed and edited them. Next I selected a printer. Mr. Capella submitted some art work for the cover, he was an artist. I drew the back cover. I had 500 copies printed. Over the years I have sold and about 350 copies . I sent a copy of the book to Locus Magazine for review and they gave me an outstanding small publisher review in their magazine. I am very proud of this book. I put a lot of love and soul into it. Of all the material accomplishments I have completed in my life, I am most proud of this book.

I never met Ray Capella. All our interaction was done by mail. I do wish I had met him and let him know face to face how much I appreciated his letting me publish his stories of Arquel. I believe this book may be the only book form publication of his stories of Arquel.

So who was Raul Garcia Capella? He was an illustrator for science fiction and fantasy books and magazines. Raul was born on February 18, 1933 in Puerto Rico and moved to Brooklyn NY in the 1940's. Raul died on June 6, 2010 at the age of 77 in CA. In an interview with James Van Hise which appeared in **Sword & Fantasy #6 (and can be found at <https://deepcuts.blog/2020/02/29/the-leopard-of-poitain-1985-by-raul-garcia-capella/> on the internet)**. In that interview Raul stated as child his Father introduced him to movie series, and adventure books including Tarzan of Apes. Around the early 1960's that he became involved with Howard's writing and the AMRA Fanzine.

In 1960 Raul submitted to George H. Scithers and outline of the career of Arquel of Argos. Bear in mind he has yet to write the first story about Arquel. The submission was called **THE LEOPARD OF POITAIN** and was printed in AMRA Vol 2 N 11 in April 1960. In that I was 14 at the time and never had heard of AMRA, I did not know of this writing until I read the introduction of the book written by Scithers. Raul in the interview with Mr. Van Hise said

" I wrote a brief autobiography of an Argossean; a fanciful bunch of ideas featuring a character who lived in the

Hyborean Age. I thought it's be presumptuous to mess with Conan, who could only be done by Howard. So my creation tried to add more color to Conan's world without altering it. In a word it was a tribute. But Scithers wouldn't let me off the hook because I'd outlined stories and titles. He kept nudging me by mail whenever I contributed illos or articles. Although hesitant to do it, when I finally started, the tales wrote themselves." The first story which was called **Crimson Bell** and the story was printed in AMRA Vol 2 N 20 in April 1962 two years after Raul submitted the bio of Arquel, Three more Arquel stories were printed in AMRA. The stories were **TURUTAL**, AMRA VOL2 N32, March 1965, **THE LEOPARD OF POITAIN** (different from the 1960 career outline) AMRA VOL 2 N 53 , 1970, and **THE LION'S BRIDGE** AMRA VOL2 N24 May 1963. An additional story, **CARVAN TO KUTCHEMES** was printed in Anduril #7 in February 1979. The final story **THE WINDS OF ACHERON** (which is a Novella) was not published until the Book, **THE LEOPARD OF POITAIN** was published in 1985.



As I stated above I found the Arquel stories when I found AMRA. One must remember this was before the days of the internet. I found a copy of one of the AMRA issues in a catalog from

either Robert Weinberg Books or from Fantasy and Science Fiction Book Company. This is when I wrote AMRA asking them to forward my letter to Raul.

In his interview with Mr. Van Hise, Rual describes this process: *"Jim Kelly, a fantasy fan who wanted to get into publishing, wrote asking why no one had put all the Arquel stories into one volume. The editors forward the letter to me. While exchanging letters, I let Jim know the project would need the final novella; it hadn't been written. He agreed to wait and sent an advance check when the book was ready."*

Yes, at that time I wanted to get into the publishing business. I created Celt Press and obtain a series of ISBN's. So far, **The Leopard of Poitain** is the only book I have published.

I asked George Scithers, the publisher of AMRA to write an introduction and he agreed to do so. Mr. Scithers began publishing AMRA in 1959. It is said that the term "Swords and Sorcery" first appeared in AMRA.

I received the books from the printers and I found I had a problem. How was I going to sell the books. At this time I was living in New Orleans, so I visited the local book stores, Walden and Dalton and comic books stores. I left books on consignments. I sent copies of the book to Mail order book companies such as Robert Weinberg and Fantasy and Science Fiction Book Company. And Locus.

Sales were poor and the book did not become known. In the first year or so, I sold or gave away about 100 books. The remaining books I stored in my garage and there they remain. I have started listing the book on EBAY.

I sell my copies for \$18 plus \$4 shipping. (Payment thru Caz is OK)

How good a writer was Raul? Of course I thought he was a great writer or I would never have proceeded to publish a book of his work. In the introduction of the book, I think Mr Scithers said it best: *"Working in another man's story-world is a tricky business. Capella wisely --- very wisely --- uses Howard's world without using Howard's principal character in on-stage roles. Arquel is neither Conan nor an imitation of him; Capella is no Howard—he's far saner, far easier to know and like. In doing so, Capella has illuminated corners of the Hyborean world that Howard overlooked: what was going on behind the scenes; why the enemies were foiled in their attempts to launch a sneak attack or bring into being a evil, magical past best buried; and how magic and magicians can work for good as well as for evil."*

This book does not have the awareness that other books written by L Sprague de Camp, Lin Carter, Poul Anederson, Karl Edward Wagner, Richard Jordan and Andrew J. Offutt have in Howard's worlds, but I believe it should.

-Jim Kelly

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