



The Eye of Argon

Jim Theis

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This is not a hoax. Jim Theis was a real person, who wrote The Eye of Argon in all seriousness as a teenager, and published it in a fanzine, Osfan in 1970. But the story did not pass into the oblivion that awaits most amateur fiction. Instead, a miracle happened, and transcribed and photocopied texts began to circulate in science fiction circles, gaining a wide and incredulous audience among both professionals and fans. It became the ultimate samizdat, an underground classic, and for more than thirty years it has been the subject of midnight readings at conventions, as thousands have come to appreciate the negative genius of this amazing Ed Wood of prose.

The Eye of Argon Details

Date : Published September 5th 2000 by Wildside Press (first published 1970)

ISBN : 9780809562619

Author : Jim Theis

Format : Paperback 74 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Humor, Fiction, Science Fiction, Classics, Short Stories, Heroic Fantasy, Sword and Sorcery

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From Reader Review The Eye of Argon for online ebook

Peter Tillman says

"At the foot of the heathen diety a slender, pale faced female, naked but for a golden, jeweled harness enshrouding her huge outcropping breasts, supporting long silver laces which extended to her thigh, stood before the pearl white field with noticable shivers traveling up and down the length of her exquisitely molded body."

.
. .

"The man upon the throne had a naked wench seated at each of his arms, and a trusted advisor seated in back of him. At each cornwr of the chamber a guard stood at attention, with upraised pikes supported in their hands, golden chainmail adorning their torso's and barred helmets emitting scarlet plumes enshrouding their heads. The man rose from his throne to the dias surrounding it. His plush turquoise robe dangled loosely from his chunky frame.

.
. .

"Take this uncouth heathen to the vault of misery, and be sure that his agonies are long and drawn out before death can release him."

Not a book to actually *read*, but it sure is fun to find bits like this! All text quoted verbatim, from a copy that used to be online.

From the [formerly] online copy, accessed 2006:

' "The Eye of Argon" was published in 1970 in OSFAN, the journal of the Ozark SF Society, issue number 10. Photocopies circulated for decades, and it became a regular sf convention challenge to read Jim Theis's mangled prose with a straight face. ... Jim Theis himself, who was 16 when "The Eye of Argon" first appeared, reportedly died circa 2001 at age 48. He will be long remembered in sf fandom.'

And here is far more than you'll want to know: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Eye...

?Misericordia? ~ The Serendipity Aegis ~ ?????? ✨*♥? says

That story went over like... like... like a story that doesn't go over very well. And it's contagiously hilarious! **It bit me, for crissake! Someone, put me out of my misery, quick!** NB! I started reading it knowing just what it is and it didn't disappoint. If anything, it overdelivered and overdelivered and went on ovedelivering on so many levels, I can't even count them all... It's so bad it can and should be used for laugh therapy sessions for geeks (just like yours truly).

Ultra, ULTRA, U L T R A freaking awesomely weird! Basically, this is a legend of a horrible novel. A masterpiece of botched literature. A veritable Hurrigane of Euphemisms, if one ever existed, I shit you not! **Jim Theis is "a malaprop genius, a McGonagall of prose with an eerie gift for choosing the wrong word and then misapplying it.** (c) David Langford

Why 5 stars? I don't think this wasn't written on purpose. And if it wasn't - the author is a genius nevertheless. THAT takes some balls and brains and paper and a really wild thesaurus. LONG LEAVE

THEIS!

So, rating composition:

+ 100 stars for the satire and cheek!

- 100 stars for everything that went wrong with this book (which is pretty much everything unimaginable and unnameable! I'm not even starting the list, it has no chance to fit in here!)

+5 stars for making me laugh and being the absolute winner in any and every category of the Books of the Nightmare!

Sources:

Original Text: The Eye of Argon

A wild thesaurus has definitely rampaged through the text. (c)

Sesquipedalian Loquaciousness.

Enjoy the excerpts (there is lots more where these came from!):

Q:

His trust found him with a dagger thrust his ribs," the wench stated whimsicoracally. (c)

Q:

Above his head rose the hideous idol, its empty socket holding the shaman's ifurbished infuriated gaze. His eyes turned to a stoney glaze with the realization of the pillage and blasphemy. Due to his high succceptibility following the siezure, the priest was transformed into a raving maniac bent solely upon reaking vengeance. With lips curled and quivering, a crust of foam dripping from them, the acolyte drew a long, wicked looking jewel hilted scimitar from his silver girdle and fled through the aperature in the ceiling uttering a faintly perceptible ceremonial jibberish. (c)

Q:

They slew the guard placed over me and abducted me to the chamber in which you chanced to come upon the scozstic sacrifice. Their hell-spawned cult demands a sacrifice once every three moons upon its full journey through the heavens. (c)

Q:

The prince would surely have submitted them to the most ghastly of tortures if he had ever discovered their unfaithfulness to Sargon, his bastard diety. (c)

Q:

"Mrifk! I thought I had killed the last of those dogs;" muttered Grignr in a half apathetic state.

Q:

"Nay Grignr. You doubtless grew careless while giving vent to your lusts. But let us not tarry any long lest we over tax the fates. The paths leading to freedom will soon be barred.

The wretch's crys must certainly have attracted unwanted attention," the wench mused.

"By what direction shall we pursue our flight?"

"Up that stair and down the corridor a short distance is the concealed entrance to a tunnel seldom used by others than the prince, and known to few others save the palace's royalty. It is used mainly by the prince when he wishes to take leave of the palace in secret. It is not always in the Prince's best interests to leave his chateau in public view. Even while under heavy guard he is often assaulted by hurtling stones and rotting fruits. The commoners have little love for him." lectured the nerelady!

"It is amazing that they would ever have left a pig like him become their ruler. I should imagine that his people would rise up and crucify him like the dog he is."

"Alas, Grignr, it is not as simple as all that. His soldiers are well paid by him. (c)

Q:

After spilling a spout of blood from the leader of the mercenaries as he dismembered one of the officer's arms, he retreated to his mount to make his way towards Gorzom, rumoured to contain hoards of plunder, and many young wenches for any man who has the backbone to wrest them away. (c)

Q:

"Thou hast need to occupy your time, barbarian",questioned the female? ...

The engrossed titan ignored the queries of the inquisitive female, pulling her towards him and crushing her

sagging nipples to his yearning chest. Without struggle she gave in, winding her soft arms around the harshly bronzedhide of Grignr corded shoulder blades, as his calloused hands caressed her firm protruding busts. "You make love well wench," Admitted Grignr as he reached for the vessel of potent wine his charge had been quaffing. (c)

Q:

A flying foot caught the mug Grignr had taken hold of, sending its blood red contents sloshing over a flickering crescent; leashing tongues of bright orange flame to the foot trodden floor.

"Remove yourself Sirrah, the wench belongs to me;" Blabbered a drunken soldier, too far consumed by the influences of his virile brew to take note of the superior size of his adversary.

Grignr lithly bounded from the startled female, his face lit up to an ashen red ferocity, and eyes locked in a searing feral blaze toward the swaying soldier.

"To hell with you, braggard!" Bellowed the angered Ecordian, as he hefted his finely honed broad sword. (c)

Q:

The eyeballs glare turned to a sudden plea of mercy, a plea for the whole of humanity. Then the blob began to quiver with violent convulsions; the eyeball shattered into a thousand tiny fragments and evaporated in a curling wisp of scarlet mist. The very ground below the thing began to vibrate and swallow it up with a belch.

The thing was gone forever. All that remained was a dark red blotch upon the face of the earth, blotching things up. Shaking his head, his shaggy mane to clear the jumbled fragments of his mind, Grignr tossed the limp female over his shoulder. Mounting one of the disgruntled mares, and leading the other; the weary, scarred barbarian trooted slowly off into the horizon to become a tiny pinpoint in a filtered filed of swirling blue mists, leaving the Nobles, soldiers and peasants to replace the missing monarch. Long leave the king!!! (c)

PS. It's supposedly fanfiction on some or other fantasy (Conan-barbarian style) allegedly written by a 16-year old boy, There's another version of it: that this was a winner of a college contest on which of the students would write the most horrible novelette with most of the don'ts done.

Basically it's a novelette, interspersed with the horriblemest of the impossible word and world choices, lots of typos, crazy syntax and weirdest pretty much everything about it. It's so horrible it's almost endearing. :) And one absolutely can't read it without cracking up! :)

Paul says

This is quite possibly the best book I have ever read, in my whole life, ever. The description is second to none, the tone is witty and entertaining, the characters are deep and unforgettable, the story is gripping and gratifying, and the gore...oh, the gore. This book goes to the depths of what it means to be a human being and challenges you to question your very existence. Once I picked up this book and started reading, I couldn't put it down until I had devoured every last succulent word. I don't know if I can ever read another book after this; comparatively, all other books are dirt.

Quite simply, this book changed my life.

Ea Solinas says

"The Eye of Argon" is a legendary piece of fiction. It may look like just another lame "Conan the Barbarian" ripoff...

... but it isn't. This is the Holy Grail of wretched fantasy, the Excalibur of excrescent writing, the purest form of terrible writing that makes Edward Bulwer-Lytton look like Shakespeare. Jim Theis' legendary novella butchers the English language and wallows in the blood -- and I defy anyone to read this story in one sitting without experiencing fatal brain meltage.

It is the story of Grignr (how do you say that anyway?), a barbarian who hacks'n/slashes his way to the city of Gorzam, "hoping to discover wine, women, and adventure to boil the wild blood coarsing through his savage veins." Yeah, whatever. So he starts a fight over some random "wench" in Gorzam, and ends up sitting in prison while a bunch of priests try to rape and sacrifice a girl. Of course, he starts causing trouble like all hot-blooded barbarians do.

Well, that's sort of the story -- if you can call it a story, which is difficult to do because frankly Theis seems to have made it up as he went along. Admittedly he was only sixteen when he wrote "Eye of Argon," but let's face it -- there isn't a single solitary SENTENCE in this book that doesn't make me want to stab myself in the brain with a fork.

Not that that's always a BAD thing. In fact, "Eye of Argon" is gutsplittingly funny and is used as a sort of genre joke.

Most of this comes from the way that Jim Theis... well, he did to the English language what Carthena does to the evil priest. Just look at the very first scene of the book. We've got a "misting brain," "grinding lungs" and "writhing mouths," not to mention "Grignr's emerald green orbs glared lustfully at the wallowing soldier." So, he's sexually attracted to the guy he just killed?

And it's like that ALL THROUGH THE BOOK. Random adjectives are slapped around (a girl has a "lithe, opaque nose"), verbs are slaughtered (Carthena "husked" a remark), adverbs are beaten senseless (how do you ask something "bustily?") and the dialogue may cause your eyeballs to bleed. Who could write a line like, "You make love well, wench"?

But let's be honest here -- this book would be a disaster even if Theis weren't that bad a writer -- the "plot" is incoherent and apparently made-up as it goes along, with absurd plot twists (killing people with a RAT PELVIS?) and long infodumps of boring blabber. What's more: it doesn't even have an end.

Even if they tried their hardest, most people couldn't write a story as hilariously, mind-blowingly horrible as "The Eye of Argon." Warning: if you read it, you might end up worming agonizingly as you utter a gasping gurgle.

Michael Arnold says

Holy shit dude.

Steve Dilks says

I first came across reference to this novella in a Dave Langford article in SFX magazine when I was standing in Tesco a few years ago. From that day on I was intrigued. Being a massive fan of sword-&-sorcery I just knew had to track this book down. Eventually I came across it online and, in all excitement, prepared myself.

I was not disappointed. Gloriously bad prosed fun, full of relentless action and carnage that, regardless of intention or not, does the genre a mighty service by giving it a right royal kick up the rear. I loved it. If you have ever read Lin Carter or Gardner F. Fox you could easily be fooled into thinking this was an early draft of one of their novels. They wrote some stinkers and, as this proves, most of them could have been written by a sixteen year old school boy with a healthy fixation for big breasted women. I've read many tales of hot blooded, lusty barbarians with mighty thews in my time and far from ridiculing this novella - I salute THE EYE OF ARGON for the masterpiece it truly is. So here's to you and your roaring red maned barbarian, Grignr of Ecordia, Jim! Tonight I shall hoist a slatternly wench with sagging breasts on my knee and plug a sweaty tankard in your honour!

Jilly says

For my last finished book of 2017, and my 300th book read this year, I wanted to finish with a bang. A masterpiece of literary goodness.

This book is named "The Worst Fantasy Book of All Time" and rightly so. It is amazingly bad. So bad that as I read it aloud to my daughter this evening, I had to keep stopping to catch my breath and wipe the tears from my face from laughing so hard.

Read it free online here.

Rev. Nyarkoleptek says

Reading this is like watching a parade of clowns being run down by penguins piloting unicycles. Epic fail that all others are judged against.

paper says

Normally, I fall for literature with well-developed characters, a cracking plot, an imaginative or imaginatively depicted setting, and a writing style that is seamless and natural, yet unique.

In The Eye of Argon, the only thing developed about the characters are their breasts and muscles. The plot is not so much cracking as cracked. The setting is imaginatively named, if not imaginative. And the writing style... well, it ain't natural, but it sure is unique.

In short, it's the worst piece of writing I've ever encountered. And for that, I love it. Seriously, it's one of the most unintentionally hilarious things in existence. And you can download it as a PDF for free.

The Eye of Argon is the (short) tale of Grignr the Ecordian, a barbarian warrior of enormous height, build and loincloth capacity. After satiating his bloodlust by murdering a couple of soldiers, he goes to sate his regular lust in a brothel. Or maybe it's a tavern - I don't think Theis knew the difference. He snuggles up with

a harlot who has 'stringy twines of orchid hair flowing gracefully over [her] lithe, opaque nose', only to be challenged by a drunk soldier. The man calls Grignr a slut, so he beheads him. Grignr is then escorted to see the ruler of Noregolia, a fat man who can blush and go pale at the same time and whose 'flabs of jellied blubber pulsate to and fro in ripples of flowing terror', whatever that means. After killing the king's advisor, Grignr is thrown into a dungeon. In order to escape, he must manually decapitate bloodthirsty giant rats, rescue swooning women from epileptic priests, spout completely nonsensical dialogue, steal a 'scarlet emerald', fight off eldritch leeches, and keep bone daggers in his G-string without slicing off his testicles. And he must do it in purple prose, surrounded by drawings as ugly and bizarre as the story itself.

If you enjoy B-movies, Tara Gillesbie's 'My Immortal', or laughing until your stomach hurts, you will love The Eye of Argon.

Ben De Bono says

So, so awful that it goes full circle and becomes amazing. I hope you like adjectives!

Hollis says

For as long as I can remember, it has always been an ambition of mine to find an artifact whose existence is denied by many: the Worst Book Ever Written. I have spent countless hours going through libraries and charity bookshops in search of it and today, I'm glad to say that I finally found it. I give you "The Eye of Argon": a work of transcendent, dizzying, sublime badness. I'll pick two sentences at random to give you an idea of the quality:

(This is after the main character Grignr the Barbarian has fatally injured a soldier). "Grignr's emerald green orbs glared lustfully at the wallowing soldier struggling before his chestnut swirled mount".

"The vile stench of the Shaman's hot fetid breath over came the nauseated female with a deep soul searing sickness, causing her to wrench her head backwards and regurgitate a slimy, orangewhite stream of swelling gore over the richly woven purple robe of the enthused acolyte".

I haven't laughed so much whilst reading a book in a very long time. Absolutely hilarious. And I love that in the Introduction, Mr Theis apparently took the story to his English teacher after he had written it so it could be improved. Bro, your English teacher can't fix this story: the only thing that can fix this is a flamethrower.

Alyssa says

I mean, how do you rate The Eye of Argon? Do you give it five stars for being SO BAD that it made you laugh so hard your kidneys hurt, or do you give it only the none stars it deserves for its "quality" level? I compromised. Which, unfortunately, makes the thing look readable. It really isn't.

Do not read this unless you have a strong stomach for bad writing and don't mind misogyny, flat characterization, an utter lack of plot, and just mammoth narrative leaps in general. Yes, it *does* read like it was written by an angry, semi-literate 13-year-old boy. And yes, it is something close to hysterical that even the author of this... work could consider it good enough to publish. If these facts are intriguing enough and

you have the stomach for it in the name of a hard laugh, well. Enter at your own risk.

Christy says

no, I'm not really finished. for obvious reasons. I read some and couldn't stop coughing since I tried to swallow an entire coke down my windpipe I was laughing so hard...

and that was on page 2. I gave up.

Lauren says

I was expecting worse, to be honest. Yeah, the writing is terrible, but after a while you kinda get used to it and then the more significant crime is just how boring the story is, especially the part where Grignr is stuck in the dungeon. Still, I don't think I've ever laughed so much during a book. The damsel in distress character was particularly bad. It was like the author saw one of those old movie posters where the women are sprawled on the ground clutching the legs of the hero, then he transplanted that image into his story, only more naked and without adding any other characterising detail.

Some top moments:

As Grignr lifted the girl from the altar, her arms wound dexterously about his neck; soft and smooth against his harsh exterior. "Art thou pleased that we have chanced to meet once again?" Grignr merely voiced an sighed grunt, returning the damsels embrace while he smothered her trim, delicate lips between the coarsing protrusions of his reeking maw.

And

"Aye! The ways of our civilization are in many ways warped and distorted, but what is your calling," she queried , bustily?

Also, every instance of writing 'orbs' or (I shit you not) 'seeing organs' instead of 'eyes'.

The main character gets called a slut a lot, too, and I know it's going for some archaic meaning, but still, that never got old.

sologdin says

Prefer an "engrossed titan" who ignores "the queries of an inquisitive female, pulling her towards him and crushing her sagging nipples to his yearning chest"?

Want your narrator's consciousness to return "in stygmatic pools as his mind gradually cleared of the cobwebs cluttering its inner recesses, yet the stygian cloud of charcoal ebony remained"?

Obsessed with "expertly chisled forms of grotesque gargoyles that graced the oblique rim protruberating the length of the grim orifice of death, staring forever ahead into nothingness in complete ignorance of the

bloody rites enacted in their prescence"?

Desire to see the villain "clutching his urinary gland as his knees wobbled rapidly about for a few seconds then buckled, causing the ruptured shaman to collapse in an egg huddled mass to the granite pavement, rolling helplessly about in his agony"?

Then you must join this quest for "the many fauceted scarlet emerald," posthaste.

Just awesome. Would be five stars had Delaney told it true that it's intentional satire. As Theis was a real guy, poor thing, it's on the other end of Poe's Law.
