

# SOUTHERN FANDOM CONFEDERATION UPDATE

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 6

JUNE 2009



*Nobody does Cthulhu like you, Nathan!*

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Art Credits: Cover – Steve Stiles, this page – Brad Foster

Dark Shadows article: Jeff Thompson

So, we've got another ish of the SFCU coming out, and as always, it's a few days later than I meant for it to be. I'm finally set up in my new apartment with a working computer and internet connection. The address there is 2412 Still Forest Pl., Apt. F, Raleigh, NC 27607. My phone is still (919) 633-4993. ~~I'm so lonely.~~

The good news, though, is that I'm getting this out before DeepSouthCon (okay, it's tomorrow). I hope to see a whole bunch of y'all there. I tried to pimp it out last month, and I'm not sure how much good another rant would do, so let's just say I hope to see a bunch of you there (and for those of you outside the South, if you don't feel like joining us there, we can always meet at Worldcon). Let's get on with this ish!

## Rebel Yells

Letters from the South and abroad

*Here we go, folks! Another zine, another Letter Column. Starting off, we heard from the ever-friendly Jeff Thompson:*

Thank you, Warren, for Update #5. I always enjoy reading what you and the other fen have to say. The hyperlinks proved interesting, too. I hope to meet you at Deep South Con five weeks from now. Also, I am going to speak about director Dan Curtis, Dark Shadows, horror, and my new 200-page McFarland book, *The Television Horrors of Dan Curtis: Dark Shadows, The Night Stalker, and Other Productions, 1966-2006*, at the Bellevue branch of the Nashville Public Library on June 18 at 6:30 PM; at the Green Hills branch of the Nashville Public Library on July 14 at 6:30 PM; and at the Dark Shadows Festival, August 14-15-16, in Newark, New Jersey ([www.darkshadowsfestival.com](http://www.darkshadowsfestival.com)). Have a good May and keep the Updates and the Bulletins coming! F.I.A.W.O.L. (Fandom Is A Way Of Life)!

*I'll definitely be at DeepSouthCon, as will many of the readers of this here publication. I believe my new car will carry four of us from NC, and we'll be throwing a party for the Raleigh NASFiC bid on Friday night. That should give everyone a chance to come mingle and enjoy some bheer. I hear that the FenCon folks, who are bidding for the 2011 DSC, will be throwing their party on Saturday night, and bringing along plenty of Texas brews. I'll be there, and hope to sample as many of those as I can handle. Good to hear you've got some speaking gigs lined up. Hopefully, the horror slant of this year's DSC will prove to be a fun time for you.*



*Next, we had a couple of letters from Joy Smith:*

Warren,

My two interviews with the Man-Kzin Wars authors--previously mentioned--are in the May issue (now out) of Expressions 107

Joy

Warren,

I love your colorful header! I'd like to see that again. And thanks for the con calendar. And I enjoyed the fandom news and con reports in the LOCs. Btw, The Sha'Daa; Tales of the Apocalypse is included in the books and zine listings in the May issue of Expressions. Re: Lord of Light. It's one of my favorite books also.

Appreciatively,

Joy V. Smith

Joy

(My blog includes helpful house hints & publication news)

<http://pagadan.blogspot.com/>

*Glad to hear I'm not the only one who loves **Lord of Light** – I'd read somewhere once that it was out of print, although I don't believe that's the case anymore.*

*Did I mention this is a fanzine? Apparently someone did, as we've got another LoC from the reigning world champ letterhack, Lloyd Penney:*

1706-24 Eva Rd.  
Etobicoke, ON  
CANADA M9C 2B2

May 13, 2009

Dear Warren:

Thank you for the newest SFC Update, issue 5. A barebones zine will probably get you a barebones loc, unless I get really creative or something really catches my eye. No promises...

It's times like these that make me wish there was a northeastern regional convention like a DeepSouthCon or a Westercon. I hope the DSC continues to serve its purpose; we have a national convention in Canada, but because the country is so big, and it's so expensive to fly across it, it's difficult to get a national audience there. And often, people will just go to a big local con, or settle for the Worldcon. For Canadian fans this year, the national convention, or CanVention, will be held at the Montreal Worldcon.

Coming up in about ten days or so is the big annual anime convention, Anime North. Usually, we don't attend because we're not anime fans, but we will be going this year to help out with the Ad Astra fan table, and participate in the Full Steam Ahead steampunk fashion show the Sunday of the convention.

The local...I have to respond to the latest Katzine asap. It's been difficult to have any contact with Southern fandom, seeing how expensive it is to travel, so it's been a good thing to get SFC publications for as long as I have, possibly 15 years or so. The SFC has been my own conduit to all things Southern and fannish.

I've got to get things organized for the fanzine lounge rsn. You like the name Ad Astra? This convention's been running since 1980, and I was the chairman 1993 and 1994. The current con managers don't number the con any more, but next year will see the 29th Ad Astra. And, I'm rejoining the committee. Eeriecon was a good time, mostly for the people there, and we did act as masquerade judges.

All done for the moment...many thanks, and I look forward to your next publication.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

*Yeah, I understand the pitfalls of a barebones zine. Still, your LoC doesn't feel barebones to me. As usual, you provide plenty to comment on. Both DSC and Westercon developed in eras when there was a real paucity of regionals in the South and the West. With the emergence of strong regionals, both conventions have seen a downward trend in membership numbers. It would be entirely conceivable for Westercon to leave its traditional weekend and start piggybacking on established conventions in the near future. I don't expect either con to die off, but something will have to change to make either of them return to their former glory. The absence of a pan-Northeastern convention is probably due to the existence of almost a half dozen established, large, well-known regionals in the Northeast (Boskone, Lunacon, Philcon, Balticon, and Disclave/Capclave all go back at least forty years). A strong contributing factor would be the geographical proximity of the centers of Northeastern Fandom (and population) – Boswash is a real tough phenomenon to find elsewhere. I've got some theories about travel times and the regional identities of Fandom, but I'll save those for an article I hope to write RSN. Needless to say, the Northeast and Midwest don't have the same need for a pan-regional convention that the South and the West do – wide population distributions and a historical lack of big regionals.*

*I'm definitely looking forward to hanging out with you in the fanzine lounge at Anticipation. You can probably even con me into working a shift or two there if you show me what to do.*

*Finally, we heard from fellow SFPAn Rich Dengrove:*

Dear Warren,

I like you and I wanted to weigh in. However, I'm afraid I'm not a convention person and yours is basically a convention type zine. So it is down and dirty. No corrections. I tried doing this before; but, for some reason, I stopped when someone was very vehement when I said I didn't believe that Thera was Atlantis. But maybe I should start it up again. I'm lagging behind on my correspondence.

I wish I had done this earlier. I could have commented on your article on Red Sonia. My wife really liked that comic book in the '70s, even though she knew a metal bikini would be very uncomfortable.

I have a comment on Arnie's comment on Southern Fandom. I think I have finally figured out the purpose of Southern Fandom: namely, to interact with other fandoms all over the nation and all over the world.

You like SF from the '60s better than Shelby the core fandomite (?) does. Well, the books are there no matter what the era is. The 1950s novels and the 1900s novels are as present as the 2000s novels are. The past is present and the present past.

I guess that's about it this ish.

Yours,  
Rich Dengrove

*Thera is as improbable as most of the other candidates for Atlantis. Remember that Plato is contemporary to Herodotus, who passed along all sorts of hearsay and rumor. And given Plato's background as a dramatist, and his contemporaries' low opinions of his treatment of what Socrates said, we can really only take him as a philosopher, and not the final word on anything. A metal bikini might be uncomfortable, but I have it on good account that they provide epic levels of support – maybe Sonia was on to something. Deep ideas about time, there. Since there's so much about Greeks in this reply, why don't I bring up Heraclitus, the fellow who noted that you cannot step in the **same** stream twice. I contend that you cannot step in the **same** stream once – the change is too constant for any ideas of fixed sameness to last (even allowing for quantized time) long enough to finish stepping in a stream.*

*We also heard from: Toni Weisskopf, Sherry Austin, Tom Feller, and Jerry Ward.*

## **June Events:**

### **First Weekend:**

June 5-7:

- Hypericon / DeepSouthCon 47 (Nashville, TN – Days Inn Stadium. Brian Keene, Steven Gilberts, Bob Embler, Kathy Mar, Glen Cook, Jonathan Maberry. Oh, and did I mention that it's DeepSouthCon? Check the flyer I've included.)
- Florida SuperCon (Weston, FL – Doubletree Miami Mart, Airport Convention Center. Bruce Campbell, Gene Colan, Doug Mahnke, Chris Claremont, Tony Moore. Looks like a great selection of comics pros, Bruce Campbell, and some other media types. Probably a good show if you can make it – but you'll be at DSC, right?)
- OMGcon (Paducah, KY – Julian Carroll Convention Center, Executive Inn. Greg Ayres, Chris Ayres, Robert & Emily DeJesus)
- Blackbeard Festival (Hampton, VA – Pirate festival in downtown Hampton devoted to one of the most fearsome pirates of all. It sounds like a blast, but I'll be at DSC.)
- WarFair (Chattanooga, TN – Chattanooga Choo Choo. Miniature wargaming. But it's within day-trip distance of DSC, so you could really do both if you wanted to.)
- Anime Alabama (Mobile, AL – Renaissance Riverview Plaza Hotel. Robert Axelrod, Maja, Meredith Placko, Mini-Komix. An anime con that makes it easy on me to figure out who their really special guests are, which I appreciate. I'll think of them briefly while I'm at DSC.)

### **Second Weekend:**

June 11-14:

- SFRA Conference (Atlanta, GA – Hotel Midtown. Michael Bishop, F. Brett Cox, Paul di Filippo, Andy Duncan, Kathleen Ann Goonan, Jack McDevitt, Warren Rochelle. Themes: Engineering the Future, and Southern Fried Science Fiction and Fantasy)

June 12-14:

- Sci Fi Summer Con (Atlanta, GA – Crown Plaza Atlanta-Marietta. A broad selection of writers, artists, musicians, costumers, and film professionals.)

June 13-14:

- Con du Lac (Lake Charles, LA – Lake Street Rec. Complex. Richard Hatch)

### **Third Weekend:**

June 19-21:

- Rapier (Jacksonville, FL – Jacksonville Clarion Hotel. Gaming, featuring a fine selection of naval wargaming.)
- HeroesCon (Charlotte, NC – Charlotte Convention Center. Mark Bagley, Brian Michael Bendis, Ed Brubaker, Frank Cho, Matt Fraction, Michael



- Golden, Adam Hughes, Steve McNiven, George Perez, David Petersen, Brandon Peterson, Jeff Smith)
- Metrocon (Tampa, FL – Tampa Convention Center. Mark Hildreth, Scott McNeil, Kirby Morrow, Brad Swaile, Brian Drummond, Abney Park, and ArcAttack!)
  - Anime Mid-Atlantic (Hampton, VA – Embassy Suites Hotel & Hampton Roads Convention Center. Johnny Young Bosch, Yunmao Ayakawa, Chris Patton, Robert Axelrod, Jamie McGonnigal, Christopher Ayres, Greg Ayres)

#### **Fourth Weekend:**

June 25-28:

- Midwestcon (Sharonville, OH – DoubleTree. *The* relaxacon. Not technically a Southern con, but a lot of Northeastern fans think of it as one, and a good number of Southerners attend. It's at least as much of a Southern con as WisCon is a Bay Area con.)

June 26-28:

- ApolloCon (Houston, TX – DoubleTree Hotel Houston Intercontinental Airport. Wil McCarthy, Pat Rawlings, Amy McNally, Al Jackson, Stanley G. Love)
- Bayou Wars XVII (Kenner, LA – Radisson Hotel)

#### **FOUR-COLOR SHADOWS: THE *DARK SHADOWS* COMIC BOOKS AND NEWSPAPER COMIC STRIP (Part One) by Jeff Thompson**

One of the most phenomenal television series of the 1960s was ABC-TV's *Dark Shadows*, the daytime serial which ran from 1966 to 1971. Originally a mildly mysterious romantic serial reminiscent of the Gothic novels popular at the time, *Dark Shadows* became completely supernatural with the 1967 introduction of Barnabas Collins, a tortured, guilt-ridden vampire, freed from his chained coffin after 171 years of maddening imprisonment. The unprecedented character of Barnabas, as portrayed by Shakespearean actor Jonathan Frid, so captivated the daytime-television audience—especially children and teenagers—that *Dark Shadows* soon was one of the highest-rated programs in all of daytime television. The serial's ratings increased steadily from 1967 to 1969, and its ratings were still respectable when the show was cancelled in early 1971.

*Dark Shadows* helped acquaint or reacquaint audiences of the 1960s with traditional vampirism, from its coffins, bats, and stakes to the bite marks which the fanged Barnabas inflicted upon the other characters and to Barnabas's battles with other, more sinister vampires. Although vampire Tom Jennings may have been the show's most frightening vampire and Angelique or Roxanne the most sensual, it was Barnabas Collins who set the post-Lugosi/Lee standard for the popular-culture vampire. It was not long before Barnabas and *Dark Shadows* invaded another popular-culture medium: comic books.

The first issue of Gold Key Comics' *Dark Shadows* series was dated December 1968, and the thirty-fifth (and final) issue bore a February 1976 date. The comic magazine began as a quarterly publication but with issue #13 (April 1972) was stepped up to bi-monthly status. Twenty-six of the thirty-five issues were published after the ABC-TV series was cancelled. All thirty-five issues were edited and/or supervised by Wallace I. Green, managing editor. Among the uncredited scriptwriters of the *Dark Shadows* comic book were Donald J. Arneson and Arnold Drake. Arneson wrote *Dark Shadows* #1 and other issues, the one-shot *Dark Shadows Story Digest Magazine* (June 1970), and stories for Gold Key's *Boris Karloff's Tales of Mystery*, *The Twilight Zone*, and *The Governor and J.J.* Arnold Drake wrote *Dark Shadows* #22, #24, #30, and about ten other issues.

Drake is one of the most respected names from the Silver Age of Comics. "I wrote something like 2000 stories during my comic-book period," Drake declared in a 1986 interview. Arnold Drake created Deadman and the Doom Patrol for DC Comics. At DC and elsewhere, Drake scripted the four-color adventures of Batman, Bugs Bunny, Bullwinkle, Challengers of the Unknown, Heckle and Jeckle, Little Lulu, and Barnabas Collins.

As for the art direction of the *Dark Shadows* comic book, "Everybody who has seen all of the *Dark Shadows* [comic] magazines has seen every piece of reference we ever got from Dan Curtis Productions!" Wallace I. Green recalled in a 1986 interview. "We used all of the photographs [which came from Dan Curtis Productions] on front covers and inside covers [of the first seven comic books]. Eventually, of course, we ran out of photographs. That's when we went to the painted covers. The artist was a man named George Wilson, who did *a lot* of painted covers for us. I think for several years he may have been the *only* artist we had painting covers [for Gold Key comic magazines], so almost everything you saw that had a painted cover was done by George Wilson. George eventually went on to do [covers for] a lot of paperback novels. How we were able to keep him as long as we did at the prices we paid him, I'll never know! Joe Certa did [the artwork for] all of the insides; he did every single issue of *Dark Shadows*."

From 1940 to 1943, Joe Certa was one of the illustrators of Street and Smith's twenty-issue *Doc Savage* comic book. The 1950s found Certa penciling the adventures of Robotman, the Martian Manhunter, and other DC Comics super-heroes. In the newspapers, Certa collaborated with John Belfi and Ray Gardner on the Western comic strip *Straight Arrow*. After Gold Key Comics' *Dark Shadows* was cancelled in late 1975, Joe Certa drew stories for Gold Key's *Ripley's Believe It or Not*, *The Twilight Zone*, and *Grimm's Ghost Stories* magazines.

The comic-book rights to *Dark Shadows* went to Western Publishing Company (Gold Key Comics) in the first place because Dan Curtis Productions, controller of *Dark Shadows* then and now, was unable to sell the rights to either Marvel or DC, the two major comics companies at the time. Neither DC nor Marvel legally was able to produce a *Dark Shadows*-type series in 1968 because of each company's voluntary, long-time observation of the strict tenets of the Comics Code Authority. In the late 1960s, most comic books were still governed by the original guidelines established by the Comics Code Authority on 26 October 1954. One passage of the restrictive Comics Code read, "Scenes dealing with, or instruments associated with, walking dead, torture, vampires and vampirism, ghouls, cannibalism, and werewolfism are prohibited."

It was not until 27 October 1971 that the Code was revised and the above passage was changed to read, “Scenes dealing with, or instruments associated with, walking dead or torture shall not be used. Vampires, ghouls, and werewolves shall be permitted to be used when handled in the classic tradition, such as *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, and other high-caliber literary works written by Edgar Allan Poe, Saki (H.H. Munro), Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and other respected authors whose works are read in schools throughout the world.” Marvel and DC Comics then were able to feature vampires and werewolves in their magazines—too late, however, for Dan Curtis Productions’ 1968 deal with Gold Key Comics. Dell/Western/Gold Key/Whitman comic books had *never* been governed by the Comics Code Authority, reportedly because of some fast talking by publisher George Delacorte in 1954. With their newly increased creative freedom, Marvel and DC immediately launched two of the greatest post-EC supernatural-horror titles in the history of comics: *Tomb of Dracula* (1972-1979) and *Swamp Thing* (1972-1976), respectively.

Meanwhile, Gold Key had been producing the highly supernatural *Dark Shadows* comic book for almost four years. With lurid titles such as “Creatures in Torment,” “Souls in Bondage,” and “My Blood or Yours,” the stories in *Dark Shadows* recalled—but did not equal—the height of EC Comics horror of the 1950s. Although often lacking the high quality of the subsequent *Dracula* and *Swamp Thing* comics, *Dark Shadows* nevertheless zealously pitted vampire Barnabas Collins and werewolf Quentin Collins against other vampires and werewolves, zombies (still technically taboo elsewhere), a golem, a mummy, winged “zozoes,” and even a headless horseman. Most of the stories took place in and around the Collins estate in Collinsport, Maine, although Barnabas or Quentin occasionally traveled to the Netherworld, Limbo, Eskimo Point, the Island of Eternal Youth, and other locales. Barnabas also indulged in a great deal of time travel. In almost one dozen of the thirty-five issues, Barnabas used various methods to transport himself to the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth, or (in *Dark Shadows* #11) twenty-first century.

Although Barnabas occasionally behaved more like a super-hero than a vampire (e.g. #3, #5, #13, #15, #33, et al.), editor Wally Green and writer Arnold Drake tried to remain faithful to their basic concept of the character as “a romantic hero.” According to Green, “We thought of him as a sympathetic character with a lot of problems. That’s the way we saw him. He had to be a hero despite the evil part of him which he was constantly fighting.”

Green continued, “We [at Western Publishing Company] were very circumspect with any comic book we did which was based on a licensed property to see that the material went to the licensor and we got a written approval on it before we went to press. However, I don’t remember that we *ever* did that with *Dark Shadows*! Actually, Dan Curtis Productions had zero input. Every story was original with its author.”

Although such unsupervised originality was a dream come true for the writers, the *readers* of Gold Key’s *Dark Shadows* comic book often suffered through drastic inconsistencies and deviations from the established facts, history, and relationships depicted on the ABC-TV series. Even more disconcerting was the fact that many of the comic-book stories themselves did not even agree with *each other* as to which of the seven regular characters knew Barnabas’s secret, whether or not Quentin could speak while in werewolf form, whose name was what, and even whether Elizabeth Collins

Stoddard and Roger Collins were indeed brother and sister or (as incorrectly portrayed in the infamous *Dark Shadows* #28) “husband and wife!”

Arnold Drake admitted that he did not watch the TV series regularly while he was writing Gold Key’s *Dark Shadows* comic book. “I saw a few episodes of *Dark Shadows*,” Drake said. “I did not see many of them. It wasn’t one of my favorite shows. I saw several of them because I knew that Dan Curtis was turning out a good, low-budget package, and I was interested in the techniques. As a man who had written and produced for the screen, I was interested in the techniques that were being used to knock those things out at the bottom dollar they were doing them for. So I did watch [a few episodes] for that reason, and I read a number of the stories that had been written [by Dan “Marilyn” Ross], one or two of the theatrical scripts [of *House of Dark Shadows* and/or *Night of Dark Shadows*], and some of these comic books which had been written before I started to write them. And I gained the basic flavor of it: the language, the somewhat ‘purple prose’ which makes something like that work, and I’m not knocking it at all. And then I just took off on my own. I would get outside the ‘house cast’ [of Barnabas, Elizabeth, Quentin, Julia, Roger, Angelique, and Stokes] and search for other themes. One of the things I tried to do [with *Dark Shadows*] and with most of my comics was to bring in as much of the real world as I could—to try to write out of the headlines and out of what was happening.

“My goal was to write a good story. The ‘fans’ are interested *beyond* the normal interest in a story. Their interest becomes almost like a religion or something bordering on it. So they are interested ritualistically: they want everything to be ‘observed’ in a particular kind of way. The writer is not interested in the ‘ritual’ of *Dark Shadows*. He is interested in the people, yes; in the characters, of course; and in the best darn stories that he can get out of them, but *not* in whether he observes precisely what Jonathan [Frid as Barnabas Collins] should do under these precise conditions so that it will be in agreement with twenty other stories that came before [or be in agreement with the television series]. If the writer involves himself that much in the ‘ritual’ of *Dark Shadows*,” he isn’t going to get a decent story. He’s going to be restricted—bound—too much by what has been done.”

Despite some fallacies and low points within the thirty-five-issue run of Gold Key’s *Dark Shadows*, excellence shone through many other issues. Quite a few issues of *Dark Shadows* presented exciting, thought-provoking stories which were true to the TV characters and their backgrounds and/or were good comic-book stories in their own right. Occasionally, the writers even produced a tale which fans might have wished could have been dramatized on the TV series or in a third *Dark Shadows* movie. Issues #1, #4, #6, #8, #11, #17, #18, #24, #31, and #32 were superb. Issues #7, #25, #29, #34, and #35 were above average. The remaining twenty issues of *Dark Shadows* ranged from average to below average. Nevertheless, *Dark Shadows* fans still seek out the comic books and pay top dollar for this unusual facet of the voluminous *Dark Shadows* memorabilia which also include model kits, games, puzzles, masks, gum cards, LPs, View-Masters, et al. A near-mint copy of even the least valuable issue is worth more than \$50.00—and the value of a near-mint *Dark Shadows* #1, complete with the pull-out poster of Barnabas still attached, is worth more than \$425.00.

In the *Dark Shadows* comic book, the circumstances of Barnabas’s becoming a vampire were left vague at best and contradictory at worst. *Dark Shadows* #1 (December

1968) revealed that “in the late eighteenth century...a real witch, more evil than death, cast the curse which doomed Barnabas to eternal existence as a vampire.” The witch was Angelique, who appeared in eleven issues of the comic book to torment (and occasionally aid) her beloved Barnabas. However, three-and-one-half years later, in *Dark Shadows* #14 (June 1972), Barnabas mused, “My travels took me to the West Indies! Now, I return with the dread mark of the bat!” This story (“The Mystic Painting”) asserted that Barnabas was cursed in the West Indies in about 1740 as opposed to the TV-series fact that Angelique cursed Barnabas in Collinsport in 1795-1796 (as *Dark Shadows* #1 also implies).

The *Dark Shadows* comic book succeeded in observing most of the conventions of vampirism. By day, Barnabas remained in his coffin; the box was seen in almost every issue of the comic book. At least five issues (#10, #11, #24, #31, #33) even mentioned the bit of “native soil” which Barnabas needed to keep inside his coffin. “The Thirteenth Star,” the excellent story in *Dark Shadows* #11 (November 1971), even hinged on the need for the soil. In this one point at least, the comic book bested the TV series, for the TV show *never* mentioned vampires’ need for native soil.

After enduring the brief catastrophe of having his coffin *stolen* (in #21), Barnabas actually carried his coffin with him when he traveled away from Collinsport (in #23 and #24). However, in *Dark Shadows* #33, as Barnabas prepared to follow Quentin to Eskimo Point, the vampire was confident that “nature will provide some sunken hole in which to rest.”

Barnabas seemed to have no trouble crossing water (e.g. #19 and #24), but his primary enemy remained the dawn. The vampire found “reflected sunlight” to be “painful” in issue #24, and the sunrise almost caught him away from his casket in #25 and #27. The sun *did* come up on the hapless vampire in *Dark Shadows* #10 (August 1971) when his body withered away and his soul was snatched by Termina, high priestess of St. Lucifer Island. (Quentin Collins and Dr. Julia Hoffman succeeded in resurrecting Barnabas.)

Writers D.J. Arneson and Arnold Drake and editors Wally Green and Denise Van Lear also made frequent use of the vampiric convention of the transformation into a bat. Just as he sometimes did on the TV show, Barnabas turned into a bat in almost two dozen of the thirty-five issues of the comic magazine. Finally, the writers handled with caution the matter of the actual bite. Although in many comic-book panels Joe Certa prominently drew Barnabas’s fangs in his mouth, Barnabas was rarely seen biting anyone. Sometimes, Barnabas’s attempt at biting was foiled by a cross or some other distraction; at other times, the bite was suggested more than shown. Barnabas actually fed in only a handful of issues (including #1, #8, #18, #30, and #32).

Most curious of all was the fact that Barnabas Collins was *not* a vampire in issues #3 (November 1969) through #7 (November 1970). The writers gave no explanation for this startling move other than Barnabas’s casual line in *Dark Shadows* #4 (February 1970) about “the day Angelique’s curse dissolved.” In issues #3 through #7, as well as in the June 1970 *Dark Shadows Story Digest Magazine*, Barnabas lived in fear of the curse’s reactivation as he was “forced to walk the thin line between worlds.” Then, on the splash page of *Dark Shadows* #8 (February 1971), vampire Barnabas was seen once again lamenting his “unholy affliction.” Without a transition or even an explanation, he was a vampire again for the duration of the comic-book series. Perhaps the writers made

Barnabas human for a year because there had been periods on the TV show in 1968-1969 when Barnabas had been “cured” and was human again.

Several other vampires found their way into the *Dark Shadows* comic book. In *Dark Shadows* #7 (November 1970), Angelique transformed herself into Barnabas’s double and bit Collinsport citizen Pamela Cordon. Pamela, now a vampire, bit Terk, a wharf bum, and planned to make Barnabas a vampire again, too. However, Professor Stokes developed a serum which “cured” vampirism and used the serum to return Pamela and Terk to normal. Apparently, Stokes—and the writers—had forgotten about the “cure” before Barnabas could have used it. Curiously, Pamela Cordon returned in *Dark Shadows* #23 (December 1973) in a story which took her, Barnabas, Quentin, and Stokes to Amenti, a village populated by the 400-year-old Cult of the Dasni. Having drunk from the cursed waters of Ab-I-Hayat, the Dasni cultists were immortal vampires who made Pamela Cordon one of their own. In the excellent *Dark Shadows* #8 (February 1971), Barnabas killed Tybalt, an occultist who sought to kill Barnabas and Quentin. However, Tybalt was resurrected as a vampire and further terrorized Barnabas and Quentin until he was impaled on a stake. In *Dark Shadows* #20 (June 1973), werewolf Quentin Collins himself became a vampire during the full moon when he accidentally received Dr. Julia Hoffman’s “blood serum” meant to cure Barnabas! At the end of the story, Julia developed another serum which “cured” Quentin of vampirism (but not lycanthropy) but which, in another forgotten plot point, seemingly never was used on Barnabas.

An outstanding exploration of vampirism took place in *Dark Shadows* #24 (February 1974), one of the very best issues of the series. In Arnold Drake’s story “On Borrowed Blood,” an emergency blood transfusion from Barnabas turned the ruthless millionaire Andre Markovian into a vampire. Markovian used his new supernatural powers to become the dictator of the island nation of Romanique, and he blackmailed Barnabas into acting as his First Minister! Ultimately, the leader of Romanique’s rebel army fired a crossbow whose arrow pierced Markovian’s heart and ended his unnatural life and evil reign. Deadman creator Arnold Drake said of this fine story, “I had fun with that.” Despite some failings, Drake and other creative forces behind Gold Key’s *Dark Shadows* comic book led the magazine to quite a few creative pinnacles before it was cancelled in late 1975.

Halfway through the run of the *Dark Shadows* comic book, Barnabas and Collinwood enjoyed a second four-color incarnation—in the “funny papers.” Syndicated by Register Tribune, the beautifully drawn *Dark Shadows* newspaper comic strip appeared in papers seven days each week between 14 March 1971 and 5 March 1972. The comic strip presented six different stories, each lasting two months.

Although the writer of the *Dark Shadows* newspaper comic strip was never credited, the strip’s story editor was Elliot Caplin, younger brother of *Li'l Abner* creator Al Capp (Alfred Gerald Caplin). Yale graduate Elliot Caplin scripted the newspaper comic strips *Abbie and Slats*, *Big Ben Bolt*, *Doctor Kildare*, and *The Heart of Juliet Jones*.

The illustrator of *Dark Shadows* was Kenneth Bruce Bald, who had drawn the *Doctor Kildare* strip in the 1960s and *Judd Saxon* in the 1950s. Ken Bald, a Pratt Institute graduate, first made his mark illustrating the comic-book adventures of Captain Marvel, Bulletman, the Black Owl, and Captain Battle in the 1940s. In the 1971-1972 *Dark Shadows* newspaper comic strip, Ken Bald achieved a remarkable likeness of

Jonathan Frid as Barnabas Collins. In addition to Barnabas, the only TV characters ever to appear in the year-long comic strip were Elizabeth Collins Stoddard, her daughter Carolyn Stoddard (*never* seen in the comic *book*), and the witch Angelique.

In one storyline, Barnabas traveled back in time two hundred years. In other stories, Barnabas battled a 310-year-old warlock, a Caribbean voodoo cult, and “Mr. Sinestra, Monarch of Darkness.” In one of the two best storylines (May-July 1971), Barnabas became romantically involved with the Egyptian goddess Isis, who believed that Barnabas was the seventh reincarnation of the god Osiris. In the other of the two best tales (July-September 1971), Barnabas fought werewolves in Collinsport and in Europe. In the entire, year-long run of Ken Bald’s *Dark Shadows* newspaper comic strip, the vampire Barnabas Collins fed only once. On 9-10 June 1971, Barnabas gave Isis “the bite of love!”

Finally, *Dark Shadows* returned to comic books very briefly in the early 1990s. In 1991, *Dark Shadows* was reborn on NBC-TV as a nighttime serial starring Ben Cross, Barbara Steele, Roy Thinnes, and Jean Simmons. Although the new *Dark Shadows* was a superb remake with fine production values and clever new twists, it was cancelled after a two-month run. One year later, in mid-1992, the now-defunct Innovation Comics launched a *Dark Shadows* comic book based on the new TV series. Only nine issues were produced irregularly before Innovation abruptly went out of business on 31 December 1993.

Although the intricately painted illustrations (by E. Silas Smith and later Jose Pimentel) were often exquisite and highly faithful to the likenesses of Cross, Steele, and the other actors, the lackluster *writing* of the nine issues was the comic book’s undoing. With each new issue, the writers (David Campiti, Scott Rockwell, and Maggie Thompson) veered farther and farther away from the established TV characters and instead populated Collinsport with a man who could read minds through touch, an old dollmaker named Granny Whitlock, and even Euryale and Stheno, the two immortal Gorgons of Greek mythology! Most of the readers of Innovation’s *Dark Shadows* comic book probably wanted to read stories about the established TV characters instead of tales about so many new characters. The comic book first went wrong (in issue #2) when it took Barnabas Collins and Dr. Julia Hoffman to Barrettstown, a Colonial-style village populated with small, gnomelike, mutated freaks controlled by the Reverend Redmond Swann, a centuries-old religious fanatic. This ill-conceived *Dark Shadows* comic-book incarnation’s only redeeming qualities were its usually gorgeous artwork and its brief flashbacks to 1790 in the first four issues. Its ultimate, swift cancellation was no great loss.

The Gold Key comic books’ stories were impressive almost half the time, and the Gold Key cover paintings were often stunning. The Innovation issues’ interior artwork was usually beautiful, and much of the short-lived newspaper comic strip was a real joy. Nevertheless, the immortal Gothic serial *Dark Shadows* has yet to reach its full potential as a comic book or a comic strip. The 1966-1971 and 1991 television series remain extremely popular because of their availability on VHS and DVD, so perhaps some day, *Dark Shadows* will find its way to the four-color medium for a fourth—and even more creatively fulfilling—time.