

The books "The Singing Citadel" (Mayflower 25p.) and "The Sleeping Sorceress" (published this month), concern Elric's struggle against the sorcery of the wizard Theleb K'aarna, who is insanely jealous of his mistress Yishana's interest in Elric.

In Elric's world there are two cosmic forces, one of Law, and one of Chaos. Elric has always served the god of Chaos, Arioch, but as the story continues in the book "Stormbringer" (Mayflower 25p.) we find that Elric is simply:

Destiny's champion,
Fate's fool,
Eternity's soldier,
Time's tool.

and is doomed to save the world from the rule of Chaos. Meanwhile Elric desperately tries to find peace, through living in the earthly paradise Tanelorn, and through marriage to Zarozinia, princess of the land of Kaarlak.

The struggle against Chaos continues, and finally there are none left in the world but Elric, Zarozinia, and Elric's friend Moonglum. Zarozinia, transformed by loathsome magic into a huge worm, with her own face, impales herself upon Stormbringer's point when she sees the loathing in Elric's face at her worm-shape. Elric is so weakened by the battle that he has fought that he needs more strength in order to blow the horn that will seal the fate of the world. Moonglum forces Elric to kill him, to give him the needed strength. Elric throws the sword away from himself in hatred, but it flies up at him from the ground and kills him.

You may think that Elric has found peace in death, but that is not really so, as Elric is reincarnated in all Moorcock's other books. He is reincarnated in the four-volume "History of the Runestaff" as Dorian Hawkmoon, in the "Shores of Death" as Clovis Marca, in the "Eternal Champion" as Erekoze, and in "Phoenix in Obsidian" as Count Urlik Skarsol. The one link between these reincarnations is that each has a weapon, whether it is a sword, as Stormbringer, or the Sword of Dawn owned by Dorian Hawkmoon, or even the needle-gun owned by Jeremiah Cornelius.

"Always a weapon - always a warrior."

Rosie Turner.

THE WOOD BEYOND THE WORLD. by WILLIAM MORRIS

William Morris thought that he belonged to the Middle Ages - actually, we might say, he belonged to Middle-earth. His medieval London, 'small and white' but not so 'clean', might have disappointed him; but the Shire!

Pan books have decided very rightly that this is the time to re-issue (through Ballantine) William Morris's grand novels of fantasy, after many years of neglect. "The Well at the World's End" has been out some time, in two volumes, but "The Wood Beyond the World" is to appear on August 6th.

Most readers in this day and age will have just one criticism of William Morris's fantasy novels - his intolerable archaic style. Although L. Sprague de Camp may call it "beautifully poetic and artfully archaic", I feel that too many people will be put off by so much thee-and-thou-ing. It is always a problem for any writer of either historical or fantasy fiction, to steer between unconvincing modernisation and verbal fancy-dress; and it is notable that Tolkien solves the problem by suiting his style to his characters, so that some speak 'high' and some speak 'low', and in the descriptive and narrative parts he uses plain unselfconscious English without mannerism. But William Morris is Ye-Olde-Englishe all the way through,

delighting in far-fetched Anglo-Saxonisms. One must remember the fashion for that kind of thing, at the time when these books were written - the time of Burne-Jones and Rossetti. I am reminded of how Swinburne, in one of his letters, mentions having met someone's baby in her 'push-wain-ling!' It was a craze, a fever, a cult - and who are we to criticise it? But I think it is only fair to say that anyone trying to write fiction should not immerse himself too deeply in William Morris, for the style is infectious, and he is likely to break out in a rash of how-now-forsooth-quoth-he.

But for all that the story is a fine one, and liberates the mind into the true country of fantasy. It is, of course, the very opposite pole to Sci-Fi. It harks back to a world like that of the Hobbits, where machinery is scarcely heard of, but magic underlies the things of nature - a wonderfully refreshing world. This goes for both books. Lin Carter, in his very adequate preface, hails William Morris as "The man who invented fantasy." And many readers will agree with him.

These books are, of course, paperbacks, handy in size, and I would particularly commend their cover-designs, especially that of the latest one; they are evocative of the true magic of "The Wood Beyond the World". I hope Pan Books will give us more like these, if they are to be found in this world.

Belladonna Took.

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Lud-in-the-Mist is published by Ballantine Books in paperback.

Deryni Rising is also published by Ballantine, in the Adult Fantasy series, in paperback.

The 'Elric' Novels are published by Mayflower Paperbacks, at 25p.

The Wood Beyond the World is published by Pan Books, through the Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series, in paperback.

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COMPETITION

As it says in the letter column, in his last letter to the editors John Abbott sent a silver brooch, to be used as a prize in a competition in Mallorn. Naturally this left the editors in a bit of a state, since they actually had to do some thinking for a change, and could only think of a competition to think of a competition - and you know where that leads.

The story moves to the unexpected ((You can say that again! ST)) arrival of Dave Weldrake in Richmond, where he stayed for a few days with Steve Thomson. One afternoon the conversation turned to the forthcoming film of LotR. Although hoping for a cartoon version - the only feasible way of representing the various races - we also discussed a possible cast for the film. Just imagine :- Gandalf and Shadowfax played by Roy Rogers and Trigger, respectively! Racquel Welch as Galadriel! Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda as Black Riders! John Wayne as Aragorn! The possibilities are endless. So...

All you have to do is to prepare a cast list for any of the major or minor characters in LotR; the editors will print as many entries as possible in the next issue, and send the prize to the most humorous and original entry printed. Closing date the same as press date for the next issue.