

of the hero, Kelson, young son of the assassinated King Brion, as he seeks to retain power in the central country of Gwynedd against the machinations of his sadly confused mother, Charissa the Shadowed One, double-crossing nobles at court, and the hell-fire and damnation breathing Bishops. Also on Kelson's side are the faithful half-Deryni, Alaric and Duncan, quasi-mortals given only grudging recognition by prejudiced humanity who, not many hundreds of years before, had conducted a Deryni pogrom - born of fear of their superhuman talents and sorceries - which almost wiped the race from off the face of the Earth. Under King Brion the Deryni had regained some of mankind's trust, but with him dead the fears of the ignorant threaten once more to fan the flames of violence.

How Kelson and his friends defeat their friends with the aid of some supernatural fireworks from St. Camber and assorted Deryni talents forms the story in this first book. The framework of this alternate world offers much scope for the remaining two volumes. The action as described here is a little enclosed, being mostly court intrigue with an added dash of magic bitters, a little like the Zimiamvian works of E.R. Eddison, and one hopes that the scope of Miss Kurtz's tales will widen later. The characters of Lord Alaric, Duncan, Kelson, the Queen, and others are clearly delineated and rise off the page almost three-dimensionally, engaging ones sympathies at once.

For the aficionados of Sword and Sorcery there may not be enough Sword, but this lack is more than made up for by the sheer brilliance of the tale-telling. Some of the set-pieces, the scene in the Vault of the Dead King, the final clash between Kelson in possession of full regal powers and Charissa at the Coronation, are enthralling, described in vivid colours. Highly recommended.

A.R. Fallone.

MOORCOCK AND THE 'ELRIC' NOVELS.

If J.D. Collins is looking for "books of equal standing" with LotR, I would whole-heartedly recommend the books of Michael Moorcock.

Undoubtedly the best of Moorcock's works are the 'Elric Sagas', of which the first is 'The Stealer of Souls' (Mayflower Paperbacks, 25p.) In this we are introduced to Elric, "Proud prince of ruins, last Lord of a dying race. Elric of the black sword, sorcerer and slayer of kin, despoiler of his homeland, crimson-eyed albino, who had within him a greater destiny than he knew."

Elric, the rightful king of the sorcerous isle of Melnibone, was usurped by his cousin Yyrkoon, the mad brother of Elric's betrothed, Cymoril. Being an albino, Elric would normally be weak and helpless, but his broadsword Stormbringer, a Hell-forged weapon, took the souls of those it killed to Hell, and in return fed the victim's vitality to its wielder. So therefore the sword was dependant on Elric, and he was dependant on Stormbringer. (A curious love-hate relationship, although neither Elric nor Stormbringer have control over each other.

So Elric, armed with Stormbringer, leads an army against his own realm of Melnibone, so that Elric can free Cymoril from the enchanted sleep that Yyrkoon has imposed on her. Elric battles with Yyrkoon, and finally, by killing him, awakens Cymoril; but Stormbringer is not yet satisfied, and shrieking it swoops on Cymoril and kills her. So Stormbringer, Elric's lifeforce, is the cause of the death of his beloved, and also the destruction of his realm. He earns the hatred of all Melniboneans, and is named Elric Kin-slayer. From the moment of Cymoril's death, Elric becomes a bitter, twisted, haunted man, always seeking peace from his nightmares of Cymoril's death at his own hand.



Stombringer

Bryan Talbot '71

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,