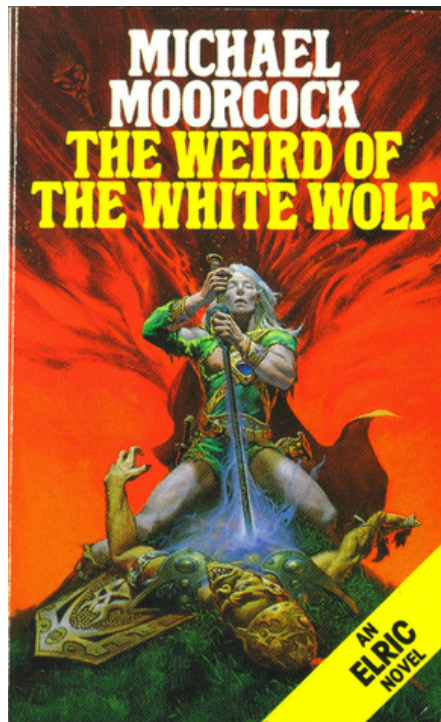




The Weird of the White Wolf

Michael Moorcock

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The Weird of the White Wolf Michael Moorcock
AN UNHOLY ALLIANCE BETWEEN SWORD AND SWORDSMAN...

"We must be bound to one another, then. Bound by hell-forged chains and fate-haunted circumstance. Well, then - let it be thus so - and men will have cause to tremble and flee when they hear the names of Elric of Melniboné and Stormbringer, his sword. We are two of a kind -produced by an age which has deserted us. Let us give this age cause to hate us..."

Imrryr, the dreaming city; Yyrkoon, the hatred usurper; Cymoril, the beloved - all had fallen to the fury and unearthly power of the albino prince and his terrible sword. And Elric faced at last the fate that was to be his in this haunted era: that he must go forth, sword and man as one, and havoc and horror would be forever at his forefront until he found the Purpose tag was as yet obscured to him...

THE WEIRD of THE WHITE WOLF is the authorised, revised and complete novel of the third book of Elric.

The Weird of the White Wolf Details

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From Reader Review The Weird of the White Wolf for online ebook

Jos says

So far I'm able to read one Elric volume per day. Eat this, George R.R. Martin. With the third volume, all my worries that Elric might turn into a boring white knight are blown away. On the contrary, he's more bad-ass than ever, annihilating his own civilization, earning the title womankiller and becoming the most notorious villain of the multiverse. Way to go!

Again, friends come and go, usually by death caused by our hero. Women are consummated, Elric moves on. Mysterious places, other planes, demons aplenty. A breathless fighting fantasy romp where my search for deeper meaning gets lost in the pace of events.

Tipper says

Seems I had already read this as part of Elric of Melniboné (Tale of the Eternal Champion #8).. Oh well

Carl V. says

Michael Moorcock ramps things up with this third volume of Elric tales. This story includes a prologue that introduces two very interesting characters before moving on to Elric, who is returning after his year of adventure to exact his revenge on the man who tried to kill him and usurp his throne. The relationship between Elric and his sword, Stormbringer, builds during this novel. I'm finding these compelling reads. A more detailed review can be found here:

<http://www.stainlesssteeldroppings.co...>

Benjamin says

I have a sweet-tooth for Fantasy, and Elric is like pudding. It goes down smooth, and I always have a taste for more. It may not be as well crafted as the decadent chocolate cakes of high fantasy, but then again it doesn't leave me in a sugar crash with raspberry sauce all over my shirt.

Red Haircrow says

Michael Moorcock has created many characters who are an aspect of the Eternal Champion, who battles sometimes on the side of Law and sometimes on the side of Chaos, depending on his incarnation. In the incarnation of Elric of Melniboné, a man weak in body except when augmented by the stolen souls provided through the medium of the perilous sword Stormbringer, he is powerful in intellect, passion and magic.

Yet more than that, he is a man who is the very embodiment of the hard choices which Fate can inflict on a soul. Torn between obligation, a desire for vengeance and simply to be allowed by the gods and demons of

the Universe to have a measure of peace, Elric is both deadly and beautiful, pitiless and deserving of sympathy.

An unforgettable anti-hero, and this is just one installment in the series of his personal incarnation. An outstanding line of books for lovers of saga and epic fantasies, sword and sorcery which blasts its unforgettable images into your heart and soul.

Simon says

This was something of a disappointment this time. I have to say I couldn't remember anything about this book since the first time I read it, none of the individual stories had stuck in my mind at all.

This time, incongruities in the plot grated with me a bit. Surprise surprise, Elric's mortal enemy Yrkoon whom he unfathomably leftas regent while he went off to 'find himself' has resumed his evil plans and re-incarcerated his beloved Cymoril. The first story starts with Elric about to lead an invasion party with the intention of burning Imrryr to the ground and wiping out his entire race. Doesn't really make sense to me.

All in all the stories herein are all okay but quite forgettable. Worth reading, perhaps, as part of full story of Elric. But so far a low point in my re-read of the series that I hope improves with later volumes.

Elihú says

Moorcock viene bien cuando uno busca desconectar de lecturas más densas. No hay que pedirle más a las historias del albino, son aventuras, magia y espadaos a todo lo que da y muy entretenidas.

Creo que este tercer volumen en las peripecias del Lobo Blanco ha sido el que más me ha gustado. Abre con un espectacular prólogo que nos revela mucho sobre las fuerzas del Caos y sobre todo la creación de Melniboné.

La primer historia, La Ciudad de Ensueño, enlaza con el -estúpido- final del primer libro, con Elric volviendo a su imperio para, de nuevo, destronar a su odioso primo Yrkoon. La situación deriva en una tragedia griega que sella el destino del antihéroe.

El segundo relato, Los Dioses Ríen, es una interesante aventura en donde Elric se aliará con una mujer para encontrar un libro que quizá le dé las respuestas existenciales que tanto busca. Aquí destaca porque aparece por primera vez el elemento "cliché" de las historias de espada y brujería, que es el compañero fiel que de ahora en adelante ayudará al protagonista en sus viajes.

Finalmente, tenemos La Ciudadela Cantante, quizá la más "made in Conan" de este pequeño tomo, donde el prota ayudará a una reina a expulsar de sus tierras una desconocida amenaza que habita dentro de una ciudadela que ha venido de otra dimensión.

Son tan solo 150 páginas, dosis más que suficientes, para disfrutar de estos relatos, que solo se diferencian del bárbaro de Robert E. Howard gracias a un personaje con más tribulaciones. Elric es melancólico, filósofo, un adicto al poder de su espada, Stormbringer, pero también un ser sensible y más carismático.

Algernon says

Before getting reacquainted with the ongoing saga of Elric, the albino sorcerer king that spent the previous volume as a vagabond mercenary, self-exiled from his own people and from the throne he inherited, Moorcock offers us a glimpse at the cosmology underlying his imaginary universe in **The Dream of Earl Aubec**. Within the standard sword & sorcery structure of the adventure (the champion swordsman of a fantasy realm goes on a quest to conquer a last bastion for his queen), the author debates the nature of reality, the question of predestination and other existentialist tropes. The Castle of Kaneloon (*Brooding and mysterious, the castle seemed to have a defiant air, for it stood on the very edge of the world.*), like other constructions in the Moorcock's universe, has a dual presence - at the same time solid and imaginary. Earl Aubec moves through the halls in a dreamlike trance, fighting not the scions of a powerful sorceress, but the demons of his own imagination, the doubts and fears that keep one awake in the small hour of the night with thoughts of mortality and pointlessness. The border that the castle Kaneloon guards is a fluid one, the place where the solid earth of Order meets the sea of Chaos. Here sanity battles nightmare and new territories (or theories) can be created by pushing back against the unknown. Aubec is a stand-in for Elric, who has been plagued by the same sort of questions since the first moments the reader lays his eyes on him. Like Elric, Aubec decides that even if the questions are unanswerable, the only thing a man can do is to pick up his sword and go into the unknown, to carve out his own fate. Whether he is succesful or not... well, that's another story.

The doom of Imrryr in **The Dreaming City** , capital of the ancient race of Melniboneans, has been promised since the introduction of the series and in this second novella of the present collection, the dark deed is done - Elric returns from his wanderings among the Young Kingdoms to find his throne usurped by his cousin Yyrkoon and his fiancée Cymoril enchanted into a cursed sleep. Enraged, the albino opens the gates of the city to a host of pirate ships who set the whole town on fire and goes on to hunt for his traitorous cousin.

Two things I found memorable in this novella: the issue of responsibility for one's own actions, a leitmotif in the whole Elric series, and the fantastic talent of Moorcock to condense an epic struggle in a relatively short format. On the question of free-will, Elric started out as a rebel against Fate, leaving behind the destiny decided for him by his ancestors, and sometimes going against even his sponsor deity, Arioch the Duke of Hell. As we progress into the series, it becomes evident that Elric is subverted in his quest by the very thing that gives him power - the magic sword Stormbringer, a sentient artefact with a malevolent will of its own. As in the opening story of Earl Aubec, the symbiotic/ parasytic relationship between the sword and its master here mirrors the internal struggle within the soul of the main character, the eternal battle between Chaos and Order.

We must be bound to one another, Elric murmured despairingly. Bound by hell-forged chains and fate-haunted circumstances. Well, then - let it be thus so - and men will have cause to tremble and flee when they hear the names of Elric of Melnibone and Stormbringer, his sword. We are two of a kind - produced by an age which has deserted us. Let us give this age cause to hate us!.

'The Dreaming City' is Elric darkest moment so far. It is very difficult to find attenuating circumstances for his crimes and betrayals. He is doomed by his own hand, and 'the sword made me do it!' is a feeble argument even in the albino's own conscience. Elric is once again an exile, a sellsword without a country to call his own, without loyalties and without hope for redemption. Where will he go from here?

While the Gods Laugh gives an answer to my last question. Elric's monumental melancholy, his tortured soul and his gloomy moods may be insignifiant in the larger scheme of things. But the existential questions

give our hero no rest, and when a new quest is offered, Elric is only too eager to set out on another adventure:

One night, as Elric sat moodily drinking alone in a tavern, a wingless woman of Myrhhn came gliding out of the storm and rested her lithe body against him.

Shaarilla of the Dancing Mists knows of a secret (beside the bedroom ones), the Dead Gods' Book, an ancient manuscript that is alleged to hold the answer to all questions, and needs a champion to do battle with the book's guardian, Orunlu the Keeper. Shaarilla would like to get her wings back. Elric would like to know if there is any higher power that decides the fate of man.

Despairingly, sometimes, I seek the comfort of a benign God, Shaarilla. My mind goes out, lying awake at night, searching through the black bareness for something - anything - which will take me to it, warm me, protect me, tell me that there is order in the chaotic tumble of the universe; that it is consistent, this precision of the planets, not simply a brief, bright spark of sanity in an eternity of malevolent anarchy.

The path to the hidden keep where the book rests is long and filled with dangers. Savage beasts are followed by revenant riders, and ultimately by the signature Moorcock scenes of psychedelic kaleydoscopes in primary colours, suffocating mists and dreamlike trances that remove all references to a logical reality : **They lost all sense of time and Elric began to feel as if he were living through a dream.** . I wonder what kind of drugs they were on, maybe I can try some.

The conclusion is by now not unexpected : Elric is stymied in his efforts by an ironic twist of fate (view spoiler). There is no easy solution, and the albino must keep searching. I like the notion of the relativity of the concepts of good and evil, replaced here by Order and Chaos. L E Modessitt Jr. uses a similar device in his long Recluce series, where the black wizards and the white wizards often change roles who gets to play the good guys and who the bad guys. Neither Chaos nor Order could survive without each other, and the universe is the result of the balance between the two forces.

We exist only to fight - not to win, but to preserve the eternal struggle. says Orunlu the Keeper, a theme that is reiterated in the last novella of the collection, and explains why Elric is considered an incarnation of The Eternal Champion.

The Singing Citadel is a rinse and repeat of the previous story. The temptress that seduces Elric with her charms and with the promise of adventure is a certain Queen Yishana. Her kingdom is threatened by a mysterious castle that appears suddenly within the borders. Her soldiers and peasants are lured there by esoteric music, never to be seen again. Yishana's pet wizard and former lover, the mage Teleb K'aarna is unable to cope with the powerful enchantments and will soon add jealousy to his list of complaints about Elric. This story was a tad too similar to the fare promoted by Robert E Howard and his Conan pulps. I expect more from an Elric story, and only in the end dialogue with Balo the Jester, a trickster deity in the mould of Loki, was some of the old magic recaptured.

- *I intend to establish my own Realm on Earth - the Realm of Paradox. A little from Law, a little from Chaos - a Realm of opposites, of curiosities and jokes.*
- *I'm thinking we already have such a world as you describe, Lord Balo, with no need for you to create it!*

I plan to continue with the Elric saga over the summer, as I find the different novellas complete each other well into a bigger picture, with a definite continuity and progress in the evolution of the main hero. From a quote used by Moorcock as the title for 'The Laughing Gods', it looks like I must also add Mervyn Peake to my wishlist.

J.G. Keely says

In my last two reviews, I have talked about how Moorcock's fevered imagination keeps these books aloft, even when the plot seems to grow disconnected from the series, or the characters grow repetitive, but he seems to be losing steam, for this book moves along apace, advancing the plot here and there, but not materially adding anything new to our understanding of the world or the characters.

Moorcock's shorter plot arcs lack the grand set pieces and focus which make Leiber's and Howard's works so delightful, and even if the brief episodes which make up the larger plot might be called 'short stories', they do not show the completeness or unity of idea of Conan or Lankhmar.

I keep longing for a return to form from Moorcock, wishing that he could combine those moments of lucid, pretty prose with his wild metaphysical magics and the brooding introspection which first defined Elric. But alas, it grows harder to look past his errors when he begins to repeat himself.

As usual, he has problems finding scenes which illustrate his characters, and so he ends up relying on exposition, or on the characters talking at length about their own thoughts and reactions, which always ends up feeling stilted and incomplete, especially when those traits are not always outwardly demonstrated.

the series itself begins to grow repetitive, as Elric is always followed by some bosom compatriot, who by the end will be betrayed, or killed, or lost, or all three. Likewise there are the female interests, who seem to traipse in and out of Elric's life to torment him, but who often have little character of their own.

The series focuses narrowly, sometimes unsparingly, upon Elric himself, but it feels as if much more could be done with his character if he had an equally strong supporting cast to play off of. When secondary characters are summarily introduced and dropped, it becomes harder for them to have any effect on Elric--and if they do produce some sudden effect upon him, it can feel rather overly convenient if the relationship has not yet been fully-developed.

One of the hallmarks of the Conan series is that in each story, Howard shows us very different sides of Conan: different humors, desires, fears, and outlooks. In the first three stories we get Conan young, aged, and full-grown, and each portrayal depicts a different sort of man.

Clearly, with Elric, we would not expect so drastic a shift, as we follow him from place to place in chronological order, but I do find myself disappointed that we don't tend to see other sides to Elric: he is always brooding, somewhat naive, and less callous than he imagines himself. I keep waiting to find something surprising in him, some aspect of depth before unexplored.

In short, I wait for the mad philosophical explorations which live in Moorcock's magic to reach Elric, to show up in him in some fundamental way, to change him or leave a trace on him, to become an exploration of his character, and more than that, of his possibility.

The series is always looking forward, always moving forward--sometimes too quickly, sometimes without a chance to build or pause or ponder--but always moving; and I have to ask myself: for what? Where are we going?

Certainly there are hints, there are moments of conflict and feeling for Elric, but rarely are they given time to emerge, rarely is the story constructed so as to reveal them naturally. If they are not constructed carefully,

over time, then when they arrive, they will always be too early, or too late, and seem almost inconsequential in the face of the vast cosmic conflict which tends to make up the heart of the story.

Elric feels weak and unsure. He travels somewhere to reach something strange and magical which has piqued his interest. He battles an otherworldly thing, which he defeats, but he now feels drained. He wanders through a strange dimension and faces another thing, which is powerful and dangerous. He almost dies, but then he summons something and it saves him. the most recent of a series of doomed soldier friends saves him and makes an ironic quip (always ironic). Elric departs no richer than he arrived, and despondent at his failure.

I am still enjoying this series, and it shows a lot of promise, but at this point, the gap between what it is and what it could be is widening. Sure, it's still more interesting, original, and better-written than most of the fantasy out there, but I'm desperate for it to really find its groove. Moorcock has the tools, I just want to see him use them all at once.

My List of Suggested Fantasy Books

sologdin says

More pulpy sword & sorcery, episodic, fast-paced to the point of parody.

Includes what is now the obligatory cryptic prologue. Prologue here has the virtue of self-ridicule, wherein the hero is not Elric, but his ancestor Aubec, from whom he had the sword in volume I, prior to achieving the nuclear-sword with which he is more famously associated. Aubec has gone to the edge of the world to incorporate the last castle into the empire, but is tricked by its occupant to win not merely the castle, but also "that which lies beyond," the formless chaos which might be tamed to yield "new plains, new mountains, new seas--new populations, even--whole cities full of people fresh-sprung and yet with the memory of generations of ancestors behind them" (24). This conquest *beyond*, we are told in Tolkienian tone, births the new kingdoms and leads to the death of the Empire (26).

Whatever. But: it is an accurate description of what Moorcock is doing. The world of the text is bordered by formless chaos in his mind, and, as each new installment is published, and Elric needs more areas to despoil and more persons to slaughter, the author can introduce hitherto unmentioned (and unthought by the writer until his agent reminded him that he is past deadline) portions of the setting, deities to trouble the protagonist or aid him, persons to be used or abused or both. It's extremely weak setting development, and, as there is really not enough space for character development, these being smallish volumes, with a loose focus on Elric's moping, not much of interest in personal interaction. His prior ally, Smiorgan, is snuffed out without much thought (66), during Elric's bizarre adventure to rescue his old fiancée (fails) by sacking ~~Rome~~ his imperial capital (half-succeeds). (The capital receives some stunning descriptions just prior to its destruction, though (39-40)).

Sure, cool that he's "truly rootless" (59), after Rome's destruction: "He could envisage no future, for his future had been bound up with his past" (id.)--he had "destroyed the last tangible sign that the grandiose magnificent Bright Empire had ever existed"--a nice bit of proto-fascist ideology--"He felt that most of himself was gone with it" (id.)--and yet, still, even so, "his mind reluctantly brooded on Cymoril" (id.). War on memory lost, or simply abandoned by author?

The first part settles all scores from volumes I and II, effectively ending any connection to the setting described therein--now rootless, he's vested in the life of the wanderer, who acquires tasks in taverns--no

shit! (71 & 122)--to visit places never before described. The first such task involves a fairly trite and hyper-powered quest for a Super Book of some sort or another.

I get that these types of occurrences are features, instead of bugs, when it comes to sword & sorcery--but what is more or less unforgiveable in this installment is that Elric's prior war against memory is largely left aside, and instead he becomes a fucking fundamentalist, wondering if the Super Book will tell him whether "an ultimate God exists" (77). He seeks "the comfort of a benign God" (id.). FFS. (There is later acknowledgement that "he failed to forget Cymoril" (127)--indicating that the series may not be completely hopeless.)

After a number of trivial and tedious encounters, he and his new companions discover the Super Book, which "throbbed with light and brilliant color" (110), and then "disintegrated" into "yellowish dust" (110-11). Failed quests in heroic fiction are good, of course. The companion, a "materialist," takes the gems that encrusted the destroyed book, "worth a fortune" (112)--apt commentary on volumes such as this, though they yellow into dust, worth a fortune in the publisher's hands.

Third act is even more forgettable, except that it suddenly begins referring to Elric as a wolf in various ways (118, 119, 122)--which apparently explains the title, but as that merely removes the lupine mystery one step, hardly constitutes dispositive explanation.

Recommended for eternal skeptics, priest-aristocrats, and tiny creatures in the palm of the jester of chaos.

Chris says

This is an old favorite, and it hasn't lost any of its charm. The three novellas here are "The Dreaming City", "While the Gods Laugh", and "The Singing Citadel".

All enjoyable, but "The Dreaming City" stands out, way out. This was where Elric first appeared in 1961, and everything else came from that. This story alone rates 5-stars. It has all of the tragic punch of the Elric saga and the story flow is fantastic.

The other two stories are very good too, coming in a 4-stars each. They tell of some of the early events of Elric's post-Immyr travels, including his first meeting with his companion Moonglum.

All in all, a great sword and sorcery adventure that can be soaked up in just a few fun hours.

Giota says

Algernon has written an excellent review of The Weird of the White Wolf. I have little to add to that.

My favorite stories was that of "The Dream of Earl Aubec" and "While the Gods Laugh".

In this volume Elric becomes moodier, more arrogant, desperate, and he is plagued by guilt. He is moved by wild emotions to irredeemable deeds. He regrets his actions but he is unwilling to let go of the cause of his misery; the one thing that destroys him while giving him power. The perfect anti-hero Elric chases obsessively after his existential questions and revenging savagely any misdeed against him. Elric is a contradiction character and as I read I could relate and sympathize.

It is surprising how Moorcock has managed to flesh out Elric so fully and so perfectly in a few hundred pages, though I have to admit it is done at the expense of the secondary characters that are terribly under-developed

Negar Bolboli says

Elric is no longer the same man who left Melniboné with mind to learn of the ways of men. his doom drove him to many unknown lands, to worlds beyond his own and left him ever more tormented and no closer to discovering the purpose of his existence. He is met with sorrow and knowledge does not rid him of it. He can only accept that he is no more than a pawn, a device for the gods to carry out their cosmic plans whose rules remain unclear to humankind. Although he is bitter, his character is not weak and he battles still, refusing to give way to death and humiliation.

Jack says

Good entry in the series, with Elric at his moody and glum best, determinedly going through every eerie magical door and portal he finds, to arrive at the usual trippy building made of some strange rainbow crystal or distorting interdimensional masonry. Another day in the multiverse.

Robert Beveridge says

Michael Moorcock, The Weird of the White Wolf (DAW, 1977)

The third book in the Elric series introduces the reader to Moonglum, Elric's longtime companion (and, thanks to AD&D's Deities and Demigods book, the companion most readers can't imagine him without). Much of the second novel moved away from the events of the first, and concentrated Elric's character on other adventures. The Weird of the White Wolf brings Elric back to Melniboné along with Moonglum, their friend Smiorgan Baldhead, and an army of raiders bent on overthrowing Yyrkoon, who stole the throne when Elric left Melniboné for a year to travel the world. For those wondering, whether you've read the book or not: the "weird" of the title is an archaic definition of the term, given by Merriam Webster as "One's assigned lot or fortune, especially when evil." And when he finds it, he's not all that happy about it. But that's to be expected when one's antihero has a crisis of conscience, I guess.

Certainly not a slow book by any means, nor a weak one in the context of the series. And it's definitely a necessity as a prelude to what comes after it. But I still felt there was something missing here; some pieces of description left out, a few places where things could have been filled in better. All of the Elric novels are short, to say the least (Stormbringer, the last and longest of them, clocks in at 217pp.), and feel as if they could use some fleshing out; this one, however, gives that feeling the most. One wonders if the brevity of them was not the insistence of the publisher, and what Moorcock would do with them, given the opportunity (a la King's unexpurgated edition of The Stand). Loads of fun, and highly recommended for fantasy and non-fantasy readers alike, as is the whole series. ****

Carmine says

Assedi dal mare e Dei capricciosi

Proseguono le mirabolanti peripezie di Elric, personaggio sempre più lacerato da dubbi e contraddizioni interiori che non lasciano scampo, con l'inquietante Stormbringer a vigilare sul suo padrone e pretendere dazio.

Moorcock vive di intuizioni narrative, lampi nel buio che spezzano, letteralmente, il contesto narrato e lasciano intravedere scorci di una notevole forza immaginifica; quello che non segue l'estro dell'autore è proprio la gestione del worldbuilding, sin troppo sfilacciato ed ingolfato da deus ex machina che risolvono magagne di trama e balzano a piè pari qualunque tipo di spiegazione o chiarificazione.

Esplicativo, in tal senso, l'orrido sacco di Immryr, primo racconto, in cui i comportamenti illogici e le scemenze strategiche vengono elargite un tanto al chilo.

L'impressione generale è quella di un autore invecchiato piuttosto male, purtroppo.

Evgeny says

The third book of Elric saga: the boneheaded decision Elric made in the end of the first book came back to him bearing fruits. Now the only way to correct his own stupidity is to sacrifice his own people and to live with this memory for the rest of his life. The book is notable for the fact that Elric acquires a sidekick in it.

This is a typical Elric book: larger than life magic, meddling gods who never show up when they are really needed, an anti-hero, struggle of Chaos and Law on grand scale (by the way, the author is the guy who brought the concept of law and chaos in role-playing games) - these are all there.

As usual, this is a very fast fun read easily deserving 4 stars.

Kevin says

Excellent entry in the saga, finds Elric at his darkest hour and the prologue offers hints toward more darkness still to come. Book one Elric at his most Melnibonéan and his greatest despair so far. Book two his hopes are dashed again and book three a return to form as he defeats a great enemy and is once again thwarted in vengeance.

Bradley says

These shorts and novellas almost all revolve around Elric, the tormented anti-hero that sits in the palm of Chaos thanks to his intelligent and willful sword Stormbringer.

As sword and sorcery stories go, this one really stands out. It's not so much Conan as it is straddling the line between shifting realities and the world, wanting to be free of the fate of the Champion of Chaos while being the penultimate brooder with unimaginable powers, seeking peace at any cost.

Whenever I think of Elric, I think of the ultimate archetype, and there's a lot to point at to prove it. The writer

walks the careful line of making him and his quest larger than life, full of magic and conquest, sea battles, monster battles, and even going so far as to open the book of life, as stolen by the greatest necromancer... only to have all answers crumble before him.

Chaos and Law are the maelstroms that Elric traverses, and even though the theme is very much done and done again even in this cycle, the quest is always the thing. We're always meant to come away with the same conclusions as Elric, the great and evil Elric, deciding to give the world the misery it so seems to desire.

Pretty powerful stuff, really, and these really should be placed in their proper time, the sixties and seventies, introducing us to the template to one of the greatest tragic heroes and sometimes horrendous villains.

Bill Kerwin says

This third volume of the series—according to the Elric chronology—includes the two Elric stories Moorcock wrote first, the novellas “The Dreaming City” and “While the Gods Laugh” (each published in a separate issue of *Science Fantasy* in 1961). In the first, Elric, rightful emperor of Melnibone, leads a fleet against its capital city Immrryr to exact revenge and rescue his princess consort, but his sword Stormbringer literally has a mind of its own, bringing about disastrous consequences. In the second novella, Elric and Shaarilla of Myyrrhn go on a quest for the Dead Gods’ Book (Elric seeks a deity beyond Law and Chaos, and Shaarilla seeks an end to her deformity: she wants to have her wings restored.)

Elric tales are grim, in general, but these two arise from a particular despair. Moorcock was twenty-one, coming off a bad love affair, and drinking far too much. Heartache and the sense of a merciless fate pervade the atmosphere here.

The effect of these stories is somewhat lightened by two other pieces: a prequel, “The Dream of Earl Aubec,” which reveals the origin of the Young Kingdoms, and “The Singing Citadel,” in which Balo the Jester to the Gods makes a disorienting appearance on earth.
