



The Elric Saga Part II

Michael Moorcock , Robert Gould (dustjacket)

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Omnibus contains: The Vanishing Tower, The Bane of the Black Sword, and Stormbringer

The Elric Saga Part II Details

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From Reader Review The Elric Saga Part II for online ebook

Meg Powers says

Man, I'm sad this is over. It's been a long time since a series of books has felt like a really good friend. Even when taking long breaks from The Elric Saga, I found myself thinking about it with great frequency.

This series was very moving to me, not only because the character of Elric and his burden was depicted with beauty and sympathy, but because you can really see Moorcock evolve as a writer with each new book. The first book in the Elric Saga, Elric of Melniboné, didn't grip my attention. It was pretty standard fantasy fare, with cardboardy evil dudes, brooding reluctant princes, and boring love interests. Moorcock's visual descriptions and detailed worldbuilding, however, goaded me on, and I'm glad, because I think this series is a new favorite.

I will say that the women characters in this, especially the love interests, continue to be boring and one dimensional; this betrays the intense homoeroticism of the book, which is ever-present. Elric's most cherished and developed relationships are with his male companions, and the intimacies and physicality between them are lovingly described by Moorcock. In fact, Elric is described so sensually so constantly, that his author seems to really want to, pardon my language, fuck the hell out of him.

I stumbled across this quote of Moorcock's, which is a response to his anti-Tolkienism, while I was still early in the series, and it definitely wooed me a bit: "I think of myself as a bad writer with big ideas, but I'd rather be that than a big writer with bad ideas."

Yes, Moorcock's writing never really reaches a truly polished state; certain characters remain sketchy, certain phrases grow redundant. However, Moorcock's ideas are so weird and engrossing- for instance, a Jack Kirby-like set of bio-mechanical towers on a blasted dimension that are revealed to be the corporeal forms of two brother and sister space-wizards. I LOVE that. I did find myself thinking about the Lord of the Rings trilogy while reading this, because although there are things I love about it, and I will always be loyal to it and its legacy, it was hard not to compare the efficient way Moorcock introduces characters and the way he world builds v.s. the ponderous, snail-paced, "we have to talk to real estate agents for a year before we can go save the world," approach to high fantasy. Looking for that exact quote of his, I did find essays on Moorcock's opinions of Tolkien's work as crypto-fascist and classist, Elric being created in opposition to those ideas.

Something to think about!

Anyway, I highly recommend this series if you don't mind less sophisticated writing but love totally bonkers fantasy concepts with beautiful, struggling, androgynous sorcerer princes. I guess now I have to read the Elric comics!

Bryan says

The final three novels of the original six Elric stories by SFF legend Michael Moorcock, compiled into an omnibus edition. Man, these stories are sure action-packed. I'll see how well I can individually sum up each novel.

The Vanishing Tower: This story chronicles a number of adventures of Elric as he travels the Young

Kingdoms attempting to slay his (new) mortal enemy, the sorcerer Theleb K'aarna. The first portion of *The Vanishing Tower* was one of the worst and most derivative Elric stories I've encountered, saved only by some decent fight scenes with demons and a healthy dose of Moonglum, Elric's best bud (and probably his friend with the most longevity). The second portion, *To Snare A Pale Prince*, was pretty cool, as it sent Elric and Moonglum to wretched Nadsokor, city of Beggars. The whole Nadsokor adventure was very creative, and this is emblematic of why Moorcock is a visionary of the genre, in that he was able to discard well-worn tropes and do something new and exciting with sword and sorcery. Even fantasy produced today lacks the sheer inventiveness of Moorcock's now-classic efforts. The third portion of the tale begins with Elric being typically self-destructive and abandoning the storied peace of fabled Tanelorn, the Eternal City. He has many and sundry adventures, eventually encountering a couple of other Eternal Champions, Corum and Erepose, and then romps around kicking ass with them. This, to me, was reminiscent of *Sailor On The Seas Of Fate* (which I'm sure was intended) and that's a good thing, because I really enjoyed *Sailor* and the whole Multiverse crossover thing.

The Bane Of The Black Sword: This one was broken up into four shorter stories instead of the usual three. The first part, *The Stealer Of Souls*, concludes Elric's long-standing feud with the mad sorcerer Theleb K'aarna with the predictable termination of the sorcerer's life by soul-drinking hellblade. What's most interesting to me about this story is that Elric and Moonglum are essentially hired by an alliance of merchants to take out a successful rival who is undercutting them - in essence, they're engaging in price-fixing. Although supposedly against the principles of free market capitalism, this still occurs all over the real world. Anyway, in part two (*Kings In Darkness*) Elric meets a new lady friend and they are both promptly captured by a society of ghoulish worshippers. In stories like this one where the premise and villains are more typical of the genre, Moorcock really tends to come up short. His prose is curt, almost truncated, and his characters in these sword and sorcery tales are of such mythic proportions that there is actually very little character to delve into when the plot becomes more standard fantasy fare. Part three is little better. Titled *The Flamebringers*, it is another fairly typical fantasy tale of an evil invading force that gets somehow stopped by our reluctant anti-hero, interesting only in the fact that by this point Elric is truly sick of adventuring and had gotten married and hung up his black sword until this new menace comes along to disturb his retirement. The fourth part is actually my favourite in *Bane*, and doesn't feature Elric at all, but instead follows Rackhir the Red Archer, who is desperately trying to find the Grey Lords in an effort to protect Tanelorn from the invading hordes of Chaos. Really, there's too much interesting metaphysical stuff going on in this rather short story for me to even list here. It's an excellent read, completely redeeming *Bane* and nicely setting up events for *Stormbringer*.

Stormbringer: It's interesting that although this is the last of the six original Elric stories in terms of chronology, it was one of the first to be published. It's also the one of the best. In the first part, *Dead God's Homecoming*, Elric's young wife Zarozinia is kidnapped and Elric and his kinsman Dyvim Storm must bring their runeblades, *Stormbringer* and *Mournblade*, to a confrontation with her kidnapper, the Dead God Darnizhaan. Darnizhaan actually makes some very compelling arguments as to why Elric should capitulate and hand over his sword but Elric, true to form, betrays and kills him. In part two, there are plenty of terrific fantasy scenes that have been rehashed by just about every author in the field. Titanic sea battles, Elric facing off against the aristocracy of Hell, prophecies fulfilled...this is good, classic stuff. Part three returns to a familiar quest narrative, although the face-off with Mordaga the giant was anything but typical. Elric, having just treacherously slain his friend Rackhir in a fit of bloodlust, decides to spurn the prophecy and not kill the giant, negotiating for the Chaos Shield instead. Having done the merciful thing for once in his wretched life, Elric is completely unprepared for when his faithful companion Moonglum then stabs Mordaga in the back, slaying the giant as was prophesied. Part four is called *Doomed Lord's Passing*, and it is truly the culmination of this tragic tale, no matter how many sequels Moorcock later decided to write. It is also where the Elric saga abandons the sword and sorcery subgenre and crosses over into epic fantasy. Elric vanquishes all foes,

murders his friends and loved ones, and finally loses his life to his own demon-possessed sword. A more fitting ending to Elric's gloomy life could not have been possible.

Well, I truly enjoyed the Elric saga, despite the formulaic nature of some of the stories and the generally scanty nature of Moorcock's prose. Not sure whether I'll continue on and read the other 5-6 stories in the Elric "series" as these original six ended on a high note, and I haven't heard a tremendous amount of positive feedback about the others. Maybe some day.

Dan Schwent says

2011 re-read:

The Vanishing Tower: Elric and Moonglum continues their quest to destroy the sorcerer Theleb K'aarna, visiting Myshella's castle, Nadsokor, the city of beggars, Tanelorn, and the Forest of Troos...

The saga of Elric continues moving toward its conclusion. Elric meets up with Myshella, flying her magic eagle thing around, takes on all kinds of demons, and meets up with Erekoze, Corum, and Jhary-a-Conel. More of his destiny is revealed, Rackhir and Brut make return appearances, and Elric spends a bit of time in Tanelorn. I think that about covers it.

The Bane of the Black Sword: Elric and Theleb K'aarna have their reckoning and Elric foresakes Stormbringer for a life with Zarozinia. Can he leave the Black Sword behind?

While I was glad Theleb K'aarna got what was coming to him and Elric and Zarozinia started their relationship, this volume largely felt like filler to me, although that might be because I'm licking my chops in anticipation for the Armageddon shit-storm that is Stormbringer.

Stormbringer: Elric's retirement with Zarozinia at Karklaak near the Weeping Wastes is cut short when Jagreen Lern, Theocrat of Pan Tang, summons the Dukes of Hell to Earth. Can Elric slay the Theocrat before the forces of Chaos devour the world?

Ever since reading Stormbringer for the first time, it is the measuring stick against which all endings of epic sagas are measured. Even after multiple readings, it still holds up. Elric slays gods, reawakens the dragons of Melniboné, banishes the Lord of Hell, and brings about the end of the world with the Horn of Fate. Tragedy upon tragedy befalls him, because of his hellblade Stormbringer, in part, but he keeps taking the fight to the overwhelming odds opposing him. It's crazy that by the end of the saga, Elric, Moonglum, and Dyvim Storm are the only forces of Law left kicking against an unbelievably vast horde of the minions of Chaos. As I said before, even after more than a decade after I first read it, Stormbringer is still the measuring stick.

Farewell, friend. I was a thousand times more evil than thou!

João Batista says

I have already written about Books 4 and 5, so now let us see a little about Book 6 - Stormbringer. It begins by introducing the Terrible Men or Fate's Spokesmen; Elric has to face now a Dead God! Finally,

we can see him finding his purpose in life! We are also introduced to Chaos devastating everything everywhere... and the world changed. A battle ensues against the Dukes of Hell, but this time Elric is aided by Stormbringer's brothers, or as Moorcock says somewhere in the book 'sister-swords'.

Straasha - King of the Sea - is again summoned, but will he /can he help this time?

A giant - Mordaga - has a Shield and Elric needs it to defeat Chaos; is he going to give it to Elric? Can Elric defeat a giant with a shield from Chaos itself?

Another battle against a Lord of Chaos - Xiombarg.

One soul is not willing to enter Stormbringer or is it Elric who does not want this soul to enter his sword?

Here, we can see Elric's real friend - Moonglum.

Is this the correct chronological order to read the books? I know only that these are excellent books and I will have to read more about Elric in Books 7 and 8...

Kerana soliem o'glara!

Daniel D. says

The struggle of the albino prince Elric of Melnibone with his destiny is the struggle of every man. As much as he questioned himself, I found myself remembering how I echoed this doubts at some yonder years. Are we mere puppets of the gods? is there's any purpose for all this pain?

The Elric Saga Part II is an exercise in existentialism every thinking man (pious or not) should venture on.

ERNEST MORE says

I read these three novels long time ago in Junior High (between 1986-1989). I recently reread this book, Part Two, which has the last three original novels, The Vanishing Tower, The Bane of the Black Sword, and Stormbringer. I liked them but they are better in Junior High. I do prefer these last three original novels found in Part Two (especially the last two), over the first three found in Part One.

Davis says

This contains the best Elric story collection, Stormbringer. Technically this book is a collection of 3 collections, which themselves contain about 4 short stories a piece. And this physical book is only 3 of 6 collections published together. There are more short stories not in this collection and a number of novels that fit elsewhere into the chronology of Elric. While Stormbringer has some of the first stories written about Elric, they are chronologically his last.

But don't worry about any of that. This collection has the most epic and best-written stories about Elric. While the first half or so of this collection has Elric wandering around having generic episodes of adventure, they eventually start to hone in on the final moment of the tragedy of Elric: his death and destruction through the very addiction that has kept him alive all these years, Stormbringer.

And that's what Elric has always been about. The fact that, like all addictions, he both craves and despises his sword. He needs it to physically walk, but he also needs it to emotional stay sane. And at the same time it is wearing him down physically and emotionally until he betrays everyone and everything he loves for it. And

then, it stabs him and laughs in his face. Perfect tragedy.

That's the weakness of other Elric stories; he's alive and not falling into the darkness of addiction. Depression and self-loathing only go so far by themselves.

If you only read one collection of Elric's story, Stormbringer is it. I'd recommend this collected edition (and the first part) for a good overview of his whole story. There are also a few stand alone books Moorcock wrote that take place during Elric's life, but they suffer from the same problem. Elric is a character so drawn up and focused on his finality that any story not directly addressing that, whether by setting up why Elric would take such power or what he does with it (as in the first book of this edition), loses its impact almost entirely.

NOTE: I read this book not only three years before I wrote the review, but I also read it during my honeymoon. This may have colored my experience, but seeing as the book's tone is not at all joyous, I don't think it did.

Billcorcoran says

The Elric saga is considered one of the classics of fantasy fiction. There is plenty of action, imagination, and a completely original and complex protagonist. I enjoyed those elements of the book but ultimately the lead character was unsympathetic and the supporting cast of characters lacked depth. The book had a great ending and is worth reading, but ultimately character development is key for my reading enjoyment.

Cwn_annwn_13 says

This book includes the fourth through the sixth of the old six book Elric series that Moorcock put out. I was seriously into Moorcock's Elric stuff as a teenager and now after rereading it after all these years I still consider this to be a classic in the fantasy genre. Elric is far from being a typical or clichéd fantasy hero, in fact I would label him as an anti-hero. Instead of being a strong chivalric hero Elric is a foppish weakling albino who is kept alive only through the use of drugs and sorcery. He sits on the throne of a declining empire that takes pride in being cruel and unjust to the rest of the world. He comes into possession of a sword that is more or less a demon physically manifested into the form of a black bladed two handed sword. The sword, named Stormbringer, feeds on the souls of those that Elric kills giving Elric their life force and energy. He becomes dependent on Stormbringer like a heroin addict to heroin, needing it and the souls of those that he kills just to function. So yeah like I said not exactly Sir Galahad here.

A very dark tale without being overly contrived. I'm surprised more of the black trenchcoat wearing goth/black metal/Marilyn Manson crowd of the younger generation hasn't caught on to the Elric stuff. I really enjoy Moorcock's Multiverse/Champion Eternal concept and would put those original Elric stories at the top of the Fantasy heap, second only to Robert E Howard and Tolkien's work.

Ross Lockhart says

Rounding out the second half of the six original books of Moorcock's celebrated Elric saga, this compilation

of The Vanishing Tower, The Bane of the Black Sword, and Stormbringer continues to deliver the sword and sorcery thrills, weird epic adventure, and fantasy counter-stereotypes initiated in Elric of Melniboné. With literary chops like Moorcock's, it is no wonder that the Elric Saga has inspired generations of heavy metal-listening, socio-sexual identity-questioning, scrawny, bookish, longhaired, teenage boys to shout "Blood and Souls for my lord Arioch" at inappropriate times. Still, the conclusion to the saga begs one question: After your evil magic sword kills your fiancé, your traveling companions, your child bride, your best friend, your arch-enemy cousin, your arch-enemy's armies, your arch-enemy's gods, your god, and yourself, what do you do for an encore? I guess the answer to that may lie in The Elric Saga, Part III, comprised of the more recent Elric novels The Fortress of the Pearl and The Revenge of the Rose, but maybe not, since there are three more books (chronicling the Albino's adventures in America, I understand) that follow.

Shane Buelna says

I read these books a long time ago, and so I only remember them hazily. But the character of Elric stands out in my mind. I loved the story of this albino prince traveling all of the world and through space and time, never quite sure what he is hoping to find but unable to return to his own people. Great series.

Mark says

There's so much I could say about this book, but I'll keep it brief. This is both the most epic novel I've ever read and one of the most personal. Others have mentioned how bleak it is, but let me clarify: it's not bleak because of gore or violence or depravity, it's bleak because Elric is a self-loathing depressive. I once heard that where science fiction is about society, fantasy is about the self, and this is a testament to that idea. The five-stars may not hold true for everybody, but the attitude and ailments of Elric resonated strongly with me in a way few characters have.

That's quite a bias, however, and if there were any objectivity in star reviews, I'd have to knock off points for the poor handling of women in these books. While all the side characters are shallow, to a degree, the women in these books are even more so, which is disappointing. Still, if you are looking for classic fantasy or a character study in a fantasy setting, I highly recommend this.

Dru says

Re-read in 2014, re-reviewed:

I must have romanticized this a bit when I was a teen or in my early 30s... While Elric and the whole mythology surrounding him is undoubtedly a great creation (and fed the imaginations of those who invented Dungeons and Dragons) the writing is immature, and hurried. Major events are 2 pages long ending with a swift kill by Elric. The drama is weak. The geography suffers strongly from a lack of a map.

All in all, I think I'm not gonna revisit this series ever again.

Below are my comments from around 2012 when I was remembering the last time I read the book.

From the Science Fiction and Fantasy Book club...still have this set on my shelves.

I remember being introduced to Elric through D&D, and so when I got to read the books I was hooked. The mythology, mixed with the intriguing anti-hero of Elric made this books really worthwhile.

I only remember one regret, and that is that the civilization of Melnibone itself only appears in the first book. After that it's all about Elric the outcast. And while Elric is interesting, the country he hails from had such potential to be fleshed out more.

Erick says

I first read this book, as well as part 2, when I was 10 years old... I read both books in about 3 days over a holiday weekend. I could not put it down, up until this point all hero books I had read were the same, hero was big and buff, strives for kingship over his domain and marry a queen... Nope! not here, everything I had ever read or known was tossed out. Elric instantly became one of my favorite SF/F characters. I highly recommend this book to any and all fantasy/Sci-Fi fans.

Derek Fraser says

As I look at other people's reviews of this, I see phrases such as "action packed" and "atypical anti-hero". And you know, it's hard to not agree with at least the first one. There certainly is a lot happening on these pages, but never anything you can't easily predict. Every chapter throughout all of these novels is a self contained conflict, normally consisting of "Elric and friends learn of conflict", "Elric and friends learn what they need to do", "Elric gets transported to where he needs to be, does it, kills someone he may or may not have wanted to" "Elric back and does the thing!", and finally the "boy oh boy that sure did come up with a price, didn't it?". Nearly every novel has 5 chapters that follow this pattern, and although it allows for a lot of action, it doesn't allow for a lot of weight. Some of Moorecocks best prose is absolutely ruined by the fact you know it's going to be resolved in at-at most- 12 pages, and never bothered with again. I loved when a certain villainous sorcerer summoned a creature from beyond world's to kill Elric, the first 3 pages are set up to let you know this guy is a big deal. When Elric kills him moments after he finally materializes, I felt robbed. Explore that, man! I want more of that! I need a fucking scale in this world so I can know what's going on, I hate just being like "give elric enough time, he'll fight his way through it." To folks who says that's the point of Elric, that he should be able to do handle everything, I say you're missing the point of the anti-hero.

But to be fair, a large part of me feels like Moorecock missed the point of him, as well. Delving into spoiler territory here, but at the end the vampiric rune sword that gives the normally weak Elric his power, of its own volition, stabs him and retains its true form, some undefined demon thing. Before this demon flies away to be a jerk or whatever it wants to do, he says to Elric's corpse "Farewell, friend. I was a thousand times more evil than thou!"

What? why is that how you chose to taunt him? Even at his lowest low, even at his worst, even when he did

what he hated, Elric never once valued anything evil. He just moved on (arguably because he had to, but it seems more likely just because the author wanted him to do another thing soon). I despise that these are the last spoken words in the whole series. They just so miss the point of what Elric thought of himself. It's ugly writing at best and fan service at worst, and it leaves me feeling unfulfilled and bored. I was much more easily drawn to the last things that Elric's one true friend, Moonglum says. In order to help Elric out, he throws himself on the vampiric sword so Elric will be revitalized with his own soul to do the last thing he has to. Moonglum's final words were "Ah, no-I-had - not expected THIS!". This finally allowed me to give some imagination to the story, knowing that Moonglum was fully prepared to die for this cause but the sensation - whatever it was - was beyond what he thought. This was great and left me feeling wholly confused, and if the story ended there I'd feel better.

Moonglum honestly is the best part of all the stories. He's not even a good character, he's just the only who gets some screen time to think about how crazy everything is. His purpose is to be a better-than-average swords person who literally knows nothing so that we can always be impressed with how much Elric knows, and that definitely gets stale way too early. Still though, from his point of view there's a few paragraphs littered throughout these novels that question why he stays with Elric even though he knows it's gonna be the death of him. I think specifically of one towards the end of the first book that just came out of nowhere, and even though critically I can know that it's not even that good, because it was so different from everything else going on it was at least refreshing to read. Maybe if there was more of that, and less action, I'd be more inclined to give this collection a better rating. As it stands, it's just the same story retold with different skins on the same characters and maybe new places. Oh well.

I give The Elric Saga Part II three bullshit story ending sleeping in a volcano prophecy dealing men out of Ten.
