



# The Champion of Garathorm

*Michael Moorcock*

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## **The Champion of Garathorm Details**

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Author : Michael Moorcock

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## From Reader Review The Champion of Garathorm for online ebook

### Mike (the Paladin) says

Following Hawkmoon as he struggles with the world(s) where he lost his love his family, or did he? This is one of the most "different" of the Eternal Champion books. The change in incarnations from book to book does a slight change in this one as you get the change from world to world during the book. Moorcock does this at least one other time in The Eternal Champion when the hero changes personas at the book's opening.

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### Pam Baddeley says

This is book 2 of the Chronicles of Castle Brass and follows directly on from the ending of volume 1, *Count Brass*, in which Dorian Hawkmoon returned to the castle after his misadventures in other dimensions and times, only to discover that his wife Yisselda had been killed five years previously at the battle of Londra, and his two children have therefore never been born. Instead, his father-in-law, Count Brass, who in Dorian's former reality did die at that battle, was saved - by Dorian himself at the end of volume 1. In this altered reality, Dorian has lived in a trance, talking of Yisselda and their non-existent children for the past five years, and everyone else has pitied him as being mad with grief.

Unable to face his altered circumstances, Dorian becomes a recluse, spending his time re-enacting the battle of Londra with models he has commissioned, and trying to find a version in which Yisselda survives, driven by an irrational conviction that he can bring her back that way. He doesn't eat properly or sleep, and, as months pass, becomes a dishevelled and dirty wreck, then weak and ill. No one can get through to him and finally, when Count Brass is called away on a state visit to Londra, and Dorian refuses to accompany him, he is left with only the company of retainers.

Dorian sinks towards death until an unexpected visitor arrives who is apparently an old friend of the count's from his days as a fighting mercenary. She is a middle-aged, very experienced, woman warrior called Katinka van Bak, who learned swordskills while a slave and earned her freedom with them. She tells Dorian she has fled the Ukraine where a motley army of strange bandits has taken over. When she mentions that one looks like an old friend of Dorian's, who died around the same time as Yisselda, he becomes interested and asks her to guide him back to the Bulgar Mountains so that he can spy on the bandits and see if Yisselda is among them.

On the way, helped by eating properly, Dorian gradually regains his strength and health. As they near their destination, they are joined by a man called Jhary-a-Conel who has a small black and white winged cat as a companion - which, to anyone who has read other Eternal Champion books by Moorcock is an immediate flag - and who talks to Dorian of other incarnations he has lived through. They reach a tunnel which would take them to the far side of the Bulgar Mountains - and everything changes. I won't say more to avoid spoilers, other than to say that the second half of the book centres around another incarnation of the Eternal Champion, Ilian of Garathorm, who is now queen of a devastated land following invasion by a huge army of beings, mainly worshippers of Chaos, who have descended upon her peaceloving people.

The book is, as indicated, a story of two halves with Dorian's at first depressed and increasingly obsessive mindset and his gradual recovery, then Ilian's struggle to free her people against a backdrop of her own guilt at having betrayed her brother under torture. Although some readers might be impatient with Dorian's depressive state, it is convincingly portrayed. It was also a nice twist to see a female Eternal Champion incarnation.

My favourite character in the book was the down to earth soldier, Katinka, whose experience turns out to be invaluable to Ilian in her goal (view spoiler). It will be interesting to see what develops in book three, (view spoiler).

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## Greg says

*The champion of Garathorm* follows on immediately from *Count Brass* (reviewed by me here) in a way that suggests that the *Chronicles of Castle Brass* were initially envisaged as a single volume rather than as a trilogy. However, a trilogy made it possible to interconnect it with the *Erekosë/The Eternal Champion* series. At the time my copy of *The champion of Garathorm* was printed (in 1981), the list of books 'By the same author' (which is opposite the title page) indicates that this book formed not only volume two of the *Chronicles of Castle Brass* but also the third volume of the *Erekosë* series (cf. the Internet Speculative Fiction Database's entry on *The champion of Garathorm*). Similarly, the third volume of the Castle Brass series, *The quest for Tanelorn*, formed the fourth volume of the *Erekosë* series. However, when my 1982 copy of *The quest for Tanelorn* was printed, the interconnectedness of the two series was no longer indicated in the author's list of publications and, today, *The champion of Garathorm* seems to be no longer counted as part of the *Erekosë* series, as indicated on Goodreads. To confuse matters more, the *Encyclopaedia of Fantasy* (1997) entry on Michael Moorcock states that the 1992 omnibus volume, *The Eternal Champion*, leaves out *The Quest for Tanelorn* and the graphic novel, *The Swords of Heaven, the Flowers of Hell* (1979) (cf. the *Encyclopaedia of Science Fiction* entry on Moorcock). Also, the encyclopaedia's entry makes no mention of *The champion of Garathorm* as being part of the *Erekosë* series. One must conclude that there was some rethinking about the inter-relationship of these different series before the *Erekosë* one was concluded in the 1980s.

Anyway, reading this book is a personal triumph because I'd purchased it in April 1987, together with *The Quest for Tanelorn*, but was unable to read them until I could get my hands on the trilogy's first volume, which did not happen until last year (2011)! Moorcock seemed to be very popular in the mid-1980s and then, in a short space of time, his books disappeared from the shelves of bookstores (at least in Ireland). I'd already noticed that my local bookshop was being slow to restock those Moorcock volumes that had sold out so I'd bought the Garathorm and Tanelorn books together in the hope that *Count Brass* would become available again soon. (As I was only 18 at the time, I might not have realised that I could've ordered the missing volume (and indeed other books I wanted) through the bookshop, unless the books had fallen out of print.) Unable to read my incomplete series of Moorcock books, I found the work of other authors to distract me (such as the *Dragonlance Chronicles* by Margaret Weiss and Tracy Hickman) and soon forgot about my Moorcock tomes. It was only when a friend of mine offered to find some secondhand books for me while on her annual holiday in the US in 2011 that the opportunity to locate some missing Moorcock volumes arose (thanks Kathy!).

Regarding the story itself, it can be described as falling into two halves. In the first half, we find that Hawkmoon has fallen into a deep depression due to the shift of time and space he experienced in *Count Brass*, that resulted in his wife, Yisselda, dying in the battle of Londra before they were married and so the children they had together no longer existed. Hawkmoon spends his time considering how the past could be altered to ensure not only Yisselda's survival but also the defeat of the Dark Empire. An opportunity for him to pursue this line of reasoning takes him on a quest from the Kamarg (in the south of Moorcock's alternate France) through central Europe and into the Balkans. It was fun to read Moorcock's alternatives for familiar place-names (e.g. Bazhel for Basel/Basle, Munchenia for Munich, Pesht for Budapest and Wien for Vienna [pp. 43, 45, 50]). I also liked coming across unfamiliar (archaic) words like *poignard* (p. 105) and *breeks* (p. 118) from time to time.

At the conclusion of Hawkmoon's journey across Europe, the book enters a more action-packed narrative of war (as would indeed befit the Eternal Champion – Hawkmoon's pan-dimensional self). This involves the curious mix of medieval and futuristic armoury that typifies Moorcock's stories centring on the Eternal Champion.

Overall, it was an enjoyable read with an interesting transgender element to the story as well as the involvement of strong female characters. I did think the chance finding of a suitable length of rope and the ease with which its 'noose settled over a branch' of a tree and held fast with just one throw somewhat fortuitous (p. 97). I also felt that, notwithstanding the involvement of Hawkmoon, the element of surprise and the exploitation of an opportunity, the successes of a tiny resistance force against an overwhelmingly large army seemed to stretch credulity towards the end. But does Hawkmoon find Yisselda in the process? You'll just have to read the book to find out!

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### **Ron says**

The Champion of Garathorm is the second novel in the The Chronicles of Castle Brass series by Michael Moorcock and featuring Duke Dorian Hawkmoon and Ilian of Garathorm. It is a sequel to both Count Brass and to the Erekosë novel Phoenix in Obsidian,[1] and is followed by The Quest for Tanelorn.

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### **Carolyn says**

A very interesting early book in the Eternal Champion series, and one of the very few that features a female Champion, albeit one who lost her soul to an enchanted jewel and had it replaced by that of Dorian Hawkmoon, the hero of Chronicles of Castle Brass and another incarnation of the Champion.

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### **Charles says**

I like the Count Brass series about the best of Moorcock's work.

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### **Shannon Appelcline says**

A book of great ideas that nonetheless fails to rise above being a pretty average read.

This book's largest problem is that it starts off very slowly. Literally half the book is spent trying to get Hawkmoon off his butt and into the interesting adventure that Moorcock has planned. During these initial pages, Moorcock also introduces Hawkmoon fully into the Eternal Champion cycle for the first time ever, and perhaps he thought that was worth the pages ... but it's *slow*.

What happens on the other side of the tunnel between worlds is pretty typical fare and even pretty typical Hawkmoon fare. A new world and a new Eternal Champion could have been fabulous. This meeting between Champions could have been really interesting for its unique point-of-view. Instead, it's OK: *there are armies of bad guys, and they fight*. But what it sets up on its last page promises that what comes next

could be *more* ...

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## Florin Pitea says

It was OK, but weaker than the Elric books.

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## Simon Mclish says

Originally published on my blog here in August 1999.

Though this trilogy is entitled The Chronicles of Castle Brass, the castle itself features very little. Moorcock's interest is in the adventures of Dorian Hawkmoon, which take place on journeys far from the marshes of the Kamarg. His purposes in writing this second series featuring Hawkmoon seems to be to link him more explicitly into his idea of the Eternal Champion. The first stirrings of this idea can be seen in the Runestaff series, but it had developed considerably by the time this trilogy came to be written.

Moorcock's idea of the Eternal Champion is inspired by the ironic juxtaposition of ideas from psychology and comparative mythology with the uninventive duplication of standard characters and plots across the fantasy genre. All heroes are aspects of the one Eternal Champion, doomed to fight to preserve the balance between Chaos and Law across the centuries and in a multitude of worlds. He has a standard group of companions, is inspired by his love for a beautiful lady, and his battles take the form of a small group of heroic comrades fighting faceless and diabolical science or sorcery.

The concept, and particularly this trilogy, is heavily dependent on the idea of parallel universes. This is a highly problematic idea in science fiction, as it has been overused to get a lazy writer out of a difficult situation; it easily can become equivalent to the 'he woke up and it was all a dream' ending which is virtually unusable. By allowing the author to bring together characters from otherwise incompatible backgrounds, it leads to self-indulgent writing, as in Robert A Heinlein's late novels. The concept, though, has been of great importance to Moorcock throughout his career, right from the very early Rituals of Infinity onwards. He works hard to keep his use of the device within self-imposed limits: for example, different aspects of the Eternal Champion are not allowed to meet or have conscious knowledge of each other. (This does not apply to his companions, particularly the Champion's guide, under any of his names.)

Having made this restriction, an attempt to get around it is the inspiration for the plot of The Champion of Garathorm. After returning from the adventures detailed in Count Brass, making the wish that he would give up anything to see the Count alive and well again, Hawkmoon is stunned to discover that he had returned to a version of his world in which the companion who survived his earlier adventures was Count Brass, rather than his beloved wife Yisselda. Driven almost out of his mind by the loss of his wife and children (who had been born after the battle, so in this world never existed), he pines away, spending his time making models, recreating the battle of Londra to try and come up with a version in which Yisselda also survives.

In another universe, the forces of Chaos, mustered by the demon Arioch (who appears in a number of Moorcock's stories) have overwhelmed those of Order. Because this has happened, a scientist from another universe has been able to imprison the soul of the incarnation of the Champion there, the warrior queen Ilian of Garathorm. This could mean disaster for the Balance across all the universes, and the companion Jhary has the idea of taking Dorian's soul, which he is hardly using, and temporarily animating Ilian with it.

My feeling about this is that it is not self-indulgent plotting, but an interesting way to get around a restriction that was, after all, imposed by Moorcock. It is using the restriction in a creative way, and that is the opposite of indulgence. The way in which Dorian's soul becomes immersed in the being of Ilian, forgetting his own separate existence is quite fascinating.

However interesting from the point of view of seeing how Moorcock puts together his imaginary worlds, though, I think he is a better writer when he is not being so explicitly clever. He is very good at using subtle hints to tell us something - this is why the backgrounds to his novels are so compelling, even though they are only lightly sketched in.

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### **Max says**

I really enjoyed this book, as it explored the concept of the Eternal Champion and the multiverse a lot more than the previous books in the series. Of course, not everything makes sense quite yet, and there is still some tragedies that will hopefully be reversed in the last book.

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### **Robert Beveridge says**

Michael Moorcock, *The Champion of Garathorm* (Berkley, 1973)

Moorcock continues the Chronicles of Castle Brass with this odd little novel, perhaps one of the riskiest novels of Moorcock's career. Dorian Hawkmoon, united with his old friends, has paid a deep price-the loss of his wife and children. Or did he ever have them in the first place? Many at Castle Brass say he's been mad for the past five years, inventing the marriage and children after the death of his betrothed at the Battle of Londra (in the novel *The Runestaff*). Brought back to what they consider sanity by the arrival of a guest, an old friend of Count Brass', Hawkmoon feels that adventuring may be the best thing for him, and goes off into what is certainly the eternal champion's oddest adventure yet.

The oddities begin about a third of the way into the book, and explaining them would be impossible without major plot spoilers. Suffice to say that originally, the oddities seem as if Moorcock has just spliced together-badly-a series of unrelated stories. Such is not the case. Everything ties together, and as strand after strand comes full circle, the reader will get the idea of what Moorcock is on about. Once the whole weave is in place, the picture is staggering. \*\*\*\*

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### **Keith Davis says**

Moorcock continues to explore the larger panorama of the Eternal Champion mythos by visiting a female aspect of the champion and having a little gender-bending adventure.

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