

Eric Rücker Eddison

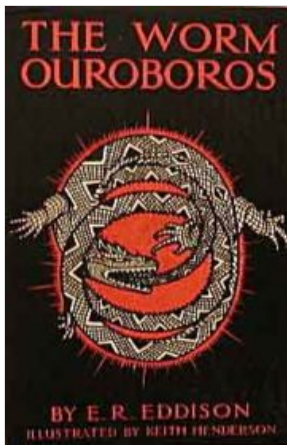
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Eric

Rücker Eddison (November 24, 1882 – August 18, 1945) was an English civil servant and author, writing under the name "E.R. Eddison."

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Biography

Born in Adel, Leeds, Eddison was educated at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge and joined the Board of Trade in 1906, retiring in 1938 in order to work full time on his fiction. During a distinguished career he was awarded the CMG Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George in 1924 and the CB Companion of the Order of the Bath in 1929 for public service with the Board of Trade.

He is best known for his early romance *The Worm Ouroboros* (1922) and his three volumes set in the imaginary world Zimiamvia, known as the Zimiamvian Trilogy: *Mistress of Mistresses* (1935), *A Fish Dinner in*

Memison (1941), and *The Mezention Gate* (1958).

These early works of high fantasy drew strong praise from J. R. R. Tolkien (see especially Letter 199 in the collected letters), C. S. Lewis (see the Tribute to E. R. Eddison in *On Stories and Other Essays on Literature*), and Ursula Le Guin (see the essay "From Elfland to Poughkeepsie" in *The Language of the Night*). Privately Tolkien found the underlying philosophy rebarbative, and clashed with Eddison at their sole meeting, who in return thought Tolkien's views "soft". They are written in a meticulously recreated Jacobean prose style, seeded throughout with fragments, often acknowledged but often frankly

stolen, from his favorite authors and genres: Homer and Sappho, Shakespeare and Webster, Norse Saga and French medieval lyric.

They exhibit a thoroughly aristocratic sensibility; heroes and villains alike maintain an Olympian indifference to convention. These characters have been admired for his work in making his villains, particularly, more vivid characters than Tolkien's.^[1] Others have observed that while it is historically accurate to depict the great of the world trampling on the lower classes, his characters often treat their subjects with arrogance and insolence, and this is depicted as part of their greatness.^[2] Indeed, at the end of *The Worm Ouroboros*, the heroes, finding peace dull, pray for and get the revival

of their enemies, so that they may go and fight them again, regardless of the casualties that such a war would have.
[3]

The Zimiamvia books were not conceived as a trilogy but as part of a larger work left incomplete by Eddison's death. In fact, *The Mezentian Gate* itself is unfinished, though Eddison provided summaries of the missing chapters shortly before his death. Some additional material from this book was published for the first time in the volume *Zimiamvia: a Trilogy* (1992).

Eddison wrote three other books: *Poems, Letters, and Memories of Philip Sidney Nairn* (1916), *Styrbiorn the Strong* (1926) and *Egil's Saga*

(1930). The first was his tribute to a Trinity College friend who died in his youth. The other two relate to the saga literature; the first is a retelling of *Styrbjarnar þátttr Sviakappa* (alluded to in e.g. *Eyrbyggja Saga* and *Heimskringla*), while the second is a direct translation from the Icelandic *Egil's saga*, supplemented with extensive notes.

Bibliography

Fantasies

- *The Worm Ouroboros* (1922).
London: Jonathan Cape

Zimiamvia Trilogy

- *Mistress of Mistresses* (1935).
London: Faber and Faber.
- *A Fish Dinner in Memison*
(1941). New York: E. P. Dutton
& Co.
- *The Mezentian Gate* (1958).
London: Curwen Press.
- *Zimiamvia: a Trilogy* (1992).
New York: Dell Publishing.
ISBN 0-440-50300-0.

Other

- *Poems, Letters, and Memories
of Philip Sidney Nairn* (1916).
London: Printed for Private
Circulation.
- *Egil's Saga* (1930). London:
Cambridge University Press.
- *Styrbiorn the Strong* (1926).
London: Jonathan Cape.

References

1. ^ Michael Moorcock, *Wizardry & Wild Romance: A Study of Epic Fantasy* p 47 ISBN 1-932265-07-4
2. ^ L. Sprague de Camp, *Literary Swordsmen and Sorcerers: The Makers of Heroic Fantasy*, p 132-3 ISBN 0-87054-076-9
3. ^ L. Sprague de Camp, *Literary Swordsmen and Sorcerers: The Makers of Heroic Fantasy*, p 116 ISBN 0-87054-076-9

External links

- The Works of E. R. Eddison -- A comprehensive site devoted to the man and his works (currently incomplete).
- E R Eddison.com -- Site

featuring a biography, info
about his books, criticism, links,
and photographs of some of his
manuscript pages.

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