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Abstract

After a brief précis of Eddison's life, the author discusses the genre of *The Worm Ouroboros*, basing most of his arguments on Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*. Following is an examination of the tale's sources, most notably elements from the Norse sagas, *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, and *Orlando Furioso*.

Keywords

Eddison, E.R.—Biography; Eddison, E.R. *The Worm Ouroboros*—Genre; Eddison, E.R. *The Worm Ouroboros*—Sources

Selected Materials From A Study Of THE WORM OUROBOROS

by Ian Myles Slater

The following short biography of Eric Rücker Eddison is based primarily upon the information contained in the volume WHO WAS WHO, 1941-1959.

Eric Rücker, the eldest son of Octavius Eddison, of St. Helen's, Adel, Yorkshire, and Helen Louisa, the daughter of Daniel Henry Rücker, of London, was born on the 24th of November, 1882. He was a graduate of Eton, and of Trinity College, Oxford. He received his B.A. (2nd class, Classical Moderations; 2nd class Lit. Hum.) in 1905, and entered the Board of Trade in 1906.

In 1909 he married Winifred Grace, the oldest daughter of George Henderson, and one daughter was born to the couple.

From 1915 to 1919, Eddison was the Secretary to successive Presidents of the Board of Trade. In 1916, he published his first work, *POEMS, LETTERS, AND MEMOIRS OF PHILIP SIDNEY NAIRN*. From 1920 to 1921 he was the Controller of the Board of Trade.

In 1922 was published *THE WORM OUROBOROS*, which was reprinted in the United States in 1926, 1952, and 1967. Meanwhile, Eddison had become Secretary to the Imperial Economic Conference in 1923, and became a Companion (of the Order) of St. Michael and St. George in 1924. In the same year he became Comptroller of the Companies Department, Board of Trade, which position he held until 1928.

In 1928 he was made Head of Empire Trades and Economic Division in the Department of Overseas Trade, and remained so until 1930, becoming a Companion (of the Order of) the Bath in 1929. In 1930 was published his translation of *EGIL'S SAGA*.

From 1930 to 1937 E.R.E. was Deputy Comptroller-General of the Department of Overseas Trade, publishing *THE MISTRESS OF MISTRESSES* in 1935. This work was reprinted also in the United States in 1967.

Eddison was a Member of the Council for Art and Industry from 1934 until his retirement in 1937. He began to devote full time to his literary work in 1938, and published his next work, *A FISH DINNER IN MEMORIAM*, in 1941, printed in the United States in 1968.

Eric Rücker Eddison, who listed his recreations as "mountains and books," began work on his last book, *THE MEZENTIAN GATE*, but it was left incomplete at his death on August 18, 1945. The completed chapters, with the *Argument* for those left unwritten, were published by Mrs. Eddison in 1958. The first American printing was in 1969.

The paper which follows is a selection and summary of materials from a much longer and more comprehensive study of the works of E.R. Eddison, especially from the study of *THE WORM OUROBOROS*. It is assumed that those who will read and/or hear this paper will have read the book which it discusses, as the need for brevity has forced considerable condensation and use of allusion instead of argument, which may tend to make the entire discussion incomprehensible to anyone not familiar with the work being considered.

Due to the need to condense, this paper, as it stands, is like Aunt Polly's prayer in Mark Twain; "built from the ground up of solid courses of Scriptural quotations, welded together with a thin mortar of originality." Here, quotations must stand for the arguments based upon them.

According to C.S. Lewis, at the beginning of the first chapter of his *PREFACE TO PARADISE LOST*,

"The first qualification for judging any piece of workmanship from a corkscrew to a cathedral is to know what it is — what it was intended to do and how it is meant to be used. After that has been discovered the temperance reformer may decide that the corkscrew was made for a bad purpose and the communist may think the same about the cathedral. But such questions come later. The first thing is to understand the object before you: as long as you think the corkscrew was meant for opening tins or the cathedral for entertaining tourists you can say nothing to the purpose about them." (1)

This observation on the reading and criticism of John Milton's *PARADISE LOST* in particular, and to reading and criticism in general, also applies, naturally, to the reading and criticism of the fantasies of Eric Rücker Eddison.

The question of just what Eddison was trying to do may have confused readers just as much as his unusual vocabulary and prose style, and the violation of time-sequence in the three volumes of the Zimiamvia Cycle. This confusion seems to have interfered with the reading and appreciation of even such a comparatively simple work as Eddison's *THE WORM OUROBOROS*.

Such misconceptions as could result from a mistake about Eddison's intentions in writing the book may account for the variety of evaluations of the book — leaving aside ingrained like or dislike of "fairy-tales". (2)

One reviewer denounced *THE WORM OUROBOROS* as "the utopia of a decadent," (3) while another hailed it as "unadulterated romance and disinterested beauty." (4) A blurb-writer insisted that *THE WORM* is "an allegory and a commentary on our times," (5) while the second reviewer cited above admitted that she began reading the book under a misapprehension: "Resolute for equal labors in the solution of sex-symbolism and the appreciation of satire, we valiantly plunge into the

closely-printed pages." (6)

The idea that *THE WORM OUROBOROS* is an allegory of some sort is widespread and tenacious. A few years ago, a teacher of English at a leading Los Angeles City High School gave one of her classes a list of allegorical books which included, along with *THE FAERIE QUEENE* and *PILGRIM'S PROGRESS*, *THE WORM OUROBOROS*.

The classic statement of this theory seems to have been the blurb mentioned above, which was printed on the dust-jacket of the 1952 American edition — and that is one of the problems with it.

The exact claim was that "As an allegory and a commentary on our times it is extraordinarily pertinent and penetrating." (7) The little phrase "on our times" almost torpedoed the theory right there, since *THE WORM* was first published in 1922, a mere thirty years before the blurb — unless there is a hidden assumption that Eddison was a prophet!

Much more important than this small chronological difficulty, however, is a short note, printed below the Dedication of *THE WORM OUROBOROS*. The first sentence of that note read, "It is neither allegory nor fable but a Story to be read for its own sake." At the end of the note is "9th January 1922 E.R.E." (8)

Unless someone wishes to propose that Eddison didn't know what he was doing, or that he was playing a rather strange joke on all possible readers, that single sentence should dispose of all claims that *THE WORM OUROBOROS* was intended to be an allegory.

Allegorical meanings, of various degrees of persuasiveness, can probably be read into it. Why? Well, to quote C.S. Lewis once again:

"No story can be devised by the wit of man which cannot be interpreted allegorically by the wit of some other man.

The Stoic interpretations of primitive mythology, the Christian interpretations of the Old Testament, the medieval interpretations of the classics, all prove this. Therefore . . . the mere fact that you can allegorize the work before you is of itself no proof that it is an allegory. Of course you can allegorize it. You can allegorize anything, whether in art or real life." (9)

The same magical statement by Eddison which slew our critical dragon, Allegoria, can probably serve to eviscerate any notion that *THE WORM OUROBOROS* is some sort of personal propaganda for the author's social, political, or moral views, whether decadent, utopian, aristocratic, racist, or other. (10)

Whether or not any of Eddison's own ideas, opinions, values, or aspirations show through is another matter. *THE WORM OUROBOROS* does, in fact, seem to be based upon certain opinions held by E.R. Eddison, which are more explicitly presented in the three books of the Zimiamvia Cycle, and in the introductory and other comments in his translation of *EGIL'S SAGA*. (11) Judging from all of these works, Eddison was in favor of small, autonomous states (as opposed to bloated empires), courage, beauty, intelligence, and mountain climbing.

Still, having determined what *THE WORM* is not (allegory, or a personal position paper on the Human Situation), we are left with meeting the original challenge of determining just which genre it can best be assigned to. After all, Eddison's own word, *Story*, is a rather large and unwieldy category!

One reviewer graciously pronounced *THE WORM OUROBOROS* "A wholly original book, sui generis." (12) This position is legitimate, but question-begging. If something is unique, it is both the best and the worst of its kind, and comparison and judgment must give way to personal opinion — which is informative only about opinions.

Also, no matter whether or not *THE WORM*, as a whole, belongs to any literary category, it is, as will be demonstrated below, extremely derivative in detail.

Clifton Fadiman once argued that *THE WORM OUROBOROS* is a "rigorously conceived" prose Epic. (13) Unfortunately, the list of characteristics which he gives, while it does describe *THE WORM*, does not seem to correspond to either the Aristotelian or the neo-classical theories of the epic. (14)

Fadiman says that "The classical exigencies of the epic — that it shall involve a battle between two great powers, that our attention shall be particularly directed to the feats of one hero, that this hero shall emerge victor after a series of adventures mounting in complexity, that there shall be divine intrusion at one point at least of the story, and that the viewpoint of the author, if at all intimated, shall be conveyed by exaggeration rather than irony — all of these requirements are complied with." Fadiman adds that *THE WORM* has been given the "appearance of pure romance." (15)

Actually, Fadiman seems to have had in mind not "The classical exigencies of the epic," but the fifteenth and sixteenth century Romantic Epics of Boiardo, Tasso, Ariosto, and Spenser. (16) But although these poets had Homer and Virgil in mind, they were, as C.S. Lewis put it, "the lineal descendants of the medieval romancers." (17) Incidentally, Fadiman's first point cannot be applied to Homer's *ODYSSEY*, and only vaguely to Virgil's *AENEID*!

Lewis's comment brings us to the last two points of view which we shall consider here. *THE WORM OUROBOROS* has been called a Romance (18) and a Novel. (19)

The latter term, while possibly applicable, has serious critical

drawbacks. Northrop Frye, in his *ANATOMY OF CRITICISM*, points out "the the word novel, which up to about 1900 was still the name of a more or less recognizable form, has since expanded into a catchall term which can be applied to any prose book that is not 'on' something." (20)

Frye's comments on the Novel and the Romance, as literary forms, what they are, and the differences between them, are worth considering, and have been adopted here as working definitions.

First of all, Frye believes, "Fictions . . . may be classified . . . by the hero's power of action, which may be greater than ours, less, or roughly the same." After pointing out that the hero of a *myth* is superior in *kind* to men and to their environment, and is, properly speaking, a god, Frye continues by saying that "If superior in *degree* to other men and to his environment, the hero is the typical hero of *romance*, whose actions are marvellous but who is himself identified as a human being. The hero of romance moves in a world in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended: prodigies of courage and endurance, unnatural to us, are natural to him, and enchanted weapons, talking animals, terrifying ogres and witches, and talismans of miraculous power violate no rule of probability once the postulates of romance have been established." (21)

The similarity of this catalogue to the contents of *THE WORM OUROBOROS* should be obvious to anyone who has read that work with any care.

Later in the *ANATOMY OF CRITICISM*, Frye discusses the difference between the Novel (as he defines it) and the Romance, and why it is important to try to keep them separate, even though "The forms of prose fiction are mixed, like racial strains in human beings, not separable, like the sexes." (22)

"The essential difference between novel and romance lies" (in Frye's opinion) "in the conception of characterization. The romancer does not attempt to create 'real people' so much as stylized figures which expand into psychological archetypes. . . . This is why the romance so often radiates a glow of subjective intensity that the novel lacks, and why a suggestion of allegory is constantly creeping in around its fringes. . . . The novelist deals with personality, with characters wearing their *personae* or social masks. . . . The romancer deals with individuality, with characters *in vacuo* idealized by revery. . . ."

"The prose romance, then, is an independent form of fiction to be distinguished from the novel and extracted from the miscellaneous heap of prose works now covered by that term. . . . It may be asked . . . what is the use of making the above distinction, especially when, though undeveloped in criticism, it is by no means unrealized. . . ."

"The reason is that a great romancer should be examined in terms of the conventions he chose." (23)

It is difficult for this writer to see how anyone who has read *THE WORM OUROBOROS*, and who is willing to accept, even provisionally, the definitions adopted here, could but conclude that *THE WORM OUROBOROS* is a Romance, and not a Novel.

Those who like *THE WORM OUROBOROS* may agree with James Branch Cabell that it is "a rather majestic example of romance which purchases, through its own unadulterated magic, and for no utilitarian ends whatever, the momentary 'suspension of disbelief' in many very beautiful impossibilities." (24)

Those who dislike *THE WORM* need not concern themselves any further in this discussion, unless their dislike was based on one of the misunderstandings which, hopefully, has been cleared up here.

Once the nature of *THE WORM OUROBOROS* as a Romance is accepted, however, many things about it are seen to be important parts of that art form. It very 'irrelevance' ("neither allegory nor fable") are part of the 'place of life' of the Romance. C.S. Lewis observed in his *THE DISCARDED IMAGE* that

"It looks as if the Romances and . . . Ballads were in the Middle Ages, as they have remained ever since, trannies, refreshments, things that can live only on the margin of the mind, things whose very charm depends on their not being 'of the centre' (a locality which Matthew Arnold possibly overvalued)." (25)

The Romances of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance are not the only sources for *THE WORM OUROBOROS*, however. Materials can be found in it which were derived from Classical mythology, history, and philosophy, from Medieval chronicles, legends, Saints' Lives, travellers' tales, bestiaries and lapidaries, from Norse mythology and Sagas, and from Renaissance and early Modern epics, stories, histories, and plays, and anything else which seemed appropriate, strange, beautiful, or moving.

To those of us who like the resulting Story, however, this seems to be a part of its charm, and we believe that *THE WORM OUROBOROS* will, like Wolfram von Eschenbach's *PARZIVAL*, "bring you word of both joy and sorrow, and delight and distress accompany it as well." (26)

Examples of, and evidence for, borrowings from all of the sources noted above is impossible here, for lack of time and space, but some clear examples, which, hopefully, are interesting in themselves, may be considered. First of all, however, should we not consider the question of what principles guide such selections? Why should Eddison, or any other writer, re-use ideas instead of inventing out of as nearly whole cloth as possible? And why, on the other hand, does such a writer, at another point, invent when he might have borrowed more?

Charles Williams, in a discussion of the great Vulgate Cycle of

Arthurian Romances in "The Figure of Arthur," made an excellent observation on this very point.

"It is occasionally forgotten, or seems to be," noted Williams from his position as a novelist, poet, critic, and scholar, "in the great scholarly discussions, that anyone who is writing a poem or a romance is primarily writing a poem or a romance. He will, of course, be affected, as the Crusaders in their task were affected, by all sorts of other things — his religious views, his political views, his need of money, the necessity for haste, the instructions of a patron, carelessness, forgetfulness, foolishness. But he is primarily concerned with making a satisfactory book. He may borrow anything from anywhere — if he thinks it makes a better book. He may leave out anything from anywhere — if he thinks it makes a better book." (27)

Whether or not *THE WORM OUROBOROS* is a "satisfactory book" — and C.S. Lewis, for one, thought that it was (28) — Eddison borrowed many things from many places in the making of it.

As might be guessed from the long quotation in the "Induction" to *THE WORM*, (29) Eddison 'borrowed' quite a bit of material from the great Icelandic Sagas in his attempt to "make a better book." The bulk of this material in direct use seems to come from the work cited in the "Induction," *BRENNU NJALS SAGA*, in Sir George Dasent's "classical" (30) translation of it as *THE STORY OF BURNT NJAL*. (31) This borrowing, it should be noted, was in terms of details, not plot or style — for even in the archaizing translations of Dasent and William Morris, the laconic style of the sagas is very far from that of Eddison.

Three clear examples of borrowings from *NJAL* are worth describing, since they indicate the way diverse elements have been woven to the fabric of *THE WORM OUROBOROS*.

Two of the proverbs quoted in *THE WORM* are "Bare is back without brother behind it," (32) and "But a little while is hand fin of blow." (33) Both of these (the latter as "But a short while") are not only to be found in *THE STORY OF BURNT NJAL*, but on it — that is, stamped in gold on the "green cover" (34) of the original edition of 1861 (and the abridged edition of 1901). It is easy to see why they stuck it Eddison's mind!

The third example of borrowing involves some furniture, and a verbal similarity which seems too close to be coincidental. Eddison remarks, in his description of Lord Juss's chamber at Galing, that "On the cornice of the bed and on the panels above the pillow against the wall were carved Juss's deeds of derring-do; and the latest carving was of the sea-fight with the Ghouls." (35)

This description, which might seem to be simply Eddison's imagination at work, seems to reflect a particular passage in *THE STORY OF BURNT NJAL*, one which deserves to be quoted almost for its own sake:

"Thorkel Foulmouth had been abroad and worked his way to fame in other lands. He had slain a robber east in Jemtland's wood, and then he fared on east into Sweden, and was a messmate of Saurkvir the churl, and they harried eastward ho; but to the east of Baltic side Thorkel had to fetch water for then one evening; then he met a wild man of the woods and struggled against him long; but the end of it was that he slew the wild man." (Footnote in Dasent: "Wild man of the woods" — in the original, Flinnalkn, a fabulous monster, half man and half beast.") "Thence he fared east into Adal-sysla, and there he slew a flying fire-drake. After that he fared back to Sweden, and thence to Norway, and so out to Iceland, and let these deeds of derring-do be carved over his shut bed, and on the stool before his high seat." (36)

There is Scandinavian material in *THE WORM OUROBOROS* from works other than *THE STORY OF BURNT NJAL*, however. Some of it is merely background material, but it is interesting in that it reveals something of Eddison's creative processes, and makes his world of "Mercury" much more concrete.

Let us consider first the origin of the cry, in Gro's prophetic dream, of "Witchland from thy hand, O King!" (37) This is a variation in a sentence from the *HEIMSKRINGLA*, a history of Norway in the biographies of its kings, written in the first half of the thirteenth century by Snorri Sturluson, an Icelandic. (The title is from the opening phrase of the work, *Heims kringla*, "The orb of the world, upon which mankind dwells.")

Snorri, a Machiavellian politician, was also the author of some technically adroit poetry, the compiler of the great *PROSE*, or *YOUNGER*, *EDDA* (a major source of information on Norse mythology and poetic diction), and very probably the author, or at least a redactor, of the *EGILS SAGA SKALLAGRIMSSONAR* (The Saga of Egil, Son of Grim-the-Bald), which Eddison later translated as *EGIL'S SAGA*.

In the *OLAF TRYGVASSON'S SAGA* in *HEIMSKRINGLA* is Snorri's account of that Christian monarch's last battle, which he fought from the deck of the Long Worm, the largest war-ship (180 feet long) built in the North to that day. With Olaf on the ship was — but let Snorri tell the tale (through the translation of William Morris and Eirikr Magnusson):

"Now Einar Thambarskelvir was aboard the Worm aft in the mainhold; and he shot with the bow and was the hardest shooting of all men. Einar shot at Earl Eric, and the arrow smote the tiller-head above the head of the earl, and went in up to the shaft binding. The earl looked thereon and asked if they wist who shot; and even therewith came another arrow so right that it flew betwixt the earl's side and his arm, and so on into the staying-board of the steersman, and the point stood out far beyond. Then spake the earl to a man whom some name Finn, but othersome say that he was of

Finnish kin, and he was the greatest of all the
'Shoot me yonder big man in the strait hold.'

"So Finn shot, and the arrow came on Einar's bow even as he drew the third time, and the bow brake asunder in the midst. Then spake King Olaf: 'What brake there so loud?'

"Answered Einar: 'Norway, king, from thine hands.' "(38)

Eddison, a great lover of Norse history and literature, was certainly familiar with this fine tale. He mentions the Long Worm herself, in a note to his EGIL'S SAGA, giving the figure for its length adopted here.

The note which discusses Olaf and his longest long-ship also reveals that the "dragons-of-war" and fifty-oared ships in THE WORM OUBOROS are not just rhetorical flourishes.(39)

"Dragon-of-war" is a translation of the Norse word dreki, fire-drake or dragon, while "Magnusson . . . thinks the terms skel, snekkja, and skuta indicated decreasing order of size; the skuta beginning with 15 oars aside and going up to 20, the snekkja from 20 to 30, the skel over 30. The Long Worm, King Olaf Tryggvason's ship, was a 34-bencher, and her length was probably 180 feet."(40) By this system, the fifty-oared ships in THE WORM OUBOROS, assuming a logical arrangement of twenty-five oars to a side, would belong to the snekkja class of longships.

Even the "Beshtrian pleasure-galleys" (41) can be accounted for in the context of this single note, if one wishes. Eddison continues in the next paragraph by saying that "The karfi (which I have called "caravel") was a small ship, apparently comparable with the skuta, used probably by kings and great men as a private yacht. The specimens found at Oseberg a few years ago has been identified with some certainty as that of Queen Asa, mother of Halfdan the Black"(42) the father of Harald Harfagri, unifier of Norway.

What this rather prolonged discussion of a minor technical point was intended to demonstrate was the fact that, for all of the fancy and fantasy found in THE WORM OUBOROS, the technical, material base was solidly anchored in reality. If the interpretation suggested here is correct, it is possible to find pictures of the kinds of ships Eddison had in mind, down to the very yachts and pleasure-galleys, in any good, illustrated volume on Medieval Scandinavia!

Some parts of THE WORM OUBOROS are, of course, obviously sheer whimsy. Consider this account of part of the geology of "The Marchlands of the Moruna":

"The fifth day, and the sixth, and the seventh, they journeyed by the southern margin of a gravelly sea, made all of sand and gravel and no drop of water, yet ebbing and flowing away with great waves as another sea doth, never standing still and never at rest. And always by day and night as they came through the desert was a great noise very hideous and a sound as it were of tambourines and trumpets; yet was the place solitary to the eye, and no living thing afoot there save their company faring to the east."(43)

The immediate source for this wierd scene is almost certainly THE TRAVELS OF SIR JOHN MANDEVILLE, probably the most entertaining, if least reliable, of all medieval travel books. In the description by that "English Knight" of his travels in the empire of Prester John, comes the following account of one of the "many great marvels" "the hat in his lordships":

"For in his country is the sea that men clepe the Gravelly Sea, that is all gravel and sand, without any drop of water, and it ebbeth and floweth in great waves as other seas do, and it is never still ne in peace, in no manner season. And no man may pass that sea by navy, ne by no manner of craft, and therefore may no man know what land is beyond that sea. And albeit that it have no water, yet men find therein and on the banks full good fish of other manner of kind and shape, than men find in any other sea, and they be of right good taste and delicious to man's meat.

"And a three journeys long from that sea be great mountans, out of which goeth a great flood that cometh out of Paradise. And it is full of precious stones, without any drop of water, and it runneth through the desert on that one side, so that it maketh the sea gravelly; and it beareth into that sea, and there it endeth. And that flome runneth, also, three days in the week and bringeth with him great stones and the rocks also therewith, and that great plenty. And anon, as they be entered into the Gravelly Sea, they be seen no more, but lost for evermore."(44)

This passage in MANDEVILLE was taken from the "Letter of Prester John," of mysterious origin, which circulated widely in Medieval Europe. John Kirtland Wright, in his GEOGRAPHICAL LORE OF THE TIME OF THE CRUSADES, remarks, quite sensibly, that "If we remove the halo of fable surrounding all this, we discern here an account of a desert of dunes, with dry watercourses entering it, a feature common enough in southwestern Asia and northern Africa."(45)

The rest of the material from Eddison seems to be from such reports as that which Marco Polo has of the Desert of Lop, north of Tibet. The Italian reported that "even by daylight men hear these spirit voices, and often you fancy you are listening to the strains of many instruments, especially drums and the clash of arms."(46)

Still other elements of the Demons' adventures in Outer Implan and on Morna Moruna are drawn from MANDEVILLE. The puzzling episode of the Lady and the Sparrowhawk(47) is either from MANDEVILLE directly, or from a fourteenth century Romance, MELUSINE, which apparently used MANDEVILLE as a source — or possibly from both.

In THE TRAVELS OF SIR JOHN MANDEVILLE, the story goes as follows:

that country is an old castle that stands upon a rock; the which is clept the castle of the Sparrow-hawk, that is beyond the city of Layays beside the town of Pharsipee, that belongeth to the lordship of Cruk, that is a rich lord and a good Christian man; where men find a sparrow-hawk upon a perch right fair and right well made, and fair lady of faerie that keepeth it. And who that will watch that sparrow-hawk seven days and seven nights, and, as some say, three days and three nights, without company and without sleep, that fair lady shall give him, when he hath done, the first wish that he will wish of earthly things; and that hath been proved often-times.

"And one time befell, that a King of Armenia, that was a worthy knight and doughty man, and a noble prince, watched that hawk some time. And at the end of seven days and seven nights the lady came to him and bade him wish, for he had well deserved it. And he answered that he was great lord enough, and well in peace, and had enough of worldly riches; and therefore he would wish none other thing, but the body of that fair lady, to have it at his will. And she answered him, that he knew not what he asked, and said that he was fool to desire that he might not have; for she said that he should not ask but earthly thing, for she was none earthly thing, but a ghostly thing. And the king said that he would ask none other thing. And the lady answered; 'Sith that I may not withdraw you from your lewd corage, I shall give you without wishing, and to all them that shall come of you. Sir King! ye shall have war without peace, and always to the nine degree, ye shall be in subjection to your enemies, and ye shall be needy of all goods.' And never since, neither King of Armenia nor the country were never in peace; ne they had never sith plenty of goods; and they have been sithen always under tribute of the Saracens.

"Also the son of a poor man watched that hawk and wished that he might chieve well, and to be happy to merchandise. And the lady granted him. And he became the most rich and the most famous merchant that might be on sea or on earth. And he became so rich that he knew not the thousandth part of that he had. And he was wiser in wishing than was the king.

"Also a knight of the Temple watched there, and wished a purse evermorefull of gold. And the lady granted him. But she said him that he had asked the destruction of their order for the trust and affiance of that purse, and for the great pride that they should have. And so it was. And therefore look he keep him well, that shall wake. For if he sleep he is lost, that never man shall see him more."(48)

Jean D'Arras, the author or compiler of the stories in MELUSINE, which purports to be an authentic history of the great crusading family of Lusignan, tracing its descent from the half-serpent "lady of faerie" of the title, seems to have taken over the story from MANDEVILLE, and to have applied it to the tale of Melusine's sister, Melior, and the downfall of the Lusignan kings of Armenia. (The Lusignans, like other Crusaders, tended to become distracted by opportunity.) There is no need to give here the expanded and particularized account which forms the last adventure in MELUSINE, as it was translated about 1500, and published in 1895 by the Early English Text Society.(49)

A full discussion of these three versions of the story, and the significance of the story as it stands in THE WORM OUBOROS, must wait upon a planned article on initiatory motifs in THE WORM.

Here and now, it should be sufficient to note that Eddison changed the story which he received, so that Lord Brandoch Daha (his replacement for the King of Armenia in the original tale) does win the Lady, but later insists on leaving her — and it is this which brings down the curse.(50)

The main reason for thinking that Eddison may have had MELUSINE in mind, in addition to MANDEVILLE, is an incident at the beginning of that Romance, in which Melusine, with her sisters Melior (the Lady with the Sparrowhawk at the end of the Romance) and Palatyne, magically imprison their father, in revenge for his breaking a taboo, on an enchanted mountain.

"We shall close our shett hym on the high mountayne of Northomberland, named Brombelyoys and in myserye he shalbe there all his lyf," says Melusine. And, in deed, "Longe tyme was the King Elynas on the said mountayne in so moch that deth which bringeth every persone to an ende toke hym."(51)

This is sufficiently close to the imprisonment by magic of Lord Goldry Bluzco on the mountain known not to men, but by the Gods called Zora Rach nam Psarrion, "loneliest and secretest of all earth's mountans, and most accursed."(52)

But Goldry, unlike poor old King Elynas, was rescued, by Lord Juss, who flew to that peak of Zora upon the back of a new-hatched hippogriff, the beast that was the special sign of his House, and of his Kingdom of Demonland, for the sake of the ancestor who had ridden one once before.(53)

The hippo-griff, or horse-griffin, the mixture of the griffin (lion and eagle mixed) with the horse — or perhaps with Pegasus — was the creation of the Italian poet Ludovico Ariosto, who seems to have invented the beast as a mode of transport for the characters of his Romantic Epic, ORLANDO FURIOSO.

Eddison had probably read the great ORLANDO, and one suspects that he remembered fondly such passages as:

"After the hippogryph has won such height,

The he is lessoned to a point, he bends
 His course for where the sun, with sinking light,
 When he goes round the heavenly crab, descends;
 And shoots through the air, like well-greased bark
 and light,
 Which through the sea a wind propitious sends.(54)

And so, as the hippogriff carries Rogero off into the southwest, we take leave of this discussion for a time.

FOOTNOTES

1. Lewis, C.S., A PREFACE TO PARADISE LOST. Oxford University Press, London, 1942. O.U.P. Paperback, London, Oxford, and New York, 1961. Page 1.

2. Lewis, C.S., OF OTHER WORLDS: Essays and Stories. Geoffrey Blos, London, 1966. "On Science Fiction," pp. 71-2.

"I would like to draw attention to a neglected fact: the astonishing intensity of the dislike which some readers feel for the mythopoeic. I first found it out by accident. A lady (and, what make the story more piquant, she herself was a Jungian psychologist by profession) had been talking about a dreariness which seemed to be creeping over her life, the drying up in her of the power to feel pleasure. Drawing a bow at a venture, I asked, 'Have you any taste for fantasies and fairy tales?' I shall never forget how her muscles tightened, her hands clenched themselves, her eyes started as if with horror, and her voice changed, as she hissed out, 'I loathe them.' Clearly we here have to do with a critical opinion, but with something like a phobia. . . . On the other side, I know from my own experience, that those who like the mythopoeic like it with almost equal intensity."

3. THE SATURDAY REVIEW OF LITERATURE, August 14, 1926, page 43.

4. THE NEW REPUBLIC, June 23, 1926, pp. 148-9, by Dorothy Bacon Woolsey.

5. The first flap of the dust-jacket to THE WORM OUROBOROS, E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc., New York, 1952. Copy in possession of this writer.

6. See #4.

7. See #5.

8. Page v of the Dutton edition of 1952, and the Ballantine edition of 1967. Presumably the same for the editions of 1922 and 1926.

9. Lewis, OF OTHER WORLDS, "On Criticism," pp. 57-8.

10. See #3. Also see AMRA, Vol. 2, No. 48, for mid-August, 1968, "The Pulp Race," by John Boardman, pp. 16-17.

11. See, for example, A FISH DINNER IN MEMISON, Chapter XVII, especially pp. 278-285 (of the Ballantine edition). For example, on p. 283:

"'What would you have?' he said at length.

'The Greek city. I speak from experience, of course: have had it, and mean to again. Perhaps a little more; but that for the centre of your state. City and countryside: a polity the size of England — less, perhaps. And a population measured by a few tens of thousands. Beyond that, all becomes skumble-skamble.'

'The Greeks made a nice mess of it.'

'Because they choked themselves trying to swallow a cherry seems a poor reason why we must guzzle down the whole pie-dish at a mouthful. . . . Roman affairs conducted on basis of megalopolitan civilization are simply not susceptible of good government. You have two choices: tyranny and mob-rule.'

12. THE INDEPENDENT, June 26, 1926, p. 750. "Romance in Another Planet," "A Review by D.R."

13. THE NATION, July 28, 1926, p. 87. "A True Epic," by Clifton P. Fadiman.

14. Consult, for example, Aristotle's POETICS, chapter 5.

15. See #13

16. For a good, short analysis of this form, see C.S. Lewis, THE ALLEGORY OF LOVE. Oxford University Press, 1936. O.U.P. paperback, Galaxy Book, New York, 1958. Chapter VII, parts i and ii, pp. 297-312.

17. Lewis, C.S., THE DISCARDED IMAGE, An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature. Cambridge University Press, 1964. Paperback edition, 1967. Page 8.

18. Both, for example, in the "Introduction" to THE WORM by Orville Prescott, in the editions of 1952 and 1967. Prescott also calls it a romantic epic. See, for the same hesitation, Lin Carter, TOLKIEN: A LOOK BEHIND THE LORD OF THE RINGS, Ballantine, 1969, pp. 142-148.

19. See #18

20. Frye, Northrop, ANATOMY OF CRITICISM, Four Essays. Princeton University Press, 1957. Atheneum, 1965, p. 304.

21. Frye, ANAT. OF CRIT., p. 33.

22. ibid., p. 305.

23. ibid., pp. 304-305

24. James Branch Cabell, in the Letter of Introduction to the 1926 American edition, but I am copying from the quotation on the jacket of the 1952, since the original was not available at the time of writing.

25. Lewis, THE DISCARDED IMAGE, pp. 9-10. But this is not the view expressed in THE VOGUE OF THE MEDIEVAL CHIVALRIC ROMANCE IN FIFTEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND, "A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Language and Literature," by Murray Faulds Markland, 1957, which considers the "social utility" of the romances.

26. Wolfram von Eschenbach, PARZIVAL: A Romance of the Middle Ages. A New Translation, with an Introduction, by Helen M. Mustard and Charles E. Passage. Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, 1961, p. 4.

27. ARTHURIAN TORSO, Containing the Posthumous Fragment of THE FIGURE OF ARTHUR by Charles Williams and a Commentary on the Arthurian Poems of Charles Williams by C.S. Lewis. Oxford University Press, London, New York, Toronto, 1948, 1952. p. 62.

28. Lewis, OF OTHER WORLDS, "On Stories," p. 19:
 "The works of the late E.R. Eddison . . . succeed completely. You may like or dislike his invented worlds (I myself like that of THE WORM OUROBOROS and strongly dislike that of MISTRESS OF MISTRESSES) but there is here no quarrel between the theme and the articulation of the story. Every episode, every speech, helps to incarnate what the author is imagining. You could spare none of them. It takes the whole story it build up that strange blend of renaissance luxury and northern hardness."

29. Ballantine edition, THE WORM OUROBOROS, p. 2

30. ibid., p. 520.

31. THE STORY OF BURNT NJAL, or Life in Iceland at the End of the Tenth Century. From the Icelandic of the NJALS SAGA, by George Webbe Dunsen, Edmonston and Douglas, Edinburgh, 1861. Two volumes.

32. THE WORM OUROBOROS, Ballantine edition, p. 27.

33. ibid., p. 383.

34. ibid., p. 2

35. ibid., p. 129

36. THE STORY OF BURNT NJAL, Vol. II, p. 139.

37. THE WORM OUROBOROS, Ballantine edition, pp. 27 and 32.

38. THE STORY OF THE KINGS OF NORWAY, CALLED THE ROUND WORLD (HEIMSKRINGLA) by Snorri Sturluson. Done into English out of the Icelandic by William Morris and Eirikr Magnusson. Bernard Quaritch, London, 1893. "The Story of Olaf Trygvisson," Chapter CXVII

39. THE WORM OUROBOROS, Ball. edit., pp. 27, 29, 407, etc.

40. EGIL'S SAGA, Cambridge University Press, 1930. P. 254, note 10.

41. THE WORM OUROBOROS, Bal. edit., p. 433.

42. EGIL'S SAGA, p. 254.

43. THE WORM OUROBOROS, Bal. edit., p. 164.

44. THE TRAVELS OF SIR JOHN MANDEVILLE, edited by A.W. Pollard, MacMillan and Co., Ltd., London, 1900. Reprinted, with 119 Woodcuts, Dover Books, New York, 1964. Chapter XXX, p. 180.

45. Wright, John Kirtland, THE GEOGRAPHICAL LORDS OF THE TIMES OF THE CRUSADES; A Study in the History of Medieval Science and Tradition in Western Europe. American Geographical Society, Research Series, #15, 1925. Reprinted, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1965. p. 229

46. Marco Polo, THE TRAVELS, translated by Ronald Latiam. Penguin Books, Baltimore, Maryland, 1958. Page 53. The Lop is more commonly known as the Gobi Desert.

47. THE WORM OUROBOROS, Bal. edit., pp. 164-171.

48. THE TRAVELS OF SIR JOHN MANDEVILLE, chapter XVI, pp. 98-99.

49. MELUSINE: Compiled (1282-1294 A.D.) by Jean D'Arras. English about 1500. Edited from a unique manuscript in the Library of the British Museum by A.K. Donald. Published for the Early English Text Society by Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., 1895. EETS, extra series, no. 88.

50. THE WORM OUROBOROS, Bal. edit., pp. 166-7.

51. MELUSINE, pp. 14, 16-17.

52. THE WORM OUROBOROS, Bal. edit. page 239.

53. ibid., p. 240.

54. Ludovico Ariosto, ORLANDO FURIOSO. Translated by William Stewart Rose, Canto IV, Sta.za L.

