

# KALKI

Studies in James Branch Cabell



"Now, the redemption which we as yet await (continued Imlac), will be that of Kalki, who will come as a Silver Stallion: all evils and every sort of folly will perish at the coming of this Kalki: true righteousness will be restored, and the minds of men will be made clear as crystal."

Vol. II, No. 4(a); Whole No. 8(a)

## The Spell of Mirror and Pigeons



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# Stallion and Dragon



notes on (and by) Cabell and Eddison

We are now in the midst of still a third attempt at a revival of the works of E. R. Eddison. Three of his heroic fantasies -- THE WORM OUROBOROS, MISTRESS OF MISTRESSES and A FISH DINNER IN MEMISON -- have been put out in paperback by Ballantine Books, which hopes to duplicate its great success with the Tolkien fantasies. It is a great delight to have these lovely books back in print; let us hope that this time they stay there.

When the WORM was first published in the United States in 1926, it carried with it a letter of appreciation from James Branch Cabell. We reproduce it below as it appeared, from JBC's own copy of the WORM:

DUMBARTON GRANGE  
DUMBARTON, VIRGINIA

Albert & Charles Boni

Gentlemen:

In reply to your letter of the twelfth, it has now for three years stayed a puzzle to me that The Worm Ouroboros is not better known. The book, to be sure, is not for everyone. So many persons, indeed, to whose attention I have introduced it have got from the volume only boredom that I have at last, through a series of depressing failures to communicate my enthusiasm, been reduced to concluding that a reader finds perforce in this book exceeding joy or else nothing at all,—in either case, quite unpredictably.

To me, in any event, The Worm Ouroboros remains a rather majestic example of romance,—of really pure romance, untinted, in our modern way, with satire or allegory, or even with humor,—of the romance, in fine, which purchases, through its own unadulterate magic, and for no utilitarian ends whatever, the momentary "suspension of disbelief" in many very beautiful impossibilities.

Yours faithfully,

James Branch Cabell.

21 November 1925

This inclusion brought a very prompt response from Eddison -- of particular interest because it reveals that Eddison in turn was an admirer of Cabell. It is reproduced below, in Eddison's own holograph, from one of Cabell's scrapbooks:

19<sup>th</sup> June, 1936.9, EVELYN MANSIONS,  
WESTMINSTER, S.W.1.

Dear Sir

I have just received copies of the American edition of my "Worm Ouroboros", & read for the first time your generous comments on my book. I must write this line to thank you. Also to thank you for the pleasure I have had from "Gurgen"; & most of all, from Queen Anaitis, with whom I have hopes that someday, in Elysium, I too may voyage to that island of Coccyzus. In that passage (end of Ch. XX & Ch. XXI) you have, in my humble judgment, touched perfection. It has that quality of really great writing, to be better always at the last time of reading than at the time before; & its delightful humour is without all topical or extraneous adulterations which, growing out-of-fashion, could rob it of its freshness with the lapse of time. I am proud to have your name on my book, & to know that you like it.

Yours faithfully,

James Branch Cabell, Sr.

E. R. Eddison

Cabell subsequently reviewed Eddison's *MISTRESS OF MISTRESSES*, in *The American Mercury*, January 1936, under the title, "Romance and the Novel." He said: "I find here -- in his finest, his purest, and his most romantic vein -- the finest living writer of pure romance." (Ballantine quotes this much, slightly inaccurately.) The review as a whole supplied the core material from which Cabell later developed the 24th chapter of *SMIRE*, "To The Public at Large" (1937, pg. 191). This is the passage in which he defines the novel as a form of journalism or copying; the romance as a form of poetry or creation.