



Zimiamvia: A Trilogy

E.R. Eddison, Paul Edmund Thomas (Introduction), Douglas E. Winter (Foreword)

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DIMENSION TO DIMENSION... WORLD TO WORLD ~

A lady strays from a garden path and enters a different realm. A castle harbors a secret cabinet and a golden key. A king wages dynastic war for control of three kingdoms. Thus, a saga that rivals the wondrous worlds of Middle Earth, Dune, and the hitchhiker's galaxy, sweeps us into a fabulous cosmos of pure imagination. Here, villains plotting to take control of an alternate world and a mysterious, magical woman seeking her destiny are catalysts. They ignite a splendid pageantry of battles and quests, poisonous love and triumphant passion, doomed loyalties and unsurpassed courage in this "lost" classic by one of the fathers of modern fantasy.

~ THE ZIMIAMVIAN TRILOGY ~

Each of the books in this unique trilogy is an epic complete in itself. Read together, they form one of the greatest imagined worlds in fantasy literature. This new Dell edition contains recently discovered fragments of The Mezentian Gate, printed here for the first time, along with illuminating notes by E. R. Eddison scholar Paul Edmund Thomas, making this the most complete edition of Zimiamvia ever published.

Zimiamvia: A Trilogy Details

Date : Published August 1st 1992 by Dell

ISBN : 9780440503002

Author : E.R. Eddison , Paul Edmund Thomas (Introduction) , Douglas E. Winter (Foreword)

Format : Paperback 985 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Speculative Fiction, Science Fiction Fantasy, Fiction

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From Reader Review Zimiamvia: A Trilogy for online ebook

Jennie C-knight says

This hefty tome was recommended by J R R Tolkien, one of my favourite authors, and so I persevered with it.

An extraordinary mixture of the exotic, the detailed, and the brutal (one of the characters kills one of his hunting dogs who is misbehaving with his own hands). It took me a while to work out that Aphrodite manifests herself within the various female characters in the book. The over the top" descriptions of physical perfection (in the female characters) and luxurious settings read almost like a parody as they are so extreme. I find myself wondering whether ordinary women (in terms of looks) have any place in the mind of the author. I was also confused by the fact that the women were not in any way "noble" characters but seemed to be excused everything they did on the basis that they were so beautiful. The men are much more well drawn characters and more believable, and therefore more likeable. The author maintains that he is not a poet and yet his descriptions read like poetry - they are beautifully crafted. The time settings switch from the mediaeval to the 1950s without warning, and I was startled to suddenly find parts of Norfolk near where I live described in detail.

Stephen Simpson says

Very mixed feelings. The quality of the writing/language was amazing, but I didn't enjoy the actual story/plot. This is a book that I think can be read and re-read just to hone the craft of writing, but it's not a story that is ever going to resonate with me.

Dave Holcomb says

This is one of the great mid-twentieth century fantasy epics, along with Tolkien and the Lewis' Narnia books, but unlike both of those, Eddison's Zimiamvia is not a place where the meek inherit the earth, or where sacrifice and redemption triumph over evil, but rather a playground for larger-than-life characters romping and rampaging across the shattered lives of a vast crowd of extras who are not in on the game.

The language is Eddison's version of a rather lush sixteenth-century English, and can sometimes get a bit over-precious, but at the same time, the Jacobean rhythms and cadences also provide a feeling of poetry to much of the dialogue, and the major characters are massive, beautifully constructed, moving through the lavish scenery like gothic cathedrals who have learned to dance and fight.

NOTE: The three books were published in reverse order: that is, the first book commences with the death of King Mezentius, while the third book describes his birth. Although Eddison wrote them in that order, and critics have long insisted that they should be read that way, I prefer to work from back to front so that the internal timeline is consistent.

Seth says

Okay, this series can be a hard sell: the language is deliberately (and beautifully) flowery, the setting is antiquated and almost story-book, and the ethos requires admiring evil men for their honor and purity of purpose while accepting that good men will fight one another for the same reason. Plus, it wasn't finished when the author died and some of the chapters in the middle are replaced by notes describing what would happen in them. The cheesy frame story doesn't help.

But it's well worth it. It redeems itself with its ontology and with why its characters act the way they do.

In *Mistress of Mistresses* we are introduced to Zimiamvia, a fantasy land of dukes, princesses, and armies. There is one magician, described as a philosopher, who works his wonders in the garden instead of the battle-field. Our first hero is Lessingham, the perfect specimen of the fighter: a daring general, a dashing leader, and known kingdom-wide for his honor and his mercy. Our second hero is Duke Borganax, the perfect specimen of the lover: painter, devoted to his lover Fiorinda, and known for ruling his prosperous dukedom with kindness and generosity.

If they merged into one protagonist, you would have a book by Heinlein. Instead, the prince's death, an uncertain primogeniture, an unmarried princess, and Lessingham's sense of duty to his evil cousin puts them at the head of opposite armies in a succession war.

The military story is fine: Lessingham and his cousin, the Vicar Horius Parry, versus the combined might of the country's admiral, the duke's own soldiers, and the armies of his allies. In between engagements they and their agents engage in politics, betrayal, and persuasion among the nobility and among criminals.

And of course, whenever they encounter one another--as on the night before hostilities break out, when everyone knows tomorrow will be war so they hold a garden party--they treat one another with civility, leading to some wonderful court insults, lies, and honesty.

A Fish Dinner in Memison drives us deeper into the philosophical side of the story. It takes place during the third book, shortly before a pivotal battle, when the principals come together for an evening and discuss the meaning of life. Trust me, it isn't as boring as it sounds; this isn't *My Dinner With Andre*, it's a chance for gods and goddesses to make themselves known and for the world's mage to explain why the battle makes sense and what the purpose of their sacrifice is. This is an idealist's version of the Bhagavadgita and it explains many of the stranger moments in the first book.

The Mezentian Gate brings the story to a close by going back to before the first book. We see the politics and relationships that led to the war and in many ways resolve the political story that actually hasn't begun yet. This is the most political and "courtly" of the books and it's a wonderful chance for great character interactions.

Some people will try to tell you to read the books backwards, so you get the story in "chronological" order.

Nonsense and heresy.

The events of The Mezentian Gate don't work as well if you haven't yet read *A Fish Dinner in Memison*, *A Fish Dinner...* doesn't work as well if you don't know the characters as antagonists from *Mistress of Mistresses*, and *A Fish Dinner...* spoils too much of the character development in *Mistress...* by telling you

why the universe needs the characters to develop as they do.

These aren't light fantasy, but they aren't nearly as heavy as some other, more popular, books. Give them a try. Read some of the text out loud to get a sense of the beauty of the language. Skip the framing chapters at the beginning of *Mistress* if they bother you (but go back and read them later; they will make sense then).

Get this omnibus edition with the forewords by Thomas and Winter if you can. They make the series a much more rewarding read.
