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THE MYSTIC INITIATIONS OF GANDALF

Although Professor Tolkien assured us that there is no underlying or hidden meaning to his epic trilogy - "THE LORD OF THE RINGS", and that it is simply a tale to be read and enjoyed, to the discerning eye the theme of initiation is a strong thread to be found running throughout the book,

It is because the characters in the book are every evolving and enriching their consciousness that a tale of such length can hold and constantly fire the imagination. Compare the foolish antics of the hobbits at the first visit to the Inn at Bree with the ones that return to scour the Shire. Initiation is an ever growing and constant experience that draws forth the wisdom in a being.

There is much unconscious symbology to be found as we look at the nine travellers who set out from Rivendell. There represented are the five kingdoms in nature; the dwarf representing the mineral kingdom, the elf representing the vegetable kingdom, the hobbits the animal kingdom, the two men the human kingdom, and led by Gandalf the initiate.

For Gandalf a climax of the process was reached at the bridge at Khazad-dum. This thin passage of safety is symbolised under many guises, in descriptions of the razor-edge path that lies between the manifest and the unmanifest universe that dwells on the far side of the Misty Mountains.

Here Gandalf went down and wrested with a nameless horror of the underworld. Perhaps it was a projection of his own psyche, but he emerged victorious and transformed on the mountain top, where he lay - "Naked I was sent back - for a brief time, until my task is done. And naked I lay upon the mountain top. The tower behind was choked with burned and broken stone. I was alone, forgotten without escape upon the hard horn of the world. There I lay staring upward while the stars wheeled over, and each day was as long as a life-age to the earth. Faint to my ears came the gathered rumour of all lands; the springing and the dying, the song and the weeping and the slow everlasting groan of overburdened stone. And so at last Gwaiher the Windlord found me again and he took me up and bore me away".

Here the eagle, ever a representation of man's aspiration, rescues Gandalf from the pinnacle of sight and he returns as the White Rider. We now find him playing a controlling and balancing part in the continuing events. It is he, who from afar defeats the Dark Lord, as Frodo sits in the seat of seeing on Amon Hen.

"And suddenly he felt the Eye. There was an eye in the Dark Tower that did not sleep. He knew that it had become aware of his gaze. A fierce eager will was there. It leapt towards him; almost like a finger he felt it searching for him. Very soon it would nail him down, know just exactly where he was. Amon Lhaw it touched. It glanced upon Tol Brandir - he threw himself from the seat, crouching, covering his head with his grey hood. He heard himself cry out: 'Never! Never!' or was it 'Verily I come, I come unto you'? He could not tell. Then as a flash from some other point of power there came to his mind another thought. Take it off! Take it off! Take off the Ring!

The two powers strove in him. For a moment perfectly balanced between their piercing points, he writhed, tormented. Suddenly he was aware of himself again. Frodo, neither the Voice nor the Eye; free to choose and with one remaining instant in which to do so. He took the Ring off his finger".

The Dark Force will use his mind to dominate, while the white brother only suggests leaving the will free to choose.

Later, when Frodo and Sam are trapped on the side of Mount Doom, it is the eagles of aspiration that carry them off to a time of greater experience and responsibility.

And so the age came to an end as all ages will. And the Rings of Power, the controlling limits, worn by those wise enough to bear them, passed away, leaving behind those who had grown in understanding and strength and could now be relied upon to stand upon their own two feet.



BALLADE OF A VAIN REGRET

"Saint George's Worm was no great shakesto slay;
I'd kill a worm, if one came here today:
Fafnir fell to Nithing. I'm as deft
As Siegfried; and my sword yearns for its prey.
Oh, darn! Why aren't there any dragons left?

"The Dragon of Yberye to no avail
Had human brains. Sir Fouke chopped off his tail!
I have a dagger with a deadly heft
Like Beowulf's. I'd stab through dragon's mail!
Oh, darn! Why aren't there any dragons left?

"A dragon disturbed Sir Rustum's sleep, and so
(As I would) Rustum slew him with a blow!
Smaug was not arrow-proof; Bard's arrow reft
His heart. Beware my fatal shaft and bow!
Oh, darn! Why aren't there any dragons left?

Envoi

"Draconius Supremus here. You stagger
To find I've chopped your sword and bow and dagger?
Well, I eat little men who cry, bereft,
Oh, darn! Why aren't there any dragons left?"

(Exit Little Man, running).

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