



The Grandmaster: A short essay on the Philosopher Roger Zelazny

Mark O. Keen

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This essay focuses on a critical interpretation of likely embedded philosophical elements in Roger Zelazny's *The Chronicles of Amber*. It is based on the presupposition that authors embed hidden meanings in their work and Zelazny was a brilliant author who had embedded philosophical elements into his other collected works. The author surmises that Roger Zelazny, through his book series *The Chronicles of Amber*, was trying to communicate a profound truth to his readers and that the entire *Chronicles of Amber* is a metaphor, a metaphor that has largely escaped modern critical commentary of Zelazny's work.

Much has been written about the philosophy of Roger Zelazny and his inspirations. This complex writer left us collected works numbering over 100 with 16 awards for his work, so there is no shortage of material to study. Many of his science fiction and fantasy stories draw inspiration from Hindu, Christian, Norse, Chinese, Egyptian, Greek and other mythology, so there is clearly a spiritual and philosophical underpinning to his work.

In his *Chronicles of Amber*, Amber - with its central Pattern, was the center of all creation. The Pattern cast an infinite number of Shadow Worlds, and those born to Amberite blood could travel through shadow at will, after first walking (and learning) the Pattern. The Pattern was a drawing, inked in Dworkin's blood, on a giant slab of stone. Whoever was able to walk the Pattern successfully, was able to Walk in Shadow and manipulate the Stuff of Shadow - a hint from the Grandmaster.

By simply taking a stroll and wishing subtle elements of their natural world to change around them, those born to Royal Amberite blood, who had previously walked the Pattern, could instantly travel to other worlds. As the stroller walked and turned a corner, he might imagine that the sky was yellow or that a certain castle was peeking over a hill in the distance. Those changes became real though the magic of the Pattern and allowed the Royal Amberite to change the world they were inhabiting and disappear into Shadow. In a scene of the book, Zelazny tells us that a traveler through shadow begins to look paper-like and thin to the observer before they vanish – perhaps that was another clue to what he was really thinking.

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