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**Eduardo Segura and Thomas M. Honegger, eds, *Myth and Magic: Art according to the Inklings.*
Review by Brandon Dorn
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Eduardo Segura and Thomas M. Honegger, eds. *Myth and Magic: Art according to the Inklings*. United Kingdom: Walking Tree Publishers, 2007. 337 pp. ISBN: 978-3905703085.

Like a good essay, a good collection of essays invites its readers to imagine, and discover, connections and revelations. Indeed, the connecting is the discovering.

Myth and Magic rewards this kind of close reading. The essays are gathered from international authors, from the UK, USA, Switzerland, and a good number from Spain, all of which fall within the realm of Inklings studies, emphasizing their thought on language, art, and the imagination. Each essay acts as a lens through which to understand aspects of the work of these men, Lewis and Tolkien in particular. The best essays, Colin Duriez's, Verlyn Flieger's, and Eduardo Segura's in particular, bridge the Inklings's fiction and nonfiction writings to show the fundamental and enduring patterns of thought that comprise their vision. They demonstrate the cohesive wholeness of Tolkien's and Lewis's understanding of life and art, always informed by their religious convictions. Happily, they send us back to these authors with an expanded sense of who they are and how they see things.

In his introduction to the collection, Segura writes that 'the [essays] have been distributed in no special order, so that they can be read as independent parts of a whole' (iii). The 'whole' that he had in mind seems at first only the shared theme of Inklings scholarship; yet closer reading reveals deeper, more subtle connections.

Three essays focus particularly on Lewis' and Tolkien's use of language. In 'Recovering the "Utterly Alien Land": Tolkien and Transcendentalism', Martin Simonson argues for a clear parallel between Tolkien's conceptions of 'recovery' and 'subcreation', as articulated in 'On Fairy Stories', and the American Transcendentalist ideal of cultivating unity with the cosmos. Each action is a kind of renewal of the imagination, a recognition of connectedness between man and nature, nature and God, man and God: '[Words] present us with the unique possibility to make use of the subcreative gift which, if efficiently expressed, may open up paths toward a new unity with both the natural and supernatural word' (17). Simonson,

among others, emphasizes the centrality of 'subcreation' to Tolkien's thought - the resemblance of man's creation of imaginary worlds through words to God's initial and everlasting creative act.

Dieter Bachman's 'Words for Magic: *goetia*, *gûl*, and *lúth*' distinguishes between Lewis' and Tolkien's definitions of each term as used in Renaissance texts. While the essay does not deal with questions as profound as others in the collection, it does help readers come to terms with the arcane yet significant distinctions between each unfamiliar word. Fernando J. Soto's and Marta García de la Puerta's inquiry into the 'Hidden Meanings of the Name Ransom' proves an enlightening justification for Lewis's christening of the protagonist in his Ransom Trilogy.

A handful of the essays are only loosely connected with myth and magic, yet remain closely tied to fundamental themes and tensions in the Inklings' thought. In 'New Learning and New Ignorance: *Magia*, *Goeteia*, and the Inklings', Tom Shippey demonstrates how Lewis re-framed the conventional triangular opposition of magic, religion, and science by introducing a 'more complex opposition between...scientism and *goeteia*, and...religion and *magia*' (21). The core of Shippey's argument is the 'discrepancy between Lewis's argument about magic in [*English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*] and his fictionalization of magic in *That Hideous Strength*' (30). Lewis distinguishes between magic and *goeteia* in *Sixteenth Century* in order to draw attention to the insidious blending of magic and science that he saw in the world, which the National Institute of Co-ordinated Experiments (N.I.C.E.) embodies in *That Hideous Strength*.

Patrick Curry's 'Iron Crown, Iron Cage' draws a parallel of a similar nature, comparing Tolkien's vision of modernity with that of social critic Max Weber. Writing thirty years prior, Weber's critique of the 'disenchanted' worldview accompanying the onset of the Industrial Revolution anticipated Tolkien's distinction between 'magic', associated with the ego-centric will, and 'enchantment', 'the realization, independent of the conceiving mind, of imagined wonder' (100). Each represents the will to power of the modern empire with related metaphors: Tolkien's image of the iron crown of Morgoth in *The Silmarillion*, Weber's use of the iron cage in his criticism (105).

Eugenio M. Olivares-Merino explores Tolkien's conception of Grendel in 'A Monster that Matters', giving a thorough contextualization of Tolkien's essay 'Beowulf: The Monster and the Critics' within the author's own works and contemporary academic thought concerning the epic. The essay excels in its connections to Tolkien's fiction, showing a clear correspondence between Beowulf, Grendel, and Cain, and Frodo, Gollum, and Sméagol, resembling John Garth's essay

‘As Under a Green Sea’. Garth relates Tolkien’s fiction to his coming to terms with his experience fighting in World War I and the onset of World War II, as revealed in journal entries and letters to his son, Christopher.

Flieger’s essay on Tolkien’s idea of Faërie, ‘When is a Fairy Story a Faërie Story?’, like Shippey’s, illuminates a fundamental distinction that the author embodied in his fiction. For Tolkien, Fairy Stories and Faërie stories were different in kind: “visits of fairies to the mortal world...are the stuff of standard fairy tales,” Flieger points out, whereas faërie stories exude a near-ineffable sense of the world of these creatures (58). Flieger helps readers read *Smith of Wootton Major* as the representation of Faërie, rather than ‘allegorizing its simplicities...looking for a message rather than a meaning’ (58). Margaret Carretero-Gonzaléz also has appropriate ways of reading in mind in her essay, ‘A Tale as Old as Time, Freshly Told Anew’, which is a reading of the Harry Potter series alongside *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Carretero-Gonzaléz reveals the shared mythic qualities of the series using the Inklings’ work and thought as a backdrop.

Carretero-Gonzaléz’s essay is one of five others in the collection that examine the nature and functions of Myth as the Inklings understood it. In ‘A Kind of Orpheus-Legend in Reverse’, Miryam Librán-Moreno draws substantial parallels between the Beren and Lúthien elements of Tolkien’s legendarium and the Orpheus-Eurydice and Protesilaus-Laodemia myths. Thomas Honneger assesses what he perceives to be Tolkien’s purpose for his legendarium in ‘A Mythology for England’, and surprises the reader by ultimately giving Tolkien a failing grade, though still praising his work: ‘...the English, in spite of Tolkien’s astonishing creativity, are still without a “mythology for England” proper... What we have [from Tolkien] is a vast and somewhat ramshackle collection of tales and legends that have sprung from the depths of a genuinely “English” creativity’ (126).

Devin Brown’s essay, ‘Lewis’s View of Myth as a Conveyor of Deepest Truth’, functions similarly to Flieger’s by showing how Lewis found ‘a creative format to be more powerful than an expository one’ for representing fundamental truths (131). Brown contrasts the fictional and non-fictional representations of three aspects of Christian experience that Lewis treats in his fiction and non-fiction – God’s absence when one asks to be ‘left alone,’ the pain of repentance, and the miraculous healing of redemption. He points out that ‘over and over again we find that the works that affect and transform [Lewis’s] character are myths not philosophy’ (134).

‘Leaf by Niggle and the Aesthetics of Gift’ by Eduardo Segura is one of the best essays in the group for its comprehension of the interrelation between faith and imagination in Tolkien’s life. As Brown and Flieger do, Segura connects Tolkien’s

fiction with arguments laid out in his essays, further substantiated by his Catholic convictions. He emphasizes Tolkien's aversion to allegory, quoting his foreword to *The Lord of the Rings*: 'I think that many confuse "applicability" with "allegory"; but the one resides in the freedom of the reader, and the other in the purposed domination of the author'. Myths, Segura argues, function as a gift for the reader in the freedom of interpretation allowed, the multiplicity of meanings, a concept embodied in Tolkien's *Leaf by Niggle*.

Colin Duriez's essay 'Myth, Fact, and Incarnation' focuses upon a similar thread in Lewis's work and provides a profound synthesis of the author's lifelong study of Myth and its ability to bridge the abstract and concrete. As with Tolkien, Lewis's thought springs from his religious convictions: for Lewis, 'the integration of myth and fact, the abstract and the concrete, is most fully expressed in the incarnation and resurrection of Christ' (91). Duriez's essay is not so much an argument as an exploration of Lewis's thought in the vein of Montaigne – leisurely and precisely finding connections and influences in Coleridge, MacDonald, Barfield, and Tolkien. The essay culminates in Lewis's 'theory of transposition', in which Lewis 'reveal[s] his tangible vision of how all things – especially the natural and supernatural – cohere' (95). Here one sees the relationship of transposition to Tolkien's concept of subcreation, as Simonson discusses it, and learns more about how each author understands the artistic creation of Myth.

Criticisms of the collection are few. Although there are, at times, patches of academic self-consciousness in the pieces that can distract from the profound subjects at hand (Olivares-Merino gives a three-page preamble to his essay, stating his intent and apologizing for quoting Tolkien as much as he does), the best writing, like that of the Inklings, feels at once accessible and sophisticated. For the most part the essays are intended for an academic audience, so a high instance of qualifying statements can be forgiven for the sake of intellectual precision. And though we see sprinklings of his thoughts, not enough attention is given to the work of Owen Barfield, one of the more elusive Inklings. He is referenced in Duriez's essay, as well as Simonson's, yet his work is not the focal point of any of the pieces.

As a whole, the essays succeed in their task of returning readers to the primary works with appetites whetted. They refresh our sense of the authors and their work, and show the coherence of their fiction and non-fiction, the unity of vision that suffused their lives.

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