

Rodica Albu

INKLINGS IN ROMANIA

Compared to fifteen years ago, when the author of these lines was striving hard to rouse the interest of a Romanian publishing house in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C. S. Lewis (which finally came out as *Leul, vrăjitoarea și garderoba*, Iasi, Chisinau: Junimea & Hyperion, in 1993), the Romanian reader has now become receptive to at least two of the four major names in the Inklings group: Tolkien and Lewis. The *Lord of the Rings* film trilogy and the recent version of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (2005) played, of course, their part in raising people's awareness of, and interest in, the fabulous worlds created by Tolkien and Lewis. The enterprising Bucharest publishing house RAO sensed "the course of history" and embarked upon publishing in Romanian translation the Narnia Chronicles (1997–2003), now available as an elegant set (*Cronicile din Narnia*, RAO, 2006), as well as *The Lord of the Rings* (2000–2003) and *The Silmarillion* (2003). Other publishing houses hosted Romanian translations of some of C. S. Lewis's other works, as follows:

- Lewis, C. S., *Scrisorile lui Zgîndărilă. Scrisorile unui drac bătrîn către un drac tînăr*, (The Screwtape Letters) translated by Mirela Rădoi, Cluj-Napoca: Logos, 1993
- Lewis, C. S., *Depart de planeta tăcută* (Far from the Silent Planet), translated by Mirela Rădoi, Cluj-Napoca: Logos, 1995.
- Lewis, C. S., *Despre minuni. Cele patru iubiri. Problema durerii* (Miracles. The Four Loves. The Problem of Pain), translated by Sorin Mărculescu and Vlad Russo, București: Humanitas, 1997.
- Lewis, C. S., *Despre minuni* (Miracles), translated by Sorin Mărculescu, București: Humanitas, 2001 (first published in

the earlier volume *Despre minuni. Cele patru iubiri. Problema durerii*, 1997).

Lewis, C. S., *Sfaturile unui diavol bătrîn către unul mai tînăr* (The Screwtape Letters), translated by Sorana Corneanu, Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2003.

Lewis, C. S., *Creştinism. Pur şi simplu* (Mere Christianity), Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2004.

Lewis, C. S., *Treburile cereşti* (The Business of Heaven), 2 volumes, Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2005¹

Lewis, C. S., *Desfiinţarea omului* (The Abolition of Man), Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2004.

The philosopher Robert Lazu, from Timisoara, is the first Romanian who succeeded in elaborating – and publishing – a critical monograph devoted to the Hobbits' creator. Entitled *Lumea lui Tolkien* (*Tolkien's World*), the book published in Arad by the Hartmann PH Publishing House (2004) met with immediate success. By quickly taking the necessary steps in devising an Internet site entirely devoted to the critical reception of the Oxonian writer, Lazu managed to bring together initiates able to explore the significance of the events taking place in the fabulous universe of Middle-earth. The English translation of Chapter 4, "The Fantastic Secret of Tolkien's Fairy-Tales. Literature & Spiritual Exercises", from *Tolkien's World* (Hartmann Publishing House, 2004, pp. 94–120) is available on line at <http://robert.lazu.ro/>.

The book was followed by another volume devoted to the Oxonian master of imagination: *J. R. R. Tolkien. Credinţă şi imaginaţie* (*J. R. R. Tolkien Belief and Imagination*), Arad: Hartmann, 2005.

¹ Somewhat ironically, the first Lewis translation was published outside Romania in the '80s: *Creştinismul redus la esenţe* (*Mere Christianity*), Societatea Misionară Română, Wheaton, Illinois, 1987. As for Tolkien, the first time hobbits were introduced to the Romanian readership was in 1975 when Catinca Ralea's excellent translation *O poveste cu un hobbit* (*The Hobbit*), came out (Bucureşti: Ed. Ion Creangă). A new edition of this version, entitled *Hobbitul* this time, was issued by RAO in 2002, and Junona Tutunea's translation *Povestea unui hobbit* appeared in 1995 (Ploieşti: Ed. Elit).

This is a collective volume co-ordinated by the distinguished American professor of Romanian descent Virgil Nemoianu (Catholic University of America – Washington D. C.) and the same Robert Lazu, still very young but already highly respected as philosopher, moral thinker, essay writer and cultural activist. The two manage to bring under the same cover articles by Romanian recognised authorities in Tolkien studies side by side with some of the internationally recognised Tolkien specialists: Virgil Nemoianu, Bradley Birzer and Joseph Pearce (USA), Stratford Caldecott (England), Wilhelm Danca, Gyorfi-Deak Gyorgy and Robert Lazu (Romania), Christopher Garbowski (Poland), Andrew Nimmo (Australia), Michael Waldstein (Austria). Although diverse in their orientation, all the texts aim at evidencing the theological and mythological depths of Tolkien's work. It has been remarked upon the "Intercontinental character" of this work since its authors come from such distant countries as Austria, USA or Poland.

At the other end of the country (if one crosses it diagonally), in Iasi, Rodica Albu continued her effort to create a Romanian readership for the Inklings and, together with students, former students, and friends, selected, translated or/and elaborated a collection of texts *by* and *about* the Inklings, which was printed by "Al. I. Cuza" University Publishing House in 2004. The volume, entitled *Inklings. Litera și spiritul (Inklings. The Letter and the Spirit)* includes translations, accompanied by introductory notes, of excerpts from the writings of the "hard nucleus" – Lewis, Tolkien, Williams, Barfield – the integral translation of *The Abolition of Man* by Lewis, as well as biographical and critical texts by Rodica Albu, Daniel Callam, Mihaela Cernăuți-Gorodețchi, Jan Curtis, Astrid Diener, Hope Kirkpatrick, David Llewelyn Dodds, Peter Russel and Elmar Schenkel. Rodica Albu's present ambition is to pave the way to the reception of Barfield's work in Romania.

At present the Tolkien fans look forward to the publication of the *Encyclopaedia of Tolkien's World* conceived and co-ordinated by Robert Lazu and written by him in collaboration with Mihaela Cernăuți-Gorodețchi, Györfi-Deák György (author of several articles about the reception of Yeats in Romania for the e-jour-

nal of literary criticism entitled *Pro-Scris*), Teodora Ghivirigă and others, which is due to come out at the RAO Publishing House this year. Lazu's volumes devoted to Tolkien, as well his recent participation in the Oxford Tolkien Conference *The Lord of the Rings: Sources of Inspiration* with the paper "Inside the Belly of the Dragon: Levels of Initiation in Tolkien's Works" (see abstract at <http://www.tolkiensoxford.com/abstracts.asp>) place him in the forefront of present-day Tolkien specialists.

To be continued – no doubt.