

## C. S. LEWIS COMES TO ROMANIA 1977–2022

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### **Abstract**

This paper traces the history of the entry into Romanian cultural space the works and ideas of one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's leading Christian scholars and writers, C. S. Lewis over the past 45 years. It does this in two ways: by presenting a comprehensive history of translations into Romanian of Lewis's writings from the 1970s to the present, and, secondly, by sketching the history of the Iași Phenomenon, a successful project to promote the study of Lewis and kindred spirits.

### **Keywords**

C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, the Inklings, Romania, Narnia, Rodica Albu, Denise Vasiliu, A. I. Cuza University Iași, Humanitas publishing house, C. S. Lewis and Kindred Spirits Society, Christian apologetics, Christian scholarship

## Introduction

**T**HIS IS the story of C. S. Lewis coming to Romania. Who was C. S. Lewis and why is he important? Lewis (1898–1963) was a fellow and tutor in English Literature at Magdalen College in Oxford University from 1925 to 1954, and held the chair on Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge University from 1954 to 1963. While teaching at Oxford, he formed a close friendship with J. R. R. Tolkien, who later achieved fame as the author of *The Lord of the Rings*. Lewis had been an atheist from youth, but following a prolonged philosophical exploration and influenced by Tolkien, he became a Christian in the early 1930s. An informal circle of like-minded writers gathered around Lewis and Tolkien in the mid-1930s called the Inklings, who discussed ideas—particularly those related to the Christian faith—listened to each other read

from works in progress, and offered criticisms and suggestions. By the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, study of the writings and the lives of the Inklings had become a world-wide phenomenon.<sup>1</sup>

Lewis began but soon decided that he was not destined to become a famous poet. However, his poetic proclivities and efforts impacted significantly his later wildly successful prose. (Interestingly, the same was true of Tolkien.) In the 1930s, Lewis began to publish important works of literary scholarship that eventually led to his election to the British Academy. At the same time, following his conversion, Lewis began to publish numerous volumes on Christian apologetics as well as on his own spiritual development; and several substantial works of fiction. Altogether, Lewis published more than 30 books in his lifetime and another 30 or so (mostly collections of essays and correspondence) have appeared posthumously. A testimony to the perennial quality of Lewis as a writer is the fact that all of his books are still in print.

What made Lewis's works so effective and so enduringly popular? Lewis's writings combined relentless logic with a poetic imagination which he presented in an attractive style accessible to large audiences while never talking down to his audience. As Donald Baillie, a leading theologian from the University of St. Andrews, stated, Lewis was noteworthy and important because he "succeeded in capturing the attention of many who will not readily listen to professional theologians" while he "arranged a new kind of marriage between theological reflection and poetic imagination."<sup>2</sup> As for approachability and affability, one need go no further than Lewis's World War II BBC lectures on Christianity which attracted a listenership of millions, both of the most educated and of the most humble. For many, reading or listening to Lewis was a lot like carrying on a conversation with a trusted friend.

For his efforts, C. S. Lewis became internationally well-known, appearing on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1947; had a chair created for him at Cambridge in 1954; was elected a member of the British Academy in 1955; had his works translated into innumerable foreign languages; and in 2013, on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death, received the distinction of being given a memorial plaque in Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey.

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1. For the life and work of C. S. Lewis, see Walter Hooper, *C. S. Lewis: A Companion and Guide* (London: HarperCollins, 1996); Jeffrey D. Schultz and John G. West, Jr., eds., *The C. S. Lewis Readers' Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998); Bruce L. Edwards, ed., *C. S. Lewis. Life, Works, and Legacy*, 4 vols. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007); and Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to C. S. Lewis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Hooper provides an extensive bibliography on Lewis's works.
  2. Quoted in Alister McGrath, *The Intellectual World of C. S. Lewis* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), p. 163.

## I. Stage One: Under Communism to 1989

**B**UT FOR all that, C. S. Lewis was very late in coming onto the Romanian scene. Prior to 1990, he was virtually unknown in Romania. How and why this was so has been expertly and cogently described and analyzed in a 2014 article by the Romanian scholar Emanuel Conțac entitled “The Reception of C. S. Lewis in Post-Communist Romania.”<sup>3</sup> Among the reasons for the delay that Conțac singles out were the facts that Lewis came from the British space and not the dominant foreign one of France; the cultural isolation of Romania following the communist takeover after the Second World War occurred just as Lewis was coming to prominence in the West; and, lastly, there was the fact that Lewis’s Christianity permeated his work, something that would not recommend him to the cultural establishment of a communist bloc country.

The first work to penetrate the Romanian space was an underground publication of Lewis’s *Leul, vrăjitoarea și dulapul* (The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, 1950), which appeared in the mid-to-late 1970s.<sup>4</sup> The book contained no publisher or date; it is likely that it was probably produced by Rev. Pete Popovici’s Romanian Baptist Church of Chicago.<sup>5</sup>

The second Lewis book to breach the Romanian Iron Curtain was *Creștinismul redus la esențe* (Mere Christianity, 1952), with an introduction to Romanian readers.<sup>6</sup> This appeared in 1987 in an edition of 3,000 copies, and was a project of Josif Țon and the Societatea Misionară Română. The translator was Livius Percy and John Tipei was the editor. Dănuț Mănăstireanu writes that this translation was important to “young Christian intellectuals” like

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3. Emanuel Conțac, “The Reception of C. S. Lewis in Post-Communist Romania,” *Linguaculture* (Iași), vol. 5, no. 2 (2014), pp. 123–141. I am grateful to Prof. Conțac for permission to extensively refer to his article as well as for graciously and helpfully responding to a number of questions. Also valuable here was the work of Teofil Stanciu, “C. S. Lewis în limba română,” posted 30 June 2013 at <https://scriptorie.wordpress.com/2013/06/30/c-s-lewis-in-limba-romana/>, last accessed 1 March 2022.
  4. C. S. Lewis, *Leul, vrăjitoarea și dulapul*, unknown translator, no location, publisher, or date. Conțac thinks it might be 1977. Conțac, “Reception,” p. 131. It was customary for the communist era not to include such information to protect translators and editors who might have relatives in Romania; and to protect readers who might suffer reprisals for having in their possession religious matter printed outside of Romania.
  5. Conțac, “Reception,” pp. 131–132. Dănuț Mănăstireanu, “C. S. Lewis, Reluctant Convert and (Not So) Ordinary Anglican,” *Linguaculture*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2014), pp. 57–65, attests to the existence of the 1970s version “the first Lewis book I had ever read,” though he was later surprised to find Lewis’s Narnian stories for children being referenced in British seminaries to illustrate theological points.
  6. C. S. Lewis, *Creștinismul redus la esențe*, translated by Livius Percy, edited by John Tipei (Wheaton, IL: Societatea Misionară Română, 1987). The translator and editor are not mentioned in the book, but are identified by Conțac, “Reception,” p. 132.

himself, “who were constantly being pressed to defend the rationality of our existential option...”<sup>7</sup>

An attempt by the SMR to publish a translation of *The Screwtape Letters* (1942) in 1987–1988, foundered because of costs.<sup>8</sup> These represented the extent of pre–1989 Lewis publication in Romania.

## II. Stage Two: 1990–2014

**F**OLLOWING THE collapse of communism in Romania, translation and readership of the works of C. S. Lewis were facilitated by the reality that Lewis is not identified in his work with a commitment to a particular Christian confession. This made him accessible to a wide variety of Christian groups, ranging from Protestant of all sorts to Roman Catholic to Eastern Orthodox.<sup>9</sup>

What were the ways in which C. S. Lewis first came to Romania? Conțac usefully sets forth four ways in which C. S. Lewis “permeated Romanian culture.” These were

- 1) as a “scholarly author known to a restricted circle of intellectuals;
- 2) as the author of Christian devotional and apologetic works “promoted by Evangelical publishers”;
- 3) as the author of classic Christian works; and
- 4) as the “author of fiction for children.”<sup>10</sup>

The first category—literary scholar and medieval historian—continues to the present as a virtual void in the Romanian language. The sole exception to this is a collection of Lewis’s literary commentaries, *Despre lumea aceasta și despre alte lumi* (*Of This and Other Worlds*, 1982),<sup>11</sup> which, Conțac points out, doesn’t really testify to Lewis’s proficiency and importance as a medieval and Renaissance scholar. However, individual scholars were familiar with Lewis’s work, including N. Steinhardt, Andrei Pleșu, Ștefan Nenițescu, and Virgil Nemoianu. Pleșu, in particular, thoroughly perused Lewis’s writings, both scholarly (such as *The Allegory of Love*, 1936, *Studies in Words*, 1960, and *The Discarded Image*,

7. Mănăstireanu, “Lewis,” pp. 57–58. He also notes that the book had to be smuggled into Romania because “at that time religious literature was regarded by the secret police as fully as dangerous as drugs, arms, or pornography.”

8. Conțac, “Reception,” pp. 132–133.

9. Conțac, “Reception,” pp. 124.

10. Conțac, “Reception,” pp. 124–125.

11. C. S. Lewis, *Despre lumea aceasta și despre alte lumi*, translated by Bianca Rizzoli (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2011).

1964), as well as key apologetic works (such as *Mere Christianity*, 1952 and *The Problem of Pain*, 1940) during two grants in West Germany prior to 1989.<sup>12</sup>

The second category has to do with C. S. Lewis and Romanian Evangelicalism.<sup>13</sup> Activity in this sphere is no surprise since, world-wide, Evangelical circles are the most avid and devoted readers of Lewis's writings. Following the collapse of the Socialist Republic of Romania in 1989, the still-born Screwtape project was revived and the book was published in 1993 by Logos Press in Cluj,<sup>14</sup> as *Scrisorile lui Zgândărilă: Scrisorile unui drac bătrân către un drac tânăr*.<sup>15</sup> Logos printed 10,000 copies, which greatly over-estimated the market for such a book.<sup>16</sup>

Logos followed this with the first volume of Lewis's Space Trilogy, *Departa de planeta tăcută* (*Out of the Silent Planet*, 1938), translated by Mirela Drăgoi.<sup>17</sup> This volume also misjudged the market with a publication of 5,000 copies and the rest of the trilogy never went beyond the project stage.<sup>18</sup>

A second Evangelical publisher active in Lewis translations was Kerigma, which came out with a translation in 2014 of Lewis's *A Grief Observed* (1961) as *Anatomia unei dureri*, translated by Cornel Țicărat.<sup>19</sup> To this should be added a Lewis-related book which contains some 18 letters from Lewis to the author: Sheldon Vanauken's *A Severe Mercy* (1977), translated in 2008 by Gela Bâlc as *Îndurare aspră*.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, in 2008, the now-defunct Editura Aqua Forte publishing house published a translation of Colin Duriez's invaluable *O călăuză prin Narnia și prin întreaga operă a lui C. S. Lewis*, translated by Maria Ștefănescu and Valentin Dan.<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately it did not get the circulation it deserved, but made a definite contribution to Lewis studies in Romania.

12. Coțac, "Reception," pp. 126–131.

13. For Romanian Evangelicalism, see Paul E. Michelson, "The History of Romanian Evangelicals, 1918–1989: A Bibliographical Excursus," *Archiva Moldaviae*, vol. 9 (2017), pp. 191–197.

14. Dănuț Mănăstireanu was at the time editor-in-chief of Logos. He notes that the artist Logos commissioned to do the illustrations, Marcel Chirnoagă, told them when offered the contract: "You have come to the right person; I am a specialist in demons." Mănăstireanu, "Lewis," p. 58.

15. C. S. Lewis, *Scrisorile lui Zgândărilă: Scrisorile unui drac bătrân către un drac tânăr*, translated by Mirela Rădoi (Cluj: Logos, 1993).

16. Coțac, "Reception," pp. 133–134.

17. C. S. Lewis, *Departa de planeta tăcută*, translated by Mirela Drăgoi (Cluj: Logos, 1995).

18. Coțac, "Reception," p. 134.

19. C. S. Lewis, *Anatomia unei dureri*, translated by Cornel Țicărat with a foreword by Madeleine L'Engle and an introduction by Douglas Gresham (Oradea: Kerigma, 2014).

20. Sheldon Vanauken, *Îndurare aspră*, translated by Gela Bâlc (Oradea: Kerigma, 2008).

21. Colin Duriez, *O călăuză prin Narnia și prin întreaga operă a lui C. S. Lewis*, translated by Maria Ștefănescu and Valentin Dan (Cluj: Aqua Forte, 2008). The original title was Colin Duriez, *A Field Guide to Narnia*, with a foreword by Brian Sibley (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

The continuing problems that confronted Evangelical publishers were numerous: too few competent translators, prohibitive publishing rights costs, and escalating printing expenses. On the other hand, after 1989, considerable numbers of Western Evangelical authors found their way into print in Romania as well as Lewis, including, among others, N. T. Wright, John Piper, Tim Keller, Philip Yancey, Alister McGrath, D. A. Carson, Carl F. H. Henry, and John R. W. Stott.<sup>22</sup> And since many of these authors quote Lewis, in the end this was another way of growing Lewis's name recognition and stature in Romania.<sup>23</sup>

Conța's third category was the appearance of books by C. S. Lewis from secular publishers. The trailblazer in this was Romania's leading "serious" publisher, Humanitas. Andrei Pleșu, who was responsible for the founding of Humanitas, was able to promote the publication of numerous translations (ten in all by 2014) of key books by Lewis in fairly substantial print runs.<sup>24</sup> The first to appear was a combined edition in 1997 of three important books: *Despre minuni* (*Miracles*, 1947), *Cele patru iubiri* (*The Four Loves*, 1960), and *Problema durerii* (*The Problem of Pain*, 1940), the first two translated by Sorin Mărculescu, the last by Vlad Russo.<sup>25</sup> This was followed in 2003 by *Sfaturile unui diavol bătrîn către unul mai tânăr* (*The Screwtape Letters*, 1942), translated by Sorana Corneanu; *Desființarea omului* (*The Abolition of Man*, 1943) in 2004, translated by Petruța-Oana Năiduț; *Creștinismul, pur și simplu* (*Mere Christianity*, 1952) in 2004, translated by Dan Rădulescu,<sup>26</sup> an anthology, *The Business of Heaven*,

22. Mention should be made of the Societatea Misionară Română in Wheaton, Illinois, which also published a number of translations into Romanian of Western Evangelical writers such as Paul Little, Billy Graham, and John MacArthur, Jr.
23. Conța, "Reception," pp. 134–135.
24. Mănăstireanu relates a meeting he had with the head of Humanitas, Gabriel Liiceanu, and Andrei Pleșu in the early 2000s. "From their conversation I realised that Andrei Pleșu was in fact the moving spirit behind the publication of Lewis's works by this major publishing house." Mănăstireanu, "Lewis," pp. 58–59.
25. Bucharest: Humanitas, 1997. *Despre minuni* was published separately by Humanitas in 2001 and 2007; and *Problema durerii* in 2007.
26. There has been some debate over the quality and choices made by the translators of the two versions of *Mere Christianity* into Romanian. For an excellent, scholarly analysis, see Teodora Ghivirigă, "Of Virtues and Vices of Christians and Translators: The Two Romanian Versions of C. S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity*," in *C. S. Lewis—His Life and His Heritage*, edited by Teodora Ghivirigă and Daniela Vasiliu, with an Introduction by Rodica Albu (Iași: Editura Universității Alexandru Ioan Cuza din Iași, 2021), pp. 131–145. Ghivirigă concludes that although the two versions differ, this divergence is not as great as was previously assumed. There are a number of "instances of (possibly) misunderstanding of the source text, of mistranslation or infelicitous use of the target language code in providing the best equivalent," but both are valuable: the 1987 version for providing "a bridge of common Christian spirituality across languages and cultures in times of political distress," and the 2004 edition for a "rendition that would attract and please as large a readership as possible, which would have definitely won Lewis's acceptance." In the end, she suggests, perhaps "a third version" is needed which would combine the virtues of the first two efforts (p. 144).

1984), edited by Walter Hooper, published 2005 as *Treburii cerești*, two volumes, translated by Mirela Adăscăliței.<sup>27</sup>

Between 2008 and 2013, Humanitas published a series of translations by Emanuel Conțac, who brought greater theological nuance and sophistication to a number of subsequent Humanitas publications of Lewis.<sup>28</sup> These included *Surprins de bucurie* (*Surprised by Joy*, 1955) in 2008; *Ferigi și elefanți și alte eseuri despre creștinism* (*Fern-seed and Elephants*, 1975) in 2011; and *Meditații la Psalmii* (*Reflections on the Psalms*, 1958) in 2013. Humanitas also published in 2011, *Despre lumea aceasta și despre alte lumi* (*Of This and Other Worlds*, 1982), translated by Bianca Rizzoli; and in 2013 *Marea despărțire* (*The Great Divorce*, 1946), translated by Alexandru Macoveșcu.

Curiously, the contribution of the secular publisher, RAO, to the Romanian Lewis corpus—that is the first complete publishing of *Lewis's Narnian Chronicles* (1950–1956) for children—is dealt with by Conțac only in his Bibliographical Appendix. The RAO edition, published between 1997 and 2003, followed the new chronological order preferred by HarperCollins: vol. 1, *Nepotul magicianului*; vol. 2, *Șifonierul, leul și vrăjitoarea*; vol. 3, *Calul și băiatul*; vol. 4, *Prințul Caspian*; vol. 5, *Călătorie pe mare cu Zori-de-Zi*; vol. 6, *Jițul de argint*; vol. 7, *Ultima bătălie*; vols. 1, 2, and 4 were translated by Larisa Avram; vol. 3 was translated by Simona Neagu; vols. 4, 5, and 7 were translated by Irina Negrea. These volumes have gone through multiple editions and printings. The appearance of the first three Narnia movies in Romania between 2005 and 2010—which came out in the publication order, beginning with *Leul, vrăjitoarea și dulapul* followed by *Prințul Caspian* and then *Călătorie pe mare cu Zori-de-Zi*—had a definite impact on the sales of Romanian translations of the Narnian books, and, doubtless on the diffusion of all other Lewis translations and Lewis related writings.<sup>29</sup>

With regard to *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1950), prior to 2015, no fewer than three Romanian versions appeared. The first came out possibly 1977, in the “underground” edition, *Leul, vrăjitoarea și dulapul*, discussed above. The second appeared in 1993 under the title *Leul, vrăjitoarea și garderoba*, translated by Rodica Albu (about whom more anon) with a “Preface for Children...” and a “Postscript for Parents” by the translator and illustrated by the noted artist Val Munteanu. It was jointly published in Iași and Chișinău by

27. For comments on print runs and other matters related to Humanitas, see Conțac, “Reception,” pp. 135–136.

28. Dr. Conțac is a professor at the Pentecostal Theological Institute, Bucharest.

29. *Leul, vrăjitoarea și dulapul* (2005); *Prințul Caspian* (2008), and *Călătorie pe mare cu Zori-de-Zi* (2010). See Carmen Angelus Romila, “The Chronicles of Narnia—Cronicile din Narnia,” 13 Nov. 2017, <https://www.cinemagia.ro/liste/the-chronicles-of-narnia-cronicile-din-narnia-14315/>, last accessed 3 March 2022.

Junimea and Hyperion, both secular publishers and stands with the 1993 Logos edition of *Screwtape Letters* (discussed previously) as the first Lewis books published legally in Romania. The third version of Lewis's tale was, of course, the 1997 RAO edition. The existence of three versions of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* with three slightly different titles has, naturally, raised translation issues just as in the case of Romanian versions of *Mere Christianity*.<sup>30</sup>

This stage was concluded with the appearance of Conțac's study of "The Reception of C. S. Lewis" in 2014,<sup>31</sup> which not only revealed for the first time the depth and breadth of the entry of the writings of C. S. Lewis in translation into Romanian culture, but also provided an impeccable scholarly appreciation of this phenomenon on which Lewis studies in Romania could be built.

How should the work of those who brought numerous works of Lewis into Romanian translations be regarded? Dănuț Mănăstireanu summarized in 2014:

Although until about two decades ago Lewis was only known to a minority of Romanian literary specialists and to some members of the quite small Evangelical community, since then . . . Lewis has become well known to the wider public in our country.

He goes on to give Andrei Pleșu well-deserved thanks "for his critical role in making the works of this remarkable author and writer available to the Romanian readership."<sup>32</sup> In the final analysis, Conțac concludes, in the 1990s, Lewis's work was

too multifaceted an author to appeal only to a single denominational market . . . Now fifty years after his death, Lewis's works have permeated a neutral denominational space and drawn to themselves readers from all theological traditions . . . [As] new titles are added to the Lewis oeuvre in Romanian, his position as a point of reference will become more firmly recognized, and interest in "the other Lewis" (the author of the space trilogy and the literary and historical scholar) will increase.<sup>33</sup>

30. These are discussed in Sorina Antonese's 2016 dissertation at Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, "A Diachronic Analysis of the Translation and Retranslation of C. S. Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia—*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*," and her "The Retranslation Hypothesis and the Three Romanian Versions of *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*," in *C. S. Lewis—His Life and His Heritage*, pp. 109–130. As will be seen below, a fourth version of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* appeared in 2015.

31. Conțac, "Reception," passim.

32. Mănăstireanu, "Lewis," pp. 58–59.

33. Conțac, "Reception," pp. 137–138.



### III. Professor Rodica Albu and the Iași Phenomenon and Project

CONȚAC CONCLUDED his analysis of the 1989–2014 reception of the works of C. S. Lewis with a section on the work of Professor Rodica Albu, a linguist in the Department of English at the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași,<sup>34</sup> who had been present on the Lewis scene in Romania virtually from its creation. Albu had been apprised of the existence of the original English edition of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* at the British Council Library in București in the late 1980s by a student (this was Teodora Ghivirigă, later to become a linguistics professor at Iași and a leading Lewis and Tolkien expert herself).<sup>35</sup> Albu somehow had a copy made and translated it on the fly to her daughter. She was attracted by Lewis's delightful prose and fascinated by the parallels that might be made between life in communist Romania and a Narnia in which it was always winter, such as those between the wicked and cruel White Witch who held Narnia in sub-freezing thrall and the wicked and cruel wife of Romania's dictator, Elena Ceaușescu, who held Romanian culture in the manacles of a seemingly interminable communist nightmare. This was the taproot of the C. S. Lewis Iași Phenomenon.

To the surprise of almost everyone, in 1989, the endless East European communist winter not only thawed, but melted completely away (though not without leaving Romania and other communist bloc countries dysfunctional for subsequent decades).<sup>36</sup> In 1990, Rodica Albu took her completed translation of *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* to Junimea publishing house in Iași to see if it could be published, but this proved complicated. Finally—Albu having acquired for Junimea the publication rights and arranging for the printing to be done in the Republic of Moldova by Hyperion publishing house—the book was published in 1993. However, Junimea's rights to Narnia expired in 1993 and RAO bought the rights and began publishing their edition in 1997. By Rodica Albu's own account, the true Narnia boom did not explode in Romanian until the appearance of the Narnian movies in 2006. Prior to that, in 1990, when she

34. Conțac, "Reception," pp. 136–137.

35. In addition to several articles on and translations of Lewis, she also wrote and translated Tolkien and contributed more than a dozen articles to Robert Lazu (coord.), Mihaela Cernăuți–Gorodețchi, and György Györfi–Deák, eds., *Enciclopedia lumii lui J. R. R. Tolkien* (Târgu-Lăpuș: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2007). See also her "A Story of Sharing and Learning," *C. S. Lewis and Kindred Spirits Newsletter for Central and Eastern Europe*, vol. 1, no. 3 (2021), pp. 1–2.

36. See Paul and Jean Michelson, "Post-Communist Romania: A Dysfunctional Society in Transition," in *Mentalități și instituții: Carențe de mentalitate și înapoiere instituțională în România modernă*, edited by Adrian-Paul Iliescu (Bucharest: Ars Docendi, 2002), pp. 61–97.

asked acquaintances what they knew about C. S. Lewis or Narnia, the usual response was “Nothing.”<sup>37</sup>

In the meantime, Albu, on a 1991 exchange at the University of Freiburg, met there Elmar Schenkel, and through him, made contact with the German *Inklings-Gesellschaft für Literatur und Ästhetik*. The following year, she met at a conference in Romania Mary Woodiwiss, the wife of an American Fulbright grantee from Wheaton College in Illinois. Wheaton is the home of the Marion E. Wade Center, the leading center of studies about C. S. Lewis and a unique repository of materials by and about Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Dorothy L. Sayers, George MacDonald, G. K. Chesterton, Owen Barfield, and Charles Williams.<sup>38</sup> Mrs. Woodiwiss put her in touch with the Wade which provided her with copies of materials from its collection. And in 1995, while in Oxford, Albu met Astrid Diener who was completing work on a dissertation about another of Lewis’s Inklings friends, Owen Barfield, further broadening her familiarity with others of Lewis’s circle.

Albu eventually brought together these diverse strands of her C. S. Lewis and kindred spirits encounters (6° of separation?) by editing in 2004 *Inklings: Litera și spiritul*,<sup>39</sup> the first book in Romanian dealing specifically with the Inklings and designed to be used as part of an Inklings seminar at the A. I. Cuza University of Iași directed by Mihaela Cernăuți-Gorodețchi. Let’s look more closely at this seminal collection of articles. Prof. Albu’s succinct “Introduction,” (p. 15–30) answered the question “Who were the Inklings and why should we pay any attention to them.”<sup>40</sup> This not only included the Inklings as such, but also some of their kindred spirits. The book was divided into four sections: one for each of the Inklings indicated in the title. In addition to two pieces on each author,<sup>41</sup> translations were included from each. For Lewis, Mihaela Morariu translated and presented a fragment from the Space Trilogy (pp. 65–78);

37. Details in Rodica Albu, “*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* or How a Romanian Adult in the 90s Reads a British Book for Children Written in 1950,” *Inklings: Jahrbuch für Literatur und Ästhetik*, vol. 11 (1993), p. 39–48; Antonese, “Diachronic Analysis,” pp. 34–35; Rodica Albu, “The Power of ‘Three,’” *C. S. Lewis and Kindred Spirits Newsletter for Central and Eastern Europe*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2021), p. 1; and Antonese, “Retranslation,” pp. 114–115.

38. On the Wade Center, see <https://www.wheaton.edu/academics/academic-centers/wadecenter/>.

39. Rodica Albu, ed., *Inklings: Litera și spiritul: C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, Owen Barfield* (Iași: Editura Universității Alexandru Ioan Cuza din Iași, 2004). Owing to some editorial complications, the volume was not as widely circulated as it could have been, which is why a bit more detail is presented here. All of the contributions appear in Romanian or Romanian translation.

40. Albu, “Introducere,” in Albu, *Inklings*, pp. 15–30. The volume also contained (pp. 55–63) a Romanian version of her 1993 article “*The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.”

41. These included Hope Kirkpatrick and Daniel Callam on Lewis; Peter Russell and Mihaela Cernăuți-Gorodețchi on Tolkien; David Llewelyn Dodds and Jan Curtis on Williams; and Elmar Schenkel and Astrid Diener on Barfield.

Teodora Ghivirigă translated and presented part of *The Silver Chair* (pp. 79–84); and Rodica Albu translated the whole of *The Abolition of Man* (pp. 85–135).<sup>42</sup> For Tolkien, Teodora Ghivirigă translated and presented a fragment from *The Lord of the Rings* (pp. 164–169); for Charles Williams, Nicoleta Samson translated a fragment from *Descent into Hell* (pp. 235–24); and for Owen Barfield, Magda Pracsiu translated “Modern Idolatry,” from his *History, Guilt, and Habit* (pp. 274–281). The volume concluded with two annexes: one by Rodica Albu listing and providing dates and occasionally commentary on “Alți membri Inklings”; the other by Mihaela Cernăuți-Gorodețchi on publications in Romania of books by Lewis and Tolkien up to 2003. All in all, an extremely useful volume and one that would introduce Lewis and the Inklings to Romanian students, particularly in Iași. Its limited circulation should be remedied with a second printing so that its salutary message could be accessed across Romania.

The seeds for the study of C. S. Lewis and his Inklings kindred spirits in Iași had, thus, been firmly planted owing to the efforts of Rodica Albu, Teodora Ghivirigă, and others. The next phase of the Iași Phenomenon came with the inauguration of the Iași Project growing out of their work. It began in 2011 with the visit to Wheaton College, Illinois of Denise Vasiliu,<sup>43</sup> an enthusiastic and talented student in the Department of English at Iași. Vasiliu’s interdisciplinary thesis proposal on C. S. Lewis (the first ever in Romania) had been accepted and her purpose was to do research at Wheaton’s C. S. Lewis collection.<sup>44</sup> There she met the late Christopher Mitchell, then the director of the Wade Center.<sup>45</sup> The kindness, encouragement, and support of Chris Mitchell motivated Denise to organize a meeting in Iași to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of C. S. Lewis’s death. Through Mitchell, she met Marjorie Lamp Mead of the Wade and Jerry Root of Wheaton College (who had been making speaking trips to Romania even before 1989). Through him, she subsequently met Lewis and Inklings specialists in Oxford, including Michael Ward and Walter Hooper.

42. A version that appears to be superior to that published by Humanitas in the same year. Albu subsequently published a significant piece on Lewis’s perennial analysis entitled “Note la *Abolirea omului* de C. S. Lewis (1943), la început de mileniu,” *Philologica Jassyensia*, vol. 2, no 2 (2006), pp. 9–16.

43. Dr. Vasiliu’s given name is Daniela, but everyone knows her as Denise.

44. See Denise Vasiliu, “If You Want to Dream Bigger Dreams, Get Around Dreamers,” *C. S. Lewis and Kindred Spirits Newsletter for Central and Eastern Europe*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2021), p. 1.

45. Mitchell has been praised for his support of Gen 3.0 of Lewis scholars, encouraging, in an unpublished lecture, the pursuit of “unexplored” or “undiscovered” areas such as more nuanced approaches, reassessments, historical studies of Lewis in context, comparative studies. Bruce R. Johnson, “Preface,” in *The Undiscovered C. S. Lewis: Essays in Memory of Christopher W. Mitchell*, edited by Bruce R. Johnson (Hamden, CT: Winged Lion Press, 2021), pp. 5–6.

Ward subsequently recalled how he “had received an email from a complete stranger” who had been given Ward’s name by Chris Mitchell.<sup>46</sup> During lunch at the Eagle and Child pub (a famous hangout for Lewis and his pals), the stranger, Denise (Daniela) Vasiliu, told him of her plans for a 2013 anniversary conference on Lewis and the Inklings in Romania and asked if he would agree to be keynote lecturer. Ward had never been to Romania, but had friends there and knew it was the homeland of Richard Wurmbrand. He agreed. Later as it dawned on him how full his fall 2013 calendar had become, including serving as the lead organizer, memorial conference planner, and fundraiser for the Lewis memorial project at Westminster Abbey,<sup>47</sup> as well as teaching new online courses in America, he tried to beg off. Denise Vasiliu was having none of it. Ward came to see that the Iași conference “meant a great deal more than I had realised. It was not just another academic conference, but an important step in a long and sometimes painful process whereby Lewis’s works have become disseminated in communist, and now post-communist Romania.” When the 2013 conference rolled around, Ward would be there.

It was, of course, primarily due to Denise Vasiliu’s high voltage networking, entrepreneurial, and leadership skills—not to mention her adamant refusals to take “No” for an answer—that the Iași Project got off the ground. Thus, the First International Interdisciplinary C. S. Lewis Symposium hosted by Alexandru Ioan Cuza University was held on 7–8 November 2013, under the title “The Romantic Rationalist: Life, Joy & Imagination in the Work of C. S. Lewis.”<sup>48</sup>

The University had felt it would be satisfied with a dozen or so participants would mark a successful conference on such a relatively specialized and obscure subject. In the event, there were 150 present at the opening session. Special participants included Michael Ward (Blackfriars Hall, Oxford), who gave the keynote lecture; Walter Hooper (Oxford), who spoke by recorded message; and the British ambassador, Martin Harris.<sup>49</sup> Particularly memorable was Ambassador Harris’s reminiscences about his old tattered first edition of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Other participants were from Romania and the UK.

Michael Ward later reflected on what he “saw for myself” about “what Lewis means, and has meant to a Romania that only relatively recently became extricated from communist oppression.” A conversation with Rodica Albu re-

46. Michael Ward, “Introduction,” *Linguaculture*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2014), pp. 5–8.

47. See Michael Ward and Peter S. Williams, eds., *C. S. Lewis at Poet’s Corner*, with a foreword by Canon Vernon White (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016), passim.

48. For an announcement of the 2013 symposium, see <http://vechi.uaic.ro/uaic/bin/view/Main/N1311051423>, last accessed 3 March 2022.

49. For some of the 2013 program and participants, see <https://infochristian.wordpress.com/2013/11/>, last accessed 3 March 2022.

vealed to him “a perspective on *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* that I had never considered before,” about how the communist regime had raised “a whole new political dimension to the meaningfulness of that first Narnia tale. . . . It was humbling for me to realise that the writings of C. S. Lewis could mean so much to people that they would court punishment, imprisonment, perhaps even risk their lives to gain access” to works that Westerners take for granted. “Lewis, I now perceive, matters, not just imaginatively and theologically, but politically and socially. This was all the more interesting, given that he was, in general, as resolutely un-political a writer as can be conceived!”<sup>50</sup> An auspicious beginning for the Iași Project.

This was followed in 2014 with the Second International Interdisciplinary C. S. Lewis Symposium, which was held in Iași on 6–7 November, under the title “C. S. Lewis: Life and Legacy.” The support of Alexandru Ioan Cuza University was even more tangible this time around, leading to a long term, mutually beneficial relationship. What has now become the C. S. Lewis and Kindred Spirits Society for Central and Eastern Europe had a reliable home venue and the University had gained international prestige and name recognition at relatively little cost. This has continued to the present. Among the special guests at the Second Symposium were Dame Helen Cooper (Magdalene College, Cambridge), who gave a keynote on “C. S. Lewis as a Medievalist,” Stephen Prickett (Regius Professor at the University of Glasgow and University of Kent), whose keynote was entitled “It Makes No Difference: Lewis’s Criticism, Fiction and Theology,” and the British Ambassador, Paul Brummell.<sup>51</sup> Other speakers were from Romania, USA, UK, and Canada. Many of the papers from these first two meetings were published in a special issue of *Linguaculture*, the journal of the Department of English Literature at Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, vol. 5, no. 2 (2014), including contributions by Emanuel Conțac, Helen Cooper, Laura Carmen Cuțitaru, Teodora Ghivirigă, Joel Heck, Jane Hipolito, Kirstin Jeffrey Johnson, Till Kinzel, John Lotz, Dănuț Mănăstireanu, Natan Mladin, Denise Vasiliu, and Michael Ward.<sup>52</sup>

The Iași Project followed up the 2013 and 2014 sessions by taking the message to other parts of Romania. In 2015 there were no fewer than three conferences: a double conference, October 13 at the University of Bucha-

50. Ward, “Introduction,” pp. 5–8.

51. The 2014 program is available at <https://danutm.wordpress.com/2014/10/13/international-symposium-c-s-lewis-life-legacy-iasi-6-7-nov-2014>, last accessed 3 March 2022. See also Denise Vasiliu, “Report of the 2nd CS Lewis Symposium, Iasi University, 6–7 Nov 2014,” <https://danutm.wordpress.com/2015/02/25/report-of-the-2nd-cs-lewis-symposium-iasi-university-6-7-nov-2014>, last accessed 3 March 2022.

52. This issue is available online at [www.journal.linguaculture.ro/archive/53-volume-5-number-2-2014](http://www.journal.linguaculture.ro/archive/53-volume-5-number-2-2014), last accessed 3 March 2022.

rest Faculty of Law,<sup>53</sup> and 15 October in Braşov, both dealing with “The Life and Legacy of C. S. Lewis.” Speakers at these mini-conferences included Joel Heck (USA), John Lotz (UK); Caius Dobrescu (Romania), and Steven Prickett (UK). The Bucharest and Braşov meetings represented a successful national outreach of the Iaşi C. S. Lewis Project.

On 17–18 November 2016, this was followed by another successful conference: the Third International Interdisciplinary C. S. Lewis Symposium at Alexandru Ioan Cuza University with the theme “C. S. Lewis and Kindred Spirits.”<sup>54</sup> Presenters and participants were present from Romania, UK, Canada, Germany, USA, and India.

The Iaşi Phenomenon continued to gain momentum in 2018. Jerry Root (by now an old Romanian hand) and Claudia Root of Wheaton College gave lectures on C. S. Lewis in Iaşi. This was followed by two more landmark events for the Iaşi Project preceded the next international conference. On November 20, the Agora Christi Foundation held a mini-symposium in Chişinău, Moldova, hosted by the Divitia Gratiae University. Denise and Florin Vasiliu (Romania), professors Joel Heck (USA), Paul Michelson (USA), and Jerry Root (USA) presented papers on Lewis and Tolkien. Over two hundred were present. This was, as far as is known, the first C. S. Lewis/Inklings event ever held in Moldova.

The Chişinău meeting was followed on 21 November 2018, by a specially convened meeting at the home of Denise and Florin Vasiliu for the express purpose of officially establishing a C. S. Lewis and Kindred Spirits Society for Central and Eastern Europe. Present at the creation were: Denise and Florin Vasiliu, Rodica Albu, Marinela Blaj, Teodora Ghivirigă, Dănuţ Mănăstireanu (all of Romania); Joel Heck, Paul Michelson, Jerry Root, and Claudia Root (all of the USA); Patricia Erskine-Hill, John Lotz, Stephen Prickett (of the UK); Kirstin Jeffrey Johnson (Canada), and Maria Shaskolskaya (Russia). The group unanimously approved the formal establishment of the C. S. Lewis and Kindred Spirits Society on 21 November 2018.

All of this culminated with what I have called “*Eucatastrophe* in Iaşi,”<sup>55</sup> the Fourth International Interdisciplinary Conference on C. S. Lewis and Kindred Spirits at Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, on 22–23 November 2018. This conference was specifically scheduled to mark the celebration of Lewis’s 120<sup>th</sup> birthday and the 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death. The session was co-sponsored by the Agora Christi Foundation, the Faculty of Letters and the English De-

53. The home page for the 2015 Bucureşti Symposium is at <http://simpozionlewisbucuresti.blogspot.com>, last accessed 3 March 2022.

54. The program of the 2016 Third Symposium may be found at [www.uaic.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Conference-programme-C.S.Lewis-3-final.pdf](http://www.uaic.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Conference-programme-C.S.Lewis-3-final.pdf), last accessed 3 March 2022.

55. Paul E. Michelson, “*Eucatastrophe* in Iaşi, Romania, November 2018: The C. S. Lewis and Kindred Spirits Founding Meeting and Conference,” unpublished report, 2019.

partment of the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, *Linguaculture*, and the British Council. Though attendees waded through a lot of snow, their hearts were strangely warmed by the hospitality of the hosts, the passion of the presenters, and the wisdom of the keynote speakers Jerry Root (Wheaton College/USA), Paul Fiddes (Regent Park College, Oxford UK), and Metropolitan Kallistos Ware (Oxford UK/by video).<sup>56</sup> Invited speakers were present from Romania, UK, Canada, USA, Russia, Liechtenstein, and Norway. It had become clear by 2018 that the Iași Project's conferences had become the premier events of this sort in all of Europe, pathbreaking and pacesetting endeavors. Subsequently, a special *Linguaculture* volume of papers from the 2018 conference, edited by Rodica Albu, Rodica Dmitri, and Teodora Ghivirigă, appeared.<sup>57</sup> Contributors were from Romania, USA, UK, Germany, Norway, and Canada.

Clyde S. Kilby and the Wade Center at Wheaton College had kick-started wider interest and deeper study of C. S. Lewis following Lewis's death in 1963, while Walter Hooper's dogged devotion to the Lewis legacy and posterity continued to expand circulation and access to Lewis's works. In the same way, Professors Rodica Albu and Teodora Ghivirigă lit a fire which ignited into the Iași C. S. Lewis project that took Lewis (and kindred spirits) studies to the next level, led by the persistent and unflagging Denise Vasiliu.

Unfortunately, the following three years for the world as a whole were mostly just old fashioned catastrophe. Lockdowns greatly impeded the work of the Agora Christi Foundation. The Fifth International Interdisciplinary conference planned for November 2020 had to be postponed to November 2021. On the positive side, the Agora Christi Foundation obtained some logistic support from Faith and Learning International of Wheaton Illinois as well as developmental advice and counsel. The Friends of C. S. Lewis and Kindred Spirits Society formed a board led by Denise Vasiliu (Romania) and included Kirstin Jeffrey Johnson (Canada), Paul Michelson (USA), and Claudia Root (USA). The board was able to launch a series of C. S. Lewis and Kindred Spirits Connected Zoom meetings beginning in 2020 (organized by Kirstin Jeffrey Johnson), and a CSLKS Society *Newsletter* (edited by Paul Michelson) in 2021.<sup>58</sup> It was also hoped that a *Mere Christianity* book study group would be organized, and a CSLKS website will be launched in 2022.

To keep the fire going, the first CSLKS Connected online event was held on 20 November 2020, in lieu of the hoped for, but postponed 5<sup>th</sup> CSLKS

56. The program of the 2018 Fourth C. S. Lewis and Kindred Spirits Conference is at <http://simpozioncslewis.blogspot.com/p/speakers.html>, last accessed 3 March 2022.

57. *Linguaculture*, vol. 10, no. 2 (2019). See <https://journal.linguaculture.ro/index.php/home/issue/view/22> for pdfs of all of the articles, last accessed 3 March 2022.

58. The CSLKS Society Newsletters can be accessed at [www.pnichelson.com/cslks\\_newsletter.htm](http://www.pnichelson.com/cslks_newsletter.htm), last accessed 14 March 2022.

conference. The topic was “Of This and Other Worlds: Narnia at 70,” celebrating 70 years since the publication of *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*. The program was led by Michael Ward (Oxford University/UK) and Malcolm Guite (Cambridge University/UK), moderated by Denise Vasiliu (Alexandru Ioan Cuza University/Romania), followed by Q & A.<sup>59</sup> Over 200 people joined the Zoom session. The second CSLKS Connected event was held on 23 April 2021: “The Inklings: A Discussion,” between Malcolm Guite (Cambridge University/UK) and Brenton Dickieson (University of Prince Edward Island/Canada), moderated by Kirstin Jeffrey Johnson (Canada). Also very well-attended, this session provided insights into Inklings studies around the world.<sup>60</sup> A third CSLKS Connected, on November 2021, dealt with “Imaginative Hospitality,” featured Michael Ward (Oxford University/UK), Diana Pavlac Glycer (Azusa Pacific University/USA), Fr. Andrew Cuneo (St. Katherine Orthodox Church/USA). The session was moderated by Kirstin Jeffrey Johnson.<sup>61</sup> The panel dealt with intellectual and creative hospitality as a hallmark of the Inklings and their kindred writers and went on to talk about the collegiality and creativity of the Inklings. It was also in itself a tale about theological and ecumenical hospitality. As Brenton Dickieson put it

I love the stories of the Inklings sitting together in college rooms or a local pub, sharing their writing and arguing words and history and theology with a commitment to friendship that is as fierce as their commitment to truth, goodness, and beauty. For, with all their ‘likeses,’ the Inklings were a community of ‘differents’ when it came to their faith perspectives. So it was such a blessing to experience the personal presence, soft and thoughtful voices, and generosity of spirit of these scholars from different faith perspectives—demonstrating in the moment what potential there is for “Imaginative Hospitality.”<sup>62</sup>

The long-awaited 5<sup>th</sup> International Interdisciplinary Conference on C. S. Lewis and Kindred Spirits was held on 18–20 November 2021, at Alexandru Ioan Cuza University. Co-sponsored by the Agora Christi Foundation, the Faculty of Letters and the English Department of Alexandru Ioan Cuza University,

59. For a video of CSLKS Connected #1: Narnia at 70, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57aJspmfV6Q>, last accessed 3 March 2022.

60. For a video of CSLKS Connected #2: Inklings of Imagination, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9UMNGqq2cw>, last accessed 3 March 2022.

61. For a video of CSLKS Connected #3: Imaginative Hospitality, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Biue8BKa3Q>, last accessed 3 March 2022.

62. Brenton Dickieson, “A Pilgrim in Narnia blog,” <https://apilgriminnarnia.com/2021/11/05/imaginative-hospitality-a-c-s-lewis-kindred-spirits-society-connected-event-hosted-by-kirstin-jeffrey-johnson-with-diana-glycer-michael-ward-and-fr-andrew-cuneo-full-video/> last accessed 3 March 2022.



*Linguaculture*, the British Council, the Iași Branch of the Romanian Academy, and A. Philippide Institute of Romanian Philology in Iași. It was well worth the wait. Because of the continuing COVID-19 crisis, the conference included both live and remote presentations, a dual system that worked out pretty well. The Keynote Speakers were Malcolm Guite (Girton College, Cambridge/UK), Jerry Root (Wheaton College/USA), James Como (City University of New York/USA), K. Alan Snyder (Southeastern University/USA), and Ștefan Oltean (Babeș-Bolyai University/Romania). Other presenters were from Romania, USA, Canada, UK, France, Norway, Russia, and Montenegro.<sup>63</sup>

A feature of the conference was the publication of a volume of papers by CSLKS supporters: *C. S. Lewis—His Life and His Heritage*, edited by Teodora Ghivirigă and Daniela Vasiliu with an Introduction by Rodica Albu.<sup>64</sup> The volume displayed remarkable breadth, with contributions by Romanian, British, Russian, American, and Canadian writers. It is a dense, spiritually-rewarding work that will repay careful study. For 2022, the CSLKS will be launching a series of reading groups, beginning in the spring of 2022 with *Mere Christianity*. In addition, 2021 Conference papers will be published in 2022 in *Linguaculture*.

Having staged five international conferences on C. S. Lewis and his kindred spirits, having inaugurated a variety of other initiatives, having survived two debilitating years of the COVID-19 pandemic and having established Iași as an international center for the promotion of C. S. Lewis and his legacy, the Iași Project has been a true intellectual phenomenon, a credit to the remarkable and truly phenomenal work of Rodica Albu, Teodora Ghivirigă, Mihaela Cernăuți-Gorodețchi, and Denise Vasiliu at Alexandru Ioan Cuza University.

#### IV. Lewis in Romania Since 2014

SINCE 2014, the story of the coming of C. S. Lewis to Romania, as we have seen, has been dominated by the Iași Phenomenon/Iași Project. Let us return now to the translation into Romanian of books by C. S. Lewis as well as books about Lewis and his kindred spirits since 2014.

Compared to the two decades prior to 2014, the number of Lewis translations have slacked off considerably between 2014 and the present. The economic impact of COVID-19 certainly has been a factor. The fact that many of Lewis's key works have already been published by Humanitas, RAO, Arthur,

63. The 2021 Conference website is located at <https://simpozioncslewis.blogspot.com/p/conference.html>, last accessed 3 March 2022.

64. Teodora Ghivirigă and Daniela Vasiliu, eds., *C. S. Lewis—His Life and His Heritage*, with an Introduction by Rodica Albu (Iași: Editura Universității Alexandru Ioan Cuza, 2021).

Logos, and Kerigma meant that there were fewer books to translate, especially of the most widely popular. On the other hand—especially because of the work of the Iași C. S. Lewis Project—Prof. Conțac’s prediction in 2014 concerning the life and work of C. S. Lewis in Romanian translation has come true: Romania will see an “enlarging of the circle of readers who will discover with delight the clarity and rigour of his argumentation, the penetration of his intellect, and the richness of his imagination.”<sup>65</sup>

Nevertheless, Humanitas has continued its commitment to publishing and promoting the works of C. S. Lewis. Their current home page features an “Author Spotlight” devoted to C. S. Lewis which links one to their current list of Lewis translations.<sup>66</sup> In 2020, it published *De ce, Doamne? O radiografie a suferinței* (*A Grief Observed*, 1961).<sup>67</sup> In this book, Andrei Pleșu, correctly affirms, Lewis has “the courage and honesty” to ask the big questions no matter how painful. He sees God as “the Great Iconoclast,” who cannot be imprisoned in our theologies and conceptualizations, as the Absolute who cannot be forced into our linear and foreseeable patterns. At the same time, because of the Incarnation, God completely understands the human condition from the inside. Thus, “Lewis’s book is not a plea for doubt; far from it.” It is a plea for us to “to prefer the *adventurous and complicated* path to God.” In the end, Lewis’s reaction to his wife’s death has echoes of Job: sometimes only through struggle “can you provoke the clear reaction of God.”

RAO’s edition of Narnia gained some competition from another secular publisher, Arthur, which published between 2015 and 2018 very high quality hardbound editions of the *Chronicles of Narnia*, translated by Irina Oprea and Radu Paraschivescu. These included the colored versions of the Pauline Baynes’s illustrations (instead of the black and white in the RAO editions) and seem to follow the 1994 HarperCollins definitive Narnia editions.<sup>68</sup> Of course, the Arthur edition added another, fourth, different translation of *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*.

When it comes to Lewis-related translations—which are cultural indicators of the continued growth of the Lewis phenomenon in Romania—these range from the serious—Alister McGrath’s *C. S. Lewis – O viață. Geniu excen-*

65. Conțac, “Reception,” pp. 137–138.

66. See <https://humanitas.ro/autori/cs-lewis>, last accessed 2 March 2022.

67. C. S. Lewis, *De ce, Doamne? O radiografie a suferinței*, translated by Tatiana Niculescu with a preface by Andrei Pleșu (București: Humanitas, 2020).

68. Though the Romanian copyrights refer only to the original British copyrights. With the 1994 edition, HarperCollins stabilized a single English language version of the *Narnian Chronicles*, dispensing with the somewhat edited American versions in favor of the British editions, and adding illustrations colored by the original artist, Pauline Baynes. The Romanian colored drawings are slightly larger, but a little less vivid.

tric. *Profet fără voie*<sup>69</sup> and Armand M. Nicholi, Jr.'s *Problema numită Dumnezeu: C.S. Lewis și Sigmund Freud dezbat cu privire la Dumnezeu, dragoste, sex și sensul vieții*<sup>70</sup>—to “chick-lit” fictionalized treatment of Lewis’s late in life marriage—Patti Callahan’s 2021 *Surprinși de iubire: Incredibila poveste de dragoste dintre Joy Davidman și C. S. Lewis*<sup>71</sup>—to the semi-absurd—the publication of a C. S. Lewis/Narnia coloring book!<sup>72</sup>

That does not mean that the work of translating C. S. Lewis into Romanian is at, or nearly at, an end. This essay concludes with a few suggestions concerning books by C. S. Lewis that deserve translation in the near future:

1. Fiction: *The Pilgrim’s Regress* (1933); a complete translation of the Space Trilogy (1938-1945); and *Till We Have Faces* (1956).

2. Apologetics: *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (1964); *Christian Reflections* (1967); and *God in the Dock* (1970);

3. Literary: The most neglected of the Lewis corpus are his literary works. On the one hand, it might seem like much of a muchness to translate writings on English literature into another language. I would venture that Lewis’s *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* (1954) might fall into this category. On the other hand, more than just some of Lewis’s vibrant comments and commentary on literature should be accessible to Romanian speakers: *The Allegory of Love* (1936) is more than just of literary importance; *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (1941) is a classic that would be edifying to Romanians, both scholars and Christians; *An Experiment in Criticism* (1961) is another classic text that Romanians need to have access to regardless of their interests, especially those who are concerned with a liberal education; the same could be said for *The Discarded Image* (1964). Lastly, two collections edited by Walter Hooper ought to be published in Romanian translations: *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (1966) and *Selected Literary Essays* (1969).

69. Alister McGrath, *C. S. Lewis – O viață. Geniu excentric. Profet fără voie*, translated by Natan Mladin (București: Newword Press, 2015).

70. Armand M. Nicholi, Jr., *Problema numită Dumnezeu: C. S. Lewis și Sigmund Freud dezbat cu privire la Dumnezeu, dragoste, sex și sensul vieții*, translated by Agnes Dragomir (Cluj: Kerigma, 2017), a translation of Nicholi’s *The Question of God: C. S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud Debate God, Love, Sex, and the Meaning of Life* (New York: Free Press, 2003).

71. Patti Callahan, *Surprinși de iubire: Incredibila poveste de dragoste dintre Joy Davidman și C. S. Lewis*, translated by Manuela Dumbravă (Oradea: Scriptum, 2021), a translation of Callahan’s *Becoming Mrs. Lewis: A Novel: The Improbable Love Story of Joy Davidman and C. S. Lewis* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2018).

72. C. S. Lewis, *Cronicile din Narnia: Carte de colorat*, with illustrations by Pauline Baynes, translated by Irina Oprea and Radu Paraschivescu (Bucharest: Arthur, 2016), originally published as C. S. Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia Official Coloring Book*, with original illustrations by Pauline Baynes from all seven books (New York: HarperCollins, 2016), which at least has the virtue of reproducing the Baynes drawings and several Narnia maps.

4. Miscellaneous: HarperCollins published a collection of Lewis's essays in 2000 entitled C. S. Lewis, *Essay Collection and Other Short Pieces*.<sup>73</sup> This provides the widest such collection of Lewis's writings and translating it would provide the broadest selection and coverage of the essays.

5. And, of course, there remain to be translated a considerable number of books about C. S. Lewis and kindred spirits, including reference works.

6. Last but not least, original books in Romanian itself need to come forth. A prime candidate should be the publication of Denise Vasiliu's thesis, *C. S. Lewis at the Border Between Christian Spirituality and Fiction*.

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73. Edited by Leslie Walmsley (London: HarperCollins, 2000), sometimes published in two volumes: *Essay Collection: Faith, Christianity, and the Church* and *Essay Collection: Literature, Philosophy, and Short Stories* (London: HarperCollins, 2002).

SOURCE:

Paul E. Michelson  
"C. S. Lewis Comes to Romania, 1977-2022"  
in Ioan Bolovan and Melania-Gabriela Ciot, eds.,  
*Românii și România în context European Istorie și diplomatie.*  
*Omăgiu profesorului Vasile Pușcaș la împlinirea vârstei de 70*  
(Cluj-Napoca: Editura Academiei Române/Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2000)  
pp. 985-1004