

Murray Pittock, ed., *The Reception of Robert Burns in Europe*. London: Bloomsbury, 2014. Pp. 348. £175. ISBN 9781441170316.

This collection showcases Robert Burns' reception and (re)interpretation as a European literary/social/cultural model, while also dealing with translation studies. Language(s), home-culture, political involvement, class, metre, are all interconnected in Burns' poetry. Should a translator privilege source-author over target-reader; meaning over meter? Can one appreciate Burns' word-choices without sharing Scotland's linguistic background? These are some of the questions discussed by the authors selected by editor Murray Pittock.

As series editor of *The Reception of British and Irish Authors in Europe*, Elinor Shaffer explains that the project 'throws light on not only on specific strands of intellectual ideas and cultural history but also on the processes involved in the dissemination of ideas and texts' (x). Hence, the book begins with Pauline Mackay's forty-four-page timeline of the European reception of Burns' works: from Ireland's publication of *Poems, chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* (1787) to Hungary's translations 'Wad ye dae that?' (2000).

The chapters illustrate, often through case-studies of specific poems, what Burns represented for countries Europe-wide: which traits were emphasised, discarded, or re-elaborated to suit political and cultural milieus. Eleoma Bodammer explains how, due to censorship, there was a lack of Burns anthologies in translation in Austria during Habsburg rule. Frauke Reitemeier discusses how after the Vienna Congress political disillusionment made Germans turn their backs on politics, and how music and poetry (including Burns') gained interest as a result (12). Natalia Kaloh Vid shows how in Russia the despotism of Nicholas I meant poets avoided revolutionary topics (hence Burns was essentially known through sentimental poetry), but that under the Soviet Union, Burns emerged as a 'Communist' poet. Francesca Saggini explains that in Italy Burns was paralleled to anti-dogmatic Giosuè Carducci, or used to draw morals about religion. Many, if not most countries condemned Burns' lifestyle, and either resorted to omitting details of his personal life, or extracted moralistic lessons from it.

Many nations identified 'Burns-figures', recognised as comparable icons for different reasons. Valentina Bold notes how Slovenia feels akin to Scotland for being a country identified by language, where cultural identity is transmitted through poetry and song (250). Silvia Mergenthal mentions the parallel between the Highlanders and Swiss mountaineers; she gives examples whereby, for instance, Burns' 'mountains' are not translated literally as 'Berge', but as Alps (61). This geographic specificity alienates Burns' Highlands, but involves Swiss readers with closer-to-home concepts.

Beyond the idea(s) emerging from Burns' poems, parallel continental poet-figures appear. Veronika Ruttkay shows why Hungary's national poet Sándor Petőfi was initially accepted as a 'Hungarian Burns' for his humble origins and revolutionary ideas. Valentina Bold explains how Burns was equalled to France Prešeren in Slovenia; Hanna Dyka tells us how Burns was compared to Ukrainian bard Taras Shevchenko; Eleoma Bodammer discusses instead how Franz Stelzhamer in the 1840s was named 'the Burns of Austria' for his popular translations of Burns, and common rural background (39).

But the rural background sometimes ruled out Burns as a 'proper' poet. Such is the example of Spain: Andrew Monickendam acknowledges baffling silences about Burns from many Spanish scholars. If this is partly due to the linguistic obstacle Burns' poems posed outside Britain, he was also seen as irrelevant to Romanticism (152) according to conservative canons of literature, which deemed a 'ploughman-poet' unsuitable for the poetic profession. Instead, in Czech culture, as Martin Procházka notes, the appeal of Burns' folk tradition was mixed with his success as alternative popular culture (231).

Burns' dialect was often an obstacle. Not all countries have a linguistic scenario comparable to Scotland's: this renders translations difficult. As Mirosława Modrewska points out, Burns' genius is 'impossible to grasp without serious research into the relevant languages and cultures' (248). This is why Polish translator Jerzy Hebda provided commentaries to uncover Burns' original language. Silvia Mergenthal remarks that the first Swiss translator, Heinrich Leuthold, did not exploit his possibilities as a native speaker of Swiss German, thus missing a whole dimension of Burns' expression; while Bold notes how modern Slovenian translators have engaged with the potentials of dialect. These examples demonstrate the complexity of translating such a multifaceted author.

Dominique Delmaire shows how in France, the notion of 'last of the Scottish poets' was paralleled with Ossianic nostalgia, emphasising Burns' bardic role. Delmaire also explains how August Angellier crystallised often inaccurate notions about Burns, confining him to popular culture through his songs. This is complicated by semantic differences between *chanson* and *song*, and their class implications. Bodammer notes that in Austria Burns was used to "reaffirm a Germanic cultural identity" (54); for Hanna Dyka he was seen as a "spiritual weapon to build the future of Ukraine" (183); for Veronika Ruttkay he was the 'natural ally' (200) in Hungary during the 1848 revolutions; for Jahn Holljen Burns is an icon of counter-culture of opposition in Norway. Burns provided scope for inspiration, internationally.

Concluding the collection is Kirsteen McCue and Marjorie Rycroft's chapter, dealing with a potentially 'universal language', music – but which again notes how Burns has been 'translated' through different 'international musical stimuli' (267) – from Beethoven's *Volklieder* to James MacMillan's 'Lament of Mary, Queen of Scots'. The authors conclude that the musical creations ultimately reveal 'the universality of Burns' poetic and musical voice'. This book demonstrates this point most compellingly.

Vivien Estelle Williams
University of Glasgow