Sibylle Erle and Morton D. Paley, eds., *The Reception of William Blake in Europe*. 2 vols. London: Bloomsbury, 2019. Pp. 768. £250. ISBN 9781472507457.

Despite a plan to fund a trip to Rome in 1784, the furthest William Blake ever got was the Sussex coast, from where he could look across a stormy sea to France. It is Byron of course, not Blake, who is the European Romantic, but the thirty or so contributors to this volume from across Europe uncover a complex reception history. Who would have expected that the earliest musical setting of a Blake poem outside Britain was a 1910 Finnish version of 'A Cradle Song'? Blake arrived in Europe via many different routes. As illustrator of Blair's *Grave* or Young's *Night Thoughts*, Blake's work may have been invisible to early readers and his engravings for the Dutch-Scottish J. G. Stedman's *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition* were often replaced in French, German, Italian, Swedish and Dutch versions. Nevertheless, Blake's friendship with the Swiss Fuseli and his abiding interest in the work of J. C. Lavater ensure a special relationship with Swiss readers. In Italy Blake is particularly known as the illustrator of Dante. And he was known in Germany via Henry Crabb Robinson's 1811 article even though this early contact was with a 'mad Blake'. Reinvented as a Symbolist and an Irishman, Blake was introduced to a new European readership by Yeats. Just three years after the Yeats-Ellis edition, Zinaida Vengerova published a long critical article on Blake in Russia. The same edition introduced Blake to the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa. Chapters by Susanne Schmid and Sibylle Erle highlight the work of Helene Richter, whose 1906 study of Blake singlehandedly drew attention to his working process.

Exhibitions at Tate (described by Martin Myrone) and across Europe spread interest in Blake as an artist. In 1947 (the same year Northrop Frye published *Fearful Symmetry*) the British Council, committed to cultural reconstruction across Europe, organized a Blake exhibition which moved from Paris in March-April to Antwerp in May-June then to Zurich in July-August before returning to the Tate Gallery in August-September and on to Harvard in October-November. That summer in New York, Miró worked with other Surrealist artists to reconstruct Blake's method of relief-etching. David Bindman's chapter describes the important Hamburg Blake exhibition of 1975. The Paris Blake exhibition of 2009 and Moscow exhibition of 2011 are highlights of the chapters on French and Russian reception. Reviews of a 2012 exhibition of Blake in Madrid greeted the work of 'the English Goya'.

Translation of course is key to the reception of Blake's poetry. Andre Gide's French versions of 1922/3 would be a source for Pablo Neruda's 1934 translation of *Visions* and *The Mental Traveller*. But the simplest poems seem the most difficult to translate: catching the play of repetition and variation in 'The Tyger' challenges practically all attempts.

Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of these two volumes, however, is what they reveal about the distinct Blakes that have been shaped by politics. Nazi critics and art historians focused on physiognomy, 'national character' and national myth-making. In August 1939, a right-wing journalist wrote that Orc would rise against England: 'If he rises against the nine-fold damned darkness of Urizen, he will break into England' (I, 276). Blake similarly gained ground in Italy during the Fascist era (1922-43) via an interest in race and genealogy. In the Soviet Eastern Bloc there was a revival of interest in Blake after 1957 when Blake appeared on postage stamps in Bulgaria, Romania and the Soviet Union. Blake's recognition at this time as a 'progressive' thinker may have owed something to the influence of A. L. Morton who lectured in Eastern Europe (mostly at universities in the GDR) and whose 1952 *The English Utopia* stressed Blake's revolutionary sympathies. Contributors writing from ex-communist countries tend to view the idea of Blake as a social critic with some scepticism, seeing in such versions the ideologically constrained readings of the period of state socialism. As Ludmilla Kostova and Ludomir Terziev explain in a fascinating chapter on the Bulgarian reception,

'foreign writers could be proven to fit the process […] Progressive writers were in fact "made" rather than discovered' (II, 607).

A quite different Blake appears as a herald of new artistic freedoms in France in May 1968 or in Portugal after the 1974 Carnation revolution when David Mourao-Ferreira spoke of the power of European poetry: 'let me tell you today – at last out loud – what this program has meant to me: just another means […] of transmitting – through poetry translations – the exalting and wonderful diversity of free voices that have expressed themselves in other languages'. These two wonderful volumes are the fruit of a pan-European collaboration which testifies to the power of transnational reception. The first Portuguese recording of a musical adaptation of Blake's poetry appeared in 1996 on a CD called 'The European Union sings its great poets' (I, 205), an identity which Blake may be about to lose.

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