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Robert Burns's Poetry During Critical Years in China

Abstract: Robert Burns never came to China, never read about China, nor wrote about China. But he is known almost by every cultured person in China. It is the Chinese writers and translators who introduced him to China. His poems played different significant roles in different periods during critical years. His love poems helped him enter China; his patriotic poems encouraged Chinese youth to fight for the country's freedom and independence; his folk-song style set example for young Chinese poets to follow; his love for people won the heart of Chinese readers.

Keywords: Robert Burns's poems, roles and influence, China.

Robert Burns is becoming more and more famous in China thanks to many noted translations of his poems into Chinese, thanks to the efforts of teachers of literature who have been enthusiastic about teaching and discussing Burns, thanks to researchers who have made and published studies of him, and thanks to Scottish scholars joining with Chinese counterparts to hold international conferences on Scottish literature. This paper focuses on the translation of Burns's poems for over a century between 1908 and 2020.¹

THE FIRST CRITICAL PERIOD: THE INTRODUCTION OF BURNS TO CHINA IN THE LATE QING DYNASTY

It appears that some officials in the Qing Dynasty once visited the birthplace of Robert Burns. Though they did not leave any written materials about their visit, their visit nevertheless suggests an awareness of the importance of Burns in Scottish culture. During this period, it is Lu Xun (鲁迅, 1881–1936) who first mentioned Burns in a very

¹ Details about some translators cannot be retrieved due to a lack of records about them. In some cases, even dates of birth and death are missing.

important critical essay, while Su Manshu is the first person to translate Burns.

A native of Zhejiang, Lu Xun (or Zhou Zhangshou by birth and later Zhou Shuren), was born into a rich family. He was a writer, critic, thinker and a revolutionary and is also regarded as the first scholar of comparative literature in China. Lu Xun mentioned Burns in his essay ‘On the Power of Romantic Poetry’ (written in 1907 and published in 1908), an article of critical significance in comparative literature, in which he talked about eight European romantic poets:

In the 18th century... In the literary circle, there was a farmer called Burns who was born in Scotland. He spared no effort to rise against the society, publicizing the concept of equality to the masses, not fearing authority, not worshipping money, showing his warmth, writing versed poems.²

Su Manshu (苏曼殊, 1884–1918) was a poet, novelist, painter and forerunner of modern translation, as well as being a monk for a short time. He was the first person to translate Burns’s ‘A Red, Red Rose’ into Chinese. Though he chose only one this poem to translate, his work nevertheless shows how Burns began to influence China, and this poem in particular has a number of expressions familiar to Chinese readers as well as a universal sentiment which appeals to all. Su Manshu was born into a family of a Guangdong tea merchant who fathered Su Manshu with his fourth wife’s younger sister (who was Japanese). Su Manshu grew up in both Japan and Guangdong, between which he shuttled in his short life, often neglected by his side of the family. This life experience made him radical, passionate and melancholy at the same time. In 1903, he attended university in Japan but did not graduate and in the same year returned to China. He began to work in various roles as a teacher, editor and translator and was progressive and active in fighting against imperialism. On 7 August 1903, *The Daily of the Citizen* (《国民日报》) began to be issued, run by Su Manshu and others including Xie Xiaoshi, Zhang Shizhao, Chen Duxiu, Zhang Ji, He Meish, Chen Qubing.

Su Manshu translated poets such as George Gordon Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Victor Hugo, but translated only the one poem by Burns, which he added to his collection of poems entitled *The Sound of*

² Lu Xun, *The Complete Works of Lu Xun (Vol. I)* (Beijing: The People’s Literature Press, 1980).

Tides (《潮音》) in 1908. The collection was published in Japan in 1911, printed in Tokyo by Bowen Museum and issued by Qimin Press. His translation of 'A Red, Red Rose' is as follows (with my translation back into English on the right):

頰頰赤薔靡

Bright Bright the Red Rose

頰頰赤薔靡，
首夏初发苞。
惻惻清商曲，
眇音何远遥。

Bright bright the red rose,
Budding in the early summer.
Melancholy music is her voice,
Spreading far and farther.

予美凉天绍，
幽情申自持。
仓海会流枯，
相爱无绝期。

Her beauty is so cool.
My emotion is out of control.
All the seas can go dry;
My love for her shall never die.

仓海会流枯，
顽石烂炎熹。
微命属如缕，
相爱无绝期。

All the seas can go dry;
Hard rocks can melt in hot summer.
My little light shall not smother;
My love for her shall never die.

掺怯别予美，
离隔在须臾。
阿阳早日归，
万里莫踟蹰³

Tenderly I bid you adieu.
I am away for a short while.
I, A Yang, will return soon,
Never hesitating though thousand miles away.

From among almost 600 poems of Burns, Su Manshu only translated this one song, so we can see he attached importance to this particular work, though what merit Lu Xun saw in Burns in general was his spirit of revolt against injustice and oppression. The language in Su Manshu's translation is beautiful, but the translation itself is not quite faithful to Burns, the reason being that the ancient Chinese poetic form restricted the romantic expression of Burns. In his translation he lost the poetic culture of Scottish poetry and Burns's romantic warmth. Nevertheless, Su Manshu made one of the greatest contribution to spreading Burns's poetry in Chinese as he triggered other people to translate Burns.

THE SECOND CRITICAL PERIOD: THE TRANSLATION OF
BURNS BEFORE CHINA'S NEW CULTURE MOVEMENT

The New Culture Movement (1915–1923) was a cultural movement in ideology, thought and literature initiated by a number of Chinese

intellectuals who received western education, such as Chen Duxiu (1879–1942), Li Dazhao (1889–1927), Lu Xun (1881–1936), Hu Shi (1891–1962), Cai Yuanpei (1868–1940), Qian Xuantong (1887–1939) and others. They advocated using modern Chinese language and expressing democratic and scientific ideas. Their efforts enlightened people and boosted the development of modern science in China and laid a foundation for the May Fourth Movement for social and political reform to break out in China. Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao later became the main co-founders of the Communist Party of China.

Since the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty in 1911, and with the advent of the New Culture Movement, people began to translate western literature into Chinese. The fighting spirit of some Western poems encouraged Chinese youths to fight against the imperialists bullying China and the feudalist lords ruling China. Other poems brought new forms of literary expression to Chinese culture.

Lu Zhiwei's 'translation' of Burns

Lu Zhiwei (陆志韦, 1894–1970), also named Lu Baoqi, was one of the first translators to translate western poetry. He graduated from Dongwu University (Central University in China, the present Suzhou University) in 1913 and went to the United States to study psychology. He returned to China in 1920, taught in Nanjing Advanced Normal University (the present Nanjing University), Dongnan University and Yanjing University. From 1934, he was the president of Yanjing University (the present Peking University). Then in early 1952, he was transferred to the China Academy of Social Sciences. He made a great contribution to the development of psychology and linguistics in China (especially in the fields of phonology, modern lexicology and the reform of the writing system and Chinese phonetic system).

During 1913 and 1914, Lu Zhiwei published 6 poems in the periodical *Dongwu*, one poem written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, two poems by Alfred Tennyson, two poems by William Wordsworth and a poem he wrote about Burns. Unlike the other five poems, the one on Burns was not a direct translation of any specific poem written by Burns, but rather the general impression he got from Burns's poems. The Chinese title at least mentions Burns: it was titled '译彭斯诗·调寄虞美人', which translated into English reads 'On Translating Burns—using the tune of Yumeiren'. 'On Translating Burns' was published in the second issue of *Dongwu*, March, 1914. *Dongwu* was the precursor of Journal of Suzhou University, which had started publication in 1906 using name *Journal of Learned Raft* (《学桴》).

The poem describes the beautiful scenery of Scotland and his state of mind (my back translation on the right):

译彭斯诗

调寄虞美人
陆志韦

匿斯河上延空翠，
颇颌心头事，
思量到此强开眉，
忽忆桃花流水赏心时。

淡山窈窕连江绣，
忍感春怀旧。
几寻踪迹曲江滨，
争奈素心难遇素人心。

On Translating Burns

In the tune of Yumeiren
By Lu Zhiwei

The Ness River stretches the emerald green.
But I have something to ponder.
I try to be happy thinking of this,
Suddenly recalling happy hours of peach
blossoms and flowing water.

Pale hills meander like river embroidering;
I cannot help recalling days of old.
How many traces are found by the riverside,
But to my regret, my plain heart cannot meet
another plain heart.

Yu Lu's translation of Burns's poems

Yu Lu (庾麓, ?-?) (for whom some provided the name 瘦麓, Lean Foot of a Mountain) was possibly a penname and the actual identity of this individual is still uncertain. We only know that he translated and published two poems of Burns in the first issue of the progressive journal *Citizen* run by the students of Yanjing University (present Peking University) on 1 January 1919. The title of the poems was 《征夫别》，translated perhaps from 'Go fetch to me a pint o' wine'. Burns wrote many patriotic poems and his love of country is the common source of Chinese readers' love for his poems. In 'Go fetch to me a pint', a young man bids farewell to his love and goes off to fight for his country. Such messages were really quite approved at that time, and poems by other poets which encouraged people to fight for what they love were also translated into Chinese.

The context in which this translation appears is crucial to understanding how Burns's work was being received in China. *Citizen* was a journal run by the progressive students mainly from Yanjing University before the May Fourth Movement. The editors included people such as Deng Zhongxia, Gao Junyu, Xu Deheng and Zhang Guotao, and it was also the first journal to publish the translation of the *Communist Manifesto*.

THE THIRD CRITICAL PERIOD: TRANSLATIONS OF BURNS BETWEEN 1921 AND 1949

This period is critical because during this period the new culture movement made progress. Most journals that spread western literature

and thought were run by progressive scholars and youths connected with the Communist Party of China. They planted the seeds of democracy, encouraged science and patriotism, and spread the spirit of struggle against oppression and exploitation by imperialists and feudal lords.

Sporadic translation of Burns's poems appeared in this period. In 1923, Wang Duqing (王独清, 1898–1940) translated 'A Red, Red Rose' entitling it 《一朵红玫瑰》 and published it in *Learning Art*, a journal to publicize science, which the China Art-learning Society (中华学艺社) started in 1916 in Japan and moved back to China in 1930. In fact, this society advocated learning the art of everything including science and technology from the west. In 1926, Wu Fangji (吴芳吉, 1896–1932) translated 13 of Burns's poems and published them in *The Critical Review* run by some professors at Southeast University (present Nanjing University), who argued with the new culture represented by Hu Shi and others. The editors were Wu Mi, Mei Guangdi and Hu Xiansu. This journal, started in 1922, was against the New Culture Movement's promotion of Western ideals and sought instead to preserve Chinese traditional culture. It is therefore interesting that even a journal stressing Chinese traditional culture published Burns's poems. One may speculate that the reasons for doing so were related to the novelty and increasing popularity of Burns.

In 1927, Luo Houan (罗厚安, ?-?) and Zhong Dasheng (钟达生, ?-?) translated two of Burns's poems, 《悼梅丽》 translated from 'Poor Mailie's Elegy' and 《我爱似红薇》 translated from 'A Red, Red Rose', which were published in *The English Student* journal run by the Commercial Press (1915–1927). In 1928, the journal *Daffodil* (《水仙》) published two famous lyrical poems translated into Chinese. One of them is again 'A Red, Red Rose' 《红红的玫瑰》, though little else is known about this magazine and the translator. In 1929, Liang Shiqiu (梁实秋, 1903–1987) published four poems by Burns he had translated into Chinese in the journal *New Moon* (《新月》), run by Xu Zhimo, Luo Longji, Hu Shi and Liang Shiqiu. This journal was named after the Xin Yue (New Moon) Bookstore and published revolutionary literature attacking the cruelty of the warlords and grim reality of contemporary society while sympathizing with the laboring people and promoting patriotism. In 1935, Gu Wenying (顾文盈, ?-?) published his translation of 'A Red, Red Rose' (《一朵红红的蔷薇花》) in *English Weekly* (1915–1937), a periodical run by the Commercial Press which witnessed the spread of English culture in China, emphasizing advanced western science and technology and literary excellence.

Sporadic translations of Burns continued in the following decade. In 1940, Ke Ning's (克宁, ?-?) translation of 'John Anderson, My Jo' into 《约翰安徒生，我亲爱的》 was published in *South Wind* (《南风》). There were four journals entitled *South Wind* before 1949, respectively started in Guangdong in 1920, then Shanghai in 1931, 1933 and 1939 respectively, which published works of literature and art works but with different features, ideas and styles. In 1940, Yuan Shuipai (袁水拍, 1916–1982) published ten of Burns's poems 《彭斯诗十首》 in *Central Plain* (1943–1945) (《中原》) with Guo Moruo as the editor-in-chief in Chongqing. Yuan Shuipai is particularly significant for the reception of Burns in China as he would be the first person in China to publish a collection of Burns's poems in book form, as detailed below. Finally, in 1948, He Kege (何克葛, ?-?) translated one poem by Burns entitled 《美丽的敦河呵》, which is possibly translated from 'The Banks o' Doon'. It was published in *Poetic Creation*, a journal of modern Chinese poetry which started in Guilin in 1941.

The first book of Burns's poetry in China

《我的心呀在高原》(*My Heart's in the Highlands: Selected Poems of Burns and Housman*) was the first collection of Burns's poems in book form translated by Yuan Shuipai (袁水拍, 原名袁光楣, 笔名袁水拍和马凡陀). This book is of great significance in many respects. In terms of form, it triggered other translators and publishers to imitate him. In thought and idea, he called on people to fight for freedom while pursuing love.

Yuan Shuipai (Yuan Guangmei by birth; Ma Fantuo being another penname), a native of Jiangsu, was a poet, editor, revolutionary and later a high-ranking official. He attended university in Shanghai in 1934 but he did not graduate. After 1937, he worked in Hong Kong and Chongqing, later working in Shanghai after 1945 and Beijing from 1949. His status as a translator is significant: after 1974, he was chosen to join other famous translators to translate Mao Zedong's poems into English. In 1976, he even became vice-minister of the Ministry of Culture, yet his work was stopped when the Gang of Four, leaders from the Cultural Revolution of 1966–76, was overthrown.

Yuan Shuipai wrote political satires and folk songs and published 11 books of translation of foreign poems. He also translated 2 novels. Yuan Shuipai followed in the footsteps of the New Culture Movement in China. Traditional culture was losing ground while a new modern culture gradually replaced the old one. Translators began to abandon the old style

and instead pursued foreign style and features by using modern Chinese language.

His greatest contribution to English literature is his translation of Burns's poems collected in *My Heart's in the Highlands*, which comprised of 30 of Burns's poems along with 18 poems by the English poet A. E. Housman published by Meixue Press (美学出版社) in 1944 in Chongqing when he was only 28. The press was run by Yuan Shuipai, along with Shen Yong, Feng Yidai and others. *My Heart's in the Highlands* was also reprinted by Shanghai Xinqun Press (上海新群出版社) in 1944 and 1947.

It is the first collection of Burns's poems before 1949 and is faithful to Burns in translation. 'A Red, Red Rose' is one of the poems translated, however the title of the book focuses on Burns's song about the Highlands, while the collection includes a number of poems containing revolutionary ideas. What Yuan Shuipai valued is the fighting spirit and the heroism of the Scottish highlanders. The collection also praised the virtue of Scottish people and eulogized the beauty of Scotland. The book reminds Chinese readers of fighting for the freedom of the country against Japanese invaders. Therefore, as a collection, it in many ways has a similar significance as 'Scots Wha Hae' and Burns's call for liberty. The translation of Burns's poems was used to encourage people to fight, and it has even been reported that the poem 'My Heart's in the Highlands' was used as the march song for Chinese soldiers in the war against Japanese invasion.⁴

In the 1944 preface of *My Heart's in the Highlands: Selected Poems of Burns and Housman*, Yuan Shuipai elaborated on the theme of class struggle in Burns's poems and took poetry as a weapon to criticize the negative side of society. He found virtue and merit in Burns's hatred of injustice, feelings towards poverty and warm praise of the American War of Independence and French Revolution. Yuan Shuipai does mention his translation of love poems, yet he also stresses class struggle and the movement to oppose the one-party monopoly of the National Party, or Guomindang.

However, Yuan Shuipai's translation of 'My Heart's in the Highlands' was challenged by a student. In October 1946, unsatisfied with Yuan Shuipai's translation of Burns's verse, Tu An (1923–2017;

⁴ Wang Jiankai, 'Robert Burns is for Both Nation and World: Preface of *Select Poems of Robert Burns in English and Chinese*', in Li Zhengshuan, *Select Poems of Robert Burns in English and Chinese* (Beijing: Tsinghua University Press, 2016), p. xii.

Jiang Bihou by birth), then still a 23-year-old university student in Shanghai Jiaotong University, retranslated 'My Heart's in the Highlands' and presented to the editor-in-chief of *Association of Poets*, the supplement to the *Wenhui Daily*, who published it on 6 November. His translation presents a more poetic flavor. His friend Zhu Jingqing – the would-be president of Shanghai Conservatory of Music, Chairman of Shanghai Musicians' Association, music theorist and composer – composed music for Tu An's translation with oriental lyric flavor. The song was also popular with the soldiers and served as a military march.

THE FOURTH CRITICAL PERIOD: THE FLOWERING OF BURNS'S POEMS BETWEEN 1949 AND 1959

The fact that Yuan Shuipai's book was republished since 1949 proved the 'usefulness' and popularity of Burns's poetry in new China.

Poetry translation should meet the requirements of the times. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, it was a prime requirement that literature should help consolidate political power and maintain social order. Therefore, it was felt that the writing and translation of poetry must use the kind of language that people can understand and by that means instruct and delight. Burns's language satisfied this need. In 1951, there appeared an article in *The People's Daily* calling on translators to attach importance to the political function, militancy (combative quality) and educational or didactic purpose of their art. It also called on translators to use the 'pure' and 'healthy' language of the people and avoid artificial words and phrases. By the end of the 1950s, there was a movement in which people of all classes and educational backgrounds were asked to write poems. Again, Burns was a good example to be followed because of his popular outlook or 'affinity to the people'. Wang Zuoliang and Yuan Kejia found it proper to translate Burns for a popular audience.

Republication or reprints of Yuan Shuipai's book

Yuan Shuipai was not only a poet but also an official of the CPC, or Communist Party of China. His poetry alone was influential as progressive literature. His translation of Burns's poems met the need of the times to encourage people to fight for freedom and enjoy love and happiness, and *My Heart's in the Highlands: Selected Poems of Burns and Housman* was reprinted in new China by Shanghai Xinqun Press in 1950 and 1951 and by the People's Literature Press in 1959.

Wang Zuoliang's translation of Burns's poems

Of course, 1959 was the 200th anniversary of Burns's birth. That year, Professor Wang Zuoliang (王佐良, 1916–1995) published a collection of Burns's poems in Beijing in New China in memory of Burns's anniversary. Wang Zuoliang was a native of Zhejiang, a poet, translator, professor and expert on English literature, who had attended Tsinghua University (1935), which moved to Kunming during the war against Japanese invasion, and where after graduation he became a teacher. In 1946, he returned to Beijing together with the university and in 1947 went to Oxford University to study English literature. After returning from Britain in 1949, he was assigned to work in Beijing Foreign Studies University, where he was a teacher and then a Dean until he became the Vice-President of the university. His works on English literature are too numerous to be mentioned here, but within them he published important works related to Burns.

His first work of Burns's poetry, *Selected Poems of Robert Burns*, was published to commemorate the 200th anniversary as a 95-page book by the People's Literature Press, in 1959. Once more it contained a version of the perennial favourite among Chinese translators, 'A Red, Red Rose'. Besides the anniversary celebration, the background of publishing *Selected Poems of Robert Burns* was to meet the socio-political requirements noted above and to provide the new folk-song movement with an example to follow.

At this time in China, the socialist revolutionary struggle in thought was taking place and there appeared a new folk-song movement. 1958 was remarkable in many respects. The whole country and its people were driving to build socialism and China strived to realize the 'Great Leap Forward' not only in industry and in agriculture but also in culture and literature. The folk-song movement was the cultural 'big leap' in poetry. It required people of all backgrounds to write, collect, reorganize and publish folk songs and poems. As a farmer-poet, Robert Burns was found to be close to common people and was revered for his poems and songs.

Wang Zuoliang and Yuan Kejia collected and translated some of Burns's works into Chinese in answer to this new Chinese folk-song movement and to make their contribution to the socialist construction. In the eyes of both, literature must serve politics and ideology. Literature translation was regarded as a political action. Burns's poems were seen to embody the essence of struggle, democracy and revolution; thus, his poems were easy to accept. In this context, Wang Zuoliang's translation of Burns's poems became a powerful weapon in political discourse.

Wang Zuoliang's translation of Burns's 'A Red, Red Rose' reads as follows (my back translation to the right):

啊，我爱人象一朵红红的玫瑰， 它在六月里初开； 啊，我爱人象一支乐曲， 它美妙地演奏起来。	O my Love's like a red, red rose, That's newly sprung in June; O my Love's like the melodie That's sweetly played in tune.
你是那么漂亮，美丽的姑娘， 我爱你是那么深切； 我会一直爱你，亲爱的， 一直到四海枯竭。	You are so beautiful, my pretty girl, So deeply I love you. And I will love you forever, my dear, Till all the seas go dry.
一直到四海枯竭，亲爱的， 到太阳把岩石烧化； 我会一直爱你，亲爱的， 只要生命之流不绝。	Till all the seas go dry, my dear, And till the sun melts the rocks. O I will love you forever, my dear, As long as I live.
再见吧，我唯一的爱人， 让我和你小别片刻； 我会回来的，亲爱的， 即使我们万里相隔。	Goodbye, my only love! Let us part for a while! And I will come back, my love, Though we were ten thousand mile away!

Here, Wang Zuoliang correctly used the language that the people then preferred and produced verse which aligned with the requirement that poetry translation should also be of political and didactic use. Since the times required poets and translators to use the unrefined language of the people to answer this purpose, Wang Zuoliang attached importance to using the modern language which could more readily be understood by people, thereby meeting the objectives of the new folk song movement. His translation is colloquial and lyrical, in accordance with the aesthetic requirement of the new Chinese poetry to be popularly accessible.

In comparison with that of Yuan Shuipai, Wang Zuoliang's version is indeed more 'colloquial', much easier to understand, smoother, and livelier. The meaning, the artistic conception, the imagery, the line lengths, the rhythm and rhyme are all retained from the source text, and the translation is relatively faithful to the source text. Yet the Chinese version can more easily arouse the passion of readers and listeners in China.

Yuan Kejia's translation of Burns's poems

In 1959, Yuan Kejia also published an anniversary collection of Burns's poems in Shanghai in memory of Burns's 200th anniversary. And, like

Wang Zuoliang's anniversary collection, it also included a translation of 'A Red, Red Rose'.

A native of Zhejiang, Yuan Kejia (袁可嘉, 1921–2008), was a poet, critic, translator and teacher for a short period. He was a translator of western modernist poetry and also an advocate for the Chinese new poetry. He was one of the 'Nine Leaf School' poets and had strong interest in introducing modern Chinese poetry to the West. After 1949, he took part in translating *The Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, and in the early 1980s went on to teach the new poetry of China in the United States.

As a poet and critic, his poetry translation was unique. He had clear motives and a strong purpose to absorb what is good from foreign poetry to inspire Chinese new poetry and benefit the country's cultural construction. His translation of modern poetry was closely related to China's opening policy in the 1980s. He put forward his own principles of translation and advocated that appropriateness should be mastered and form can be somewhat sacrificed for the sake of smoothness. We can see this clearly in his translation of Burns's poems. When Yuan Kejia published his translation of Burns's poems, he was 38, older than Su Manshu (24) and Yuan Shuipai (28) when they published their own translations of the bard. He was also much more academically mature than Su Manshu and Yuan Shuipai, being wholly devoted to research and translation. Yuan Kejia called on translators to avoid two things. The first is that a translator should avoid merely translating the surface meaning of the source text without considering the general features of poetry and the personal language characteristics of a poet, thus losing the real nature of the source text and failing to convey its spirit. The second is to avoid translating foreign poems into ancient forms of Chinese poetry and folk songs. Some things cannot be localized.

His contribution to introducing western literature into China lies in three groups, namely: modernist poetry and theory; poetry of the working people (including Blake, Burns and Chartist poetry); and American folk songs. But his greatest contribution to English literature is his translation of Burns published by the Shanghai Literature and Art Press (the former New Literature and Art Press) in 1959, which sold very well.

The things to which Yuan Kejia attached importance in the course of selecting Burns's poems were: Burns's attitude to politics at home and abroad; Burns's satire of capitalists and the aristocracy; Burns's attitude towards the people; Burns's exposure of religious hypocrisy; Burns's relation to his region and nation; his attitude towards labour, and to animals; and finally Burns's contribution to collecting and reworking folk songs. When translating Burns, Yuan Kejia was good at grasping,

interpreting or transforming the main idea of the source material. He used flexible sentence patterns and was never rigid and stiff. One can see that his sentences sometimes tended to be 'domesticated' to make them more vividly reproduce the poetic meaning of the original poem. What he achieved is functional equivalence, not faithful equivalence, and most often very colloquial translation.

Yuan Kejia's translation of Burns's 'A Red, Red Rose', for example, was published as follows (my back translation to the right):

一朵红红的玫瑰

A Red, Red Rose

啊，我爱人象红红的玫瑰，
在六月里苞放；
啊，我爱人象一支乐曲，
乐声美妙、悠扬。

O, my love is like red, red rose
That budded in June.
O, my love is like a melody
Whose sound is mellow in tune.

你那么美，漂亮的姑娘，
我爱你那么深切；
我会永远爱你，亲爱的，
一直到四海涸竭。

You are so beautiful, pretty girl;
I love you so deeply.
I will love you forever, my dear,
Till all the seas go dry.

直到四海涸竭，亲爱的，
直到太阳把岩石消融！
我会永远爱你，亲爱的，
只要生命无穷。

Till all the seas go dry, my dear,
Till the sun melts the rocks.
I will always love you, my dear,
As long as my life does not end

再见吧，我唯一的爱人，
再见吧，小别片刻！
我会回来的，我的爱人，
即使万里相隔！⁵

Farewell, my only love,
Farewell, just a little while.
I will come back, my love,
Though we are ten thousand miles apart.

In comparison with that of earlier translators, Yuan Kejia's version is more colloquial, more poetic, more concise, more harmonious and more musical. The meaning, the artistic conception, the imagery, the line lengths, the rhythm and rhyme are all retained. In a similar fashion to Wang Zuoliang, Yuan Kejia used appropriate language that spoke directly to the people.

⁵ Yuan Kejia, *Poems of Robert Burns* (Shanghai: Shanghai Literature and Art Press, 1959), pp. 152.

THE FIFTH CRITICAL PERIOD: THE FOLLOW-UP TRANSLATION OF BURNS'S POEMS BETWEEN 1959 AND 2000

Between 1959 and 1980 there was a gap during which there were no reprints or new publishing of Burns's poems in China. The reasons require further exploration, but one could speculate that people were either busy with other matters or that there was a shift in the perception of foreign literature in China. The beginning years of the 1960s saw natural calamity and international political strife between China and the superpowers. The Cultural Revolution lasted from 1966 to 1976, and may have contributed to the hiatus in Chinese interest in Burns. In 1978, China began a new policy of opening up to the world and opportunities returned for world literature to develop. While new publications of foreign literary works were yet to come, there started to appear reprints of some Western works, and Burns's poems were among the first to be printed (further suggesting the attraction of Burns's poetry to Chinese audiences).

Beginning from 1980, Wang Zuoliang's translation of Burns's poems became a highlight in the flourishing of foreign literature and foreign literary theories. In 1980, *A Selection of British Poems Translated into Chinese* containing 11 of Burns's poems was published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. In 1983, it was reprinted by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. In 1985, the enlarged edition of *Selected Poems of Robert Burns* translated by Wang Zuoliang was again published by the People's Literature Press. In 1986, Wang Zuoliang published *Selected Poems of Scotland* including 28 poems of Burns. It was published by Hunan People's Press. In 1987, his pocket book *Love and Liberty*, with poems by Burns, was published by the People's Literature Press, followed by *A Treasury of English Poetry*, published by Shanghai Translation Press in 1988, which also contains poems by Robert Burns. In 1998, the enlarged edition of *Selected Poems of Robert Burns* translated by Wang Zuoliang was published again by the People's Literature Press. Finally, in 2012, the enlarged edition of *Selected Poems of Robert Burns*, consisting of a total of 45 poems by Burns was published by the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. It should also be noted that after the 1980s, Wang Zuoliang revised his translations, which reveals his pursuit of art rather than the purely political nature of his work.

In this later period, Guo Moruo's translation of Burns was published posthumously. He translated only one of Burns's poems, again the ever-popular 'A Red, Red Rose'. Guo Moruo (郭沫若, 1892–1978), was a native of Sichuan (with many pennames) and a poet and playwright, historian and critic scholar on ancient word writing as well as being a

social activist and revolutionary. He served in the army and government on many important posts and even became a state leader (a high ranking official in China as a vice-premier of the Government Administration Council and vice-chairman of the National People's Congress). As a young man, he had studied in Japan and, after exposure to a range of poets and philosophers, gave up studying medicine to study literature. Guo Moruo started a new style of poetry by abandoning the constraints of traditional culture in order to meet the new culture and literature advocated by the May Fourth Movement of 1919. In turn, he became a figurehead of progressive literature.

*The Complete Works of Guo Moruo*⁶ consists of a hefty 38 volumes. Among these, he translated 61 English poems based on a small book of English short lyrics compiled and annotated by a Japanese scholar named 山宮允. His *Manuscript of a Translation of English Poems*, which included one of Burns's poems, was published in 1981, three years after his death, by Shanghai Translation Press, though he had started to translate them from 1969 onwards.

Manuscripts of a Translation of English Poems (1981) was arranged by his sons Guo Shuying and Guo Pingying after his death and was published by Shanghai Translation Press.

The general features of Guo Moruo's translation are to translate poetry as poetry, and translating in a manner which captures the translator's own charm and personality. The poetic forms Guo Moruo used in his translation included in Baihua-form (non-archaic) Chinese; ancient Chinese and metric form; both ancient Chinese and modern Baihua (non-archaic) language; and free verse. His principles of translating poetry into poetry dictated that the number of lines should be the same with the source text; that the translation must use rhyme; and that the form (which can be in either classic or modern style) should be orderly. Translating poetry with the translator's charm and personality meant that meaning becomes more important than form. The soul and spirit of the source text were to be preserved even while the translator's personality was infused into the work. For Guo Moruo, the translation should not be rigid and flexibility is required. The artistic conception of the source text is very important. To retain it, one can translate the original words but they can also be reworked and reorganized. This approach was closely connected with his identity as a poet and his romantic sentiments.

⁶ Guo Moyuo, *Manuscripts of a Translation of English Poems* (Shanghai: Shanghai Translation Press, 1981).

On his creative approach to translation, he believed that rewriting is allowed on the grounds of grasping the artistic conception. Translation itself becomes an act of artistic creation.

In his translation of Burns's 'A Red, Red Rose', the creative element is evident:

红玫瑰

Red Rose

吾爱吾爱玫瑰红，	I love I love the rose red;
六月初开韵晓风；	It budded in June in morning breeze.
吾爱吾爱如管弦，	My love my love is like a pipe and lyre,
其声悠扬而玲珑	Her voice is melodious and exquisite.
吾爱吾爱美而殊，	My love my love is beautiful and special;
我心爱你永不渝，	My heart loves you and shall never change.
我心爱你永不渝，	My heart loves you and shall never change,
直到四海海水枯；	Till water in the four seas go dry.
直到四海海水枯，	Till water in the four seas go dry,
岩石融化变成泥，	Till rocks melt and become mud.
只要我还有口气，	As long a s I have breath,
我心爱你永不渝。	My heart loves you and shall never change.
暂时告别我心肝，	For a while I part with my darling.
请你不要把心耽！	Pray you not to worry about me.
纵使相隔十万里，	Though we may be one hundred thousand miles apart,
踏穿地皮也要还 ⁷	I will come back even though I stamp through the earth's crust.

He has creatively used the classic ancient style of Chinese poetry to translate this poem and was bold enough to change the structure of the verse in some lines. At times, he exaggerates the sentiment regardless of the source text. Guo Moruo changes the theme-rheme structure of the first line, making 'I' the subject, rather than directly comparing 'my love' to the red, red rose.

Between 1981 and 1996, Yuan Kejia's *Poems of Robert Burns* was reprinted three times. In 1981, it was republished by Shanghai Translation Press. In 1986, it was published again by Shanghai Translation Press. In 1996, his *Selected Lyrical Poems of Burns* was published by Hunan Literature and Art Press. 45000 copies of this edition were sold, which is a considerable number for a poet in translation.

Next, we turn to Bian Zhilin's translation of Burns's poems. Bian Zhilin (卞之琳, 1910–2000), a native of Jiangsu, was a poet, critic and

⁷ Robert Burns, William Wordsworth et al., *Manuscripts of a Translation of English Poems*, trans. Guo Moruo (Shanghai Translation Press, 1981), pp. 27.

translator who operated under the penname Ji Ling. He learned his craft from Bing Xin, Xu Zhimo, Shen Congwen and others. Chen Mengjia grouped him as one of the New Moon School poets and he was acclaimed as one of the representative poets of the new culture campaign. In 1929, Bian Zhilin entered Yanjing University to study English. From 1930, he began to publish and translate poems, and from 1938 to 1947, visited many places which were helpful to his poetic development, teaching in a number of different universities such as Lu Xun Art Institute, Sichuan University, Southwest United University and Nankai University. In 1947, he went to Oxford University to undertake research before returning to China in 1949 to begin teaching in Peking University. In 1953, he was transferred to China Academy of Social Sciences where he carried out research on Shakespeare and English poetry.

His contribution to Burns studies is that he translated two of Burns's poems 'Duncan Gray' and 'A Man's a Man for A' That' which were anthologized in *A Chinese Selection of English Poetry*, published by Hunan People's Press in 1983. *A Chinese Selection of English Poetry* was also published by the Commercial Press in 1996 and 2005. It contains 74 poems by 30 British poets.

A great poet and scholar in English literature, Bian Zhilin had a different taste to other translators. In all his translations of English poems, he only chose two of Burns's poems to translate. One is a love poem, but not 'A Red, Red Rose' (which as we have seen has been a particular favourite among Chinese translators); rather, he opted for a much bawdier song. The other poem, Burns's radical anthem 'A Man's a Man', is one which of course argues for human dignity.

The case of Zhou Yi'nai

As a translator of Burns's poem Zhou Yinai (周宜乃, 1915–1996) is somewhat different to the examples above. Zhou Yinai was effectively a 'non-literary' translator of 'A Red, Red Rose' who used five-character-line quatrains to produce a new version of Burns's song. A native of Anhui, he had majored in mechatronics and was a graduate of Wuhan University who went on to study in the UK before returning to China in 1951. Zhou Yinai published a collection of British and American poems titled 《自由之歌》 *Songs of the Free* in classical form and classical Chinese.

Songs of the Free was published by the China Translation & Publishing Corporation in 1999. Out of the 161 pages of verse in

translation, the book contains only one song of Burns, the version of ‘A Red, Red Rose’ which follows (my back translation to the right):

卿若红玫瑰 卿若红玫瑰， 新绽六月里， 更若旋律曲， 嘹亮声和谐。	You Are a Red Rose You are a red rose That bloomed newly in June; It's more like a melody, Loud and melodious.
汝颜美若斯， 我深弥爱之， 情爱永不变， 直至海枯时。	So beautiful you are. I love you so deeply. My love shall never change, Till all the seas go dry.
海水尽枯竭， 岩石皆蚀摧， 此生一息存， 相爱永不隳。	Till all the seas go dry, Till all the rocks melt; As long as I live, Our mutual love shall never decay.
吾爱此别矣， 暂作小分飞， 相去虽万里， 他日终旋归。	I leave my love now For just a little while. Though I will be away for ten thousand miles, I will come back some day.

Despite appearances, this is a very good translation. Though the form of the original is changed considerably, the meaning is retained. Thus, we can see how Zhou Yi'nai was very serious in his work and had good skills of translation, believing that only the classic form can reveal a translator's cultural deposits. Even though he majored in engineering, his level of Chinese was advanced and, in some ways, one might even assert that although he may not have been a poet by profession, yet he surpassed many poets in his translation work.

THE SIXTH CRITICAL PERIOD: FURTHER TRANSLATION AND REPRINTS OF BURNS'S POEMS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The years between 1999 and 2005 were another significant period, if only because the reprint or new publishing of Burns's poems was rare. Wang Zuoliang's *A Treasury of English Poetry* (which contains poems by Burns) was published in 1993, annotated by Jin Liqun, and reprinted by Shanghai Translation Press many times from 1993 to 2003. However, after this hiatus, a series of 'birthday' poems edited by Zou Bicheng (邹必成, ?-?) and translated into Chinese was published by the Commercial Press in

2005 under the title *366 of Burns' Short Birthday Poems* (《彭斯生日小诗366首》). These birthday poems are not separate independent poems. Zou Bicheng tailored them out of Burns's poems, and must have made special efforts to make them. The People's Literature Press reprinted Yuan Kejia's translation of Burns's poems. Li Zhengshuan's new translation of Burns's poems was published by Tsinghua University Press. The significance of these recent works is indicated by the fact that the publishers were all prestigious publishing houses, which testifies that Burns's poems still have lasting appeal in China.

Yuan Kejia's translation of Burns's poems, *My Luve Is Like a Red, Red Rose*, was reprinted by the People's Literature Press in 2008. In 2011, Wang Zuoliang's *A Treasury of English Poetry* was published by Shanghai Translation Press again. It also contains poems by Robert Burns (figure 25). Wang Zuoliang's *Selected Poems of Robert Burns* was reprinted by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press in 2012.

In this period, we have also seen the reuse of Wang Zuoliang's translation of Burns in *My Luve Is Like a Red, Red Rose: Western Classic Love Poems* (《爱是朵红红的玫瑰：西方经典爱情诗》(双语彩绘典藏版)). This book was partly Burns's poems as translated by Wang Zuoliang, published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press in 2013, and also contains poems by John Keats, William Shakespeare, George Gordon Byron and others. *The Complete Works of Wang Zuoliang* Vol. XII (*Selected Poems of Burns, Selected Poems of Scotland, Selected Poems of England, and The Thunderstorm*) was reprinted by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press in 2016.

Li Zhengshuan's translation of Burns's poems

Li Zhengshuan (李正栓, 1963–) is a professor of Hebei Normal University, who has been teaching English poetry since 1992. In his translation, he tries his best to reproduce Burns's style. He has published a book containing 108 of Burns's poems, has another book containing 100 of Burns's poems ready to be published, and has completed translating the rest of Burns's poems (over 400 poems) to be revised, polished and arranged for publication in the near future. His first book of Burns's poems 《彭斯诗歌精选》 (*Select Poems of Robert Burns in English and Chinese*) was published by Tsinghua University Press, printed in 2016 and 2017.⁸

⁸Li Zhengshuan, *Select Poems of Robert Burns in English and Chinese* (Beijing: Tsinghua University Press, 2016).

Gerard Carruthers, Francis Hutcheson Professor of Scottish Literature at the University of Glasgow, and General Editor of the new Oxford University Press Edition of the Works of Robert Burns graced this edition with a foreword which highlights the importance of this new edition:

It is a huge pleasure to see this most modern and scholarly Chinese edition of selected works by Robert Burns. The translator, Professor Zhengshuan Li, has been an assiduous scholar not only of Burns the poet and the song-writer, but also of previous Chinese translators of the Scottish 'bard'. In a lecture to a rapt audience at the University of Glasgow in the spring of 2015, Professor Li provided a master class of the high-points (and a few low ones) in the previous Chinese rendering and reception of Burns. This forensic knowledge of the field makes him the ideal Burns translator into Chinese for the twenty-first century.

The generously ample selection compiled by Professor Li, over a hundred poems and songs or around a sixth of Burns' output, makes it a commendably wide introduction to a writer of world stature. The thematic divisions of this edition run the range of Burns' emotional gamut from great tenderness towards the human and natural world, to biting satire in the face of folly and political and cultural oppression. It captures Burns as a great teller of tales and also as a writer of fine philosophic sensibility.

The best new translations set up fresh encounters between writers and their readers. The best translators enable this process. Professor Li has set the stage for a thrilling new chapter in Robert Burns' relationship to China. This edition is a treat in store for the fine people of that great nation.

Li Zhengshuan's translation principles are to translate poetry into poetry; using rhyme whenever possible; giving up rhyme so as not to harm the meaning; and pursuing faithful equivalence in understanding, culture transfer and the reproduction of style. His translation tries to remain faithful to contents, form, tone, feeling, style and rhythm of the source material, for example keeping equivalence in terms of number of lines, the length of each line, the rhyme scheme, and also artistic conception and images. Li Zhengshuan's approach is not to surpass Burns, but to translate his poems with the feeling of the poet preserved, making sure the poet is still present in the translation. Such an approach is

evident in his translation of Burns's 'My Heart's in the Highlands' (my back translation to the right):

我的心啊在高原
曲调：步枪礼

My Heart's in the Highlands
Tune: The Musket Salute

我的心啊在高原，我的心不在这里：

My heart's in the highlands, my heart is not here;

我的心在高原，追逐着鹿群，
追逐着野鹿啊，跟踪着野狗，
我的心啊在高原，不管我何处漂摇

My heart's in the highlands, a-chasing the deer.
A-chasing the wild deer and following the roe,
My heart's in the highlands wherever I go.

再见吧，高原！再见吧，北方！
你是品德的家园，是勇士的故乡；
不管我流浪何处，不管何处浪迹，
高原的群山峻岭永远在我心底。

Farewell to the highlands; Farewell to the north
The home of virtue and the home of valor.
Wherever I wander, where I roam,
The beautiful hills are in my heart forever.

再见吧，银装素裹的高山；

Farewell to the high mountains covered with snow;

再见吧，绿色山谷与河滩；

Farewell to green valleys and the straths below.

再见吧，参天的森林和丛生的野树，

Farewell to skyscraping forests and wild-hanging woods;

再见吧，奔腾的激流和轰鸣的瀑布
(李正栓译)

Farewell to rushing torrents and loud-pouring waterfalls.

His translation work has been recognized as significant outside of China. For his efforts to spread Scottish literature in China, the University of Stirling granted Li Zhengshuan an honorary Ph.D degree.

Other notable translations of Burns's poems in the modern age include Wang Zuoliang's translation of poems. *Love and Liberty* (《王佐良译爱情与自由》) is the third book of the translators' series published by the People's Literature Press in 2019, which contains 163 English poems, among which are 60 poems by Robert Burns. The reprint of Wang Zuoliang's *Selected Poems of Burns* was published by the People's Literature Press in 2020. Besides translations of poetry, critical works regarding Burns have started to appear in China, such as Kenneth Simpson's detailed guidebook for Burns's poems. *Robert Burns* (《罗伯特·彭斯：动荡时代的诗歌全才》(苏格兰文学经典导读)) was translated by Lin Yun and published by Nanjing University Press in 2020.

CONCLUSION

Robert Burns is one of the few foreign poets who have been translated continuously in China for over a century. His work has been seen as

relevant for different occasions at different times during different periods, all critical and crucial in the progress of history in China. It is no exaggeration to call him a global poet and translation has of course played a significant role in turning the national bard of Scotland to an international poet of the world. Today in China, almost all university textbooks of English literature anthologize Robert Burns. Besides Chinese teachers teaching Burns, many Chinese scholars are interested in Burns, not to mention a tendency for more and more people to be attracted to the charms of Burns's poetry.

Up to now, there have appeared 3 doctoral dissertations and about dozens of master-degree theses on Burns's poems or on the translation of Burns's poems. I searched the internet and found 504 articles related to Burns, and 50 of them are related to 'A Red, Red Rose'. I am sure as long as we teach literature, Robert Burns shall live forever.