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10 Dickinson in the Ukraine: Slavic Traditions and New Perspectives

Anna Chesnokova

Although Russia and Ukraine are now separate countries, they do share a common past and many of their literary traditions remain intertwined. Such historical, political and literary relations are, necessarily, the subject of ongoing debate and revision, but of significance to this study is the fact that the two states once lived a single research life. Before the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, no clear distinction was made between research perspectives in Ukraine (then the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) and Russia (then the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic). All scholars were considered 'Soviet', a perspective strengthened by the fact that research papers in the Soviet Union (with rare exceptions) were written in the state language, Russian. As a consequence, academic access and exchange were relatively easy for scholars, and even students, of all fifteen republics. Today, eighteen years after independence, each ex-republic adheres proudly to its own national/official language: such a move is obviously intended to promote ethnic identity and national values, but though laudable, the rejection of a common language inevitably deprives many scholars of the kind of shared research resources available in a previous era. However, since present day Ukraine is a bilingual country, where the majority of the population (especially in large cities) speaks and reads Ukrainian *and* Russian, Ukrainian Dickinson scholars are in the relatively privileged position of having access to the store of information available from Russian libraries.

Soviet Criticism

Dickinson's poems began to appear in Ukrainian libraries and bookshops in the 1990s, but even today getting the most recent standard editions of the poetry from local sources remains problematic. The only copy of Dickinson's poetry available from the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine in Kyiv (the richest source of research material in Ukraine) has long been *Bolts of Melody* (Dickinson 1945). Scholars interested in working on Dickinson have therefore had to buy the books from abroad (an expensive undertaking due to unfavourable exchange rates) or to read her in Ukrainian and Russian translations.

Before the 1980s, with the Cold War in operation and the 'iron curtain' still

'The essays in this collection make an important and timely contribution to Dickinson scholarship, documenting but also explaining the nuances of Dickinson's appreciation, appropriation and influence outside the United States. This fascinating book expands our understanding of Dickinson's twentieth-century reception, showing how scholars, readers, writers, and translators from Europe, Japan, South America, Israel, Australia and Canada confirm critical and theoretical trends in Dickinson scholarship, but also offer different approaches to her work, new insights and fresh perspectives.'

DR PÁRAIC FINNERTY, LECTURER IN ENGLISH LITERATURE, UNIVERSITY OF PORTSMOUTH, UK

Emily Dickinson's poetry is known and read worldwide but to date there have been no studies of her reception and influence outside America. This collection of essays brings together international research on her reception abroad including translations, circulation and the responses of private and professional readers to her poetry in different countries. The contributors address key translations of individual poems and lyric sequences; Dickinson's influence on other writers, poets and culture more broadly; biographical constructions of Dickinson as a poet; the political cultural and linguistic contexts of translations; and adaptations into other media. It will appeal to all those interested in the international reception of Dickinson and nineteenth-century American literature more widely.

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C O N T I N U U M R E C E P T I O N S T U D I E S

