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The status of George Eliot, pseudonym for Mary Ann née Evans (1819-1880), in the British literary canon fully justifies the appearance of this volume in the series *The Reception of British and Irish Authors in Europe*, a Research Project conceived and edited by Professor Elinor Shaffer and currently published by Bloomsbury. Running from 1998, the series comprises at the moment a total of twenty-three volumes on the European reception of major British and Irish authors, with forthcoming issues to appear soon. The series consists mainly of literary writers, but attention has also been paid to philosophers and even scientists like Charles Darwin. The scope of the series and its usual wide coverage make of it an invaluable contribution to the history of European cultural relations in the last three centuries. Reception is usually approached in a wide and comprehensive manner, considering the literary, social and broad cultural perspectives, with translation issues taking a central position. As the general editor of the series remarks in the preface to this volume, “[t]he nature of the translation is often a determining factor in the reception of a work or an author” (xii).

The volume is co-edited by Elinor Shaffer and Catherine Brown, both Eliot specialists, and counts on a solid team of contributors including well-established scholars from the different countries surveyed. Following the model of the previous volumes of the series, the book contains a greatly informative and comprehensive timeline that lists the main events in G. Eliot’s life, the translations, relevant criticism, films and theatre adaptations. This overview is complemented by a list of the translations for each language in chronological order placed before the works cited lists of the various chapters. The latter feature is a novelty and a useful improvement upon early books of the series since it allows the reader to have a complete and immediate knowledge of the European history of G. Eliot’s translations and, consequently, of the wider reception of her works.

It covers a total of sixteen European countries, geographically organised into three areas: Northern, Southern, and Eastern Europe. Given the diversity of countries and cultural traditions that the broad general division

encompasses, disparity in terms of reception might be expected; however, patterns emerge. Thus, the immediate success of Eliot's works in the countries of the Northern group, where they were soon translated on account of religious ideological affinities, differs from the more protracted response in the majority of the southern countries. Similarities between countries owing to political reasons can also be detected. For instance, commercial reasons have changed the reception of G. Eliot in many former socialist countries where, after the collapse of the Iron Curtain, she has lost popularity among publishing houses, which now tend to publish old translations or just favour lighter reading, whereas in some Southern countries, such as France or Spain, the production of translations has rather increased in the last decades.

The organisation of the volume is also well balanced in terms of the contents. The countries where reception has been significant are paid a more detailed attention. There are two chapters for the reception in Germany, a country with which G. Eliot had many intellectual and personal connections during her lifetime. Similarly, the reception in Italy, where *Romola* is located, is divided into three chapters, two of which are dedicated to this novel. And Russia, where the British writer was a favourite among some of the great nineteenth-century novelists, also counts with two chapters. Linguistic variety is also contemplated in terms of chapter organisation. The complex and changing map of the European geopolitical and territorial divisions in the last two centuries is a real challenge when considering matters of cultural and linguistic traditions, but, at the same time, it may also throw light for an understanding of their development. This is what happens with the early nineteenth-century translations of G. Eliot's novels into Norwegian, which were based on Norwegian dialects and resulted instrumental for the consolidation of the language. Similarly, the late and scarce appearance of translations into Slovak, with only three novels translated so far, is very illuminating of the situation in the Czech and Slovak territories. In this line, the Spanish and Catalan languages are also dealt with in separate chapters. While censorship during Franco's dictatorship was very detrimental to cultural development in the whole country, in Catalonia, linguistic censorship was an added problem. The two chapters illustrate the case by showing how state censorship was the cause not only of excised versions in Spanish, but also of their non-existence in Catalan for a period of over sixty years.

The authors of these chapters find themselves in the task of reviewing and assessing the translations of an author who was an expert translator

herself. G. Eliot's reputed translations of Friedrich Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu*, Ludwig Feuerbach's *Das Wesen Cristemtuns*, and Baruch Spinoza's *Ethica* were an invaluable schooling that shaped, in Michela Marroni's words, her "acute awareness of translation as a demanding work and of the role of the translator as a mediator between different linguistic and cultural realities" (201). Some of her ideas on the subject were made public in the essay "Translations and Translators", which appeared in the newspaper *The Leader* in 1855. It is a review of the first translation into English of Kant's *Critique of Judgment* and of a volume of lyrical poetry translated from German. There are also comments on August Wilhelm Schlegel's and Friedrich Tieck's respective translations of Shakespeare. This intelligent choice of translations allows G. Eliot to set forth her ideas about the intellectual and artistic requirements of translators. She praises the translation of Kant's work because, in her view, "a work of reasoning or science can be adequately rendered only by means of what is at present exceptional faculty and exceptional knowledge" (218). However, she criticises the translation of the poetry book arguing that the author had "not the poetic power which makes poetical translations endurable to those acquainted with the originals" (*idem*). G. Eliot also points out certain inaccuracies in the Shakespearean translations in order to prove that even the greatest talents may have flaws when translating, a fact that attests the difficulty of the task. Finally, she ends by referring to the moral qualities of the translator: "the patience, the rigid fidelity, and the sense of responsibility in interpreting another man's mind" (220). As Gerlinde Röder-Bolton, the author of the first German chapter remarks, G. Eliot's high standards explain her distrust of contemporary translators and her frustration at being unable to prevent future translations.

Despite G. Eliot's pessimism, this volume shows that translation activity has maintained her legacy alive in a transnational context. Careful attention is paid by the authors not only to the history of the translation of G. Eliot's works in their respective territories and languages, but also to publishing and market conditions, and problems of censorship. When analysing the nature of the translations, the dichotomy between domestication vs. foreignisation is the main criterion considered by the authors. The quality of the translations is generally assessed in terms of their fidelity and the integrity of the text, and re-translations or the use of source languages other than English (usually French) are also noted. The treatment of register variation and use of dialect, so important in most of G. Eliot's novels, is also carefully surveyed.

The studies are thoroughly carried out, but at the same time the critical approaches are free from specific terminology, which allows access also to non-specialised readers. Of particular interest in this respect is the Bulgarian chapter, written by the scholar and translator Vesela Katsarova, who has recently authored the translations of *Middlemarch* (2012) and *Adam Bede* (2015). Katsarova explains in detail the problems posed by dialect in *Adam Bede* and how she decided to avoid complete domestication to maintain the foreignness of the source text. The chapter is a very illustrative description of the translator's challenges when facing texts of such a linguistic complexity as G. Eliot's.

The Spanish and Catalan respective chapters deserve a particular attention. María Jesús Lorenzo-Modia's study takes a double perspective since not only does she examine the reception of G. Eliot in Spain but also the writer's interest in Spanish culture. In her analysis, Lorenzo-Modia makes a thorough review of the history of G. Eliot's translations into Spanish. It is surprising to discover that *Romola* and the author's collected essays have not been translated into Spanish yet, and that, with the exception of an early abridged version issued in 1867, there is no full rendering of *Felix Holt* into Spanish either. But perhaps even more surprising is the fact that the narrative poem *The Spanish Gypsy*, probably inspired both in Cervantes's novella *La Gitanilla* (1613) and in the author's journey around Spain in 1866, has not been translated either. Lorenzo-Modia rightly indicates that ideological and cultural reasons related to religion, gender or even Darwinism account for the lack of translations at certain periods. The translations into Catalan are reviewed by Jacqueline Hurlley and Marta Ortega, both specialists in the field, who trace with great expertise the fortune of G. Eliot in the context of a very problematic linguistic situation. Immediately after Franco's regime, as it happened in Norway, translation contributed to the standardisation of the Catalan language, and thus, as the authors explain, in the 1995 translation of *Middlemarch*, the translator avoided the linguistic idiosyncrasies of the characters for this reason. Both chapters give a full account of the uneven path of G. Eliot's translations into the two languages.

I cannot but conclude by saying that this volume offers an invaluable contribution both to the history of translation and to the knowledge of G. Eliot in the wide European cultural context.

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