

Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect (1786) - Robert Burns



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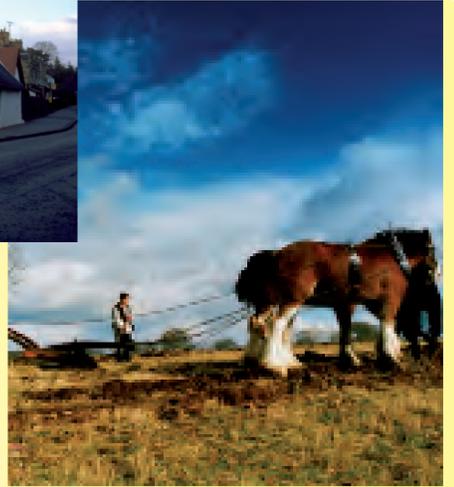
Robert Burns (1759-1796), Scotland's best known bard, was born in Alloway, Ayrshire, the son of tenant farmers. Burns was encouraged in his literary aspirations from an early age, and began writing poetry while still at school. His experiences as a tenant farmer, an

uncertain life particularly tested after his father's death in 1784, would find full expression in his early poetry, much of it written in Lowland Scots. In 1785 his domestic and financial circumstances became acute, and as a means of raising funds to emigrate to Jamaica, he sent his poems to the Kilmarnock-based publisher John Wilson, who issued them in 1786 as *Poems, chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*. Reaction was immediate and rapturous. Burns abandoned ideas of Jamaica, travelling to Edinburgh instead, where he was hailed by Henry Mackenzie as 'a Heaven-taught ploughman' and feted in literary and aristocratic circles. Later years were spent in Dumfriesshire, where he acted as excise-man and devoted himself to further song and poetical work, and to the collection and publication of contemporary Scottish ballads. He died tragically young in 1796 of rheumatic heart disease.

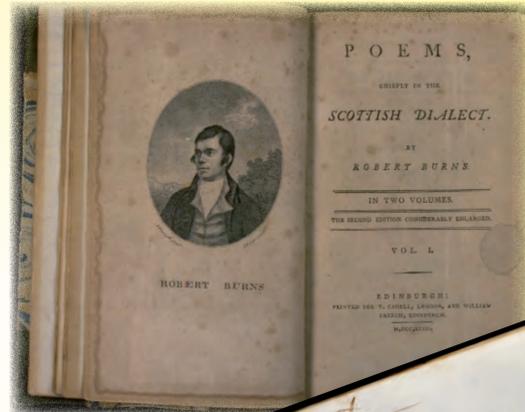
Burns's *Poems* were far-reaching and global in impact. Burns's dexterous use of the Scots vernacular, his debt to Scottish song and his intense feeling for landscape influenced subsequent writers such as James Hogg, Scott, Wordsworth, Keats and Thomas Carlyle. His belief in social equality, his celebration of human aspirations and admittance of human failings, and his humorous yet trenchant critique of religious and social hypocrisy and cant resonated equally with readers and poets worldwide. It is no accident that his legacy and poetry continues to be celebrated worldwide every year on 25 January.



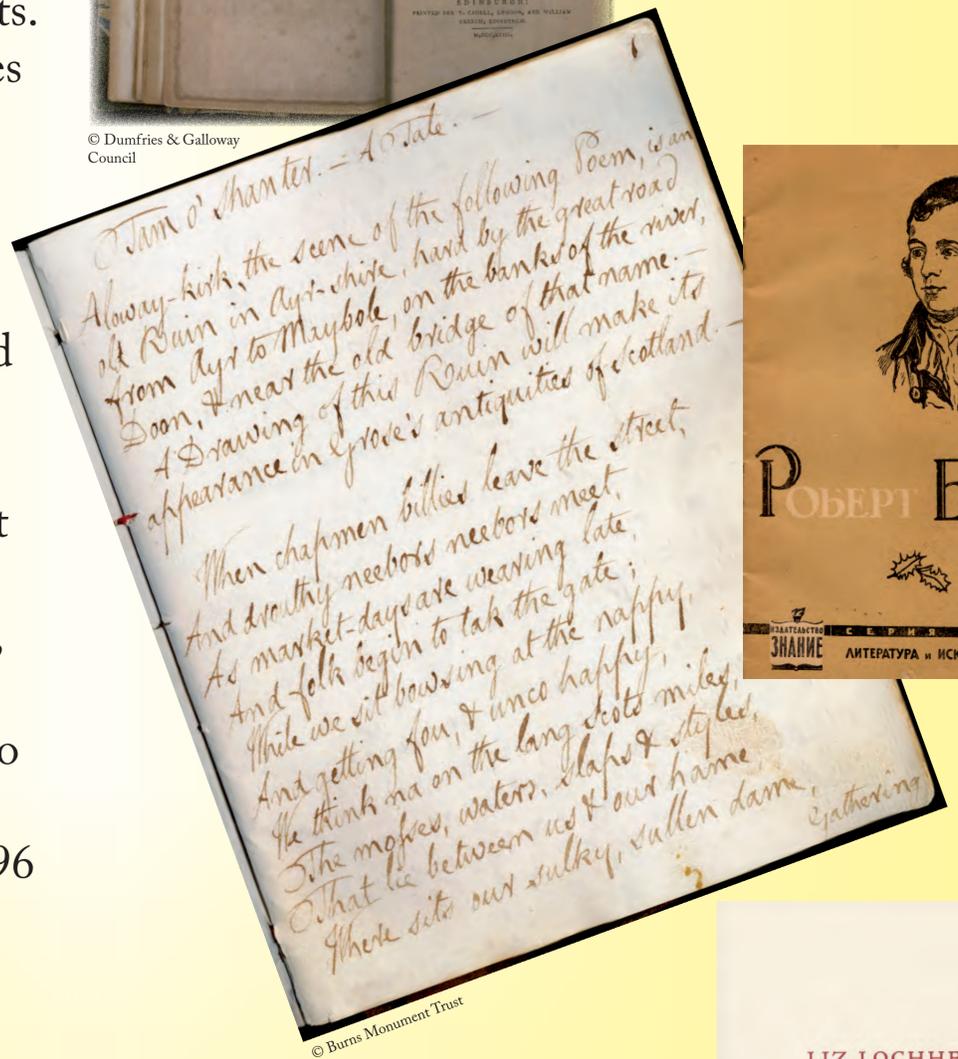
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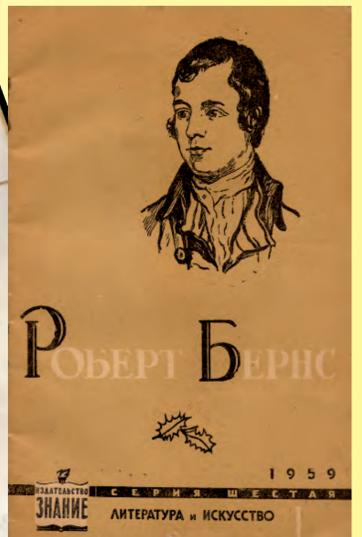
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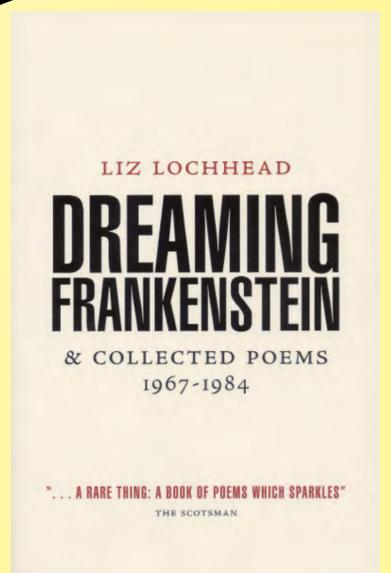
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