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## **”John Bowring as a translator of the songs of Vuk Karadžić“**

This paper will analyse the role of Sir John Bowring (1792-1872) in the reception of Serbian folk poetry. He was a man of many talents and titles: a polymath, linguist, political enthusiast, reformer, poet, writer and editor, Member of Parliament and governor of Hong Kong. It is his passion for the Serbian language, however, which is of interest. In nineteenth century England, little was known of the Serbian language, yet Bowring spoke and understood the language to such an extent that he wrote a book titled *Serbian Popular Poetry* in 1827. Through translations of folk songs collected by the Serbian language reformer Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, this work introduced many English speakers to the beautiful realm of the Serbian poetry and songs.

In Bowring’s detailed introduction, he comments on how little is known in the English-speaking world of the art of Serbian folk poetry. He writes that though Serbia’s natural beauty was known, the splendour of its literature was a revelation: ‘We knew not the spirit sublime of music, of pathos, and song’. He also discusses the poetic value of the Serbian language, and describes it to his readers as ‘the perfect instrument for poetry and music’. Along with his commentary of Serbian folk song and language, he introduces the reader to the history of the Serbian people. Bowring did not only act as a translator, but as a herald of Serbian culture to the English-speaking world.