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PHILOLOGICA 1/2023

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HELENA BŘEZINOVÁ
and PAVEL DUBEC (eds.)

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PREFACE

The Danish literary critic Georg Brandes (1842–1927) had a considerable impact on the development of literature and the arts in Scandinavia ever since he held his first series of lectures called *Hovedstrømninger i det 19de Aarhundredes Litteratur. Emigrantlitteraturen* (*Main Currents in Nineteenth-Century Literature. The Emigrant Literature*) in Copenhagen in 1871. In the following period commonly known as ‘Skandinaviske Moderne’, when Scandinavian authors rose to fame throughout Europe and introduced new topics and literary techniques, Brandes not only achieved renown abroad, but also became a remarkable example of a critic from the periphery whose ideas and writings influenced the arts and literature in many countries around the world, including the cultural centres of Europe at that time. In his review of Hans Hertel and Sven Møller Kristensen (eds.), *The Activist Critic: A Symposium on the Political Ideas, Literary Methods and International Reception of Georg Brandes* (1981), George Schoolfield aptly wrote: “In his lifetime, [Brandes] was the North’s pre-eminent critic and the lands of the German tongue lionized him, his works were widely available in English, the Russians ran Germany and the Anglo-Saxon world a very close third in their translations of him, he was admired in China [...]”.

This Scandinavian issue of *Acta Universitatis Carolinae – Philologica* focuses on one of the topics covered in this essential anthology: Brandes’s impact on national literatures and cultures. Since the anthology is now more than forty years old, this issue contributes to new research on how other cultures responded to Brandes’s ideas and writings.

Three of the contributions treat Brandes’s impact on Central Europe in a period of dramatic change in this region in which the emancipatory struggles beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century resulted in new states at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1918, the end of the First World War and the dissolution of Austria-Hungary resulted in the creation of the new republics of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland. In the political and cultural currents in all three countries, Brandes’s ideas and his symbolic capital played a remarkable role between the 1880s and 1918. The central European Brandes is scrutinized from different perspectives in the contributions of Helena Březinová and Jana Lainto (Bohemian Lands), Gábor Csúr and Anita Soós (Hungary), and Sylwia Izabela Schab (Poland). Torben Jelsbak’s contribution deals with countries at the core of Brandes’s critical *oeuvre*, France and Germany; he explores the very different reflections of his works in both countries. And finally, C. T. Au’s contribution brings a new, unexpected perspective on Brandes’s influence on the Chinese lyrical tradition.

The issue also includes Martin Humpál's article on two other authors who, like Brandes, were born in the nineteenth century and also became very influential figures in literary and cultural history: Knut Hamsun (1859–1952) and Joseph Conrad (1857–1924). Some works by these two writers are considered modernist, and it is in the context of early modernism that Humpál analyzes similarities between two of their famous novels from the 1890's: Hamsun's *Pan* (or, to be more precise, its second part called "Glahns død" ["Glahn's Death"]) and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

Helena Březinová

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ARTICLES

**BRANDES IN THE CZECH-SPEAKING WORLD:
DISMISSED AS A CRITIC, EMBRACED AS A NAME**

HELENA BŘEZINOVÁ, JANA LAINTO

ABSTRACT

In our contribution, we explore the Czech-speaking discourse related to Georg Brandes in the Bohemian Lands in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, which means before and shortly after Czechs gained their independence from Austria-Hungary in 1918. Our research of archival sources, especially periodicals and private letters, enables us to confidently claim that the impact of Brandes's criticism on the Czech arts was rather insignificant. At the same time, the sources give a clear picture that the Czech-speaking intelligentsia were interested in using Brandes's symbolic capital to promote their struggle for Czech cultural autonomy. Thus, it was not Brandes's works that can be considered influential in the Czech context but his persona. This strategy of using Brandes's symbolic capital mirrors his own efforts to be viewed as an international intermediary. Finally, we explore the East-West dynamics in Brandes's relationship with Czechs and vice versa, and here, we identify a considerable asymmetry.

Keywords: Georg Brandes; *Main Currents*; Bohemian Lands; Czechoslovakia; symbolic capital; reception; Eastern Europe; Habsburg Empire; Arnošt Vilém Kraus; Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk

In the volume *The Activist Critic* on Brandes's ideas, methods, and international reception, published more than forty years ago, Radko Kejzlar summarizes Georg Brandes's (1842–1927) impact on the Czech-speaking world:

Wenn man also zusammenfassend Brandes' Rolle im tschechischen Kulturleben festhalten will, muß gesagt werden, daß Brandes mehr durch seine europäische Berühmtheit, als direkt durch sein Werk, die tschechische Literatur als solche beeinflußt hat. Doch sein Prestige und sein Weltruf habe dazu beigetragen, daß man seit seinem Besuch die skandinavischen Literaturen in einem anderen Licht sah und sie zu einem dauerhaften Vorbild und Bestandteil – und das gilt noch bis heute – der tschechischen Kultur gemacht hat.¹

¹ Radko Kejzlar, 'Georg Brandes und Prag,' in *The Activist Critic: A Symposium on the Political Ideas, Literary Methods and International Reception of Georg Brandes*, eds. Hans Hertel and Sven Møller Kristensen (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1980), 226.

Kejzlar may be right about Brandes's pioneering role in promoting Scandinavian literature, but it is debatable whether Brandes can be given the credit for paving the way for Scandinavians to a Czech-speaking audience. No less than six works of Ibsen were published in Czech translation before Brandes's first visit to Prague, in 1892, and long before his first work was published in Czech translation. Besides, numerous volumes of Andersen's fairy tales, as well as novels by Emilie Flygare-Carlén and Sophie Marie Schwartz, appeared in Czech long before Brandes's arrival.² In general, Brandes helped to attract European audiences to Scandinavian authors and in this regard the Czech cultural milieu was no exception. His role as a trailblazer for Scandinavian authors is, however, debatable. Kejzlar is undoubtedly right in claiming that Brandes's *oeuvre* played but a minor role in the Czech literary sphere. The key to Brandes's reception in Czech-speaking countries lies in Kejzlar's words *europäische Berühmtheit*, *Prestige*, and *Weltruf*. It is therefore surprising that in this work, Kejzlar did not focus on this aspect of Brandes's reception by the Czech-speaking cultural figures.

In this paper, we shed light on the lacuna in Brandes's Czech reception. We scrutinize Brandes's influence on Czech culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is important to note, however, that Czech-speaking intellectuals were not his only contacts in the multinational Bohemian Lands: he also interacted with the local German-speaking intelligentsia.³ The analysis will demonstrate that the Czechs showed greater interest in Brandes's persona than in his writings, because of his symbolic capital (in Bourdieu's understanding of the term as a 'reputation for competence and an image of respectability and honourability that are easily converted into political positions as a local and national *notable*').⁴ It can be well documented that Czech intellectuals wished to engage with Brandes in the hope that he would promote Czech national culture abroad. Support from such an internationally respected intellectual would, they reckoned, provide international validation of the Czech national project. This is true especially of the period before 1918, the year the first independent state of Czechs and Slovaks was proclaimed and Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850–1937) was elected its first president. The interest in Brandes's international promotion of Czech culture lasted, however, even years after the founding of Czechoslovakia.

Czech cultural figures accentuated Brandes's Danish origins while his Jewish background played a negligible role in their reception of his work. Brandes's celebrity showed that intellectuals of small nations could achieve international prestige not only for themselves but also for their national cultures. The Czechs, without a nation-state of their own until 1918, tended to use Brandes's authority in their emancipatory struggle for more autonomy within the Habsburg Empire. Czech intellectuals often referred to Brandes as a neutral arbiter operating beyond the sphere of great powers and cultural dominance.

² Ondřej Vimr, 'Despised and Popular: Swedish Women Writers in Nineteenth-Century Czech National and Gender Emancipation,' in *The Triumph of the Swedish Nineteenth-Century Novel in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Yvonne Leffler (Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg, 2019), 87. URI: <http://hdl.handle.net/2077/60002>.

³ For example, Brandes's interaction with the Silesian German writer Maria Stona (born Stonawski, 1859–1944) is well documented. See Martin Pelc, *Maria Stona und ihr Salon in Strzebowitz: Kultur am Rande der Monarchie, der Republik und des Kanons* (Opava: Silesian University in Opava, 2014).

⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice, Reprint-ed. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1996), 291.

Our article thus seeks to corroborate the thesis formulated by Stefan Nygård in his recently published articles on the brokering role of Brandes as a representative of Scandinavia.⁵ The Czech perspective on Brandes therefore perfectly complements Nygård's approach, because his perspective is anchored in Scandinavia.

In the first part of the paper, we will present a brief summary of Brandes's in fact infinitesimal literary influence. Besides Kejzlar, Josef B. Michl, in his 1980 article 'Georg Brandes in Böhmen', also presented a survey of Brandes's Czech reception.⁶ Both Michl and Kejzlar, nevertheless, concentrate on the judgment of Czech men and women of letters and Brandes's influence on the field of Czech literature. None of our predecessors, however, has dealt with the question of what motivated a substantial part of the Czech literary élite to engage with Brandes's ideas. This is why the second, core part of the synthesis will focus on the Czech desire to employ Brandes as a promoter of the Czech-speaking arts and nation. The last and most controversial section of our paper is an invitation to further discussion. It is devoted to the cultural dominance of the Western perspective that Brandes sometimes displayed towards central Europe and the Slavs.

Brandes's literary imprint on Czech culture: 'The name of the departed rings hollow in our air'

These are words from an obituary for Brandes published in the daily *České slovo* (The Czech word) on 22 February 1927.⁷ They were supposed to summarize the influence that Brandes's literary works allegedly had on Czech culture. The anonymous author mentions Brandes's two visits to Prague⁸ and states that 'both times he would probably have been surprised if he had tried to find out what parts of his work had penetrated Czech culture.' Next to none, he boldly claims in the obituary, concluding with the wish that 'hopefully his death will raise more interest in his works. Surely, it may even now still be of invaluable benefit.'⁹ The obituary author's main argument resides in the modest number of Brandes's books translated into Czech, which in turn may, he writes, be a consequence of little interest on the part of the Czech public. As the author puts it: 'Even though Anežka Schulzová began to publish his *Main Currents* [in Czech], she barely got halfway through

⁵ Stefan Nygård focuses respectively on Brandes's mediating effort in the international arena in his article 'The Geopolitics of the "Modern Breakthrough": Cultural Internationalisation and Geopolitical Decline in Scandinavia 1870–1914,' *Geopolitics* 2022, DOI: 10.1080/14650045.2022.2094774. Furthermore, Nygård deals with the concept of Scandinavia as a European semi-peripheral region and the role of intellectuals in 'Georg Brandes and Fin de Siècle Scandinavia as a Cultural Semiperiphery,' *Art@s Bulletin* 11, no. 2 (2022): 9–19.

⁶ Josef B. Michl, 'Georg Brandes in Böhmen,' *Brünner Beiträge zur Germanistik und Nordistik* 2, no. 1 (1980): 109–24.

⁷ 'Jiří Brandes mrtev,' *České slovo*, 22 February 1927, 6. ('Jméno mrtvého zní tedy v našem vzduchu poněkud hluše [...].') Helena Březinová translated all original citations from Czech and Danish into English. In the text, we use English translations and original versions are given in the footnotes.

⁸ Brandes, however, visited Prague three times – first in 1892, then in 1905, and finally, passing through, in 1926.

⁹ 'Jiří Brandes mrtev,' 6. ('po obakrát byl by býval asi překvapen, kdyby byl pátral, co z jeho práce k nám proniklo [...] a snad teprve jeho smrt vzbudí u nás větší všímavost k jeho dílu. Byl by z toho i teď ještě prospěch neocenitelný?')

[them] and they received so little attention that one did not even think of publishing other Brandes books.¹⁰

The picture painted by *České slovo* is similar to that in an earlier article, published in the daily *Čas* (Time), on 3 April 1912 to mark Brandes's seventieth birthday.¹¹ The piece is authored by Gustav Pallas (1882–1964), a renowned scholar and translator of Scandinavian literature, who was clearly better informed about Brandes's books published in Czech. He mentions both Schulzová's translation of *Hovedstrømninger i det 19de Aarhundredes Litteratur: Den romantiske Skole i Frankrig*, published in Czech in 1894,¹² and Brandes's volume on Søren Kierkegaard in Schulzová's translation, released in 1904.¹³ The overall judgment is identical to that in the obituary: the influence that Brandes's works has had on the Czechs is infinitesimal.

In his newspaper remembrance seven years after her death, the Czech poet and essayist Josef Svatopluk Machar (1864–1942) gave a portrayal of Anežka Schulzová, Brandes's first translator and great admirer. It was in fact her father, Ferdinand Schulz, who had invited Brandes to Prague for his first visit, in 1892. Machar writes: 'Brandes had been their [the Schulz family's] guest in Prague. Of his *Main Currents* she translated the Romantic school in France and she wanted to translate the whole cycle – if this one turned out to be well received by readers. (It was not.)'¹⁴

These reminiscences leave the impression that Brandes and his ideas hardly influenced Czech writers and readers at all. It would be misleading, however, to focus on Brandes's works in translation only. The Czech intelligentsia acquainted themselves with his ideas predominantly in German translation and reflected those that circulated in the international cultural exchange long before they appeared in Czech. This was true of Masaryk, an informed literary critic himself, and one of the first to introduce Brandes to the Czechs. When disputing with Brandes in a treatise on Zola's naturalism in 1895, Masaryk clearly acknowledges Brandes's authority, yet reproaches him for being as narrow-minded as Zola since his approach to the human psyche was too mechanical and shallow.¹⁵

Recalling Pallas's article, Pallas notes in passing that the older generations were influenced by Brandes. This influence, however, did not consist in turning Brandes's ideas into works of art but rather in what Nygård defines as the core of Brandesian com-

¹⁰ 'Jiří Brandes mrtev,' 6. ('Sice svého času začala Anežka Schulzová vydávat v překladu jeho *Proudy*, ale nedošla s nimi ani do poloviny a pozornost byla k nim tak skrovná, že na jiné knihy Brandesovy se už ani nepomyslelo.')

¹¹ Gustav Pallas, 'Doslov k oslavám sedmsátých [sic] narozenin Jiřího Brandesa,' *Čas*, 3 April 1912, 5.

¹² Georg Brandes, *Hlavní proudy literatury století devatenáctého: Romantická škola ve Francii*, trans. Anežka Schulzová (Prague: J. Otto, 1894).

¹³ Georg Brandes, *Søren Kierkegaard: Literární studie*, trans. Anežka Schulzová (Prague: Jos. Pelcl, 1904). The last two works of Brandes published in Czech came out the year Brandes died and the following year, which is why they are absent from both articles: *Pověst o Ježíšovi (Sagnet om Jesus)*, translated by Milada Lesná-Krausová (1889–1961), the daughter of Arnošt Kraus (1859–1943), who corresponded with Brandes, came out in 1927. *Prvotní křesťanství* (translated by Jan Razil, probably from the German, *Urkristendom*) was published in 1928.

¹⁴ -by- [Josef Svatopluk Machar], 'Literární epizoda,' *Čas*, 25 February 1912, 3. ('Brandes byl před tím v Praze a byl jejich hostem, z jeho hlavních proudů překládala tehdy Romantickou školu ve Francii a chtěla přeložit dílo celé, dojde-li tento díl v čtenářstvu uznání. (Nedošel.)')

¹⁵ Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, 'Zolův naturalism [part 3],' *Naše doba* 3, no. 3 (1895–1896): 226, 232.

parative literature: 'Comparison thus served a critical function in local debates when Brandes attacked domestic cultural stagnation and emphasized the need for Denmark to catch up.'¹⁶ In the 1880s and 1890s, Czech men and women of letters were obviously most inspired by Brandes's liberal approach in fighting what he considered to be the backwardness of Danish literature and encouraging authors to take up modern trends. Symptomatic of this is expressed in a recollection of František Xaver Šalda (1867–1937), one of the most influential Czech critics of the first half of the twentieth century. On the occasion of Brandes's seventieth birthday, Šalda, a professor of Romance literatures at Prague University, wrote a lengthy piece in *Národní listy*.¹⁷ In this article, he recalls his first visit to the Clementinum library in the late 1880s which he made with piety solely to read *Main Currents*:

Back then, in the late 1880s, my relationship to Brandes was to a certain degree typical: the awakened Czech and German youth with literary interests looked up to him with the same feeling of reverence. For the youth of central Europe then, Brandes was a great liberator, an emancipator; he liberated us from the old, closed, and fossilized tradition at home; he opened new cultural and literary, aesthetic, and social horizons; he brought us Western philosophical and poetic Positivism and Naturalism. [...] My initial enthusiasm for Brandes, however, did not stand the test of my more profound studies of aesthetic, literary, and social questions.¹⁸

His essay on the occasion of Brandes's eightieth birthday, entitled 'An Eighty-year-old Lucifer' paints a similar picture.¹⁹ In the beginning, Šalda recalls Brandes's immense impact, equating it to that of Flaubert, Zola, Tolstoy, Ibsen, Kielland, Mill, and Bjørnson. These authors, according to Šalda, gave courage to the intimidated Czech soul and liberated 'Czech brains from the Egyptian darkness *in estheticis*.'²⁰ The core of the essay, however, consists of depicting his parting of ways with Brandes. In retrospect, Šalda, Machar, and Masaryk unequivocally state that Brandes's Positivism and Naturalism in literature have been superseded, condemning his conception of literature as outdated and his approach as shallow.

In reaction to the Czech translation in *Čas*, a periodical closely associated with Masaryk's Realist group, Jan Herben (1857–1936) symptomatically called Brandes a 'pioneer of progress' (*průkopníkem pokroku*) but only because other enlightened, talented, and progressive authors, like Bjørnson, Ibsen, Kielland, Drachmann, and Jacobsen, had

¹⁶ Nygård, 'The Geopolitics of the "Modern Breakthrough,"' 19.

¹⁷ František Xaver Šalda, 'Georg Brandes: K jeho 70tým narozeninám dne 4. února t. r.,' *Národní listy*, supplement *Z kulturního života*, 4 February 1912, 17.

¹⁸ Šalda, 'Georg Brandes,' 17. ('Poměr můj k Brandesovi byl tehdy – na konci let osmdesátých – do jakéhosi stupně typický: se stejným pocitem úcty vzhlížela k němu tehdy probudilá část literární mládeže nejen české, ale i německé. Brandes byl tehdy mládeži středoevropské velkým osvoboditelem, emancipátorem: osvobozoval od staré, uzavřené a ztuhlé tradice domácí; otevíral nové obzory kulturní i literární, estetické i sociální; prostředkoval západní positivism a naturalism myšlenkový i básnický [...]. Můj původní entuziasm pro Brandesa neodolal ovšem hlubšímu studiu problémů esthetických, literárních i společenských.')

¹⁹ František Xaver Šalda, 'Osmdesátiletý Lucifer,' in *Kritické projevy 12: 1922–1924*, ed. Zina Trochová (Prague Československý spisovatel, 1959), 35–39.

²⁰ Šalda, 'Osmdesátiletý Lucifer,' 36. ('pomáhal vypuzovat z českých mozků egyptskou tmou *in estheticis*!')

joined him.²¹ Otherwise, Herben brushes off Brandes's approach to literature as superficial:

Nowhere was Brandes's shallowness made so obvious as it was in Russia. A couple of years ago, Brandes went to Saint Petersburg to lecture on Russian Realists but in the end they listened to him with icy disappointment. Not only had local Russian critics analysed Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy's Realism much more profoundly than he had, but even in the West Melchior de Vogüé knew Russian Realism in an utterly different way from Brandes.²²

In his review, Herben refers to a series of his columns on Brandes's *Main Currents*, which he wrote back in 1886.²³ This supports the view that the Czech-speaking intelligentsia had reflected on Brandes's thoughts even before one of the volumes appeared in Czech in 1893. What is more important, however, is Herben's polemic with the enthusiastic review of the Czech translation, which was written by Jan Voborník and published in the daily *Národní listy* (National gazette).²⁴ Herben describes his initially positive stance towards Brandes's *Currents* as a sickness he had by now recovered from.²⁵ Herben's harsh metaphor of a cured sickness suggests that Brandes's Czech translation arrived on the scene rather late and a significant number of Czech intellectuals had already dissociated themselves from Brandes's ideas. This observation comports with the judgments made by Masaryk in his private correspondence with the writer Machar. In a letter of 6 May 1894, Machar made this critical remark concerning Brandes:

I mentioned Nietzsche. Have you read Brandes's article on him in *Zlatá Praha*? His shallowness is unparalleled. And on top of that, it takes considerable audacity to write about something after having merely leafed through it. Because the gentleman certainly cannot have read Nietzsche. Brandes is a columnist, nothing more. It is of the damned flashy, empty French school whose father was Sainte-Beuve.²⁶

²¹ [Jan Herben], review of *Hlavní proudy literatury století devatenáctého: Romantická škola ve Francii*, by Georg Brandes, trans. Anežka Schulzová, *Čas*, 9 December 1893, 773–74. This review was published anonymously but based on the references and other indications the author must be Jan Herben.

²² [Herben], review of *Hlavní proudy literatury století devatenáctého*, 773. ('Nikde nebyla tak odkryta povrchnost Brandesova jako v Rusku. Brandes zajel do Petrohradu před několika lety přednášet o ruských realistech, ale doposlouchán byl s ledovým sklamaním. Nejen domácí kritikové ruští dávno a mnohem důkladněji vyslovili se o realismu Dostojevského a Tolstého, nýbrž i na západě Melchior de Vogüé poznal realism ruský docela jinak než Brandes.')

²³ Herben wrote several essays under the name Jan Litera or the initials J. H. in *Hlas národa*, all published in 1886. In these essays, he drew on Brandes's works and critical approach. See 'Herben, Jan 1876 (autorská část)', *Retrospektivní bibliografie české literatury 1775–1945*, Prague: ÚČL AV ČR, <https://retrobi.ucl.cas.cz/retrobi/katalog/cast/A/skupina/Herben%252C+Jan+1876.0>.

²⁴ See Jan Voborník, review of *Hlavní proudy literatury století devatenáctého: Romantická škola ve Francii*, by Georg Brandes, trans. Anežka Schulzová, *Národní listy*, 1 December 1893, 4.

²⁵ [Herben], review of *Hlavní proudy literatury století devatenáctého*, 773.

²⁶ Machar to Masaryk, Vienna, 6 May 1894, in *Korespondence: T. G. Masaryk – Josef Svatopluk Machar*, eds. Helena Kokešová, Petr Kotyk and Irena Kraitlová, vol. 1, 1893–1895 (Prague: Masarykův ústav a Archiv AV ČR, 2017), 102. ('Zmínil jsem se o Nietzsche. Četl jste v "Zlaté Praze" Brandesův článek o něm? Je to povrchnost bezpříkladná. A porce smělosti k tomu patří psát o něčem tak po pouhém prohlédnutí. Neboť ten pán jistě Nietzsche nepročtl. Brandes je fejetonista a nic víc. Je to proklátá blýskavá a prázdná francouzská škola, jejíž papa byl S[ain]te-Beuve.')

In agreement with Machar, Masaryk replied that Brandes was the 'prototype of the vulgar European liberal. It suits him well that he is propagated in our literature by the arch-conservative [Ferdinand] Schulz.'²⁷ Neither Machar nor Masaryk made these harsh statements publicly, yet similar criticism was expressed by Herben in the *Čas* review. On the one hand, Herben criticized Brandes's literary doctrine and scorned his criticism for shallowness; on the other, he admitted that Brandes's *Currents* could nevertheless contribute to Czech culture as an impetus to better literary criticism because the essay-like style makes criticism accessible to the general public.²⁸ Hence, the general disdain for Brandes's criticism went hand in hand with high acclaim for Brandes's role as a public intellectual. A telling example of this stance is an article published in *Čas* on 12 April 1890 referring to Brandes's letter to *Freie Bühne für modernes Leben*.²⁹ In this letter, Brandes reports on his many debates in the international arena and his lectures in Denmark, which were packed to capacity. The Czech commentator concludes his reporting on Brandes's letter:

We do not like Mr. Georg Brandes but we would still draw attention to the lively culture scenes in other countries: philosophical debates that move countless people to write, students who wait for three-quarters of an hour for the auditorium to open, students who pack the auditoriums to capacity so the lecture has to be held twice or three times. Are further explanations needed to convince us that the Danes, although smaller in number than us, still outdo us to such extent?³⁰

This passage corroborates Nygård's observation that according to Brandes 'cultural offense was the best defence for Denmark and Scandinavia. The national and the international were mutually constituent categories, and Denmark's 'political and cultural salvation lay in an enhanced Danish presence on the European cultural scene.'³¹ As should be clear from the Czech examples, Brandes's activity promoted Scandinavia abroad and served as an example to other small nations.

As we have sought to demonstrate the appeal of Brandes's theoretical works, and especially his conception of Naturalism, soon faded in the eyes of Czech men and women of letters. The opposite is true of the impetus to comparison or, rather, to catching-up, which Brandes provided throughout Europe – this aspect of his literary activity served as a model to emulate. Following the Danish example, Brandes's inspiration mainly consisted in the possibility of making an even non-independent small nation internationally

²⁷ Masaryk to Machar, Prague, 9 May 1894, in *Korespondence. T. G. Masaryk – Josef Svatopluk Machar*, 104. ('typ vulgárního, evropského liberalismu. Hodí se k němu docela dobře, že jej teď do naší literatury zavádí arcišošák Schulz.') Machar and Masaryk's correspondence as well as Herben's polemic review reflect the contemporary disputes between different fractions of Czech national movement, in this case the Realists and the Young Czechs. The socio-political contextualization of Brandes's reception is a topic in itself and needs to be further researched.

²⁸ [Herben], review of *Hlavní proudy literatury století devatenáctého*, 773.

²⁹ 'Zajímavé světlo na poměry dánské,' *Čas*, 12 April 1890, 234.

³⁰ 'Zajímavé světlo na poměry dánské,' 234. ('Pan Georg Brandes nám není sympatický, ale přece ukazujeme na duchovní ruch v zemích jiných: filosofická polemika, která hne nesčíslnými péry, studenti, kteří tři čtvrti hodiny čekají na otevření posluchárny, studenti, kteří naplňují síně tak, že je možná mítí přednášku dvakrát ba třikrát. Je potřebí dalších výkladů pro to, že Dánové, ač jsou počtem slabší nás, přece v literatuře tak velice nad nás vynikají?')

³¹ Nygård, "The Geopolitics of the "Modern Breakthrough,"" 13.

visible. This partial conclusion leads to the second section of our essay: the effort to use Brandes in the struggle for Czech emancipation from the Habsburgs.

Using the Brandes Brand: 'A church whose frescos a Barbarian hand has left covered with lime for centuries'

In using Brandes as an international celebrity, the Czechs' aim was twofold. First, they wished to achieve legitimization and acceptance as, in Friedrich Meinecke's conception, a *Kulturnation* (a nation with a great cultural history), if not yet a *Staatsnation* (a political nation or nation-state)³². Second, they sought to emphasize Brandes's non-German, semi-peripheral origin in order to underscore the possibility of small nations successfully competing with great powers. The Czech motivation for referring to Brandes comports with Brandes's mediating role as described by Nygård. According to Nygård, Brandes and other Scandinavian intellectuals, such as Bjørnson, were interested in redefining their 'role in the world-system by exploiting a position of relative detachment from dominant centres and to situate themselves and their regions as mediators.'³³ Precisely this quality of Brandes's being relatively detached from culturally dominant Germany was accentuated and valued in several articles written by Czechs in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century.

Brandes's status as a mediator and the Czechs' using it is evident in the recycling of Brandes's description of his Prague sojourn. After Brandes had visited Prague in late July 1892, he published a short cultural travelogue from Prague with the title 'Bøhmen.'³⁴ In this essay, he mentions his maneuvering between the feuding Czech and German clubs and he displays his conscious role as an unbiased mediator. The general view he presented is his acclaim for the Czechs' fierce struggle for the autonomy of their language, yet he also visits the German club and praises both groups for not pressuring him to take a stance. True to Romanticism, however, Brandes utters his conviction that the genuine spirit of Bohemia is incarnated in the Czech-speaking majority and he therefore approves of the national rebirth of the Czechs. He uses a visual-arts metaphor to express the current state of Czech culture:

But the movement is clear: Czechness will prevail and the German element will lose its ground here. The national passion of the Czech tribe has been so strong that it has changed the face of Bohemia and the look of Prague. A lot of power was hidden in these people since it could break through so rapidly. Its essence has made the same impression on me as a church whose frescos a Barbarian hand has left covered with lime for centuries. Suddenly the coating has been removed and the imagery has appeared with its original shapes and colours.³⁵

³² For a more profound analysis see Georg Schmidt, 'Friedrich Meineckes Kulturnation Zum historischen Kontext nationaler Ideen in Weimar-Jena um 1800', *Historische Zeitschrift* 284, no. 1 (2007): I-I. <https://doi.org/10.1524/hzhz.2007.284.jg.masthead>, 598.

³³ Nygård, 'The Geopolitics of the "Modern Breakthrough,"' 2.

³⁴ Georg Brandes, 'Bøhmen,' in *Samlede Skrifter*, vol. 11 (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1902), 270–87.

³⁵ Brandes, 'Bøhmen,' 277. ('Men Bevægelsen er den, at det er det Tzechiske som vinder, det Tyske, som taber Jordsmon her, og den tzechiske Stammes nationale Lidenskab har været saa stærk, at den har

As Josef B. Michl has observed, Brandes might have written this piece about Bohemia shortly after returning home. Michl also mentions that the first translation of the Bohemia piece was first published in German in the volume *Charakterzeichnungen von Land und Leuten* (Leipzig, 1899).³⁶ But in 1894, an issue of the Brno daily *Moravská orlice* records an earlier translation into German. In September, it reported that Brandes's recollections of Prague were published in the latest issue of the *Neue Revue* in Vienna. In the Czech article, titled 'A Danish voice about our Prague', Brandes is described as a 'famous literary critic who with his activity embraces the whole contemporary cultural world.'³⁷ The rest of the article contains an accurate translation of Brandes's commendation of the Czech people for their persistence and industriousness. The report includes Brandes's statement that the Czech National Theatre is Europe's most beautiful, and uses the fresco metaphor.³⁸ Clearly, Brandes's Czech impressions were soon reimported to Bohemia and used to support Czech claims for international and domestic recognition. The Czechs' continuous use of Brandes is attested by the repeated use of the fresco metaphor in Czech periodicals. In an article from 21 February 1927, reflecting on his visits to Prague, Brandes is praised for grasping the relationship between the Czechs and Bohemian Germans during his speech for the Czechs on Žofín, an island on the Vltava in Prague, in which he used precisely this metaphor.³⁹ Interestingly, Brandes may have borrowed this image from his compatriot Frederik Schiern's *Breve fra Prag* (Letters from Prague) first published in book form in 1858. Schiern laments the oppression of the Czech language by the German and the arrogance of the German minority towards the suppressed Czech majority, and he cleverly calls life in Prague a 'palimpsest'.⁴⁰

A plethora of instances in Czech periodicals document the hunger of the Czech intelligentsia for recognition by Brandes. The fortnightly *Ženský svět* (Woman's World) ran an advertisement for the Czech translation of his volume on Søren Kierkegaard in 1904, with the following words: 'The famous author, so well disposed to us Czechs, has written us an uplifting preface to the Czech edition.'⁴¹ The entire preface was published separately by the daily *Lidové noviny* on 21 February 1927, together with his obituary, under a title that translates as 'Brandes's Message to the Czech Nation'.⁴² In the preface, Brandes juxtaposes Kierkegaard with Jan Hus and calls the Czech nation one of the most freedom-loving peoples in the world.

It is also significant that two collections of Czech poems in German translation each contains a dedication to Brandes by the Czech patriot and advocate of Czech sovereign-

forvandlet Bøhmens Udseende og Prags Aasyn. Megen Kraft har ligget skjult i dette Folk, siden den saa hurtigt kunde frembryde. Dets Væsen gjorde paa mig samme Indtryk som en Kirke, hvis Fresker en barbarisk Haand for Aarhundreder har dækket med Kalk. Det er nu, som om Sløret med Et var blevet fjernet, og den oprindelige Billedpragt viser sig pludseligt med sine Former og Farver')

³⁶ Michl, 'Georg Brandes in Böhmen,' 111.

³⁷ 'Dánský hlas o naší Praze,' *Moravská orlice*, 15 September 1894, 3. ('Proslulý dánský kritik literární, Jiří Brandes, kterýž činností svou objímá celý současný svět kulturní [...].')

³⁸ 'Dánský hlas o naší Praze,' 3.

³⁹ 'Jiří Brandes v Praze,' *Lidové noviny*, 21 February 1927, afternoon edition, 1.

⁴⁰ Frederik Schiern, 'Breve fra Prag,' in *Nyere historiske Studier* (Copenhagen: J. H. Schubothe, 1879), 5.

⁴¹ 'Brandesův Søren Kierkegaard v českém rouše,' *Ženský svět*, 20 June 1904, 154. ('Slavný autor, nám Čechům velmi nakloněný, napsal k vydání českému zvláštní nás povznášející přemluvu.')

⁴² Georg Brandes, 'Brandesovo posláni českému národu,' *Lidové noviny*, 21 February 1927, morning edition, 1.

ty, Eduard Albert (1841–1900). They are entitled *Poesie aus Böhmen: fremde und eigene Uebersetzungen aus dem Böhmischem* (1893) and *Neuere Poesie aus Böhmen: Anthologie aus dem Werken von Jaroslav Vrchlický* (1893). They are further evidence of using Brandes's international influence to advance the Czech cause. Brandes clearly only considers the poems of Vrchlický, whom he met personally. There is no evidence of him referring to other Czech writers from the collection, such as Jan Neruda, Karel Hynek Mácha, Ján Kollár (a Slovak writing in Czech), Karel Havlíček, and Karel Jaromír Erben.

The most engaged and open use of Brandes's reputation was by a close collaborator of Masaryk's, Arnošt Kraus.⁴³ In 1905, Kraus was appointed the first Czech professor of German literature at the Czech University of Prague since its founding in 1882. Most important to our essay, Kraus became widely known as an enthusiastic scholar of things Scandinavian, Danish in particular.⁴⁴ He learnt Danish, studied various aspects of Danish culture, and visited Denmark numerous times. In his works, he emphasizes the parallels between the Czechs and the Danes – both, he argues, were small nations whose national cultures competed with the dominant German culture next door. Kraus saw Denmark as a role model for the Czech nation because the Danes, despite being a small nation, had managed to surmount the difficulties they faced following their defeat in the Second Schleswig War (1864). By the turn of the century, they became an internationally respected nation, valued particularly for their economic and cultural strengths. In attempts to emulate this success, Kraus arranged excursions to Danish farms for Czech agricultural workers, wrote books and articles on Denmark, and promoted the Danish model of society to the Czech public.⁴⁵ For him, Brandes represented the epitome of Danish success in the cultural field, an intellectual of a small nation who had achieved international renown.

Kraus corresponded with Brandes and his letters are brimming over with requests to Brandes to participate publicly in the Czech emancipatory struggle. Two appeals by Kraus are typical of his approach to Brandes. In a letter of 11 March 1906, Kraus informed Brandes that he intended to start the *Čechische Revue*, a journal (publishing ten issues a year) with contributions in German, with the aim of informing foreign readers about Czech society and culture.⁴⁶ It was Masaryk who had prompted Kraus to establish a journal with a mission to overcome Czech provincialism and become a platform for Czech

⁴³ On Kraus's correspondence with Brandes see Helena Březinová, 'Arnošt Vilém Kraus zwischen Böhmen und Dänemark – eine Brücke, von der man auf Deutschland herabsieht,' in *Arnošt Vilém Kraus (1859–1943): Wissenschaftler und Kulturpolitiker*, eds. Helena Březinová, Steffen Höhne, and Václav Petrbok (Cologne: Böhlau, 2021), 197–222.

⁴⁴ Martin Humpál, 'Arnošt Kraus zwischen Tschechien und dem Norden,' *Text und Kontext: Zeitschrift für germanistische Literaturforschung in Skandinavien* 26, no. 1 (2004): 36. See also Václav Petrbok, ed., *Arnošt Vilém Kraus (1859–1943) a počátky české germanobohemistiky* (Prague: Academia, 2015), 9–27.

⁴⁵ Jana Lainto, 'A "Danish Model"? Transnational Networks and the Circulation of Danish Agricultural Practices in Bohemia at the Turn of the Century,' in *In the Sign of Self-help and Solidarity: Cooperatives, Cooperative Elites, and Politics in Central Europe in the Second Half of the 19th Century and the First Half of the 20th Century*, eds. Jan Slaviček and Eduard Kubů (Prague: Historický ústav AV ČR/Národní zemědělské museum, forthcoming). See also Peter Bugge, 'Arnošt Kraus' Images of Denmark,' in *Arnošt Vilém Kraus (1859–1943)*, eds. Březinová, Höhne, and Petrbok, 223–38.

⁴⁶ Kraus to Brandes, 11 March 1906, Brandes arkiv, Breve (Kont-Krohg) fra fremmede enkeltpersoner til Georg Brandes, æske 80, Det Kgl. Bibliotek, Copenhagen.

intellectuals to participate in international discussions.⁴⁷ The chief aim of the journal, as Kraus explained to Brandes, was to address two matters: the cultural viability of a small nation and the possibility of co-existing with a large nation bordering it. Kraus then clarified what he expected Brandes to do: 'Both these questions can be viewed from a wider perspective and I would like to encourage big (non-German) spirits from abroad, spirits and leaders coming from small nations, to express their opinion on these matters. Would you be one of them?'⁴⁸

Kraus continuously accentuated Brandes's neutrality, because, thanks to his authority, he was entitled to become a mediator between the German and Czech peoples of Bohemia. And, as has been deftly shown by Nygård, this is exactly the brokering role Brandes consciously adopted.⁴⁹ In another letter, of 21 January 1912, Kraus asked Brandes about the awarding of the Nobel Prize in Literature and tried to compel Brandes to put forward the name of the Czech writer Jaroslav Vrchlický (1853–1912) because of Vrchlický's immense impact on the evolving Czech culture.⁵⁰ Although both pleas went unheard, Kraus found ways to engage Brandes despite the famous Dane's reluctance.

In his letters, Brandes regularly apologized for not being able to provide the contribution Kraus had asked for, explaining that he was simply too busy.⁵¹ In several instances, then, Kraus made use of Brandes's published writings when they were in concordance with the general objective of the Czech emancipatory movement. Unsurprisingly, he promptly translated Brandes's 'Danskheden i Sønderjylland' (Danishness in Southern Jutland, 1899). Brandes's article was published in Czech by the monthly *Naše doba* (Our times). The title is, however, significantly different from the Danish: in Czech, it is 'Německá a dánská kultura' (German and Danish culture), reflecting Kraus's motivation for translating the article.⁵² Furthermore, he provided his translation with a telling preface in which he, like Brandes in his article, opposes Otto Weddingen's claim that German culture should be a model for both the Danish and the Czech. As his strongest argument, Kraus used Brandes's persona, writing:

It might therefore be interesting to learn opinions on this matter uttered by a voice that is not only Danish but also more competent than any other, uttered by a man in comparison with whom Mr. Weddingen plays the same role as little Denmark face to face with the German Empire, a man, whose whole orientation guarantees that we will not hear any

⁴⁷ Petr Šisler, 'Čechische Revue,' *Lexikon české literatury 1. Osobnosti, díla a instituce: A–G*, ed. Vladimír Forst et al. (Prague: Academia, 1985), 416.

⁴⁸ Kraus to Brandes, 11 March 1906, Brandes arkiv, Breve (Kont–Krohg) fra fremmede enkeltpersoner til Georg Brandes, æske 80, Det Kgl. Bibliotek, Copenhagen. ('Begge disse Spørgsmål kan opfattes fra en videre Synskreds og jeg tænker mig at opfordre Udlandets, de store (ikke tyske) og smaa Nationers anerkendte Aander og Førere at udtale sig derom. Vilde de være den første af dem?')

⁴⁹ Nygård, "The Geopolitics of the "Modern Breakthrough"."

⁵⁰ Kraus to Brandes, 21 January 1912, Brandes arkiv, Breve (Kont–Krohg) fra fremmede enkeltpersoner til Georg Brandes, æske 80, Det Kgl. Bibliotek, Copenhagen.

⁵¹ Kraus's personal papers contain 14 cards and letters from Brandes to him. In Arnošt Vilém Kraus Fonds, Korespondence osobní: Brandes Georg, sign. 197, karton 2, MÚA AV ČR, Prague.

⁵² Georg Brandes, 'Německá a dánská kultura,' trans. Arnošt Kraus, *Naše doba* 6, nos. 7 and 8 (1898–1899): 493–500, 570–76.

statements of national chauvinism. That man is Georg Brandes, whose article was published in the March issue of *Tilskueren*, a Copenhagen arts monthly.⁵³

Of equal significance is the following episode. During 1926 Brandes's sojourn at Carlsbad (Karlovy Vary), the popular spa in west Bohemia, Kraus offered him to arrange a meeting with the Czechoslovak president, Masaryk. As part of his urging, he pointed out that it had been Masaryk who 'forty-four years ago was the first in Prague to talk about you. You would say "der Mann steht seinem Ruhm; sein Ruhm ist bloß sein Schatten."⁵⁴ And, on 8 June 1826, Masaryk did indeed receive Brandes.⁵⁵ This event was obviously meant to achieve the same end as any other public announcement in which Brandes acknowledged Czech culture and statehood.

Indeed, Kraus continued to cast Brandes in the role of an authority legitimizing the Czechs right to autonomy or independence even after the birth of Czechoslovakia, and similar efforts were made by other Czech intellectuals. Evidence of this is a short news item in *Lidové noviny* on 13 June 1926, by the famous writer Karel Čapek (1890–1938), who, like Kraus, was closely allied with President Masaryk.⁵⁶ It was published a week after Masaryk had received Brandes in Carlsbad and Čapek's description of Brandes leaves the impression that Čapek was present, which he may have been, but there is no record of his having been at the meeting. Čapek depicts a spry, dignified elderly Brandes, and claims that he was the greatest of all European critics, someone who remembered poor, sick Jacobsen, hypochondriacal Strindberg, and his old friend Vrchlický.⁵⁷ The point of Čapek's name-dropping as if on the Dane's behalf was likely an attempt to convince the readers of Brandes's importance and give greater resonance to Brandes's tipping his hat to Masaryk at the end of the news item. According to Čapek, Brandes the giant dubbed Masaryk 'king' at the meeting: 'And all of a sudden this doyen of Europe raises his glass to toast the health of a king. You are republicans but you have a king of spirit in your midst. I drink to the health of President Masaryk.'⁵⁸ Čapek's metaphor of the doyen from Denmark dubbing the Czechoslovak president a king is surely the epitome of the Czechs' using Brandes's authority to their ends. It is fair to say, then, that the influence Brandes and other Scandinavian intellectuals, like Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, tried to make use of in international affairs after 1900 was apparently perceived by a considerable number of Czech intellectuals exactly the way the Scandinavians wished it to be:⁵⁹ they were quite

⁵³ Brandes, 'Německá a dánská kultura,' no. 7, 493. ('Proto bude snad zajímavo poznati o téže látce hlas z úst nejen dánských nýbrž i nad jiné povolaných, z úst muže, vůči němuž p. Weddingen, třeba Němec, hraje přec jen tutěž úlohu jako malé Dánsko u přirovnání s německou říší, muže, jehož celý směr zaručuje, že neuslyšíme výroků národního šovinismu; jest to Georg Brandes, jehož článek vyšel v březnovém sešitu kodaňské revue "Tilskueren"')

⁵⁴ Kraus to Brandes, 3 June 1926, Brandes arkiv, Breve (Kont–Krohg) fra fremmede enkeltpersoner til Georg Brandes, æske 80, Det Kgl. Bibliotek, Copenhagen. ('Han var for 44 Aar siden den første i Prag, som talte om Dem. De ville sigte der Mann steht seinem Ruhm; sein Ruhm ist bloß sein Schatten.')

⁵⁵ File 'Brandes Georg, dánský spisovatel,' KPR – protokol A (audience), inv. č. 345, sign. A 691/26, Archiv KPR, Prague.

⁵⁶ Karel Čapek, 'Doyen evropské kultury,' *Lidové noviny*, 13 June 1926, 7.

⁵⁷ Čapek, 'Doyen evropské kultury,' 7.

⁵⁸ Čapek, 'Doyen evropské kultury,' 7. ('A jindy opět tento doyen Evropy pozvedá číši vína na zdraví krále: Vy jste republikáni, ale máte ve svém středu krále ducha. Připíjím na zdraví presidenta Masaryka.')

⁵⁹ Brandes's speech on the island of Mon in 1904 is significant in this respect: 'It is also more important to develop a sense of freedom and justice among the people, not just for its own use [...]. Thus it

widely considered international authorities calling for a just approach to be taken towards small and underprivileged peoples.

Brandes and Eastern Europe

As we have seen, the Czechs again and again enthusiastically accepted and employed the authority of a cultural celebrity from another small nation, a brother and co-fighter in the emancipatory struggle of small nations, to have their cultures internationally acknowledged. And yet, when it came to his area of expertise, comparative literature, Czech intellectuals accused Brandes of not understanding Slavic literatures and Eastern Europe. After all, Brandes was widely perceived to be a representative of Western cultures. To his credit, he tried in his writings to get the literature of the Slavic East included in *Weltliteratur*, but the relationship between the Western cultural impetus and the Eastern in Brandes's understanding is complex and raises several questions. When scrutinized closely, Brandes's view of the Czechs corresponds somewhat with the notion of Eastern Europeans as the Others. In his article 'Voltaire's Public and the Idea of Eastern Europe: Toward a Literary Sociology of Continental Division,' Larry Wolff convincingly demonstrates that the division was first introduced during the Enlightenment. In this period, Voltaire 'produced a certain asymmetry in the implicit relation between "Western Europe" and "Eastern Europe", as the latter was made legible and accountable to the former.'⁶⁰ To make clear what he means by legible, Wolff also employs the categories of an appropriating subject and appropriated object: 'Again, there was a Europe that held certain beliefs, whether true or false, and another Europe which appeared only as an object of regard, an item of news, a point of controversy. There was a Europe as subject and Europe as object, geographically aligned according to west and east, and the former assumed a public persona in which it appropriated the latter.'⁶¹ Wolff gives evidence to support this assumption by focusing on Voltaire's use of 'we' when addressing the reading public of his day, around 1750, and this 'we' included Paris, Basel, The Hague, Geneva, and Dresden but excluded the European Orient:⁶² 'The first person plural, however,

was my ideal that it should be known that, despite the small size of our country, men lived here who felt sympathy for with all wronged individuals or oppressed peoples across the world and who lifted their voices, spoke on their behalf.' In Julia K. Allen, 'Taking the Measure of National Greatness: Georg Brandes's Condemnation of German Imperialism,' *Monatshefte* 108, no. 3 (2016): 326. William Banks's recently published comprehensive collection gives a picture of the scope of Brandes's international activity and attests to his self-understanding as international authority. In Georg Brandes, *Human Rights and Oppressed Peoples: Collected Essays and Speeches*, ed. and trans. William Banks (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2020).

⁶⁰ Larry Wolff, 'Voltaire's Public and the Idea of Eastern Europe: Toward a Literary Sociology of Continental Division,' *Slavic Review* 54, no. 4 (1995): 935.

⁶¹ Wolff, 'Voltaire's Public and the Idea of Eastern Europe,' 935.

⁶² Wolff, 'Voltaire's Public and the Idea of Eastern Europe,' 938. Furthermore, Wolff discusses the shift of the North-South axis to a West-East in the late eighteenth century. According to him, 'it was the intellectual work of the Enlightenment to bring about that modern reorientation of the continent which produced Western Europe and Eastern Europe. Poland and Russia would be mentally detached from Sweden and Denmark, and associated instead with Hungary and Bohemia, the Balkan lands of Ottoman Europe, and even the Crimea on the Black Sea.' In Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization in the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 5.

defined geographically the perspective from which the Orient was to be viewed, by us, “us, in our northern Occident [...]”⁶³

Exploring Brandes’s works, one can identify traces of him making such a division, although it would probably be an exaggeration to blame him for ascribing to the West an unconditional superiority and dominance. As is well documented, his aim was to import interesting impetuses from Polish and Russian works of literature in favour of *Weltliteratur* as he understood it. Still, in terms of Wolff’s Europe the subject–object dynamics are clear: in Brandes’s Western perspective, the Czechs were an object. The Czechs, nonetheless, largely mirrored this hierarchy realizing that only after Western recognition could their own cultural value be legitimized.

Returning to Pallas’s article published to mark Brandes’s seventieth birthday, we see that he rather harshly judges Brandes’s attitude to the Slavs: ‘To us Slavs, Brandes remained a stranger although his influence on the previous generation was quite remarkable. Brandes did not understand the Slavic literary currents; with just a few remarks he is done with Polish Byronism and Russian Naturalism; in his *Main Currents*, he comes to a standstill with two Germanic branches and a Roman one.’⁶⁴

A similar statement about Brandes’s ignorance about the Slavic cultures appears in the obituary written by the influential critic and professor of literature Arne Novák (1880–1939) and published in *Lidové noviny* on 21 February 1927. ‘Brandes used to bring back from his journeys,’ Novák writes, ‘diaries full of impressions and reflections, sometimes profound, sometimes superficial. And Poland and Russia, the countries in which he travelled in the 1880s, remained incomprehensible to him, which his essay on Mickiewicz and his book about Dostoyevsky also attest to.’⁶⁵ Of course, Brandes’s alleged ignorance of Slavic literatures is not evidence that he thought of Europe as being divided into West and East. Here, the opposite is true: the division is emphasized by the Czech authors. At the same time, their statements attest to Czech intellectuals’ feeling like objects appropriated by the West. Both Pallas and Arne Novák provide evidence that the division was palpable to the Czech intelligentsia.

The notion of an invisible East–West borderline can, however, also be detected in Brandes’s writings. In what follows, we will focus on this aspect and Brandes’s acknowledgment that the literary centres of power are principally in the West. As we have seen, Czech periodicals eagerly quoted Brandes’s descriptions of Bohemia. But the Czech-speaking authors omitted one part of these descriptions. In it, Brandes does not extoll the beauty of the National Theatre (finally opened in 1881) or the Czechs’ successful fight for their language, but presents a stereotypical notion of the Slavs. He writes:

⁶³ Wolff, ‘Voltaire’s Public and the Idea of Eastern Europe,’ 938.

⁶⁴ Pallas, ‘Doslov k oslavám sedmsátých [sic] narozenin Jiřího Brandesa,’ 5. (‘Nám Slovanům zůstával Brandes cizím, ač vliv jeho na minulou generaci byl dosti značný. Brandes neměl porozumění pro literární proudy slovanské, jenom zmínkami odbývá na příkl. polský byronismus a ruský naturalismus; v “Hlavních proudech” ustrnul pouze na dvou germánských a jedné románské větvi.’)

⁶⁵ Arne Novák, ‘Za Jiřím Brandesem,’ *Lidové noviny*, 21 February 1927, morning edition, 2. (‘Brandes si přinášival ze svých cest zpravidla napěchované zápisníky dojmů a postřehů, někdy pronikavých, jindy jenom povrchních, a jmenovitě Polsko a Rusko, kde cestoval v letech osmdesátých, zůstaly mu zeměmi nesrozumitelnými, jak svědčí i jeho studie o Mickiewiczovi a kniha o Dostojevském.’)

For us Northerners, Bohemia still has a certain fairy-tale ring to its name. This is the land from which, according to the ballad, Queen Dagmar sailed [to Denmark]. The land on whose shores, in Shakespeare, you land. The name in its French form, *la Bohême* (*les Bohémiens*), evokes the image of a free Gypsy life [*la bohème*]; it seems to be the term of the old land of the Gypsies or the modern home of the homeless. Yet no other Slavic nation corresponds less to these projections than the Czech inhabitants of Bohemia. Among all the Slavic tribes the Czech is the most domestic, the most industrious, and the most constantly and skilfully striving.⁶⁶

That means, conversely, that all other Slavic nations are less home-loving and industrious, that is, they live more in keeping with the notion of the ‘Gypsy life’. Clearly, the devil is hidden in the detail of Brandes’s praise. This is manifested in another compliment Brandes pays in his ‘Bøhmen’ travelogue, this time to the translation skills of Vrchlický.

His graceful suppleness is genuinely Slavic, but it is not an expression of any unreliability, only an expression of the astonishing receptiveness of his nature. Such a high degree of receptivity is usually described as feminine, but probably wrongly so; it is male in the strictest sense, for it is based on an always ready, extremely alert artistic drive to produce. If woman possessed such a heightened susceptibility, women would be the finest art-translators on earth. But in all literatures the art-translators are men.⁶⁷

Besides the gender stereotyping, Brandes implies that Slavs are unreliable confirming the insidious reputation of the Slavs known widely from Herder’s description of them in his *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784–91).⁶⁸ If we looked at Brandes’s approach as similar to the orientalizing described by Edward Said, the attributes he ascribes to the Slavs match those of the perceived effeminate, insidious Oriental Other.⁶⁹ No wonder, then, that these passages were omitted when the Czechs reported on Brandes’s appraisal of their nation and culture. According to Brandes, the Czechs are the

⁶⁶ Brandes, ‘Bøhmen,’ 276. (‘Bøhmen har for Nordboer endnu en vis Æventyrklang i sit Navn. Det er det Rige, hvorfra Dagmar ifølge Kæmpevisen kom sejlene. Det er det Rige, paa hvis fantastiske Kyster man hos Shakespeare lander. Navnet i dets franske Form: Bohême - Bohémiens - genkalder Forestillingen om et frit Zigøjnerliv; det synes at betegne det gamle Zigøjnerland eller de moderne Hjem-løse Hjemstavn. Og saa svarer intet slavisk Folk mindre til Saadanne Forestillinger end Bøhmens czechiske Beboere. Af alle slaviske Stammer er Czecherne den husligste, den flittigste, den stadigst og dygtigst stræbende Stamme.’)

⁶⁷ Brandes, ‘Bøhmen,’ 285. (‘Hans gratiøse Smidighed er ægte slavisk, men den er ikke Udtryk for nogen Upaalidelighed, kun et Udslag af det forbausende Modtagelige i hans Væsen. Man plejer at betegne en saadan høj Grad af Modtagelighed som kvindagtig; men sikkert med Urette; den er netop i streng Forstand mandlig, thi den beror paa en altid rede. yderst letvakt kunstnerisk Frembringel-sesdrift. Besad Kvinden en saadan forhøjet Modtagelighed, vilde Kvinderne være de ypperste Kunst-Oversættere paa Jorden. Men i alle Literaturer er Kunst-Oversætterne Mænd.’)

⁶⁸ Herder wrote that the Slavs were cruel and treacherous because of the long-lasting serfdom introduced by the Germans: ‘Ist es ein Wunder, daß nach Jahrhunderten der Unterjochung und der tiefsten Erbitterung dieser Nation gegen ihre christlichen Herren und Räuber ihr weicher Charakter zur arglistigen, grausamen Knechtsträgheit herabgesunken wäre?’ in Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, ed. Martin Bollacher (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker, 1989), 698.

⁶⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, facsimile ed. (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 38–39. Jan Dłask, considering the colonial character of the South America countries, employed the Orientalist perspective of the West – a thought-provoking idea in relation to countries like Bohemia. See Jan Dłask, ‘Christer Kihlman’s Autobiography “Alla mina söner” (All My Sons) in the Perspective of Orientalism by Edward

least Slavic tribe and hence the most Germanic if we take into account that the attribute of domestic (*huslig*) accompanied by the notion of domestic (*hyggelighed*) were, according to Brandes, the primary characteristics of the Germanic peoples.⁷⁰

Besides this controversial generalizing about a nation, which was typical of Brandes and his times, Brandes's writings about the Czechs contains another component we must consider in the asymmetry between West and East: the notion of catching up with the centres of the world republic of letters. The same dynamic was motivating Brandes's first memorable lectures on comparative literature in 1871 in which he tried to encourage the Danish literary scene to catch up with the French. As Nygård aptly puts it: 'Comparison thus served a critical function in local debates when Brandes attacked domestic cultural stagnation and emphasized the need for Denmark to catch up.'⁷¹ Without knowledge of Czech and therefore entirely dependent on the advice of others and on the handful of Czech books translated into German, Brandes could not of course get a satisfactory picture of Czech literature. The only play he saw at the National Theatre in Prague, František Adolf Šubert's drama about rural rebellion, *Jan Výrava* (1886), Brandes summed up as 'well performed but not excellent; the play[-writing] was talented though a bit outdated in its technique.'⁷² Without understanding what was being said by the characters, Brandes judged the piece as somewhat backward. His understanding of Czechs as culturally underdeveloped when compared with the Danes is expressed in his assessment of the standing of the Czech language in Austrian Silesia. In the section entitled 'Strzebowitz' of the article 'Austria',⁷³ Brandes describes the massive spread of Czech in the area to the detriment of German. Then, he juxtaposes the Silesian situation to the one in Southern Denmark where the Danes, owing to what he sees as their feebleness, have been yielding to the pressure of Germanization. In this context, Brandes reiterates his view that Czech-speaking culture is backward:

It is a little disconcerting that there is so much more expansiveness in Czech than in Danish, considering how much better literature has been written in the latter language than in the former, how much higher the Danes are in culture in general. But here, unfortunately, it is not culture but the primordial force of the race that matters.⁷⁴

W. Said, in *Migration and Identity in Nordic Literature*, eds. Martin Humpál and Helena Březinová (Prague: Karolinum Press, 2022), 64–72.

⁷⁰ Georg Brandes, *Hovedstrømninger i det 19de Aarhundredes Litteratur: Emmigrantlitteraturen* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1877), 256–57. In concordance with Brandes's stereotyping, Joep Leersen identifies the image of home as a key metaphor of Europe, especially the Northwest: 'The domestic centrality of the fireplace, and its architectural location at the inner core of the house-dwelling (as its Latin name, *focus*, suggests) provide a potent auto-image against which all societies stood out as barbarians who cooked their food out of doors, under the open sky. Very deeply embedded in the European self-image lies its opposition to nomadism and camp-fires, its reliance on ordered stable domiciles with a tended fire at their centre and a roof over their head. Against this auto-image, anyone living in encampments with camp-fires stands out as an alien – be he a Bedouin, a Gypsy, a nomad or a refugee.' Joep Leersen, 'The Camp and the Home: Europe as Myth and Metaphor,' in *National Stereotyping, Identity Politics, European Crises*, eds. Jürgen Barkhoff and Joep Leersen (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 136.

⁷¹ Nygård, 'The Geopolitics of the "Modern Breakthrough,"' 19.

⁷² Brandes, 'Bøhmen,' 280. ('Spillet var dygtigt uden at være fremragende, Stykket talentfuldt om end lidt gammeldags i sin Teknik.')

⁷³ Georg Brandes, 'Østrig,' in *Samlede Skrifter*, vol. 11 (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1902), 288–90.

⁷⁴ Brandes, 'Østrig,' 290. ('Det er en Smule Beskæmmende, at der findes en saa meget større Udvidekraft i Czechisk end i Dansk, naar man betænker, hvor meget bedre Literatur der er skrevet i det sidste

Apart from Brandes's belief that the Czechs are culturally deficient, it is clear that he believes that the revitalizing impetus for Czech culture, including literature, has to come from outside, preferably drawing from the Western canon. That is why he sometimes criticized the Czechs for not being fluent in French and during his own lifetime for becoming increasingly less fluent in German. This complaint can only be understood as Brandes's conviction that the impetus to improve and develop was to be found in exchange with the West. A young Emil Walter (1890–1964), later a diplomat in Denmark and Sweden and an active translator of belles-lettres, wrote the following report about his visit to the sick Georg Brandes in Copenhagen in 1912.⁷⁵ In the report, Walter wishes the Czechs had a Brandes of their own and then he passes on Brandes's warning to the Czechs that they must not isolate themselves in their nation:

He is fully convinced that we are able to develop because we have proved our viability in a national rebirth that is unparalleled in the history of any other nation. But he thinks that we have to cease being large in pettiness. We are resisting foreign influence without being able to develop our own culture. And this makes us small and isolates us from the world around us, just as our common aversion towards our national adversaries results in a loathing for learning German, the language which – unfortunately – continues to be the only bridge from our island over the German ocean. The Czechs two or three generations before us had a much better command of German than we do. He became convinced of that on his travels to Prague; during the last one, five years ago, he visited Czech and German students.⁷⁶

This belief in the need to catch up with the West was also present in the Czech public. This self-critical stance of a substantial number of Czech intellectuals helps also to explain why Brandes was welcomed so warmly – as a representative of the Western cultural canon.

Conclusion

When beginning our research on Georg Brandes's reception in the Czech cultural milieu we proceeded from the conclusions of two scholars who had looked at the topic before us. Radko Kejzlar and Josef B. Michl each wrote that the impact Brandes's writings had made on Czech culture had in fact been largely insignificant. Based on a comprehen-

Sprog end i det første, hvor meget højere de Danske overhovedet staar i Kultur. Men her er det desværre ikke Kultur, men Racens Urkraft, det kommer an paa.')

⁷⁵ Emil Walter, 'Moje návštěvy u velikých Dánů II.: U Georga Brandesa,' *Zlatá Praha*, 30 May 1913, 450–51.

⁷⁶ Walter, 'Moje návštěvy u velikých Dánů II,' 451. ('Je plně přesvědčen, že jsme schopni vývoje, protože jsme svou životnost dokumentovali faktem národního vzkříšení, jemuž není rovno v dějinách druhého národa. Jen mu připadá, že bychom měli přestat býti velcí v malichernostech. Bráníme se cizím vlivům, nejsouce při tom ještě s to vypěstit svoji vlastní kulturu. A to nás činí malými, to nás izoluje od ostatního světa, stejně jako vespolná nevraživost s našimi národními odpůrci má za následek nechut v učení a špatné ovládní německého jazyka, doposud – bohužel – jediného mostu z našeho ostrova přes německý oceán. Třetí i druhá generace před námi mluvila německy daleko lépe. Přesvědčil se o tom na svých cestách do Prahy, z nichž poslední, asi před pěti lety, platila českým i německým studentům!')

sive analysis of Czech narratives from 1880 to 1927, we can now confirm this claim. Influential Czech-speaking intellectuals like Masaryk, Herben, and Šalda, admired Brandes in the 1880s and 1890s but soon rejected his criticism as superficial and shallow. Surprisingly, neither Kejzlar nor Michl concentrated on how Brandes's symbolic capital was used in the Bohemian Lands. We consider this part of Brandes's Czech reception to be the most important for a general assessment of his influence on Czech culture at that time. The Czechs systematically made use of Brandes's persona and authority to promote the cultural autonomy of their country. They focused on his role as an arbiter and champion of Czechs and accentuated his having come from a small nation. A central proponent of this strategy was Arnošt Kraus. To Kraus and others, Brandes embodied the possibility that small nations could become prominent in the international arena. In this respect, our contribution provides evidence of the international success of Brandes's brokering position as described by Stefan Nygård in his recently published articles. This relationship between the Czechs and Brandes ultimately reveals an asymmetry: on the part of Brandes and of Czech men and women of letters, one sees a more or less exaggerated notion of the West (including Scandinavia) being culturally superior to the Slavic European East.⁷⁷

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⁷⁷ This work was supported by the European Regional Development Fund project "Creativity and Adaptability as Conditions of the Success of Europe in an Interrelated World" (reg. no.: CZ.02.1.01/0.0/0.0/16_019/0000734).

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**PROGRESS, LIBERTY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY,
OR OUTDATEDNESS, ARISTOCRATIC SNOBBERY
AND HELPLESS LIBERALISM – INTELLECTUAL
ATTITUDES TOWARDS GEORG BRANDES
IN HUNGARY BETWEEN 1870 AND 1914**

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ABSTRACT

For many centuries, Hungarian history and culture has been determined by both the country's geographical position between "West" and "East" and its predominant desire to belong to the West. The concept of Hungary as an inferior culture on the periphery (which, however, managed to become an integrated part of Western Europe from time to time) at the very least stretches back to medieval sources. To compensate for the bitterness and unfulfilled demand to overcome the nation's subjection to foreign powers, a great number of nineteenth- and twentieth-century political and cultural movements aimed towards gaining a more active and independent role in the region. In the 1880s and 1890s, the reception of the late 19th-century Danish literary critic Georg Brandes revealed new perspectives for Hungarian intellectuals and literary groups. When inspired by Brandes's revolutionary thoughts and impact on Scandinavian society and literature, the goal of a broad-minded and modern Hungarian nation, as well as a successful breakout from a secondary role within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy seemed closer at hand.

Keywords: Georg Brandes; Austro-Hungary; reception history; press history

Since the reception of Brandes in Hungary was treated in detail by Zsuzsanna Björn Andersen in her monograph entitled *The Voice from Outside*, this study cannot and does not intend to present new data on this particular topic. Instead, our intention is to supplement the existing research on Brandes's reception with an East-Central European¹

¹ In reference to the Hungarian historian Jenő Szűcs's article *The Three Historical Regions of Europe. An Outline*. (Szűcs 131–84) John Neubauer defines the region located at the border of East and West according to the concept of East-Central Europe. In his characterisation of this region, Neubauer highlights the constant struggle, search for a path and the self-determining attempts to confront German and Russian hegemonies (Neubauer 83). Hungary has been trying to define itself in literary-cultural respect for centuries. Although attempts to prove the nation's Eastern descent has appeared in its literature from time to time – for instance, at the end of the 19th century, when the term "people of the East" (Kelet népe) became widespread (Fodor 14) after the publication of a pamphlet of the same title by the statesman and polymath Count István Széchenyi – its identity has been instead determined by the effort to belong to the West.

perspective. Our aim is to examine the connection between Brandes and his work with the various independence movements in Hungarian literature and culture on the one hand and the strengthening of the country's national identity within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy on the other hand. It must be mentioned in the very beginning that Hungary's "Drang nach Westen" (Bjørn Andersen 237) aspiration, a recurring desire and a political narrative of certain intellectual circles, was primarily influenced by the German language and culture (having its centre in Vienna) in the 19th century. However, after the formation of the German Empire under Prussian leadership in the 1870s, the focus shifted from the Austrian capital to Berlin (Buzinkay 451–452; Gergely 2003, 388). The journal *Deutsche Rundschau* (1874–1964) had hundred and sixty-six subscribers in Budapest (Bjørn Andersen 60), many of whom avidly followed the formation of Berlin's intellectual life. A great number of later prominent representatives of Hungary's literary scene² lived, studied or worked for a longer or shorter period in Berlin, and, upon returning to Hungary, applied the personal experience gained in the German capital to their work, leading to a perspective that influenced their way of thinking, conception of society and literature. Furthermore, their position within Budapest's intellectual life made it possible for them to become important agents of cultural transfer.

Along with the physical migration that occurred between Budapest and Berlin, the Hungarian society's growing sense of national self-awareness and willingness to open towards Western Europe can further be traced in the periodicals published in the latter decades of the 19th century and the first decades of the new century. These journals can be divided into two subgroups, representing a conservative nationalist and a liberal cosmopolitan attitude which were the two opposing forces in the Hungarian literary-cultural debate. The country's periodical culture, for that matter, had undergone significant changes in the decades preceding the turn of the century. A number of high-quality periodicals were published and, while at the beginning of the age of dualism (1867–1918) papers that were conservative both in ideological and stylistic terms (e.g. *Budapesti Szemle*, *Uj Idők*) still dominated the contemporary cultural sphere, oppositional papers soon appeared on the literary scene (Szász 281–283), thereby propagating modern literary and cultural ambitions (e.g. *Figyelő*, *A Hét*, and at the beginning of the 20th century, the literary journal *Nyugat*, which literally means West). This era marked the emergence of a new tradition which – compared to other European countries – granted periodicals a prominent role in Hungary's literary life based upon the concept that it is the task of periodicals to provide a frame for the "movement of living literature" (Margócsy 44)³. In his article the Hungarian literary historian and critic István Margócsy calls attention to the fact that it is not a unique phenomenon that a remarkable number of high-quality periodicals were printed if we consider the country's population⁴ and the reading public. Margócsy

² To list some of the names who participated in this cultural transfer (in alphabetical order): József Diner-Dénes (1857–1937) writer, journalist, editor, art historian; Aladár György (1844–1906) writer, journalist, culture politician; Pál Gyulai (1826–1909) literary historian, poet, prose writer, critic; Hugó Meltzl (1846–1908) literary historian; Frigyes Riedl (1856–1921) literary scholar, literary historian, university lecturer; Zsigmond Simonyi (1853–1919) linguist, university lecturer; Béla Szász (1840–1890) poet, translator; Károly Závodszy Széchy (1848–1906) literary historian.

³ All quotes from Hungarian are our translation.

⁴ According to Romsics (Romsics 2010, 49) appr. 8,65 million Hungarian-speaking citizens lived in the Monarchy in 1900.

also highlights that in the age of dualism, the literary debates that occurred within the pages of various papers were extraordinarily significant from the point of view of shaping literary discourse (Margócsy 44). It is in this era, full of conflicting intellectual forces and political turbulences in the history of Austria-Hungary that Georg Brandes makes his entrance in the Hungarian culture. Regarded as a fierce advocate of moral, intellectual and national freedom Brandes was not simply a highly qualified literary critic for the editors and readers of *Élet*, *Figyelő* or *Egyetemes Philologiai Közlöny*, but also someone whose contribution to periodicals and sympathy for the Hungarian democratic intelligentsia could indirectly accelerate and provoke changes in the political status quo.

The Hungarian literary public opinion realised the importance of the Danish critic's central tenets quite early due to the work of the literary expert, classical philologist and teacher, László Névy (1841–1902), who published a series of articles in 1873 about the first volume (*The Emigrant Literature*) of Brandes's *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature*. Névy's writings appeared in *Figyelő* (Observer, 1871–1876), a weekly journal that primarily published articles related to aesthetics and literary history. Beyond describing Brandes's new aspects, Névy presents the Danish critic's monograph in detail. The anonymous author (presumably Névy, based upon the style, as Bjørn Andersen 39–40 also suggests) of this "Brief Review" (Rövid szemle) also appreciates the rationalist and realist Danish critic who represents progress, delivers lectures to packed audiences and confronts the Danish literary public while revealing "the weaknesses of the idolised national literature"⁵. Brandes is further credited with contrasting liberal ideas and free thought with the Danish people's naivety and excessive idealism of Romanticism. As a reader intimately familiar with Brandes's essay, Névy is deeply dissatisfied with the direction of development in the literature of his own country and desires a wave of enthusiasm for Hungary's national culture (Névy 1873aa, 1) that will in turn awaken the readership from its senseless, self-important state of stagnation. Névy emphasises that selling literature to the masses via newspapers, journals and books, does not necessarily indicate a general rise of the population's intellectual level. He laments the shortcomings of Hungarian literary criticism and criticises the reading public which does not regard literature as a means for social and cultural renewal. According to Névy, Hungarian literature is poor and underdeveloped compared to the "great literatures" of other cultivated European nations, which Hungarian authors "probably can only follow, but never overtake or even exceed" (Névy 1873aa, 1). Névy's words echo in fact Brandes's thoughts expressed in the introduction of *The Emigrant Literature*, in which he characterises Danish literature as a literature originating from second hand sources and therefore not generating independent thoughts, but only sporadically adopting the intellectual trends that take place in developed literatures. Although Névy assigns great significance to talented writers as regards the development of culture, he is convinced that results can only be achieved with the support of an appreciative readership. Thus – since he cannot deny his professorial attitude – Névy views the establishment of an appreciative audience as the primary task to be fulfilled. This ambition fits in the framework of movements aimed at expanding Hungary's national culture in a series of efforts at play throughout the entire 19th century.⁶

⁵ „a bálványozott hazai irodalom gyöngeségeit leleplezni bátorkodott” (Névy 1873b, 83).

⁶ See e.g. a chrestomathy by Cieger and Varga.

The aim of the *Figyelő*'s editors (first Tamás Szana and later Emil Ábrányi) was not only to publish critical essays by Hungarian authors but also to familiarise readers with contemporary intellectual and Western European schools of literary criticism. Even though the journal published significant essays on English, German and Spanish dramas and about late 19th-century literary movements in Italy as well as German and French novels, the journal only lasted six years. Besides various writings on Wagner, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, essays discussing the development of Swedish literature were also published in *Figyelő*. In addition to their interests in Western European literature, the editors focused on East-Central European literature as well and devoted attention to Slavic literature, particularly Polish and Russian poetry. As a periodical, *Figyelő* aspired to end the state of isolation in which Hungarian literature existed along with promoting the reception of outer influences. Thanks to these intentions and the orientation of the periodical, certain parallelisms can be observed between the journal's agenda and the programme that Brandes formulated in Denmark in order to eliminate cultural backwardness. Brandes's cultural mission resulted in a dialogue between Danish and outside cultures, a process that brought about the European acknowledgement of Scandinavian literature within a few decades, a circumstance that did not escape Hungarian literary scholars' notice. In his work *A History of World Literature (A világirodalom története)* published in 1941, relevant in many aspects even today, Antal Szerb views the previously mentioned era as the heyday of the Scandinavian literature and assigns a leading role to it which – besides French literature – all of Europe can learn of (Szerb 778).⁷ It therefore comes as no surprise that Névy and other like-minded littérateurs desired a similar type of cultural interaction for Hungarian literature as well. According to their opinion, the introduction of foreign standards undoubtedly fosters independent cultural (and social) development, provided that they fit in the Hungarian national character during the adaptive process.

Parallel with *Figyelő*, another periodical declared the aim of familiarising the Hungarian reading public with foreign literature. At the end of 1872, László Névy was entrusted with editing the publication entitled *Az Országos Középtanodai Tanáregylet Közlönye* (Bulletin of the Secondary School Teachers' Association, 1868–1881). Beyond continuing the traditions of the periodical, Névy had the ambition of providing a space for these previously mentioned new aspirations as well. In summary, Névy wanted to enhance the scientific standard of the periodical while simultaneously rejuvenating the literary section with a foreign literature column that exclusively published book reviews. In the following issue the new section opens with the review of the first volume of Georg Brandes's *Main Currents* published in German translation in style (Névy 1873b). In the book review, the author considers it important to describe Brandes's life briefly while also reviewing *The Emigrant Literature*. He also outlines the Danish critic's viewpoint on the contemporary situation of Danish literature. Incidentally, it is this review (i.e. Névy 1873f) which is quoted by *Figyelő*, in the "Brief Review" (Névy 1873b) section as well as in the previously mentioned introduction (Névy 1873c–e). The two texts in *Közlöny* (in one part) and *Figyelő* (in four parts) are thus almost identical. In all probability, Névy's purpose was to disseminate Brandes's ideas to the broadest possible audience in his home country.

⁷ Other notable literary histories from the period that contain a chapter on Scandinavian literature include e.g. Heinrich, Benedek, Babits, Juhász (cf. the bibliography).

Let us now proceed to the second periodical which published works by and about Georg Brandes. In its first issue, the editor of the journal of *Élet* (Life, 1891–1892), József Diner-Dénes outlines the periodical’s mission while briefly presenting the social environment and literary/cultural tradition from which the journal emerged. Sprinkled among his speculations or suggestions regarding the economic and cultural development of a Hungary wedged between East and West, he emphasises the importance of freedom while greatly stressing the significance of preserving national independence, which he views as the main tool of defence against multiple outside threats. Due to Hungary’s geopolitical location and ethnic diversity, the strengthening national identity results in a specific problem given that Hungarian society and culture continuously existed in an environment characterised by a competition between the dominant Austrian (Western) culture and that of the minority groups located within its borders. When facing Western culture, Diner-Dénes describes Hungary’s express aim as that of eliminating the lag in development that had gathered throughout the centuries. As regards the issue of minorities and cultural development, Diner-Dénes emphasises the need to consolidate the leading role of the country. Concerning this ambition, he underlines the public role of literature, within which he stresses the importance of journals, a form of publication that already has a significant impact on the Enlightenment at the end of the previous century. When, as an aim for the journal, Diner-Dénes expresses the need to transmit the “phenomena and claims of the constantly changing and improving literary and artistic, scientific and social life” (Diner-Dénes 4), his words clearly reflect the effect of Brandes’s claim about discussing the issues of the society (“at sætte Problemer under Debat”). In the revival of literature’s public role Diner-Dénes devotes an important role to the press, which is “closely and intimately connected with life” (Diner-Dénes 2).

In an issue of the *Élet* periodical (1909–1944) published in 1913 – not to be mixed up with the earlier mentioned *Élet* journal established by József Diner-Dénes – Gábor Oláh mentions the name of Georg Brandes, and contrasts the Danish literary critic against representatives of contemporary decadent literature by referring to his lecture in 1871. As opposed to poetry proclaiming its longing for death, he quotes Brandes who, according to Oláh, professes that literature has to address the issues that the nation and mankind is interested in, or it condemns itself to death. The ideal remains “the idea of liberty and improvement of mankind” (Oláh 113).

The last Hungarian periodical in the second half of the 19th century that especially was influenced by the Danish critic was called *Egyetemes Philologiai Közlöny* (European Philology Review,⁸ 1877–1948), “Hungary’s first official specialist literary-journal” (Bjørn Andersen 65),⁹ edited by Emil Ponori Thewrewk (1838–1917) and Gusztáv Heinrich (1845–1922). The regular contributors in the journal were mainly academics and scholars from all over the country and its main goal was to promote the newest trends in European philology and literary criticism. Although *Közlöny* did not have one particular ideology, political manifesto, nor it was a dedicated adherent of a specific literary view,

⁸ *Egyetemes* means literally universal, but the scope of the journal (as G. Németh also observes) was mainly European literature. Moreover, for a great number of European authors after Goethe, Christoph Martin Wieland and Friedrich Schlegel world literature became a normative term which meant literature that has something to say to a European readership.

⁹ Therefore, it did not have any hidden political motivation and was a purely scientific initiative.

its articles clearly indicate that Heinrich and most of the contributors were influenced by German positivism, and especially Alfred Herman Hettner and Georg Brandes (G. Németh 494). Two articles from 1880 and 1886 deserve a closer look. Gyula Haraszti (1858–1921), literary historian, university professor and a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, in his essay entitled *Eszmék az irodalomtörténetírásról* (*Theories of Literary History*), briefly reviews the history of European literary criticism, and evaluates the results and deficiencies of 19th-century naturalist, positivist and evolutionist approaches to literature. He considers Brandes as a final link in the chain of various theorists who can address the obvious shortcomings of the preceding era. Even if the Danish critic does not measure up to his master Hippolyte Taine as regards objectivity and moral sensibility, he nevertheless represents a progress compared to the dogmatism of positivist interpretations. According to the author, one of the Danish critic's major virtues is his capacity to understand and elucidate the personal motivations and philosophical ballast of the individual characters in literary history while he also underlines the importance of the dialogic relation between authors, periods and oeuvres. While Taine writes an "epopee of mankind", Brandes demonstrates literary history as a tragedy of individual standard-bearers.

Haraszti's final conclusion is that an outstanding author and critic is able to balance between Taine's determinism and *critique naturelle* on the one hand and Brandesian subjectivism on the other hand. Furthermore, this capacity, along with the required qualifications and a fundamental knowledge, is something that the youngest and oldest generation is unwilling to acquire. In summary, the article begins as a sort of literature review and ends as a critique of the contemporary literary landscape. Haraszti hints indirectly that someone who has the same qualities as Brandes could only bring fresh air to Hungarian literature. Interestingly, the author does not name a particular person who would live up to the conditions mentioned above. However, it is noteworthy that all the other foreign (Taine, Abel-François Villemain, Sainte-Beuve, Thomas Carlyle, Thomas Babington Macaulay, not even Haraszti's personal favourite, Saint-Marc Girardin) and Hungarian (Pál Gyulai, Károly Szász) personalities mentioned as paragons of literary criticism in the article are members of a previous generation. It is left to the reader to identify the only young Hungarian critic – the author himself – as a valid answer to the question whether at all there is someone worthy of mention among the youngest scholars. Therefore, even if the title is misleading, this essay can be interpreted as Haraszti's *ars poetica* in which he suggests himself to function as a Hungarian counterpart of Brandes. His later publications and carrier shows that it was only a part (namely, the philological disposition) of the Danish critic's complex personality that Haraszti admired. From the 1890s he gradually became an internationally acknowledged scholar of French literature. In his monograph on André Chenier (which he later translated to French and published in 1892) he refers to Brandes several times and surpasses his master by refuting the Danish critic's notes on the French poet.

The second article is from 1886 and it is a short review of *Moderne Geister*. As mentioned earlier, Berlin was a cultural centre for many Hungarian intellectuals in the second half of the century. *Moderne Geister* was written in 1881 in German during Brandes's exile in Berlin. However, it was not a well-known Germanist who reviewed this monograph that was most obviously aimed at a German-speaking European audience. The reviewer,

Károly Erdélyi (1859–1908), was a high school teacher, a highly qualified Piarist religious and a distinguished scholar of Romance philology who, at least according to his biographer (Faladi 313–325), learnt Danish so that he could read Kristoffer Nyrop's writings on the Old French epic poems. His knowledge of Scandinavian literatures and languages made him one of the most prominent connoisseurs of modern Nordic culture in contemporary Hungary. Erdélyi claims that Brandes was able to reach a greater readership by means of the German language – an accomplishment that Adam Oehlenschläger, Jens Baggesen and Heinrich Steffens could not achieve because they either became fully recognised German authors or turned out to be mediocre poets. The text itself is short and accurate with regard to the contents of the monograph. What follows is two other reviews of two German-speaking authors (Alfred Kohut and Carl Bleibtrau). Erdélyi highlights their critique of the Bismarckian militarism of the German Empire and prophesies a new Sturm und Drang movement. Even though this statement is not connected directly to Brandes, when he later speaks of the new and hopeful era of naturalism, the reader immediately understands which role Erdélyi ascribes the Danish critic in the cultural deadlock of the German nation and the whole continent. It is instructive to compare this analysis with a short portrait of Brandes by Erdélyi from almost twenty years later which was published in the third volume of Gusztáv Heinrich's *Egyetemes irodalomtörténet (A History of World Literature, 1903–1911)*, a well-known literary encyclopedia of the period which is not mentioned in Bjørn Andersens study on Brandes's reception in Hungary. At the end of the two page long portrayal Erdélyi concludes that the realist and naturalist movements, which were originally launched by Brandes, all too often have produced insignificant authors and have gone astray from the clear principles of the Christian realist Frederik Paludan-Müller.

When investigating the reasons underlying how Brandes could become so popular in Hungary during the age of Dualism, the similarities between the most important historical events influencing 19th-century Danish and Hungarian political, social and cultural life must be mentioned. Furthermore, these developments resulted in changes that can allow us to draw some parallels between the development of the social and cultural life. On 1 February 1894, Georg Brandes held a lecture on national sentiment (Brandes 2008 [1894])¹⁰. Given their relevancy to Hungary's situation and progress, his statements about his own country were astonishing as he reacted to the past thirty years in Denmark, particularly considering the relatively large geographical and cultural distance between Denmark and Hungary. In connection with significant historical events, the years of 1864 (the Second Schleswig War) and 1867 (the Austro-Hungarian Compromise) are conventionally referred to as “neuralgic points” in the history of the two nations. While Denmark gradually lost its position of a great power that had been held from the Middle Ages until the end of the 19th century and maintained somewhat friendly terms with Germany for the sake of preserving its security, as a consequence of unsuccessful battles waged over the centuries to break away from the Habsburg empire, Hungary entered an inevitable marriage with Austria, and became part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. As Brandes highlights in his speech, the left-wing (Venstre) policy of acceptance regarding the Ger-

¹⁰ Georg Brandes, *Om Nationalfølelse. Foredrag holdt ved Indvielsen af det danske Studentersamfunds nye Lokaler den 1. Februar 1894*. <https://www.brandes-selskabet.dk/84030223>

mans was countered on the part of the cabinet party aristocracy with professing a falsely interpreted national mind (“den vildledte Nationalfølelse”) that branded the left wing as unpatriotic. The activity of the liberal politicians (“club of the left”) to advocate the compromise was rejected in Hungary by two groups as well: the conservative aristocracy who, in order to preserve their own privileges were ready to return to the feudal conditions held before 1848, and the liberals, who clung to the revolutionary ideals of 1848, were in many cases living in emigration and interpreted the compromise as an abdication of the freedom of the country. Brandes contrasts “the unpatriotic Danish left wing” with Norway’s nationally minded, left-wing youth, who took part in building their nation with a passionate self-confidence that gradually enabled them to produce their own national culture. As a result, a national literature emerged by means of which Norwegians could represent themselves on the international literary scene.

A similar process began in Hungary in the first part of the 19th century, wherein the progressive representatives of the aristocracy took on the configuration of a national cultural system of institutions. In the 1830’s the national character, the definition of national culture and the establishment of a national awareness became more and more important, in which the liberal reformist opposition played an important role. Beyond hastening political and economic development, opposition representatives advocated endeavours aiming at national self-determination as well. However, this positive development was halted by the fall of the 1848–49 Revolution and a reinstated Austrian regime. From then on for many decades, being an internationally and Western oriented intellectual was often regarded as an act of abandoning Hungary’s own national interests.

Himself a cosmopolitan, Brandes, however, does not regard the concepts of national togetherness and cosmopolitanism as incompatible. What is more, he considers the first as a condition of the latter and is convinced that he can only be a true European as a Dane¹¹. In the final third of the 19th century, a similar patriotic cosmopolitanism is not unknown to political followers of the radically democratic Ferenc Deák. According to Brandes, Denmark’s decline can be traced to the fact that the youth lack a national mentality, a factor that is also important with respect to the development of the culture. Within this area, he specially mentions the duty of cultivating the language, an issue that is also inevitable in such a multi-ethnic, multicultural society as that of Hungary was during the age of Dualism. The issue of the Hungarian language was already a constant topic since the emergence of a “new” Hungary was significantly determined by the national minorities.

While the Hungarian literary public sphere soon recognised Georg Brandes, the Hungarian literature and culture of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy escaped the interest of the Danish literary critic for a long time. Although Brandes was specifically interested in many Eastern European countries and their literature, Hungary came into his perspective rather late, and only after his two visits to Budapest. Primarily because of its geopolitical position, Hungary did not have the same exotic appeal to him as Poland or Russia, countries he visited several times and to whose literature and culture he devoted much

¹¹ “Verdensborgerfølelsen er ikke blot meget vel mulig paa Grundlag af Nationalfølelsen, men den er unaturlig uden den. Ligesom at føle sig som Skandinav aldeles ikke udelukker først og fremmest at føle sig som Dansk (...) saaledes er det ogsaa med de tat føle sig som Europæer eller Verdensborger. Først Dansk – selvfølgeligt!” (Brandes 2008 [1894]).

attention. Although Brandes certainly did not reject the interest Hungarian intellectuals expressed toward his person and work, his regard of the country and its culture culminated in a benevolent air of support. Beyond the great geographical distance between Denmark and Hungary, the fact that Hungary did not raise Brandes's attention in particular was due to other reasons as well. Although the Hungarian Kingdom was located on the periphery of Western culture, as a part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Hungary was not distinctly separate from Western Europe. Nor was Brandes able to make a sharp distinction of its separation from the European culture. In spite of the fact that Brandes acknowledges his unfamiliarity to Hungarian culture during the Dual Monarchy, still it is probable that he considers Hungarian culture to be very similar to the other Eastern European cultures and he thinks the questions related to Eastern European literature in general are relevant for the Hungarian public, as well. This is well illustrated by the fact that when in 1891 he was asked by József Diner-Dénes to send an article for his periodical, a paper that had not been previously published in any other periodical earlier, Brandes sent him a manuscript discussing Polish literature.

All in all, it can be said that the reason underlying Georg Brandes's quick rise to popularity in Hungary during the 1870s can be found in the fact that representatives of Hungarian public life discovered in Brandes's critical essays similarities within Scandinavian literature that, in spite of what they viewed as its exotic nature, still showed parallels between Danish and Hungarian social, cultural and literary circumstances. These similarities in turn allowed them to interpret and evaluate their own situation anew. Hungarian intellectuals also formulated long-term plans based upon Brandes's principles aiming to renew Denmark's domestic literary life. Consequently, they viewed Brandes's writings as a kind of mirror and were not necessarily led by a specific interest in Danish literature. Instead, these works were interpreted as a perspective upon Hungarian issues, such as those of establishing a national literature, the question of language, multiculturalism, etc. Thus, they considered Brandes's writings as a means for literature to come to its senses, or rather as a way of attaining self-comprehension.

In the second phase of Brandes's reception (in the 1890s and respectively the turn of the century), great emphasis is still placed on contemplating the (self)-determination of a national literature. In contrast, the younger generation unequivocally embraced the idea of the inevitable opening up towards Western intellectual trends and the enriching effect of more developed European literatures. In this respect, Brandes became a role model as the mediator of the European cultural goods, and at the same time awakened hope that not only can Europe enter Hungary but, as was shown by Brandes's impact, Hungarian culture can also create values that can become part of Europe's cultural heritage. By the end of the first decade of the 20th century, the effect of liberal, cosmopolitan ideas can be felt more and more in Hungarian literature. As one of the most defining poets of the era, Endre Ady, writes in 1909 in an essay: "Despite of and to the chagrin of Hungarian politics such an intellectual culture got under way in Hungary that would be worthy of a Scandinavian country"¹². This statement is an obvious reference to Brandes's

¹² "A politika ellenére és kedvetlenségére Magyarországon olyan intellektuális kultúra indult, amely méltó volna egy skandináv államhoz."

work as a literary critic, which sparked the development of Scandinavian literature in the second half of the 19th century.

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THE EARLY RECEPTION OF GEORG BRANDES IN GERMANY AND FRANCE. A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The publication of *Emigrant Literature*, the first volume of *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature* (1872–1890), constituted Georg Brandes' breakthrough work and the beginning of his career as a European literary critic. However, the work was very differently received in the two major literary cultures of the time, Germany and France. In the German press, Brandes was saluted as a cultural reformer and icebreaker of literary modernity, "a good European and cultural missionary", as Friedrich Nietzsche called him in a letter from 1887, whereas French critics reacted with much greater skepticism to Brandes' work. This situation was especially annoying to Brandes as he regarded French literary and intellectual culture as superior to any other culture of the world and more than anything else he longed for recognition from the French literati. The uneven distribution of critical acclaim was a paradox that also affected Brandes' self-understanding and position as a critic. The following article will examine this tension by providing a comparative study of the reception of *Emigrant Literature* in Germany and France from 1872 to 1893.

Keywords: Georg Brandes; *Main Currents*; *Emigrant Literature*; comparative literature; intellectual history; Modern Breakthrough; Scandinavia; Germany; France

The publication of *Emigrant Literature* in 1872, the first volume of lectures composing *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature* (1872–1890) was a decisive event in Georg Brandes' career as literary critic and public intellectual. In the local context of Denmark in 1872, *Emigrant Literature* produced a public scandal that would prevent Brandes from pursuing a planned career as a university professor in aesthetics at the University of Copenhagen. As a result, he had to find himself an alternative way of living as an independent journalist and literary critic writing for the emergent literary market in Germany.

In its totality, *Main Currents* is an ambitiously designed comparative history of the major lines of development in nineteenth-century European literature and identity. It chronicles how the worldly ideals of freedom of the French Revolution of 1789 turned into their opposites, thus leading to European Romanticism, Catholic renaissance, and

Empire, and ultimately how reason and freethinking overcame this reaction in a new movement leading onward toward the bourgeois revolutions of 1848. *Emigrant Literature* was the first movement – the first act – in this historical drama, which played out among the French émigré authors driven into exile by the repercussions of the French Revolution.

However, in the first series of lectures, given in Copenhagen in November-December 1871, Brandes chose to frame this project not as a piece of literary history, but rather as a cultural-political intervention: an act of rebellion directed at contemporary Danish literature and mentality, which, according to Brandes, had become mired in Romanticism and thus now found itself in a state of lethargy – blind and deaf to the liberal developments in nineteenth century European literature and politics.

Brandes' first series of lectures became a *succès de scandale* that filled up the university auditoria with a crowd of mostly young people, yet also gave Brandes a reputation of rabble-rouser and blasphemer (Juncker 1973). When the book came out in early 1872, Brandes was even faced with accusations of socialism, although there was transparently no materialist or Marxist dimension in his agenda. Yet, the controversy around his name was the reason why a majority of conservative professors in the faculty of philosophy in 1872 opposed his appointment to the vacant professorship in aesthetics, for which he was otherwise the obvious candidate (Larsen 2016). Brandes thus had to bid farewell to the prospect of a secure bourgeois livelihood as a state-appointed professor. Furthermore, he was banned from leading Danish newspapers and could no longer make his living as a literary and theater critic in his home country. This state of affairs compelled him to bed on the German literary market and to work as an independent journalist in the German press, while also settling down in Berlin for a longer period from 1877 to 1883 (Sørensen 1980; Bohnen 2005; Allen 2010).

“[A] victory in Germany, and you will feel yourself on top of the world at home”, Henrik Ibsen wrote encouragingly in a letter to Brandes in July 1872 (Brandes 1939: 216). Contrary to the deadlock situation in Denmark, the German public and literary market offered a favorable soil for Brandes' activities and development as a writer, critic and public intellectual. In Germany, the six volumes of *Main Currents* came out in several translations and competing editions, while also a number of books and essays were written especially for the German public. Through this activity, Brandes was also able to secure, over the following decade, the status of a leading European literary critic and cosmopolitan mediator between European literatures – a “guter Europäer und Cultur-Missionär” [a good European and cultural missionary], as Friedrich Nietzsche called him in a private letter of 1887 (Brandes 1966: 441).

Georg Brandes' position as a European literary critic was thus created essentially on the German literary market. However, the victory in Germany did not make him feel completely on top of the world, as Ibsen had suggested. More than anything else, he longed for dissemination and recognition in France as he considered French literary and intellectual culture as superior to any other culture in the world. This situation created a tension or double bind in Brandes' self-understanding and position as a critic and cosmopolitan intellectual. The following article will examine this tension by providing a comparative study of the early reception of *Main Currents* in Germany and France from 1872 to 1893. Methodologically, the study will take the form of a reception history

that will map out some of the most important actors and mediators in the early dissemination of Brandes, while focusing especially on the critical judgements and reactions to Brandes' work among German and French critics. Parts of this research have been carried out within the framework of the project "Digitale Hovedstrømninger/Digital Currents" (2016–2019), funded by the Danish Carlsberg Foundation, and some of the results are also included in another forthcoming publication (Jelsbak 2023).

A Good European – Made in Germany

When entering the German literary market Brandes had an important advocate and mediator in the translator Adolf Strodtmann. Strodtmann was the man behind the first German translation of *Emigrant Literature*, published as early as September 1872 (Brandes 1872). Strodtmann did not only contribute with a favorably disposed introduction to the German edition; he also played an important role in introducing Brandes to the German public in his 1873 book *Das geistige Leben in Dänemark* (1873) which contained a somewhat valorizing discussion of the scandal of *Emigrant Literature* in the Danish public. Thanks to Strodtmann's mediations, Brandes received the best possible introduction to the German literary market (Bruns 1977) where he was presented as the daring young freethinker who had challenged Danish orthodoxy and consequently been cut down by reactionary public opinion.

It is evident from early reviews and discussions of *Emigrant Literature* in the German press that German reviewers were well informed of the reception of the book in Denmark. In *Das Magazin für die Literatur des Auslandes* (no. 49, 1872: 640), Theodor Storm referred to Brandes' revolt against "die Versumpfung" [quagmire] of Scandinavian intellectual life and predicted that *Emigrant Literature* would acquire an epochal significance for the diffusion of European ideas of freedom and progress in the Nordic countries – "Eine bittere Medizin zwar, aber hoffentlich von heilsamen Folgen" [a bitter medicine, but hopefully with healing effects] (ibid.).

The anonymous reviewer in *Literarisches Centralblatt* similarly lauded Brandes for his uncompromising attack on Danish self-absorption and self-satisfaction. "Ein literarischer Gambetta proclamiert Brandes darin die geistige Revolution" [Like a literary Gambetta, Brandes proclaims the intellectual revolution in Denmark] (Anon. 1873: 820). The lectures were praised for their intellectual riches and elegant art of characterization, and Brandes was likened to a physician who enters a closed-up and foul-smelling sickroom, peeling back the shutters and opening the windows so that air and sunlight can enter.

Likewise, Robert Waldmüller (the pseudonym of the author and painter Charles Edouard Duboc), in *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung* (Waldmüller 1874: 92–93), extolled Brandes as a lone fighter for freedom and progress in the Scandinavian countries: "Er hat bei diesem Kampfe die liberalen Elemente aller Nationen auf seiner Seite" [in these struggles he has the liberal elements in all nations on his side] (Waldmüller 1874: 93). Brandes was again praised for his refreshing and lively form of presentation, Waldmüller deeming *Emigrant Literature* as a work of interest to all Europe.

The three examples demonstrate the favorable conditions in Germany for a liberal thinker and cultural reformer like Brandes, and this measure of positive interest was

influential in his decision to bed on the German literary market. Thanks to Strodtmann, the subsequent volumes of *Main Currents* were published almost simultaneously in German editions (Brandes 1873, 1874, 1876), and in 1874 Brandes was retained as a staff writer for Julius Rodenberg's newly founded liberal journal *Deutsche Rundschau*. For this journal Brandes, over the course of the next 15 years, was to produce a series of important essays on European authors and cultural personalities, culminating with the long portrait of the hitherto rather unknown German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche in 1890. Brandes' publication activity in the German press also included numerous articles and reviews in more journalistic venues such as *Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Die Gegenwart* and the Austrian daily *Neue Freie Presse* (Bohnen 2005; Allen 2010).

The same year that Brandes became affiliated with *Deutsche Rundschau*, a review of the first three volumes of *Main Currents* by Friedrich Kreyssig appeared in the October-November issue. Kreyssig also celebrated the cosmopolitan ambition of the work, praising Brandes as a progressive advocate of freedom and modern science, additionally pointing to the disciplinary innovation in Brandes' methodology. As Kreyssig noted, *Main Currents* was not literary history in the traditional sense: neither biographical-genetic author portraits nor bibliographic annals nor aesthetic art criticism. "Wer also das Buch zur Hand nähme, um etwa auf eine Prüfung über Literaturgeschichte sich vorzubereiten, der ginge gewiss an die falsche Adresse" [Thus he who would take the book in hand to prepare for an exam in literary history would get lost in the trees]. In contrast, Kreyssig lauded Brandes efforts of tracing the great transformations in the "psychology" of German and French society during the period (Kreyssig 1874: 140).

When *Emigrant Literature* was issued in 1882 in a revised German second edition (Brandes 1882), there followed yet another favorable review in *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung* by Otto Weddingen, focusing on Brandes' work as a pioneering contribution to comparative literary studies. Weddingen also emphasized Brandes' cultural-historical and psychological approach to literature as the great merit of the work: "Es ist kein Buch in dem gewöhnlichen Sinne unserer Literaturgeschichten, es ist kein Sammel-surium von Namen und Daten, sondern ein Erzeugnis, welches die Literaturen vom psychologischen Standpunkt aus betrachtet" [it is not a literary history in the conventional sense, not a medley of names and dates, but in contrast a product of the psychological observation of the literatures] (Weddingen 1882: 750).

These later reviews give witness to Brandes' rising reputation in Germany as a literary critic and cosmopolitan advocate for progressive ideas, a "cultural missionary" as Nietzsche called him. During this same period Brandes also came to play a main role in the introduction of modern Scandinavian literature and theatre to Germany. Brandes' status in the young radical literary milieu of Germany is apparent in the following character sketch by the theater critic, dramatist, and founder of the Berlin Naturalist theater *Freie Bühne* Otto Brahm, published in *Frankfurter Zeitung* on March 3, 1884, on the occasion of a staging of Henrik Ibsen's modern play *Ghosts*:

We Germans cannot look on the development of Nordic poetry without envy ... a cohesive literary movement ... which aims at the liberation of the mind from the depths of darkness ... It is with a "golden recklessness" that Ibsen and Bjørnson and the youth of Scandinavia, who have a leader in Georg Brandes, fight against the medieval oppression that

burdens the minds of these bishop-ruled countries ... When Georg Brandes some fifteen years ago awakened his countrymen by telling of the “main currents” of modern literature, a new epoch broke out; just as the classical period in our literature emanated from Lessing and Herder, this breakthrough occurred at the urging of a purely critical intellect. (Brahm 1913: 74)

Riding the Scandinavian wave and the fame of Brandes in Germany, a series of new collected editions of *Main Currents* were published in the 1890s, and thus a new round of reviews followed, in which the continued acknowledgment of Brandes as the leading critic of the Modern Breakthrough in Scandinavian literatures was blended with new critical voices. One example is Franz Mehring’s review of the collected edition of *Main Currents* in *Die neue Zeit*, in which Brandes was met with a new kind of criticism, targeting his bourgeois ideals and idealistic conception of history:

Als bürgerlicher Schriftsteller bewegt sich Brandes immer auf idealistischem Boden; er behauptet zwar gelegentlich überall ins Leben zurückzugreifen, aber die Erkenntnis, dass sich die literarische Bewegung in letzter Instanz aus der ökonomischen Entwicklung erklärt, ist ihm fremd. [As a bourgeois author Brandes treads always upon idealistic ground; sure enough he occasionally asserts that he reaches back toward life in all areas, yet the awareness that the literary movement in the end is a mirroring of economic development is alien to him].

Despite this criticism, Mehring concluded his review by praising Brandes for his lively and intellectually abundant style, which “schmeckt wie feuriger Wein, verglichen mit der faden Limonade der preussischen Literaturgeschichte” [tastes like a fiery wine when compared to the flavorless lemonade of Prussian literary history] (Mehring 1893–1894: 311).

The French Complex

It is interesting to compare the favorable German reception of *Emigrant Literature* with the work’s fate in France. Such a comparison is of particular interest not only because the book was about French literature, but also because France during this era held a status as the center of the world literary republic (Casanova 1999). Paris was the leading center of artistic and literary innovation in Europe and the world – the place from which new literary and artistic movements emanated and in which the criteria of literary quality and modernity respectively were set. For the same reasons, the French market also constituted a kind of promised land for modern Scandinavian authors like Georg Brandes, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson or August Strindberg: the place where more than any other it was desired to have one’s texts published, staged, and evaluated by critics (Briens 2010).

Yet, the French literary market was also the one where Brandes had the greatest difficulty in entering and making a place for himself. The modest interest for Brandes’ among the French literati is witnessed also by the fact of the sluggish diffusion of *Main Currents* in France, where only of the six volumes, the fifth on *The Romantic School in France*, was published in French translation in 1902.

Emigrant Literature was otherwise well introduced in France as early as 1873, in the form of a 30-pages essay by Henri Blaze de Bury in the November issue of *Revue des deux mondes*. The essay contained no critical evaluation, but offered a congenial and gripping summary of the main ideas of *Emigrant Literature* (based on Strodtmann's German translation from 1872). The Francophone world thus had an early opportunity to become acquainted with Brandes' comparative understanding of literature and his principal idea of the main currents in nineteenth-century European literature as a dialectic interplay between the spirit of Voltaire and the spirit of Rousseau.

Nevertheless, 10 years would pass before the French public would again hear of Brandes, this time in the form of a critical profile by Arvède Barine (the pseudonym of Madame Charles Vincens) in *La Revue Blanche* (Barine 1883). This article is of particular interest in that it contains a morally grounded criticism of Brandes' vision of humanity and society in *Emigrant Literature*. Barine saw Brandes as a "sectarian" disciple of Rousseau, asserting that his temperament was carried away by his passionate struggle for natural rights and individual freedom, at the expense of "civilization" and social morality. As a counter argument to the libertarian tendencies in Brandes' agenda, Barine argued that the moral rules of conduct in a society constituted not only forces of repression but were also and essentially means of protecting people against infringement. In other words, Barine contested the democratic starting point of Brandes' radicalism, suggesting that the consequence of his struggle for the emancipation of the individual in reality would lead to a legitimization of the right of the stronger.

Despite these and other more literary-historical objections, Barine concluded by expressing her acknowledgment of Brandes' bold attempt to present a synthesis of this chaotic chapter in French literary history using the opposition between Voltaire and Rousseau. It is also evident that Brandes' work appealed to a certain form of national sentiment among French critics. At the end of the review Barine expressed her gratitude for Brandes' immense service in having demonstrated how the main currents of nineteenth-century European literature originated in France. "We are no longer pampered by these kinds of compliments," the review concluded (Barine 1883: 764).

This formulation provides a glimpse of the attitude of national defeatism that marked the public discourse in France after its defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. This attitude was also an important aspect of the relative insularity of the French literary market of the time – when compared with the open and omnivore character of the contemporary German book market, not least with regard to translations of modern Scandinavian literature.

While Brandes had gained a position as leading European critic in Germany, it was a great disappointment to him that there was only a modest interest in his works in France. This feeling of disappointment is reflected in a letter to his friend Georges Noufflard from January 26, 1888:

Je lis toujours beaucoup de Français. J'aime votre littérature plus que toute autre. J'ai écrit plus de livres sur la France que sur tout autre pays et pourtant je suis parfaitement inconnu en France. Quand j'avais écrit un seul article sur les Flamands on était prêt à mériter des statues en Flandre; tout les poètes m'envoyaient leurs œuvres, tous les journaux parlaient de moi. Quand j'ai écrit deux petits articles sur les écrivains Russes sans même savoir leur

langue, on a été tellement touché de mes connaissances qu'on m'a loué, m'a traduit, m'a fait venir. Sur la France j'ai écrit plus de volumes que je n'ai écrit d'articles sur la Russie, et on sait à peine que j'existe. Un certain Charles Simond veut me traduire; depuis deux ans il cherche en vain un éditeur, bien que Paul Bourget m'ait offert d'écrire une introduction. Cela m'attriste un peu, car une réputation n'est pas consacrée aussi longtemps que la France n'a pas dit son mot.

[I constantly read French. I love your literature more than any other. I have written more books about France than any other country, and still I am altogether unknown in France. When I had written a single article on Flemish literature, they were ready to erect a statue of me; all their poets sent me their works, all their newspapers talked about me. When I had written two short articles on Russian poets, without even knowing the language, they were so moved by knowledge of them that I was praised, translated and invited to visit. I have written more books on France than I have articles on Russia, and still the French hardly know I exist. A certain Charles Simond wants to translate me; for two years he has searched in vain for a publisher, even though Paul Bourget has for a long time promised to write an introduction. It irritates me, for the measure of an author has not been established as long as France has withheld its judgement.] (Brandes 1952: 131–12)

France did withhold its judgement until 1893, when the literary critic Jean Thorel published a comprehensive 20-page article on Brandes in *Revue de deux mondes*, written at the occasion of the newly published, collected German edition of *Die Literatur des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts in ihren Hauptströmungen*, issued by the Leipzig house Veit & Co. (1882–1892).

Thorel began his review by affirming Brandes' rising international reputation as a literary critic, and by contesting the view that French national chauvinism was the reason for the lack of interest for him in France. According to the French critic, the ignorance and lack of literary acknowledgement of Brandes in France was due essentially to the fact that Brandes was not a literary critic at all, but first and foremost a polemicist whose chief cause from the beginning had been to fight against and ultimately destroy every form of religion. Brandes' anti-clerical agenda was however of less relevance in the French context, and what the Danish critic had to say about French literature in *Emigrant Literature* did not impress Thorel. Brandes' "tiny" selection of authors and works from the period was "wholly insufficient" and all too selective to fulfill his ambition of portraying the main currents of nineteenth-century psychology (Thorel 1893: 343).

Furthermore, Thorel opposed the theoretical framework of *Main Currents* presenting nineteenth-century European literary history as a dialectic interplay between the spirit of Voltaire and the spirit of Rousseau. Thorel did not comprehend what kind of common "liberal" spirit could be attributed to the intellectual essences of Voltaire, Rousseau, Lessing, and Schiller. At the same time Thorel also pointed out a contradiction in Brandes' comparative method, which consisted on the one hand of affirming the prior lack of exchange between European national literatures, while on the other asserting that the literary works and types in the different literatures were causally connected and determinative of one another. If one wanted seriously to study the deeper and lasting influences between literatures, Thorel argued, one had to abandon the politicizing perspective on past literatures, instead going to the sources themselves. One can sense in this judgement

the new scientific standards for comparative literary criticism introduced in the decades since the first appearance of *Emigrant Literature* in 1872. Within this new field of comparative criticism a new positivistic interest in *influences* between works and authors had replaced the old romantic-idealistic doctrine of a universal spirit in history.

At the conclusion of the article, Thorel marshalled all of his weapons in order to deprive Brandes of any claim to legitimacy or originality as a literary scholar. Brandes' work was nothing other than "a long, confused and indirect defense [plaidoyer]" of political ideas that were alien to literature, and as such would have demanded a wholly different approach than that pursued in the work. From the point of view of literary history, Brandes' efforts amounted to nothing other than ephemeral compilation:

quelque bruit qui ait été fait autour de son nom et de ses livres, on s'aperçoit, le premier moment d'étonnement passé, qu'il n'y a là rien qui mérite d'arrêter l'attention plus qu'il ne convient de le faire pour une compilation, momentanément utile à cause de la masse des matériaux qui y sont rassemblés, mais que demain le premier compilateur venu pourra refaire avec plus de méthode et de clarté, ce qui rendra tout de suite inutile, – même comme compilation, – toute l'œuvre de M. Brandes.

[regardless of all the hubbub surrounding his name and his books, as soon as the initial bemusement has passed, one discovers that there is nothing in his work that deserves attention other than that it is passable as a kind of compilation, which at the moment is useful because of the great mass of material collected within it, but which tomorrow will be able to be reworked with more methodological skill and greater clarity than the initial compiler has exhibited, which will immediately render Mr. Brandes' entire work obsolete, even as a compilation.] (Thorel 1893: 358)

Thorel's severe criticism of Brandes may also be seen as part of an ongoing debate in 1890s literary France about the proper attitude to the new and foreign literary expressions and influences that had recently been introduced to the country. Like Germany, France was also witness to a Scandinavian wave that manifested itself in translations and in Parisian productions of modern Scandinavian drama by writers such as Ibsen, Bjørnson, and Strindberg (Segrestin 2010; Rogations 2016). Yet the French literary public was also capable of exhibiting an equally fervent opposition to the present "Scandophilia" or "Nordomania," articulated by nationally oriented literati and theater critics who desired to protect France's national poetics or hegemony in the world literary republic (See for instance Lemaître 1894 and 1898). Thorel's attempt to deprive Brandes of his status as a leading European literary critic also follows this pattern.

Conclusions

In relation to the positive and empathetic reception of Brandes in Germany, it is interesting to note that it was in France that his work encountered the most engaged moral and ideological criticism. It is also noteworthy that the majority of the objections to Brandes in the French reception (such as the charges of politicizing art and disavowing religion) were the same as those he had originally bene encountered with in the Danish

public of 1872 – with the difference that French critics were able to distinguish the difference between liberalism and socialism. As was the case in Denmark after the defeat in the Danish-Prussian War of 1864, France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1871 had rendered political and literary opinion in the country more conservative and national and therefore less open and receptive to a figure like Brandes. The reason for Brandes' relative lack of resonance in France may, at least partly, be explained by aspects of international geopolitics and the crisis of French national identity in the period.

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GEORG BRANDES AS AN ACTOR NARRATING A STORY ABOUT POLAND

SYLWIA IZABELA SCHAB

ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to investigate Brandes's impact on the Poles' self-image and to explain how he became an actor in an internal Polish network of relationships. Three aspects have been analysed with regard to this aim: the reception of Brandes in Poland, reception of Scandinavian literature in Poland as an outcome of the Danish critic's visits and his reception, and the contemporary virtual guide to Poland "Where is Poland?", where he is used to provide guidance on how to understand Poland. Actor-Network-Theory provides the inspiration for how to present the intertwined relations of Polish and Danish literary cultures, with changing actants and with Brandes being the key actor.

Keywords: Georg Brandes; Brandes' reception in Poland; literary reception; Actor-Network Theory

Georg Brandes's first visit to Poland in the 1880s was preceded by his reputation. He came to Warsaw, later to Krakow and Lvov, as an acknowledged European intellectual, an expert on literature, but also an advocate of the sovereignty of the "oppressed peoples" (*undertrykte Folk*). In the 19th century, Poland did not exist on the map of Europe as a state, its lands having been incorporated into the borders of the superpowers – Russia, Prussia, and Austria-Hungary – and subjected to a policy of assimilation, which generated internal tension and created the need to seek support from external authorities. Brandes's visits, including at least six in the 1880s and 1890s, were guided by several objectives. The Danish critic was invited with lectures to the largest Polish cities, and his talks were accompanied by charity collections for patriotic purposes. Receptions and balls in his honour were an important part of his visits. A "Brandesian fever" broke out in the Polish lands. Brandes not only felt in Poland "the intensification of his own being" ("jeg følte mit Væsen potenseret") and, as he wrote in a letter to his mother, "no society, no city, no people suits me like the city and society of the Polish aristocrats" (Brandes 1994: 133), but he was also becoming an actor in an internal network of relationships, a catalyst for action. He also had an explicative power in relation to the Poles' self-image. He certainly played this role at the end of the 19th century, as evidenced by his reception in Polish intellectual and artistic circles. Has he retained this function until the present? Is it still possible to explain Poland of the time through Brandes?

The article aims to analyse three aspects in which the lines of the “true European” and the Polish cause are intertwined: the reception of Brandes in Poland, revealing Polish needs and contexts, the reception of Scandinavian literature in Poland as an outcome of the Danish critic’s visits and his reception, and the contemporary virtual guide to Poland “Where is Poland?”. The first two aspects has already been presented in my texts published in Polish (Schab 2018, 2021), which I am referring to (and quote) in this study in order to illustrate the relations between Poland, Poles, literature and Brandes as the pivotal factor in the web of interrelationship. To explore it the analysis undertaken in the article draws upon the actor-network theory (ANT), being rather “a loose intellectual toolkit” than “a programmatic theory” (Nimmo 2011: 109). The premises of it are co-constructed by concepts such as networks, relations, nodal points, actor and translation (cf. Latour 2000) ANT provides an inspiration for how to understand Brandes’s influence and significance for the complex system of cultural interrelationship between Poland and Denmark (or more precisely – the Polish and Danish literary cultures). Analysing Brandes’s role from such a perspective, it becomes clear that he was/is an important agent in the network of relations (an actor or an actant – according to ANT), both in the Danish discourse on Poland, in the wider European discourse, and the internal discourse on Poland. One of Brandes’s activities became the translation¹ of the Poles’ self-image, received in Polish circles with both appreciation and criticism. A vortex is created around Brandes as a key actor whose circles resonate both in his time and today. Enmeshed in relational networks (Danish, Polish and European), he was also influenced by his contemporary political, social, cultural, economic, ideological, and health contexts².

Brandes as an interpreter and spokesman for the Polish case at the turn of the 20th century

Brandes devoted considerable attention to Poland in his writings. The most extensive work concerning Poland is the five-part *Indtryk fra Polen* (“Impressions from Poland”; English translation entitled *Poland, 1903*), the first four parts of which are an account of his travels and stays in Poland, with the reflective layer that dominates in the text. The last part is dedicated to the memoirs of a woman called Maryla Wielopolska, whose status is not entirely clear³. It is complemented by a study of Polish literature of the Romantic period. In addition, Poland is the subject of his shorter journalistic and essayistic texts, including “Udflugt til Polen” (1881), “Polens Kvinder” (1901), “Til Skoleungdommen i Russisk Polen” (1905), “Polens fjerde Deling” (1909), “Ophidselse til Pogromer i russisk Polen” (1915) and many others (see Schab 2018: 77–78). Brandes undertakes the task

¹ Translation in terms of ANT is understood as the work of agents in relation to each other, the act of translation consisting in “moving actors into thought world of which they have not previously been part” (Marais 2012: 27).

² Brandes came to Poland for treatment and rehabilitation, facilitated by his friend, doctor Jan Brzezinski (Petelska 2017: 36).

³ According to Jørgen Knudsen, this refers to the memoirs sent to Brandes in 1885 by Józefa Szebeko (to whom the Danish critic also dedicated the poem *Jusja*, from the volume “Ungdomsvers”, 1902), with whom he had a close friendship and who also translated his speeches into French and Russian (Knudsen 1994: 270).

of describing and explaining Poland to his contemporaries, using both “library travel” (reading experiences), his observations, and information obtained from Polish sources. He comes to Poland equipped with knowledge (e.g., the history of his library loans preceding his visits and including items on Polish history and literature is known; cf. Schab 2018: 80), but also with apriori judgments (including stereotypical perceptions) borrowed from Western European discourse, which are partly confirmed and partly verified by him in a critical confrontation with reality. “The Scandinavian Voltaire” provided a translation in terms of ANT (see footnote 1) of the code of the European Other – Poland – into a comprehensible text, heading in various directions. Above all, his texts, written in Danish, were aimed at a native audience, as evidenced by, among other things, the use of domestication strategies and the comparative juxtaposition of the native and visited country. “Impressions from Poland”, in fact, plays the role of a hegemonic text in Danish discourse on Poland – Danes setting out on a journey not only are familiar with his accounts but also refer to them and/or quote them (see Schab, 2018). Moreover, Brandes’s writing has had a significant impact on the perception of Poland and Poles in Scandinavia (Stala 2000: 30)⁴ as well as in Europe – in this case through translations into German (1898) and English (1903) (cf. Ciesielski 1980: 215). Brandes’s voice became a compelling story of how to understand his contemporary Poland – a significant narrative which influenced the discursive image of Poland. *Indtryk fra Polen* was also translated into Polish – in 1898 (*Polska* – the first three parts, translated by Zygmunt Poznański) and 1900 (the fourth part *Lwów*, translated by Józefa Klemensiewiczowa). Apart from the previously mentioned *Hovedstrømninger...* (1881–1885), his other works including *Indtryk fra Rusland* (Polish title: *Rosya*, 1905), literary portraits of writers (2 volumes, 1893, 1894), as well as his readings presented in Poland and a number of articles and essays were also translated⁵.

Brandes’s commitment to publicising the situation in which Poland found itself, resembling, according to his eloquent metaphor, “en fin og forsvarsløs Kvinde, over hvem alle falder og som alle tramper paa” (the noble and defenceless woman whom everyone attacks and tramples on) (*Indtryk fra Polen - Polens romantiske literatur*, p. 190), is two-fold. On the one hand, it results from the choice made by Brandes to take the side of the “oppressed peoples” (he devotes a separate publication to them, *Undertrykte Folkelag*, in which he refers to, among others, Armenians, Macedonians, Georgians, Ruthenians). In Brandes’s interpretation, their fate becomes a warning to Europe. Poland acquires the status of a European symbol in this account: “Everything found its focus on Poland: everything most hateful and revolting, and everything most radiant and worthy of greatest love; here antinomies of life in this world are shown as distinctly as in a relief; here the essence of the world is contained as if in a distillate.” (Eng. after Ciesielski 1980: 212). The fate of “... the most delicate flower of the Slavic stem” (Brandes 1900: 14) becomes a memento for Western European civilisation, which should feel warned by its example against “the triumph of an omnipresent barbarism, peeping out, in his view, from under an ever thinner civilisational polarity” (Schab 2018: 85). Brandes’s warning applies both to the Dreyfus affair in France, the Schleswig question, and to the policy of Germanisa-

⁴ For example, in a letter to Brandes, the Swedish poet Carl Snoilsky confesses: “I look at contemporary Poland through your eyes” (Ciesielski 1980: 215, after Ruben 1917: 321).

⁵ For a full list of translations, see Appendix 1 in Michalina Petelska’s (2017) dissertation, pp. 309–315.

tion and Russification in the Polish lands. Brandes sees in Poland both a fusion of East and West – Asia and Europe, full of internal contradictions and fractures, and a bulwark of civilisation – a potential to save European values from the erosion of the cultural barbarism pressing in on it, not always coming from the outside.

On the other hand, Brandes's interest in Poland stems from the enthusiastic reception he received there and from his own "Slavic mania" (Knudsen 1994: 305). In Warsaw, the Danish critic becomes the sensation of the season, and likewise later in Krakow and Lvov. The Polish dailies not only publish translations of his texts and lectures but also report on his meetings with the public; they also provide coverage of balls and sumptuous receptions in private houses in his honour⁶. As Ewa Paczoska (2012: 209) stressed it he turns up at a time when the first generation of Polish positivists is searching for a new model of realism and a new way of creating literature. For them, he becomes an important source of inspiration concerning naturalism and symbolism, as well as a model for a modern style of literary criticism. Paczoska, who has researched the latter aspect, asserts that the discussions centred around Brandes had a significant impact on how ideas about the role of literary criticism were formulated in Poland in the second half of the nineteenth century (ibid., pp. 209 ff.). Polish progressives, such as Piotr Chmielowski and Bolesław Prus, further saw in Brandes the inspiration necessary to initiate changes of a social, civilisational and aesthetic nature. The writer Bolesław Prus gave the following account of the Danish critic's visit to Warsaw in 1885: "Brandes's stay coincided with a moment when the party of stagnation is triumphing all along the line in our country and when, admittedly hard, external circumstances are lulling the general public to sleep, violently imposing it on their minds" (Prus, 2006: 161). On the other hand, in the eyes of conservative and anti-Semitic circles, Brandes was perceived as the embodiment of the enemy of everything "sacred" and "ours" – an anti-national, anti-church and subversive element, "an ally (...) of the European forces of 'darkness' and moral decay" (Paczoska 2010: 309). He was criticised for his commentaries on Polish literature of the Romantic period and accused of misunderstanding Polish culture.⁷

In summary, his reception as a literary critic reflected the division in Polish literary criticism into conservative and progressive circles. It also echoed in wider cultural circles and the *crème de la crème* of the major Polish cultural centres (Warsaw, Krakow and Lvov). It, therefore, built new links, becoming a germ of new nodal points and possible translations – both in terms of literary translations and the meaning of it according to ANT. The 'true European's readings of literature aroused interest in the Danish – and more broadly Scandinavian – literature, which will be analysed in the next section of this article. The Danish advocate of Polish independence did not visit Poland again after its establishment as an independent state. Albeit, as he admitted in one of his texts in the collection *Verdenskrigen* (1916: 122), he had never felt such enthusiasm towards any nation as he did towards the Poles. Polish public opinion, however, turned away from him, and his contacts with Poles were significantly reduced after he had published articles in the

⁶ As, for example, at the home of Mr and Mrs Wolski in Lvov in November 1898, where a brochure commemorating the Danish guest was even published – including an occasional poem by Władysław Bełza in his honour.

⁷ This paragraph is a transcription of my earlier research on Brandes's reception in Poland, published in Polish (Schab 2021 88–89).

Danish press concerning the pogroms against the Jewish population in the Polish lands. His texts were no longer reprinted after the First World War either.

Brandes as a catalyst for the reception of Scandinavian literature in Poland

Using the metaphor of a key, it can also be stated that Brandes opened the door to Scandinavia for Poles through literature. Its reception concerned both the reinforcement of realistic and naturalistic aesthetic impulses and the perception of social patterns native to the North also transmitted through literature. Both phenomena can be traced through the reception of translation⁸. According to Aleksander Świątochowski, a then popular writer, journalist and social activist of the time, the translation of *Main Currents...* into Polish “exerted such a profound and powerful influence on the progressive part of Polish society, especially on the youth, that we have not experienced something similar for many years” (quoted by Ślaski 1977: 335). The times before Brandes’s possible influence on translation decisions do not abound in translations from Scandinavian literatures. For example, in a period of more than 70 years – from the first translation of Danish literature in 1819 to 1890 – the bibliography of translations (Suchodolska, Żydanowicz, 1971) lists 87 records, 60 percent of which concern Hans Christian Andersen’s fairy tales (cf. Schab 2021: 83). The figures for Icelandic, Norwegian and Swedish literature are respectively: 11, 66 and 136 items (ibid., p. 85). In the subsequent period that I have analysed, i.e. from 1890⁹ until the outbreak of the Second World War, there is a considerable increase in the number of translations. In the case of Danish literature, this increase is more than fivefold (466 records, approx. 35% concern the fairy tales of H.Ch. Andersen, ibid., p. 91), sixfold in the case of Norwegian literature (399 records), and fourfold when it comes to Swedish (556 records) and Icelandic literature (45 records) (ibid., p. 91). The quantitative analysis alone supports a conclusion indicating Brandes’s significant role. Analysing the translations from Danish literature in terms of the selection of authors, one can see that the focus is on Brandesian writers of the modern turn. However, one cannot overlook the fact that the largest number of records relates to the novels of the bestselling author of the early twentieth century, Karin Michaëlis, which can be explained both by economic factors (the author’s readership, her status in Europe) and by the popularity of emancipation themes as well as drawing inspiration from Scandinavia (cf. Schab 2021: 93).

It is impossible to ignore the translators when looking at the reception of translation. In fact, the first generation of authors of translations was formed by female literary enthusiasts and admirers of Brandes, who knew him personally, had met him and corresponded with him. From ANT perspective he plays a role of an actor activating other actants in the network. Under his influence, they began to learn Danish, helped to translate his

⁸ Supplemented by the press reception of Scandinavian literatures - this, however, has not yet been systematically researched.

⁹ I have arbitrarily adopted the year of 1880 as the caesura as I assume that it can mark the moment from which Brandes’s influence could gain real strength – owing to the translations of *Main Currents...*, his repeated visits to Poland, the publication of *Indtryk fra Polen* and its translation into Polish.

speeches into French and Russian, and made literary translations (though mostly from German). Along with the contribution of Józefa Szebeko (1859–1945), a social activist, journalist and later senator of the Republic of Poland (1922–1927), as well as the writers and social activists Wanda Młodnicka (1850–1923) and her daughter Maryla Wolska (1873–1930); the activity of Józefa Klemensiewiczowa (1862–1938) deserves a special mention. The latter not only adapted several dozen literary works of Danish, Norwegian and Swedish literature into Polish but also actively promoted them through lectures and articles published in popular magazines and newspapers. In 1914, her historical-literary survey of Scandinavian literature – *Literatura Skandynawii* – was published in Krakow. This publication targeted a wider audience and was the first historical-literary outline of the Scandinavian cultural circle. George Brandes is referred to therein with an emphasis on his role in shaping naturalistic attitudes in literature, as well as his influence on literary discourse about Poland (e.g. in the works of Valdemar Rørdam and Agnes Henningsen) (Klemensiewiczowa, 1914: 90, 101).

Brandes as a guide to Poland in the 21st century

In the 2010s, a marked increase of interest concerning Georg Brandes in Poland could be observed. The Danish critic was revived in academic circles, as evidenced by numerous studies on the reception of his works and the history of Polish-Danish contacts through him, as well as new readings of his texts. It is worth noting that this involves researchers coming from different academic centres, who did not collaborate at the stage of preparing their analyses (see Bukowski 2017, 2018; Paczoska 2010, 2012, 2015; Pessel 2010, 2012; Petelska 2010, 2012, 2016, 2017; Płaszczewska 2016; Schab 2009, 2012a, 2012b, 2018). In 2018, the Polish government agency, the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, provided an interactive English-language portal “Where is Poland? The story of Poland under the partition seen through a foreigner’s eyes”, based on Brandes’s accounts of his travels in Poland¹⁰. It formed part of the celebrations of the 100th anniversary of independence, within the framework of the official “Independent” [Pl. Niepodległa] programme. In the introduction, the Danish critic is presented as a European authority – “one of the leading figures of European intellectual life”. The audience moves through the content on Polish history in the 19th century accompanied by Brandes as a guide, who is both visible in photographs and films and who speaks through quotations from his writings on Poland. The narrative of the nine chapters is built upon selected aspects presented in Brandes’s account: a walk in Warsaw, Russification/Germanisation, literature, censorship, the position and emancipation of women, what Poland is and who Poles are. The portal user can also solve practical tasks, such as playing the role of a customs officer and searching Brandes’s luggage, including books (a reference to the scene depicting the crossing of the borders of the civilised world from *Indtryk fra Polen*)¹¹, or exercises in the use of the Aesopian language (of which Brandes claims to be a master in his account).

¹⁰ <https://whereispoland.com/en>

¹¹ “Thus on the very frontier itself we got the feeling that from this point we were outside the precincts of real European civilisation.”

Why, 100 years after his disappearance from the Polish public space, has Brandes been reintroduced into it? Firstly, because the portal is addressed to foreigners (e.g., it does not provide a Polish-language version, yet a Russian-language one is available). The recognisability of the guide to the “country that doesn’t exist” therefore relates to his high status outside Poland. The employment of the Danish critic is intended to provide an outsider’s perspective that the audience of this multimedia project might recognise. Brandes has been embedded in a broader context – a network of connections that is beyond a national (‘Polish’ or ‘Danish’) scope. At the same time, the figure of the “activist critic” has been instrumentalised – his significance being reduced to the role of a guide to an exotic country, Poland, and a slogan evoking associations with the intellectual authority of his time. Brandes’s role as an actor in the network of Polish-Danish ties has been redefined. It is determined by relations that have been mediated and inscribed in contemporary political, historical and cultural contexts – contrasting with those of the nineteenth century. In these contemporary contexts, the Danish critic functions as an icon, known in Poland mainly to a small circle of experts. This update has been fostered by a network of connections co-created by both the government agency responsible for the project of the Multiannual Programme Independent [Pl. Niepodległa] (2017–2022), the initiators, researchers and executors of the project, and Scandinavian scholars interested in Brandes and the renaissance of interest in him in the Polish context (the project’s consultants included Włodzimierz Karol Pessel and Michalina Petelska). The choice of Brandes as a guide was justified by the portal’s creators as follows:

The guide has been designed with the foreign reader in mind, unacquainted with Polish history. Therefore, the narrator is a foreigner, for whom this is also his first encounter with Polish society. As an outsider, he looks at it with empathy and kindness, but not uncritically. From a distance, he looks back on a crucial period in Polish history – a moment when the political fate of a country divided by its borders was still being decided, and when future independence was by no means certain.¹²

Analysing the reception of the multimedia guide among English- and Russian-speaking audiences is beyond the scope of this article. It is also difficult to judge whether Georg Brandes has thus returned to the intra-Polish cultural circulation. What seems certain is that in 2019 “Where is Poland?” was appreciated by an international jury and honoured with the Silver European Design Award in the category “Digital – Information Site”.

* * *

The network of which Georg Brandes is a part is opening up to new contexts. It is unstable and unfixed, unpetrified, as new actants are involved (like the nonhuman interactive “Where is Poland?” portal) and new kinds of relations established. Due to the most recent wave of circulation of Brandes’s contribution concerning the Polish context new kinds of translations (understood in terms of ANT) are possible. All the mentioned factors make the network still productive. It is co-created by interpersonal and intercultural relations, subject to conjunctures, moods and emotions that are often difficult to capture

¹² <https://culture.pl/pl/artykul/where-is-poland-multimedialny-przewodnik-culturepl>

through the use of analytical language. In summary, Brandes's role as an expert on Poland and a European icon in the European discourse on Poland has been maintained.

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Web Portal:

<https://whereispoland.com/en>

GEORG BRANDES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHINESE LYRICAL TRADITION¹

C. T. AU

ABSTRACT

Georg Brandes (1842–1927) has had a significant influence on the development of the Chinese lyrical tradition since the beginning of the 20th century. During a panel on comparative literature at the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) in 1971, Chen Shih-Hsiang said that the “Chinese literary tradition as a whole is a lyrical tradition,” offering another perspective for interpreting the Chinese literary tradition. The Chinese lyrical tradition emphasizes expressing deep feelings (or embodying lyricism) in various art forms. When tracing the trajectory of the development of the Chinese lyrical tradition, one finds that Lu Xun’s “Moluo shi li shuo” (On the Power of Mara Poetry) (Mara Poetry) has had a profound impact on the formation of the lyrical tradition, which was proposed by Chen Shih-Hsiang in 1971, and has been consolidated by Chan K. K. Leonard since the 21st century. However, the important role that Brandes played in Lu Xun’s analysis in “Mara Poetry” has not received the attention it deserves. In fact, Lu Xun’s article is deeply indebted to Brandes’s *Poland: A Study of the Land, People and Literature (Poland)*. In order to bridge this research gap, the aim of this paper is twofold. Firstly, it attempts to examine the degree to which Brandes helped develop the Chinese lyrical tradition by identifying his influence on Lu Xun. Secondly, it traces the development of the tradition by delineating both Chen’s and Chan’s contributions. Chen’s research helps highlight the characteristics of A. Mickiewicz’s poetry introduced by both Brandes and Lu Xun, which were considered the major characteristics of the Chinese lyrical tradition by Chen later on. Chan’s study further suggested that the characteristics embodied in Mickiewicz’s poetry can also be found in Lu Ji’s (261–303 AD) “Wen Fu” (Essay on Literature).

Keywords: Georg Brandes; Lu Xun; Chen Shih-Hsiang; Chan K. K. Leonard; Chinese lyrical tradition

Georg Brandes’s (1842–1927) influence on the development of Chinese literary criticism,² and the Chinese lyrical tradition in particular, has been significant since the beginning of

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² In addition to Lu Xun’s “On the Power of Mara Poetry” (1907), there are numerous relevant works; to provide only a few examples here: Chen Gu. 1920. “Bu lan dui si” (Brandes). *Dongfang Zazhi*

the 20th century. The Chinese lyrical tradition refers to the literary tradition as proposed by Chen Shih-Hsiang in his opening address, “On Chinese Lyrical Tradition”, at the AAS Meeting in 1971. Generally speaking, the Chinese lyrical tradition refers to a literary tradition that puts emphasis on “an intense personal quality expressive of feeling or emotion, an engagement with temporal caesura and self-reflexivity, or an exuberant manifestation of subjectivity in an art form such as music or poetry” (Wang, 2015, 1).³ When tracing the trajectory of the development of Chinese lyrical tradition, one finds that Lu Xun’s⁴ “Moluo shi li shuo” (On the Power of Mara Poetry) (Mara Poetry) has had a profound impact on the formation of the lyrical tradition. Although Brandes is mentioned by Lu Xun in his “Mara Poetry”, he does not cite his sources properly in “Mara Poetry”. Nevertheless, judging from the poets discussed in “Mara Poetry” – among others, A. Pushkin, M. Lermontov, A. Mickiewicz, J. Słowacki, and Z. Krasinski – and subsequent confirmation by Zhou Zuoren and Kitaoka Masako (Kitaoka, 1983, 114), we have good reason to believe that Lu Xun drew directly from Brandes’s *Impressions of Russia* (1889) and *Poland: A Study of the Land, People and Literature (Poland)* (1903). Brandes in fact examined these Russian and Polish poets in these two works, which blend travelogue and cultural history. Despite all this, the important role that Brandes played in Lu Xun’s analysis in “Mara Poetry” has not received the attention it deserves. One of the aims in this paper is to fill this research gap. To do this, the degree to which Brandes helped develop the Chinese lyrical tradition will be examined by identifying his influence on Lu Xun. Another aim of the study is to trace the development of the tradition by delineating both Chen Shih-Hsiang’s and Chan K. K. Leonard’s contributions to the topic. I will not only demonstrate how Chen’s research helps highlight the characteristics of A. Mickiewicz’s

(The Eastern Miscellany), Vol. 17, No. 5, 75–85. Shen Zemin, 1921. “Bu lan dui si de eguo yinxiang ji” (Brandes’s Impressions of Russia). *Xiaoshuo Yuebao* (Short Story Monthly), Vol. 12, Extra issue, 484–488. Zhu Shoutong, 1993. Kuanrong de mochuang: *Shijiu shiji wenxue zhuliu daoyin* (A Forging Magic Bed – An Introduction to *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature*). Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe, 1993. Xie Mian, 1998. *1898: Bainian youhuan* (A Hundred Years of Misery). Shandong: Shandong jiaoyu chubanshe. Yang Dong, 2009. “Bainian Zhongguo piping shi zhong di Bo lan dui si wenti: guanyu Bo lan dui si zai Zhongguo de yijie yu jieshou” (A Study of Brandes in the Centennial History of Chinese Literary Criticism: The Reception and Translation of Brandes in China). *Wenyi Zhengming* (Contentions), No. 1, 6–12. Yamaguchi, Mamoru, 2013. “Zuwei qiji de xiangtu wenxue” (Local Literature as an Opportunity). *Chung Wai Literary Quarterly*, Vol. 24, 21–42. Zhang Yingjin, 2018. “Introduction Chinese Worlds of World Literature”. *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 1–12.

³ The concept of the Chinese lyrical tradition could be seen as difficult to define due to the fact that Chen Shih-Hsiang died the same year that he presented the concept at the AAS Meeting. The definition proposed by David Der-wei Wang, which I adopt in this article, can only serve as an entry point for the study of the concept. Further information on the topic of the Chinese lyrical tradition can be found in Chan K. K. Leonard’s “The Conception of Chinese Lyricism: Průšek’s Reading of Chinese Literary Tradition” (2008), Chan K. K. Leonard’s *Shuqing Zhongguo lun* (The Conception of Lyrical China) (2013), and Chan K. K. Leonard and David Der-wei Wang’s *Shuqing zhi xiandaixing* (The Modernity of Lyricism) (2014).

⁴ Lu Xun (1881–1936) was arguably the most significant writer-cum-critic to introduce this well-known Danish literary critic to Chinese readers. In addition to “Mara Poetry”, in his “Preface to *Zhongguo xin wenxue da xi* (Compendium of Modern Chinese Literature) Fiction II”, Lu Xun refers to the first volume of the *Main Currents of Literature in the Nineteenth Century*, which has a subtitle: *The Emigrant Literature* (Lu Xun, 2009, vol. 18, 105). It is fair to say that Lu Xun’s understanding of nativist literature was inspired by Brandes. As Lu Xun’s legacy spread in the 1970s, his idea of nativist literature exerted a certain degree of influence on the development of Taiwan’s nativist literature (Yamaguchi, 2013, 21–42).

poetry introduced by Brandes via Lu Xun, which are highly similar to those embedded in the Chinese lyrical tradition, but also show how Chan's study suggests that an uncanny resemblance between the characteristics embedded in Mickiewicz's poetry and Lu Ji's (261–303AD) "Wen Fu" (Essay on Literature).

This article will be divided into three main sections followed by a short concluding paragraph. The main objective of the first section is to examine Lu Xun's understanding of Brandes's *Poland*, with a focus on Lu Xun's "Mara Poetry". I will start by comparing Lu Xun's interpretation of Mickiewicz with those depicted in Brandes's *Poland*. Among other things, special emphasis will be placed on the two themes – bringing people together, and searching for light in the darkness – embedded in Mickiewicz's poetry. It is fair to say that Lu Xun was not aware that his reception of Brandes's *Poland* and his discussion on Mara poets could have contributed to the development of the Chinese lyrical tradition. Nor did Chen Shih-Hsiang aim at developing the concept of the Chinese lyrical tradition in his article "Polish Literature in China and Mickiewicz as 'Mara Poet'" (Polish Literature). When Chen studied Mickiewicz's influence on Chinese literature in the 1950s, he had not yet formally established the concept of the Chinese lyrical tradition. However, Lu Xun and Chen had a knack for identifying the essence of Chinese lyricism, and both critics were drawn to the quasi-Chinese lyricism embedded in Mickiewicz's poetry. In "Polish Literature", Chen helps highlight the themes and poetic elements embodied in Brandes's and Lu Xun's analyses of Mickiewicz, which would then become the essential qualities of the tradition decades later. I will discuss these essential lyrical characteristics in section two.

In section three, Chan K. K. Leonard's contributions to the development of the Chinese lyrical tradition will be discussed. In his article "Lyricality and Revolution: Chen Shih-Hsiang on the Light of Literature and the Power of Mara Poets" (Lyricality and Revolution), Chan underscores the intertwined relationship between Chen's interpretation of Mickiewicz, his translation of Lu Ji (261–303 AD), and his conception of the Chinese lyrical tradition. Chan highlights the two themes embodied in Mickiewicz's poetry, which had previously been identified by Brandes, Lu Xun, and Chen, and finds a striking resemblance to those embodied in Lu Ji's "Wen Fu". Indeed, Chan's discovery sheds new light on the role Brandes played in the development of the Chinese lyrical tradition, which will be revisited in the conclusion.

Georg Brandes's *Poland* and Lu Xun's "Mara Poetry"

"Mara Poetry" consists of nine sections, and Brandes is mentioned in sections seven and eight (Lu Xun, 2009, vol. 1, 267, 269). Although Lu Xun does not make explicit the sources for his writing, his brother Zhou Zuoren writes in his memoir that when Lu Xun wrote "Mara Poetry", especially those parts dealing with Mickiewicz and Słowacki, he made references to *Poland* by Brandes (Kitaoka, 1983, 114). *Poland* consists of two major parts. In the first part, entitled "Observations and Appreciations", Brandes delineates his visits to Poland in 1885, 1886, 1894, and 1899. In the second part, entitled "The Romantic Literature of Poland in the Nineteenth Century", Brandes introduces the most remarkable characteristics of the Romantic literature of Poland to his readers. Three leading figures –

Mickiewicz, Słowacki, and Krasinski – are divided into two categories. While the first two poets are considered the poets of vengeance, the last is seen as the poet of love. Among these three Polish poets, it is apparent that Mickiewicz sheds more light on the development of the Chinese lyrical tradition. In fact, both Chen Shih-Hsiang and Chan K. K. Leonard focused on Mickiewicz in their studies decades later; thus, the focus will be on him in this section. Before we proceed to examine Lu Xun's understanding of Mickiewicz, we will first explore Brandes's ideas about this Polish poet.

Brandes was invited to give lectures in Russian Poland in 1885. Poland had been split between Prussia, the Habsburg monarchy, and Russia since 1795. As the Danish critic rightly observes, “[t]here was no longer any kingdom of Poland. But there was still a Polish people” (Brandes, 1903, 24). Despite the desolate situation of Poland, Brandes reminds us that the Poles “worshipped independence to the point of insanity, freedom to the extent of the *liberum veto*, and who even now, when they had lost independence and freedom, had remained faithful to their old love” (Brandes, 1903, 24). To do so, the Poles clung to things that could keep their past alive – Polish poetry, historical writings, and Polish paintings are some significant examples. Among these things, Brandes seems to place more weight on poetry, going so far as to say that “[p]oetry in the Polish home has the same importance as religion” (Brandes, 1903, 39). Nevertheless, the best works were forbidden. Brandes uses the young Levitoux's story as a sad case in point. The young boy was found in possession of Mickiewicz's *Dziady* and was put into a dungeon in the Citadel in Warsaw. After being tortured, Levitoux was on the verge of a nervous breakdown, afraid that he would eventually reveal the names of his comrades. Despairing, he burned himself to death (Brandes, 1903, 39).

Among other issues, one major problem that Brandes tried to resolve in *Poland* was: When Poland had vanished from the map of Europe, its language had been suppressed, and a large number of Poles were in exile, including some of the most important poets, what could the Polish people do? Brandes seems to suggest that the poetry of exiled poets played a significant role in helping to create a sense of unity. Mickiewicz is a case in point. Being regarded as “the recognized laureate of a whole nation in the first half of the nineteenth century” (Brandes, 1903, 202), Mickiewicz is mentioned throughout *Poland*. Although Brandes also introduces other poets and artists in Poland, he always refers back to Mickiewicz.

Mickiewicz was born in 1798 in Lithuania. Apparently, both Napoleon Bonaparte and Lord Byron exerted great influence on Mickiewicz in his early years (Brandes, 1903, 231, 203–205). When the poet was thirteen years old, he saw Napoleon's armies march through Polish territory on the way to Russia. This episode probably planted a seed of political hope in the young poet's mind, which was the inspiration for his famous epic poem *Pan Tadeusz*, published in 1834 (Brandes, 1903, 231). A lifelong patriot, Mickiewicz joined a secret student society at university, and he was arrested and sent into exile in St. Petersburg in 1824 due to his participation in patriotic activities.

Mickiewicz turned to Byron due to his first unrequited love. When the poet studied at the University of Wilna, he fell in love with Maria (Maryla) Wereszczaka, who was introduced to Mickiewicz by his friend Thomas Zan. Unfortunately, despite the mutual attraction, since Wereszczaka was already engaged to a rich young man, she had no choice but to turn Mickiewicz down (Brandes, 1903, 232; Lednicki, 1944, 165). Mick-

iewicz sank into despair. Brandes remarks that “[i]n the condition of erotic desperation, which he was now experiencing, Byron became his only reading” (Brandes, 1903, 232). This love affair became a source of inspiration for certain parts of Mickiewicz’s *Dziady*, in which a victim of unhappy love is depicted. Despite the fact that Mickiewicz’s interest in Byron seems to lie elsewhere at that particular moment, Brandes reminds his readers that, generally speaking, “the Poles found in the poetry of Byron the common European despair and thirst for liberty” (Brandes, 1903, 206).

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, Mickiewicz is considered a poet of vengeance by Brandes. Like his fellow poets, Mickiewicz always dwells on “prison scenes, scenes of banishment, and harsh punishments” (Brandes, 1903, 257). Indeed, both Poland’s suffering and the poet’s personal experience of being jailed prior to his deportation to Russia contribute to the development of the theme of vengeance embodied in his poems. *Dziady* and *Konrad Wallenrod* are two examples. The protagonists, or to be specific, the victims depicted in the poems believe that if God does not avenge them, the Poles will eventually avenge themselves (Brandes, 1903, 257, 261). It is noteworthy that Brandes does not think either taking revenge against an enemy, or loving your enemy as in Krasinski’s case, can help solve Poland’s crisis. The Danish critic suggests an alternative way to tackle the problem, which is to be stronger than your enemy by strengthening your talents (Brandes, 1903, 268).

As a world-renowned Polish poet, despite being labelled the poet of vengeance, and although some of his poems do indeed advocate revenge, Mickiewicz was concerned with more than vengeance alone. Certain characteristics embodied in Mickiewicz’s poetry in fact remind us not only of Brandes’s suggested alternative but also of the foremost traits of the Chinese lyrical tradition proposed by Chen Shih-Hsiang and Chan K. K. Leonard decades later. For one thing, Mickiewicz was able to earn the respect of his enemies. Pushkin, among other Russian poets, treated Mickiewicz as an equal. In comparing Pushkin and Mickiewicz, Brandes seemingly puts more weight on the Polish poet. According to the Danish critic, both poets were deeply influenced by Byron in their early years – being rebellious and patriotic – but eventually, Pushkin submitted to Tzar Nicholas, whereas Mickiewicz remained faithful to his original ideals (Brandes, 1903, 235).

For another, in order to overcome his despair and darkness, Mickiewicz from time to time “turned back to the land of his childhood, Lithuania, in which he had seen the light, which he had not visited since the years of his early youth, and which he, the exile, was never to see again” (Brandes, 1903, 285). Searching for light in the darkness and uniting people through poetry are two dominant themes of the Chinese lyrical tradition proposed by Chen and Chan, which will be discussed in sections 2 and 3 below. But perhaps more importantly, before going into further discussion, it is essential that we understand the extent to which Lu Xun, though not to his knowledge, helped develop the Chinese lyrical tradition by introducing Brandes, Poland, and Polish poetry to the Chinese people.

Although it has become clear in recent years that well over eleven sources were used to write “Mara Poetry” without proper citation, including Brandes’s *Impressions of Russia and Poland* (Chen, 1956; Kitaoka, 1983, 1–2; Wang, 2011, 38; Chan, 2018, Kowallis, 2021), I would like to highlight the fact that Brandes and his book *Poland* made a strong impression on Lu Xun and his brother. Zhou Zuoren elaborates that both he and Lu Xun were thrilled to find books about Poland and Polish literature in the Japanese book market

(Chen, 1956, 574). According to Lu Xun's brother, the reference sources on Mickiewicz and Słowacki, the so-called poets of vengeance, are drawn from Brandes's *Poland* (Kitaoka, 1983, 114). Thus, it is safe to say that *Poland* and the poets of vengeance, Mickiewicz in particular (Chen, 1956, 580), play a significant role in "Mara Poetry". The reasons why Lu Xun and his brother were interested in Poland may be numerous, but one of them was probably related to the fact that both Poland and China (Qing dynasty) faced an existential threat from imperial powers. Perhaps the situation of the former was worse than that of the latter: Poland had already vanished from the map, having been torn apart by Prussia, the Habsburg monarchy, and Russia. China, by contrast was on the verge of being torn to pieces. Lu Xun found in Polish literature a precedent and a model for the future of Chinese literature.

In "Mara Poetry", Lu Xun tries to delineate a genealogy of the so-called "Satanic School", in which Byron is considered the head of the School. Nevertheless, since Lu Xun aims to use the term in a broader sense, he looks for a term that can encompass all poets, "who were committed to resistance, whose purpose was action but who were little loved by their age" (Lu Xun, 1996, 99). He settled on the term "Mara" (celestial demon), which he borrowed from India. Following the discussion on Byron and Shelley, Lu Xun introduces other Mara poets to his readers, including Pushkin, M. Lermontov, Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Krasinski, and S. Petőfi. With some modifications, the definition of "Mara poets" and the Mara poets list remind us of Brandes's discussion on Polish poets. Chen was apparently the first critic who spotted the difference between facts and Lu Xun's version (Chen, 1956, 577), followed by Kitaoka's meticulous and detailed study of the sources of influence and Lu Xun's modifications to the original sources identified in "Mara Poetry" (Kitaoka, 1983, 114–180). The latter juxtaposes Brandes's version with Lu Xun's rendering of the text, which not only helps us better understand Lu Xun's "Mara Poetry" but can also inspire us to further examine the extent to which Brandes's *Poland* exerted a subtle influence on its structure and major themes.

In addition to the excellent existing research mentioned above, I will suggest that we can find other discrepancies and similarities in the works of Brandes and Lu Xun which are more relevant to the current study. For instance, as far as Byron's influence on Mickiewicz is concerned, Brandes suggests that the Polish poet was drawn to Byron's poetry involving love and even sex (Brandes, 1903, 232), whereas Lu Xun seems to propose that Mickiewicz is fascinated by Byron's being a resistance fighter (Lu Xun, 2009, vol. 1, 271). Further to this, Brandes's subtle influence on Lu Xun resonates in the structure and one of the themes of "Mara Poetry". Despite differences in scale, structurally speaking, both *Poland* and "Mara Poetry" consist of two major components: an introduction covering historical background, followed by a discussion on numerous poets. As mentioned before, while Brandes describes three types of Polish poets, Lu Xun concentrates on one of the categories described by Brandes – the poets of vengeance – and further substantiates the idea by creating a new label, Mara poets, and modifying Brandes's poets list. In other words, although Poland and China were in similar historical contexts, while Lu Xun advocated provocative actions, Brandes proposed surpassing one's enemies instead.

Evidently, one significant theme embodied in *Poland*, which is inspired by Mickiewicz, became the most important idea in "Mara Poetry". In *Poland*, Brandes uses Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz* (1834) as an example to tell us that the poet possesses the imaginative

power to manipulate both time and space in order to overcome these barriers and to bring people together. As the exile, Mickiewicz “dreamed himself back to his childish impressions of nature [...] he succeeded in making the ancient old Lithuanian forest speak [...] the natural sounds of the animals [...], the choir of all the human voices. He rises from the quiet whispering [...] as if he had the voices of all the deceased generations of the land therein [...], as if the whole heaven of Poland were filled by his song” (Brandes, 1903, 293). According to Brandes, the Polish national epic *Pan Tadeusz*, which had been read by the Poles since 1834, would continue to be read in the years to come. In brief, the epic unites people (Brandes, 1903, 43, 294). This idea is not expressed in clear and logical prosaic language but in poetic language. By contrast, Lu Xun makes this similar idea clear at the beginning of “Mara Poetry” by referring to Thomas Carlyle’s lecture:

The man born to acquire an articulate voice and grandly sing the heart’s meaning is his nation’s *raison d’être*. Disjointed Italy was united in essence, having borne Dante, having Italian. The Czar of great Russia, with soldiers, bayonets, and cannon, does a great feat in ruling a great tract of land. Why has he no voice? Something great in him perhaps, but he is a dumb greatness [...]. When soldiers, bayonets and cannon are corroded, Dante’s voice will be as before. With Dante, united; but the voiceless Russian remains mere fragments. (Lu Xun, 1996, 97–98)

Carlyle’s idea bears a striking resemblance to those of Brandes. By using this as his thesis statement, Lu Xun is endorsing the idea that during times of national crisis, countries that have a rich literary tradition are likely to survive the crisis. Among various literary forms, Mara poetry is the most important one.

Before starting to discuss Brandes’s and Lu Xun’s influence on Chen Shih-Hsiang’s development of the concept of the Chinese lyrical tradition, I think it is necessary to reiterate that there is another theme, apparently less prominent, but recurring, embodied in Brandes’s and Lu Xun’s analysis of Mickiewicz, which is essential in Chen’s discussion: searching for light in the darkness. When Mickiewicz was in despair after the revolution of 1831, in order to overcome his depression, the poet imagined returning to his homeland, Lithuania, where he had once seen light before (Brandes, 1903, 285). It is noteworthy that Lu Xun ends his article with the image of light. He uses a passage quoted from V. Korolenko’s *The Last Ray* to conclude his discussion on the topic of Mara poetry. In this story, when an old man teaches a boy to read in Siberia, the boy cannot imagine the cherry and the oriole mentioned in the book. “The old man explained: ‘It’s a bird that sits on a cherry branch and carols its fine songs.’ The youth reflected” (Lu Xun, 1996, 109). Intriguingly, the passage is in fact a lyrical one.

Lu Xun’s Mara Poet and Chen Shih-Hsiang’s Mickiewicz

Apparently, some of the most important ideas embodied in “Mara Poetry” helped shed light on the early development of the Chinese lyrical tradition in the 1950s, which was formally proposed by Chen Shih-Hsiang in 1971. “Polish Literature” is definitely the most significant article on this topic. Two articles – “The Cultural Essence of Chinese

Literature”⁵ (The Cultural Essence) (1953) and “Chinese Poetry and its Popular Sources” (Chinese Poetry) (1961) – are equally important as far as the establishment of the conception of the Chinese lyrical tradition is concerned. It is noteworthy that Chen accurately pointed out at least two discrepancies that Kitaoka did not notice in her study in the 1980s. For example, Lu Xun writes that Mickiewicz’s first love is “the daughter of a neighbour”, which is actually inaccurate (Chen, 1956, 577). Maria Wereszczaka was the “daughter of the deceased ex-marshal of the nobility of the District of Nowogrodek” – in Brandes’s words, “a young girl of good family” (Lednicki, 1944, 165; Brandes, 1903, 232), who was not merely the girl next door. In addition, Chen also reminds us that Mickiewicz and Pushkin did not exchange their poems, entitled “St. Petersburg: Monument of Peter the Great” and “The Bronze Horseman” respectively, upon their first meeting (Chen, 1956, 579). Chen does not provide further information regarding the publication date of Pushkin’s “The Bronze Horseman”. Brandes suggests in *Poland* that the poem was published posthumously in 1841 (Brandes, 1903, 237); nevertheless, the publication date of Mickiewicz’s “St. Petersburg” was not mentioned. Not until decades later did Chan K. K. Leonard provide other relevant information: While “St. Petersburg” was written in 1832, “The Bronze Horseman” was composed in 1833 (Chan, 2018, 35).

Since Chen did not have a chance to read Brandes’s *Poland*, the Danish critic’s influence on Chen was an indirect one, mainly via Lu Xun’s “Mara Poetry”, but at the same time based on his literary convictions. The theme – searching for light in the darkness – is one example. In “Polish Literature”, Chen highlights a factual description regarding Mickiewicz’s imprisonment before being sent into exile that neither Brandes nor Lu Xun chooses to emphasize: “For more than ten months he stayed in the prison cell, where all windowpanes were covered with wooden boards, so that he could not distinguish night or day” (Chen, 1956, 578). The critic further elaborates, not without using his imagination, that: “To the many anti-Manchu Chinese who, as political prisoners, had had a taste of dark dungeons, this part of the picture of Mickiewicz’s life presented a realistic scene; and to the people of the whole nation who longed for light, it had a symbolic meaning” (Chen, 1956, 578). It is fair to say that both Brandes and Lu Xun associated light with Mickiewicz – or the so-called Mara poets in Lu Xun’s case (Brandes, 1903, 285; Lu Xun, 2009, vol. 1, 249; Chen, 1956, 574–575) – but they did not make this explicit or raise the importance of light to the level that Chen did. Chen compares the Poles with Chinese people at the beginning of “Polish Literature” by noting that both nations faced the most extreme persecution by foreign powers in the 1930s. In order to survive, the persecuted nations must have faith in the future. To put it figuratively, “we shall thus more firmly believe that beyond the darkness ahead of us is bright light” (Chen, 1956, 569).

Interestingly, Chen was also drawn to Mickiewicz’s *Pan Tadeusz*, especially the scene that depicts the ancient Lithuanian forest. As mentioned earlier, Mickiewicz’s poetry helps unite all generations. In Chen’s words, “Mickiewicz is the one who will live in the everlasting echoes to his poetry, ever without end” (Chen, 1956, 578). Chen remarks that although Lu Xun advocates Mara poetry in his article, the passage extracted from *Pan*

⁵ “The Cultural Essence of Chinese Literature” was published in 1953 by Dr. Mei Yi-Chi, who was the representative of China to the UNESCO committee of Experts on Intercultural Relations, under the title *Interrelations of Cultures* (Chen, 1961, 320).

Tadeusz by Lu Xun (and Brandes as well) is most lyrical and idyllic, which resonates with Chinese readers (Chen, 1956, 578, 583).

Chen affirms that Lu Xun and his fellow writers followed in the footsteps of the Mara poets (Mickiewicz in particular) but rebelled against their oppressors instead of against God. On the one hand, Chinese writers (Lu Xun in particular) take action and become belligerent. On the other hand, “Polish Literature” ends with Chen’s reiteration of the major characteristics of Mickiewicz’s poetry – “the beautiful, brilliant, and sympathetic phases” – that strike a chord with Chinese readers (Chen, 1956, 586). These different, if not contrasting, ideas were boiled down into one single feature two decades later. Meanwhile, almost at the same time, Chen wrote “The Cultural Essence” and “Chinese Poetry” in addition to “Polish Literature”. These two articles, among others, are considered essential for the development of the Chinese lyrical tradition (Chan, 2013, 82). Another article, “Literature as Light Against Darkness” (Literature as Light), published in 1948, is equally important in its own right but contributes to the development of the tradition in a subtle way. The article in fact includes a comprehensive study of Lu Ji’s (Lu Chi) life, an English translated version of his “Wen Fu” (Essay on Literature), and some translation notes, and provides some background information about the origins of Lu Ji’s (perhaps even Chen’s) literary convictions (Chan, 2021, 82). Chen’s untimely death in 1971, the same year he presented the concept of the Chinese lyrical tradition in his opening speech at the AAS Meeting, deprived him of the opportunity to further explain his ideas. As far as “Literature as Light” is concerned, it was not until 2018 that Chan K. K. Leonard explored the relationship between the article and the concept of the lyrical tradition. Thus, I will discuss “The Cultural Essence” and “Chinese Poetry” below, followed by “Literature as Light” in the next section.

As the title of the article suggests, the major purpose of “The Cultural Essence” is to highlight the important features of Chinese literature, in which two striking points stand out, by reminding us of those of “Polish Literature”. For one thing, according to Chen, “literature in praise of war, or characterized by a militant patriotism, is very scarce, whereas anti-militarist literature abounds” (Chen, 1953, 48). For another, the special features of the Chinese language help it become a lyrical one (Chen, 1953, 49) in which people can reconnect with their past through the lyricism permeating Chinese literature. In “Chinese Poetry”, Chen compares Chinese poetry, lyric poetry in particular, with secular religion because it brings people together (Chen, 1961, 321). It is clear that the role poetry played involved more than uniting people. In an age when political upheavals and social crisis seem inevitable, modern people struggle to find a place where they feel at home. Chen apparently shares with Mickiewicz the belief that poetry can bring them home (Chen, 1961, 325), and this is where Mickiewicz finds light (Brandes, 1903, 285).

The extent to which Chen Shih-Hsiang was referring to Lu Xun’s and Chen’s own study of Mickiewicz when he made his seminal 1971 speech, which was called “On Chinese Lyrical Tradition”, is not easy to determine. Nevertheless, as Chen points out in his speech, “[w]hen we say what is typical of one literature, we are already implying a comparison with other literatures” (Chen, 1971, 18). When Chen proclaims in his speech that “Chinese literary tradition as a whole *is* a lyrical tradition” (Chen, 1971, 20), he is actually juxtaposing Oriental literature with Occidental literature, of which Mickiewicz’s famous epic is probably an example. Despite the uncertainties one thing seems guaranteed: among all

the characteristics inspired by Lu Xun's "Mara Poetry", lyricism is the only feature that remains intact in spite of everything.

Chen Shih-Hsiang's Lu Ji and Chan K. K. Leonard's Lyricality

Almost fifty years after Lu Xun wrote his "Mara Poetry", Chen Shih-Hsiang examined the characteristics of Lu Xun's Mara poetry by putting emphasis on Mickiewicz's works, at the same time, seemingly downplaying the significance of the characteristics of Mara poetry by comparing them with those of the Chinese literary tradition, though it took him another fifteen years to formally label this the Chinese *lyrical* tradition. History repeats itself: it took another sixty-two years before Chan K. K. Leonard revisited the relationship between Lu Xun and Mickiewicz, but from the perspective of Chen Shih-Hsiang. Picking up the threads of the discussion about the Chinese lyrical tradition, Chan wrote "Lyricality and Revolution", in which, among other things, he concentrates on the image of light and the idea of poetry playing the role of religion. Chan underscores the image of light conveyed in Chen's "Polish Literature". As previously stated, Chen was inspired by Lu Xun's (and in fact Brandes's) depiction of Mickiewicz's imprisonment, imagining the inmates (the patriots) longing for light in a dark cell (Chen, 1956, 578; Chan, 2018, 35). Chan traced the image back to Chen's "Literature as Light", a study of Lu Ji and his "Wen Fu", and suggested that Chen's obsession with the image came from his own suffering (Chan, 2018, 36). Interestingly, by placing stress on Chen's study of Lu Ji in his "Lyricality and Revolution", Chan helps illuminate our understanding of the reason Chen's "Polish Literature" seems to indicate that he put more weight on lyric poems than poems of vengeance: Chen's literary preferences, laid down in his early years, significantly contributed to his formation of the conception of the Chinese lyrical tradition.

The title of Chan K. K. Leonard's "Lyricality and Revolution: Chen Shih-Hsiang on the Light of Literature and the Power of Mara Poetry" in fact calls our attention again to the relationship between "Lyricality" (the Light of Literature) and "Revolution" (the Power of Mara Poetry) described at the very beginning of the article. Nevertheless, Chan is different from his precursors in that he tries to offer some answers about what may cause the ambivalence. Chan first discussed the significance of "Literature as Light" in 2008, in which the Hong Kong critic put more weight on the discussion of Chen's life than that of Lu Ji (Chan, 2008, 225–251). In "Lyricality and Revolution", however, Chan not only shifts the emphasis from Chen's life to Lu Ji's, but also helps explain the complexity of the concept itself. On a broader level, when Lu Xun writes "Poets are they who disturb people's minds" (Lu Xun, 1996, 102), he is actually referencing *shi yan zhi* (Poetry expresses will), *shi yuan qing* ("the Lyric, born of pure emotion") (Chen, 1948, 56), and *fafen yi shuqing* ("I vent my anger and give my thoughts expression") (Wang, 2015, 5), which are closely related to the discourses on the Chinese lyrical tradition, though "Mara Poetry" focuses on process and action, recommending stronger, more intense activities (Chan, 2018, 36). Chan continues: Chen's understanding of Lu Xun's concept of revolutionary literature is an empathetic one; he knows very well that the so-called lyricism embedded in Chinese literature and culture has two aspects, namely, stillness and motion. Neverthe-

less, while at a mature stage of the development of the Chinese lyrical tradition, according to Chan, Chen is inspired by Lu Ji's life and "Wen Fu" and concludes that the ultimate goal of the tradition is to achieve serenity and harmony, which is the state of transcendence (Chan, 2018, 36). Chan's astute comments merit further elaboration.

Taking a closer look at Lu Ji's life as it is introduced by Chen, we find a striking resemblance between Lu Ji's path through life and the stages of development of the Chinese lyrical tradition. Lu's relatively short lifespan (261–303) can be roughly divided into two stages. He was born to a prominent family in arguably the darkest age of ancient China – the Wei Jin period. Lu's grandfather (Lù Xùn) and father (Lu Kang) were both great generals of the collapsing Wu Kingdom. The young Lu Ji was, among other roles, a soldier and a poet. Chen considers the first twenty-nine years the first stage of Lu Ji's life and the remaining fourteen years the second stage (Chen, 1948, 2). In the second stage, Lu Ji moved to the north to serve the new empire. As a foreigner (or outsider), Lu's talents helped him make a lot of friends and just as many enemies. Eventually, Lu Ji was executed by his enemies during a military operation (Chen, 1948, 2). Lu Ji's life reminds us of the life of Byron, who was also both a poet and a soldier. The English poet died during the Greek war of independence, though of a fever. It is worth mentioning that Byron is considered the head of the Mara school advocated by Lu Xun. At first glance, Lu Ji can also be considered a Mara poet, especially when he writes in "*Bian wang lun*" (On the Fall of a Kingdom, I and II), after the fall of the Wu Kingdom: "Heavenly opportunity is less reliable than strategic terrain; and strategic terrain is still less so than concerted human effort" (Chen, 1948, 5). Despite the collapse of the Kingdom, Lu still had a fighting spirit. Nevertheless, the poet-cum-soldier's attitude changed tremendously in the second half of his life.

According to Chen's meticulous study, a decisive event that contributed to the change in Lu Ji's perspective on life – a *coup d'état* – took place in 300 AD. Lu took part in the bloody coup, though we do not know the role he played. Numerous people were killed, including villains and innocent people. Lu Ji's good friend, Chang Hua, was one of the victims. According to Chen, Lu felt overwhelmed by Chang's death. He thus wrote six significant literary works shortly after the coup, perhaps the most significant of which is "Wen Fu" (Chen, 1948, 17). The main theme of "Wen Fu" is how Lu finds certainty during uncertain times, or to put it figuratively, finds light in the darkness, as Chen and Chan suggested. To do so, in "Wen Fu", Lu not only stresses the ideal "order" or rules in literature but also elevates literature alone to an immortal status due to its capacity to mitigate the problems of mortal life, if not eliminate them (Chen, 1948, 2). At the end of his introduction, Chen quotes John Milton's *Paradise Lost* to conclude: "At his seconding bidding darkness fled, / Light shone, and order from disorder sprung" (Chen, 1948, 20). In other words, harmony (light) emerges out of chaos (darkness) (Chan, 2018, 33; Chan, 2021, 82). Simply put, three years before his execution, Lu Ji was already fully aware that literature could help him reach a transcendental state. By comparison, Byron's works always remind us of his restlessness, among other things.

In addition to the image of light, the idea that Chinese poetry played the role of religion, which is discussed in detail in Chen's "Chinese Poetry" (Chen, 1961), can be traced back to "Wen Fu" as well. In the last part of "Wen Fu", when Lu Ji explains "[t]he use of literature", he writes:

Lies in its embodiment of every truth / It expands the horizon to make space infinite, / And serves as a bridge that spans a myriad years. / It maps all roads and paths for posterity, / And mirrors the images of worthy ancients, / That the tottering Edifices of the sage kings of antiquity may be reared again, / And the faint admonishing voices, wind-borne since of yore, may resume full expression. / No regions are too remote but it pervades, / No truth too subtle to be woven into its vast web. / Like mist and rain, it permeates and nourishes, / And manifests all the powers of transformation in which gods and spirits share. / Virtue it makes endure and radiate on brass and stone, / And resound in an eternal stream of melodies ever renewed on pipes and strings. (Chen, 1948, 70)

If we juxtapose Lu Ji's passage with an extract from Chen's "Chinese Poetry", the latter will sound familiar. It almost looks like a conclusion drawn from Lu's explanation, though Chen refers to Chinese poetry in particular. As stated by Chen,

Thus poetry emancipates men, each from his narrow self, and binds them together on a higher level of being. In the absence of any organized ecclesiastical authority, Chinese poetry, with the other arts adjoined to it, has in its social function indeed become almost the sole institution whereby man's spirituality has been nurtured and expressed, as it might have been in religion. (Chen, 1961, 321)

In his "Lyricality and Revolution", Chan traces the genealogy of the concept of the Chinese lyrical tradition, uncovering not only the intricate relationship between Lu Ji and Chen Shih-Hsiang, but also that between Lu Xun, Mickiewicz, and Brandes. The Hong Kong critic quotes a passage from Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz* which is also quoted by Brandes, Lu Xun, and Chen Shih-Hsiang. The Polish poet writes that the horn blown by the Wojski (an official in medieval Poland) would never stop. The Poles believed that the echoes of the sound of the horns could pervade everything, transcending all time and space (Brandes, 1903, 293–294). When Mickiewicz wrote this passage, he might only have had his fellow countrymen in mind. The Polish poet would never have imagined that this lyrical passage from his epic could also resonate with Chinese people of all generations. Chan identifies the spirit of this lyrical passage in several literary works. For example, in addition to Lu Ji's "Wen Fu" mentioned earlier, Lu Xun's "Mara Poetry" is also a case in point. Lu Xun writes – "Poets are they who disturb people's minds. [...] his voice pervades the soul, and all things animate raise their heads as though witness to dawn, giving scope to its beauty, force, and nobility, and it must thereby breach the stagnant peace. Breach of peace furthers all humanity" (Lu Xun, 1996, 102) – which reminds readers of traditional Chinese poetics. As pointed out by Chan (2018, 34), the above quote from Lu Xun features similar ideas to "The 'Great Preface' to the *Classic of Poetry*": "In the mind, it is 'being intent' (*zhi*); coming out in language, it is a 'poem'" (Owen, 1996, 65). The poetic theory – "Poetry expresses intents" – is shared by all generations and, not unlike religion, brings people together.

Conclusion

After having examined Lu Xun's, Chen's and Chan's contributions on the growth of the Chinese lyrical tradition, we can conclude that Brandes has undoubtedly played an important role in the development of the tradition, though in a different way than might have been expected. Brandes identified the lyrical style and two themes – poetry as light helps against darkness, and poetry unites people – in Mickiewicz's poetry, which were highlighted by Lu Xun and subsequently suggested by Chen and Chan as the major characteristics of the Chinese lyrical tradition. Nevertheless, Chan's study reminded us that the characteristics embodied in Mickiewicz's poetry are similar to those of Lu Ji's idea of literature, which have been promoted since the 3rd century AD. Perhaps it is fair to say that Brandes has played a significant role in the development of the Chinese lyrical tradition by helping illuminate the essence of Chinese literature rather than introducing something new to it.

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KNUT HAMSUNS *PAN* OG JOSEPH CONRADS *HEART OF DARKNESS*

MARTIN HUMPÁL

ABSTRACT

The article examines similarities between "Glahns død. Et papir fra 1861", i.e., the second part of Knut Hamsun's novel *Pan* (1894), and Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness* (1899). The comparative analysis demonstrates that the two texts have several common features both in terms of setting, thematic aspects and narrative technique. Both "Glahns død" and *Heart of Darkness* take as a point of departure a riverboat journey into the jungle. Both texts thematize the differences between the European civilization and the "uncivilized" exotic world and focus on the contrasts between the civilized and the primitive life, the rational and the irrational behavior. Both stories are narrated by a male narrator personality that is strongly fascinated by another man, and in each case the text involves a partially unreliable witness type of narrator. The article describes some of these common features as modernist and confirms the position of both novels in early modernism.

Keywords: Knut Hamsun; Joseph Conrad; *Pan*; *Heart of Darkness*; modernism

Innledning

Det finnes flere interessante forbindelser mellom Hamsuns roman *Pan* (1894), spesielt den andre delen som heter "Glahns død. Et papir fra 1861",¹ og Joseph Conrads korte roman *Heart of Darkness* (1899). Til tross for at *Pan* var kommet ut noen få år før Conrad skrev *Heart of Darkness*, er det praktisk talt utelukket at Conrad kunne ha lest Hamsuns roman, bl.a. fordi den første engelske oversettelsen av *Pan* ble publisert først i 1921. Som kjent kom Conrad opprinnelig fra Polen (eller egentlig fra datidens Ukraina) hvor han hadde lært polsk og fransk, men den første franske utgaven av *Pan* kom ut i 1901, og på polsk ble romanen utgitt først i 1922. Derfor gir det rett og slett ingen mening å speku-

¹ "Glahns død. Et papir fra 1861" ble opprinnelig publisert som novelle i tidsskriftet *Samtiden* i 1893, og Hamsun innlemmet den senere i romanen *Pan*. Men "[d]et er ikke så store endringer som er gjort med teksten før den ble tatt inn i boken. Det er noen stilistiske endringer her og der uten større tematisk betydning, og selvsagt noen tilpasninger i forhold til handlingen i nordlandsfortellingen" (Skaftun 2000, 114).

lere om muligheten av at lesning av *Pan* kan ha påvirket Conrad. Det er allikevel verdt å foreta en komparativ analyse av de to tekstene. De inneholder nemlig noen påfallende likheter og er begge romaner fra den samme perioden, så sammenligningen kan fortelle oss noe om den litteraturhistoriske utviklingen. Den norske Conrad-spesialisten Jakob Lothe antyder faktisk noe slikt generelt når han hevder at Conrads forfatterskap "suggests interesting affinities with, as well as significant differences from, major Modernist writers such as Hamsun, Proust, Kafka, and Joyce" (Lothe 1996, 176).²

Det Lothe sier på et generelt nivå, gjelder etter min mening også det konkrete forholdet mellom "Glahns død" og *Heart of Darkness*, det vil si at man kan merke seg både "interesting affinities" og "significant differences" mellom disse to tekstene. Denne artikkelen vil fokusere på fellestrekk, men jeg skal også nevne noen viktige forskjeller.³ Siden jeg først og fremst finner likheter mellom *Heart of Darkness* og den andre delen av *Pan*, ikke den første, vil analysen for det meste gjelde "Glahns død". Delvis vil det imidlertid også være nødvendig å ta i betraktning den første delen og romanen som helhet.

Med elvebåt inn i jungelen: Det eksotiske og foruroligende

Både "Glahns død" og *Heart of Darkness* utspiller seg utenfor Europa, i en eksotisk verden: I den første teksten er det India, i den andre Afrika, eller mer presist det belgiske Kongo. Både "Glahns død" og *Heart of Darkness* tar som utgangspunkt en reise med elvebåt inn i jungelen. Jo lenger innover i jungelen protagonistene beveger seg, desto mer foruroligende blir reisen, slik som i dette eksempelet fra *Heart of Darkness*:

Trees, trees, millions of trees, massive, immense, running up high [...]. The reaches opened before us and closed behind, as if the forest had stepped leisurely across the water to bar the way for our return. We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness. It was very quiet there. [...] We were wanderers on prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet. [...] We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse. (Conrad 2018, 37–38)

I *Heart of Darkness* opptar reisen en stor del av teksten, og urovekkende hendelser gjentar seg hele tiden. I "Glahns død" er reisen ikke beskrevet på en så omstendelig måte,

² Jf. f.eks. også Lyngstad 2005, 8–9.

³ Jeg skal i artikkelen ikke beskjeftige meg med følgende berøringspunkt mellom de to tekstene: Både i "Glahns død" og i *Heart of Darkness* er det to typer kvinner som den mann som det fortelles om, har tilknytning til; i tilfelle både Glahn og Kurtz finnes det en gåtefull dame som sitter og tenker på dem tilbake i den siviliserte verden, og begge disse mennene har et forhold med en "usivilisert" kvinne, henholdsvis i India og Kongo. På overflaten avtegner altså dette seg som et fellestrekk, men det gir egentlig ingen mening å gjennomføre en videre sammenligning i dette henseende. Grunnen er at de to europeiske kvinnene som sitter og tenker på Glahn og Kurtz, det vil si Edvarda og den såkalte "Intended", er veldig forskjellige fra hverandre. Dessuten vet leseren temmelig lite om "the Intended", mens den første del av *Pan* danner et utførlig psykologisk portrett av Edvarda. Til syvende og sist kan man ikke snakke om noen maktkamp mellom Kurtz og "the Intended", mens i *Pan* forvandles kjærlighetshistorien mellom Glahn og Edvarda "til en maktkamp, hvor [...] de gjør sitt ytterste for å såre hverandre" (Boasson 2015, 100).

men det fremmede og foruroligende er allikevel også til stede. Til å begynne med sier den anonyme fortelleren dette: ”Mens vi sat der på flodbåten husker jeg ikke at vi talte om noget andet end om den lille landsby som vi nu skulde til og hvor ingen av oss hadde været før” (Hamsun 1954, 412). Senere kan man lese f.eks. følgende:

Et par dager efter gik vi på jagt. Vi passerte tehaber, rismarker og græssletter, vi levnet byen bak os og gik i retning av floden, vi kom ind i skoger av underlige, fremmede træer, bambus, mango, tamarindus, teak- og salttrær, olje- og gummivækster, ja Gud vet hvad det var for slags træer altsammen, vi forstod os ikke meget på det nogen av os (Hamsun 1954, 414).

Begge tekster fremhever altså det fremmedgjørende aspektet ved den ukjente villmarken og forbereder leseren på at noe underlig, ja kanskje til og med farlig, kan skje.

Plassering av handlingen er i begge tekster tematisk relevant: I begge spiller forskjellen mellom den europeiske sivilisasjonen og den ”usiviliserte” verden en viktig rolle. Som jeg ennå skal vise, forestiller jungelen i begge historier et sted hvor spørsmålet om forskjellen mellom det siviliserte og det ville, det rasjonelle og det irrasjonelle, det menneskelige og det dyriske kommer i forgrunnen.

Historier om fascinasjon

Begge historier fremstiller et merkelig forhold mellom to menn. I hver av de to tekstene er fortellerens holdning til den andre mannen preget av fascinasjon og til dels beundring. I *Heart of Darkness* har kapteinen Marlow oppdraget av å hente Kurtz, sjef for en handelsstasjon som leverer elfenben og en personlighet som er omspunnet av rare, selvmotsigende rykter. Marlow har en tvetydig innstilling til Kurtz, men gradvis opparbeider han seg en beundring for ham: I teksten beskriver han Kurtz som bl.a. ”a remarkable man” (Conrad 2018, 66, 75 [3×], 80) og ”a universal genius” (77). Situasjonen er ganske annerledes i *Pan*: Alle som har lest romanen, vet at fortelleren i ”Glahns død” åpent tilstår sitt hat mot Glahn. Men samtidig kan man fastslå at fortelleren også hadde en viss beundring for Glahn til å begynne med, og selv når han senere forteller om deres eventyr i India og hvordan han til slutt drepte ham, synes han å beholde litt av denne beundringen. Det kan man etter min mening lese i f.eks. disse sitatene: ”Hans hals forekom mig i begyndelsen å være usædvanling skjøn, men han gjorde mig litt efter litt til sin dødsfiende og jeg syntes da ikke at hans hals var smukkere end min skjønt jeg ikke bar min så bredt tilskue” (Hamsun 1954, 412); ”Glahn smilte og jeg syntes at hans smil var skjønt. / Jeg glemte forresten at han ingenlunde kunde kaldes en fuldkommen mand skjønt han så så prægtig ut. Han fortalte selv at han gik med et gammelt skuddsår i venstre fot [...]” (413). Glahn er også dristigere enn fortelleren, generelt sett, og han skyter bedre enn ham: ”Glahn skjøt skrækkelig sikkert, han feilet aldrig” (414).

Selv om mange Conrad-forskere har på forskjellig vis kommentert Marlows holdning overfor Kurtz, kjenner jeg til bare én artikkel som tar opp fascinasjonsaspektet i *Heart of Darkness* eksplisitt: I artikkelen ”Surface as Suggestive Energy: Fascination and Voice in Conrad’s ‘Heart of Darkness’” hevder Hans Ulrich Seeber at ”[n]ovels like *Lord Jim*, *The Nigger of the ‘Narcissus’*, ‘Heart of Darkness’ and *Nostramo* are narrative studies in

fascination and vocal effects” (Seeber 2008, 80). I disse romanene ”Conrad presents us a communicative act, in which we are invited to share in the fascination of observers, participants and oral narrators who seem to be in the thrall of a charismatic or rather pseudo-charismatic protagonist” (80). Det som kommer til å være relevant i det følgende, er at Seeber knytter fascinasjonsbegrepet til religiøse opplevelser og påpeker at ”Kurtz radiates the fascination of a fallen god” (83).

Den hårfine grensen mellom kulturmenneske og naturmenneske

”Glahns død” er først og fremst en fortelling om sjalusi, og sentralt i denne sjalusien er maktkamp om en vakker kvinne. Dette kan bestemt ikke sies om Conrads roman. Fortelleren i *Heart of Darkness* er først og fremst interessert i å forstå seg på den gåtefulle personen han beretter om. Marlows holdning til Kurtz er både kritisk og beundrende, men man kan slett ikke snakke om skinnsyke.

Hva handler egentlig Conrads roman om? Det er veldig vanskelig å finne entydige svar på dette spørsmålet fordi romanen i høy grad er mangetydig, og flere generasjoner av lesere, kritikere og forskere har kommet med ganske ulike svar. Conrad bruker flere finurlige narrative grep, så vel som paradokser, ”ambiguous images and many-faceted symbols” (Watts 1996, 47). Selve romanens tittel ”refers not only to the heart of ‘darkest Africa’ but also to Kurtz’s corruption, to benighted London, and to innumerable kinds of darkness and obscurity, physical, moral, and ontological” (47). Det som ifølge flere forskere spesielt gjør *Heart of Darkness* til en modernistisk tekst, er nettopp dens ”epistemological ambiguity”, som f.eks. Kenneth Graham påstår: ”The whole force of ‘Heart of Darkness’ seems from beginning to end fixed on challenging the idea of single meaning, and the related idea that the act of communication in words is reliable” (Graham 1996, 213).

Men til tross for alt dette finnes det noen ting man trygt kan si at *Heart of Darkness* handler om, bl.a. imperialism og etiske spørsmål. I dette henseende er romanen igjen forskjellig fra den andre delen av Hamsuns *Pan*: Det er umulig å hevde at ”Glahns død” tar for seg imperialismeproblematikken, og selv om det finnes noen etiske spørsmål i denne teksten, er de av sideordnet betydning. Derimot kan *Heart of Darkness* beskrives f.eks. med en følgende treffende karakteristikk: Det er ”a fictional exploration of the human condition and the human psyche provoked by an exposure to imperialism and its consequences” (Lothe 1996, 169). Marlow oppdager etter hvert at handelsmannen Kurtz er en sammenblanding av en opplyst tenker og forbryter. Alt i romanen tyder på at Kurtz opprinnelig ikke var kommet til Kongo som hensynsløs, brutal koloniasator, men snarere som en humanistisk, nesten religiøst-orientert idealist. I Kongo ble han imidlertid en villmann, iallfall delvis. Han begynte å bruke barbarisk vold, og derfor oppnådde han ypperlige resultater i elfenbenhandelen. Han utnyttet også primitiv religiøsitet: Han skapte sin egen personkultus og fikk de innfødte til å tilbe ham som om han var en gud. Kurtz’ mørke side kan illustreres f.eks. ved hjelp av følgende sitater fra romanen: ”He had taken a high seat amongst the devils of the land—I mean literally” (Conrad 2018, 52). Han ”lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts” (62). Han var ”a soul satiated

with primitive emotions” (73). Fortelleren snakker også om ”the colossal scale of his vile desires” (79). Som emblem på Kurtz’ grusomhet fremstår menneskehoder på stakene (”heads on the stakes” 61) foran hans hus.

Når Marlow kommer til handelsstasjonen, er Kurtz allerede alvorlig syk og han dør på Marlows båt på vei ut av jungelen. Den døende Kurtz’ siste ord lyder: ”The horror! The horror!” (74) Det har vært mange forskjellige fortolkninger av disse ordene. For eksempel har Graham kommet med disse to forslagene: ”This can be either an ethical judgment against himself [...] or a summing-up of the ‘truth’ about life that destroys the whole basis of ethical judgement and humanist confidence” (Graham 1996, 213). Personlig heller jeg mot den andre tolkningen selv om den andre ikke helt utelukker den første. Etter min mening er *Heart of Darkness* en av romanene som omkring århundreskiftet begynte å stille seg pessimistisk til den gjengse forestillingen om den europeiske sivilisasjon som opplyst og humanistisk. Det ser ut til at Kurtz har oppdaget ved seg selv som det beste eksempelet at et sivilisert menneske i visse situasjoner og under visse omstendigheter lett kan forandre seg til et primitivt vesen med dyriske drifter. Hvis dette er sannheten om mennesket generelt, det vil si at mennesket egentlig bare er et dyr og sivilisasjonen bare en illusjon, er den selvsagt skrekkelig. I dette henseende passer Conrads roman veldig godt inn i en viss ny kulturstrømning som oppstod omkring århundreskiftet, en strømning som Fibiger og Lütken beskriver som følger:

Sigmund Freud i år 1900 slår døren til det nye århundrede ind med bogen *Traumdeutung (Drømmetydning)*. / I den viser han på baggrund af mange års klinisk praksis, at mennesket ikke er herre i sit eget hus, men at det tværtimod i høj grad er dirigeret af sine ubevidste, driftsmæssige impulser. Mennesket er ikke et rationelt væsen med en guddommeligt nedlagt evne til at gøre det rette [...]. Det troede det europæiske menneske ellers i en grad, så det anså sig forpligtet til at gå ud og gøre sorte, gule og brune folkeslag til sin kulturs disciple. [...] Det sendte naturligvis chokbølger igennem en sådan selvbevidst kultur, da Freud midt i imperialismens glansperiode hævdede, at det mørke kontinent ikke er Afrika eller Indien, som den hvide mand skal sivilisere efter sine moralske forskrifter. Nej, det mørke kontinent findes i mennesket selv. (Fibiger og Lütken 1996, 245–248)

Men her kommer man faktisk tilbake til en likhet mellom de to tekstene av Hamsun og Conrad igjen, til tross for at *Pan* ikke handler om imperialisme. Akkurat som Conrad i *Heart of Darkness* prøver Hamsun i *Pan* å overbevise leseren om at mennesket ikke er så rasjonelt som mange tror, det har sine mørke, irrasjonelle sider. Begge romaner fremmer tanken om at grensen mellom kulturmenneske og naturmenneske ikke er så skarp som man ofte antar. Og når det gjelder det konkrete forholdet mellom *Heart of Darkness* og ”Glahns død”, forteller begge disse tekstene om en mann som i jungelen får utløp for sine ville, primitive drifter.

De falne guder

Med henvisning til hva som allerede er blitt nevnt om forgudelsen av Kurtz i Conrads roman, kan man merke seg nok en likhet mellom de to tekstene: Både Kurtz og Glahn kan betraktes som falne guder. Som Seeber skriver, ”Kurtz is interpreted by Marlow as

a fallen God or a false prophet” (Seeber 2008, 87). I den første delen av Hamsuns roman identifiserer Glahn seg med den greske guden Pan. Det står ”en Panfigur” (Hamsun 1954, 340) på hans krutthorn, han har en visjon om Pan som sitter i et tre (345), og hans opphold i Nordland har blitt beskrevet som et ”forsøg på at levendegøre en gudemyte” (Tiemroth 1974, 109). Pan har ofte vært avbildet som jeger (Vige 1963, 91; Sehmsdorf 1974, 364), og det er også Glahn.⁴ Pan oppfattes vanligvis som naturgud, skogsgud, hyrdegud eller jaktgud, og alle områdene en slik gud assosieres med, har sitt motstykke i Glahns livssfære i Nordland.⁵ Som noen forskere (især Sehmsdorf 1974, 361-363) har påpekt, fungerer Pan-motivet i teksten også som et symbol på Glahns naturmystiske (i den forstand ”panteistiske”) opplevelser: I den første delen av romanen lengter Glahn etter å bli ett med naturen, etter å oppløse sitt eget jeg i en kosmisk, tidløs, ”ekstatisk livsharmoni” (Vige 1963, 84).⁶ Slik som Pan har Glahn også stor seksuell tiltrekningskraft, og også i denne forstand er han en guddommelig skikkelse; på et tidspunkt sier Edvarda til ham: ”Siden klokken ett har jeg ventet her, jeg stod ved et trø og så dig komme, du var som en gud. Jeg elsket din skikkelse, dit skjæg og dine aksler [...]” (Hamsun 1954, 387). Men Glahns tilbake-til-naturen-prosjekt mislykkes, og i den forstand beskriver Hamsuns roman en Pans fall.⁷ Og til tross for at man kanskje kan hevde at også i romanens annen del, ”Glahns død”, ”framtrer Glahn nok en gang som [...] en herlig, gude-lignende skikkelse” (Lien 1993, 136), er det ingen tvil om at han på det tidspunktet allerede er en fallen gud.

Hvis man samler alle disse trådene og legger til konstateringen ”Som alle avbildninger viser, forener Pan det dyriske og det guddommelige i sitt vesen” (Vige 1963, 91), kan man vende tilbake til sammenligningen med *Heart of Darkness* og konkludere at både Kurtz og Glahn i en viss forstand er skikkelser som er dels guder, dels dyr.

Fascinasjon og vitnetype-fortellere

Den siste grunnleggende likheten jeg vil ta opp, ligger i selve formen til begge tekster. I begge tilfeller har vi å gjøre med en fortellerperson som avlegger vitnesbyrd om skjebnen til en ufattelig personlighet. Denne formen er tett forbundet med det ovenfornevnte fascinasjonsaspektet. Både ”Glahns død” og *Heart of Darkness* handler bl.a. om det å være

⁴ Eller, som Wærp formulerer det, ”Glahns rolle i Nordland er å være jeger” (Wærp 2018, 123). Wærp understreker at Glahn er en relativt inautentisk jeger: ”Han står ikke i en allmuejegertradisjon av lokal matauk, men i en urban tradisjon av lyst- og rekreasjonsakt [...]” (123).

⁵ Jf. f.eks. Vige: ”Den mest slående parallell mellom Glahn og den mytiske Pan er deres fellesskap i livsform: Også Pan fremtrer som en ensom vandrer. Overalt hvor naturen vokser vilt og fritt, liker han å ferdes. Der utfolder han sitt vesen [...]” (Vige 1963, 90). Jf. også Sehmsdorf: ”The life style of Glahn in the forest suggests mythical associations that range from Pan’s primitive origin to late Hellenic tradition. Glahn lives in a cabin reminiscent of the god’s mountain cave, *et loddent Hi*, hung with skins and bird wings [...]. He roams the wood and mountain slopes, hunting for small game, as a friend of rocks and trees, a witness to the animals’ mating dance, a ‘son of the forest’ and its ‘king’” (Sehmsdorf 1974, 365, uthevelse i original).

⁶ Se f.eks. også McFarlane 1956, 586-587.

⁷ Mange tidligere kritikere og litteraturhistorikere tvilte ikke på at den enhet mellom seg selv og naturen som Glahn angivelig hadde opplevd i Nordland, var ekte og fyllestgjørende, men nyere forskning betrakter Glahns tilbake-til-naturen-prosjekt som mislykket: Se f.eks. Sehmsdorf 1974, Lien 1993, Rottem 1996, Humpal 1998 og Boasson 2015.

fascinert av et annet menneske, om enn i positiv eller negativ forstand, og den narrative formen fremhever dette: Leseren har tilgang til opplysninger om den andre personen utelukkende gjennom fortellerpersonens perspektiv. I begge tekster er fortellingen ytterst subjektiv, og det spørs hvorvidt beskrivelsen av den andre personen tilsvarer virkeligheten. Martin Nies, som også har lagt merke til noen av likhetene mellom ”Glahns død” og *Heart of Darkness*, påpeker likeledes at begge fortellinger er veldig subjektive: Tekstene ”gjør leseren usikker med henblikk på den fortalte handlingens fiksjonale virkelighetsstatus idet de sår tvil om fortellerinstansens identitet [...] eller troverdighet [...]”⁸

Strengt narratologisk sett er den fortellende situasjonen i begge romaner ikke helt identisk, men likheten er likevel stor. Mens ”Glahns død” rett og slett er en førstepersonsfortelling, er *Heart of Darkness* fortalt på en mer kompleks måte: Det er også en førstepersonsfortelling, men jeg-fortelleren er bare en av flere anonyme personer som hører på kaptein Marlows muntlige narrasjon. Marlows narrasjon opptar den absolutte mesteparten av fortellingen, så det er han, altså en skikkelse *innenfor* jeg-fortellingen, som egentlig er hovedfortelleren. Med andre ord er *Heart of Darkness* en førstepersonsfortelling med to forskjellige narrative lag. Ved å bruke to jeg-fortellere oppnår Conrad noen subtile effekter, men disse er ikke viktige for en generell sammenligning av de to tekstene.⁹ Til mitt formål er det nok å konstatere at de to fortellingene sterkt ligner på hverandre, narratologisk sett: I begge tilfeller er det en vitnetype-forteller som beretter om objektet for sin fascinasjon. Begge fortellerpersoner er også konstruert som representanter for den rasjonelle sivilisasjonen. Dessuten kan man også fastslå at begge tekster er rammefortellinger: Begge har en innrammende situasjon som fortellingen tar utgangspunkt i og på slutten kommer tilbake til.

Avslutning

I denne komparative analysen har jeg vist at det er flere tydelige likheter mellom den andre delen av Hamsuns *Pan* og Conrads *Heart of Darkness*. Interessant nok finnes disse likhetene både i settingen, tematikken og fortelleteknikken. Dessuten har noen av fellestrekkene modernistisk preg ved seg: Tematisk sett gjelder det særlig fremhevelsen av de mørke, irrasjonelle sidene ved menneskepsyken; formmessig sett gjelder det måten de to tekstene i høy grad problematiserer fortellernes pålitelighet på – ”til den tidlige modernismens sentrale paradigmer hører [...] problematiseringen av forholdet mellom fortellerinstans og narrasjon i epikken [...]”¹⁰ Man kan altså konkludere at de to omtalte romanene fra 1890-tallet på lignende måte fanget noe av tidsånden og tok del i kunst-

⁸ ”Sie verunsichern den Leser über den fiktionalen Realitätsstatus des erzählten Geschehens, indem sie die Erzählinstanz in ihrer Identität [...] oder in ihrer Glaubwürdigkeit in Zweifel ziehen [...]” (Nies 2006, 277, min oversettelse).

⁹ For en mer detaljert fremstilling av fortellerproblematikken i *Heart of Darkness*, se f.eks. Lothe 2002, 106–117.

¹⁰ ”Zu den zentralen Paradigmen der Frühen Moderne gehört [...] die Problematisierung des Verhältnisses von Erzählinstanz und Narration in der Erzählliteratur [...]“ (Nies 2006, 286, min oversettelse).

nernes leting etter nye estetiske virkemidler i en periode da den tidlige modernismen begynte å vokse frem.¹¹

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REVIEW

Johanna Laakso (Ed.). Ways of Being in the World: Studies on Minority Literatures . Central European Uralic Studies, volume 1. Praesens Verlag, Wien 2020, 196 p.

The anthology *Ways of Being in the World: Studies on Minority Literatures* edited by Johanna Laakso and published as the first volume of the new series “Central European Uralic Studies” at the University of Vienna is a compilation of guest lectures presented by scholars from Finnish, Hungarian, Swedish and Austrian universities at the Department of Finno-Ugric Studies in Vienna. Three of the seven chapters—not including Johanna Laakso’s introduction—which explore specific literary phenomena, do not focus exclusively on minority *Uralic* literatures, but extend to minority literatures either in a Uralic environment (Swedish literature in Finland) or in the European *oikumene* in general (Romani literature). The topical complementarity and contrasting quality—Swedish literature in Finland and Finnish literature in Sweden, local minority literatures, and the second most significant pan-European minority literature—constitute a conceptual framework for reconsidering certain fundamental terms, as summarized in Laakso’s introduction (“In place of an introduction: a linguist’s reflections on the concept of ‘minority literature’”). Laakso opens by remarking on the practical links between minorities, minority languages and literature in the context of revitalization, identity, language varieties and language standardization. She draws attention to the deeply embedded and unreflected discourse of the “reality” of national languages which, while efficient in terms of practical policy, proves scarcely tenable from a rigorous scientific perspective (these debates resemble such pseudoscientific inquiries as which language is “older”, or similar views espousing a “mere dialectal character” of e.g. Slovak as opposed to Czech). In the following sections, terms such as nation, minority and ethnic group are classified using different conceptual systems/languages according to different criteria. Special attention is paid to the *legal* terms “tribal peoples” and “indigenous peoples” defined in the ILO Convention No. 169, Article 1, (a) (for tribal peoples), (b) (for indigenous peoples).¹ These definitions are undoubtedly vague. Indigenous peoples are defined as being aboriginal to the area they live, holding the position of a *de facto* minority, and “retaining some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions”. Each of the three criteria is a *conditio sine qua non* for the status of an indigenous people. Perhaps it would be appropriate to specify what exactly these criteria denote or to propose additional criteria. However, any such specification or elaboration would have to be sufficiently justified. We cannot find any explicit reasons warranting Laakso’s narrowed criteria for paragraph (b) regarding indigenous peoples: they must be “visibly different from the dominant ethnic group”, or they must have “been subject to different administrative treatment based on their ‘race’ or ‘tribe’” (both p. 19). Thus, according to Laakso’s modified definition, no indigenous peoples could be recognized in Europe, perhaps with the exception of the Sami. After all, if we accept the criterion of “different administrative treatment”, the Karelians, Udmurts etc. would still satisfy the criteria of indigenous peoples, cf. the tsar’s plans to move the

¹ However, the relationship between paragraphs (a) and (b) is unclear. In paragraph (a), tribal peoples are mentioned, while in paragraph (b), indigenous peoples are perhaps implied, though not explicitly mentioned. The operative term between the two paragraphs is clearly a disjunction (‘or’) rather than a conjunction (‘and, at the same time’).

Udmurts and others to Siberia and elsewhere (in addition many were executed during Stalin's terror), the forced urbanization and depopulation of ethnic Karelian villages in the 1960s, Putin's recent obstacles regarding the teaching in/of minority languages in schools across the Russian Federation, and many others. The remaining criterion of visibility ("visibly different") is unclear, culturally determined and arbitrary, subjected to the judgment of measure (certain differences are clearly visible at the very least to the Russian authorities). The introduction concludes with an exploration of the concept of minority literatures as a mere umbrella term for "diversity of diversities" (p. 24).

The first two chapters—after the introduction—focus on the language minorities that emerged from the many-sided contact between the neighbouring countries of Sweden and Finland at different times. Kristina Malmio's contribution focuses on the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland, while the article by Satu Gröndahl engages with the Finnish- and Meänkieli-speaking minorities in Sweden. Meänkieli is spoken in Tornedalen (Torne Valley) in northern Sweden; historically it evolved from northern Finnish dialects, but today it is recognized as a distinctive language. Finnish-speaking minorities can be found mostly in large agglomerations in the southern parts of Sweden. Due to geographic proximity, the Meänkieli and Finland-Swedish minorities have lived in the area for a very long time and thus have a different history and status compared to other language and ethnic minorities living in present-day Sweden and Finland (apart from the Sami people who are an indigenous ethnic group in the north). This is also partially the case for Finns in Sweden outside of Tornedalen, though their migration to Sweden was not very extensive until the second half of the 20th century.

In her article "Finland-Swedish minority literature: social, economic, cultural and literary aspects", Malmio presents various perspectives and discussions on Finland-Swedish literature and also delves into our understanding of minority literature as such (cfr. S. Gröndahl; S.-E. Klinkmann, B. Henriksson & A. Häger; O. Löyty; M. Nilsson; C. Zilliacus). Based on her analysis, Malmio emphasizes that the definition of Finland-Swedish minority literature is problematic. The concept of a minority language arises from its comparison to the majority—in this case, the Finnish-speaking population of Finland. However, the Swedish-speaking population and its literature represent a minority only in the area of present-day Finland. Not even the territory-based definition is completely unambiguous, as authors can move abroad and even start writing in a different language. Furthermore, the position of Finland-Swedish literature and its role in society changed throughout the 20th century. In the beginning, authors struggled to preserve the prestigious position that Finland-Swedish literature once held in Finland's history; however, their contemporary works reflect a more cosmopolitan perspective and exhibit more international motifs.

As Gröndahl puts forth in her article "Minority literature as an emancipatory force: The development of Tornedalian and Sweden-Finnish literature", the situation of the Sweden-Finnish and Tornedalian minorities is more complicated; they did not struggle to retain their status but rather vied to receive some form of official recognition. This was finally achieved in 2000 when both the Finnish and Meänkieli language were awarded the status of official minority languages in Sweden. The ethnic mobilization and literary production aimed at reviving minority languages started in the 1970s and 1980s. Unfortunately, these revitalization tendencies were accompanied by the parallel processes of

assimilation. This might be a long-term consequence of the Swedification campaign that led to interdiction of using Finnish (or Meänkieli) in Swedish schools for a certain period at the beginning of the 20th century. Even though these restrictions are now a part of history, most speakers of Meänkieli have chosen to switch to Swedish to avoid more potential problems. This has significantly impeded the transmission of the language to younger generations. Today, the role and ambition of Sweden-Finnish and Tornedalian minority literatures is not only to support the language, but also to reinforce the position of the minority, making it more visible beyond the borders of Sweden. In addition to literatures, Gröndahl's article also mentions organizations and examples of state support designed to help language minorities.

Antje Wischmann's chapter "Re-Appropriation auf Augenhöhe? Inszenierte 'Minoritätssprache' am Beispiel von Romani" systematically and comprehensively covers the main themes that permeate debates on minority literatures, from ethnic and language essentialism to the pertinence of academic careers based solely on the "anthropological research" of an ethnic minority. These themes are confronted with the specific existence of the Romani and Romani literature, transcending the paradigms of national language/literature, canon, field and territory. The following chapter "Possible ways of discourse: Notes on the process of name-giving to Romani Studies" by Zoltán Beck might be considered a pendant to Wischmann's terminological considerations and reflections on particular programmatic narratives. Beck mentions the need for persistent methodological and ethical self-reflection in Romani Studies, which he demonstrates with a brief contextual analysis of basic and variously marked nomenclature. We may add that methodological and ethical self-reflection should be immanent to any field of intellectual struggle, though ethical considerations are naturally involved to a much greater extent in any discourse that concerns a minority.

The chapter "Literatur der ungarischen Migration in Österreich in den 2010er Jahren" by Károly Kókai starts with an exposition of the contemporary Hungarian migration in Austria by the continuing presence of Hungarians in Vienna, Burgenland and elsewhere. The legal status of minorities and migrant groups is also presented from a diachronic perspective, along with parallel examples from the transnational framing of contemporary approaches to literary historiography. The first example—*der Prager Kreis*—is in German Studies and perhaps in Austrian historiography as well one of the most well-known and explored phenomena also and primarily from a transnational point of view; however, what is still deserving of greater attention is the second example, i.e. literatures of the Uralic minorities of the Russian Federation, despite having received some academic consideration since the beginnings of Uralic Studies. Kókai's contribution lies primarily in his brief analyses of several texts by Austrian-Hungarian authors, mainly with respect to "border crossing", deterritorialization and the post-colonial theory of subalternity. Indeed, such an approach to texts of this provenance [(Central-)Eastern European] is not common, partially thanks to the friendly, open-minded and helpful societies found mainly in German-speaking countries within the European Union, where expatriate authors are not made to feel "abroad". This is perhaps why there are so few examples of works on the topic of migration written in German-speaking countries by authors of Hungarian, Czech etc. origin. On the other hand, the proliferation of this theme in the Nordic fiction of the last decades might be a mere trend or it could be ascribed to the popularity

of the new literary branch of “imagology” (“How are we perceived by others?”) that has a counterpart in Central Europe in the “Polish school of reportage”, which reflects on the stereotypes and “mentalities” of the Hungarians, Czechs and perhaps others too.

Tuulikki Kurki’s chapter “Minority literature in the Russian borderlands: Finnish-language literature in Russian Karelia” contains a precise historical overview of the position of language–Finnish, Karelian, Russian–and politics in Soviet Karelia, as well as an analysis of the language, ethnic and national “borderland identity” in texts by Karelian writers Nikolai Jaakkola and Antti Timonen. Regarding any *sovietica* or texts produced in politically restricted regimes, we are relegated to a strictly “*als ob*” reading, at least in terms of a sociological approach. (Auto) censorship thus limits the potential of these authors, despite their intrinsic intention and courage, to engage in a full-scale dialogue which adequately reflects the social situation. However, Jaakkola and Timonen represent the less schematic writers, similar to the Soviet Estonian dramatist August Jakobson, compared to the fully schematic Hans Leberecht. As Kurki points out, Jaakkola and Timonen’s texts “deviated [...] from the established narratives of Soviet history and the idealized Soviet citizen” (p. 149). However, could the individual narrative rejection of the historical dynamic of Finnish-Karelian identity in the “bloodland” of Karelia not be somewhat marked, compared to the unequivocal rejection of Soviet(-Russian) identity? After all, an emphasis on borderlands and “bridges” has historically served diverse diplomatic intentions and cover-up strategies. Kurki’s conclusions are nevertheless plausible and well-grounded both in the given methodology and textual material. It is only the last analysed text by contemporary Karelian author Arvi Perttu that would perhaps best serve as a corrective to the foregone *als ob*, but doesn’t, as it deviates too much from the aforementioned conceptual framing of the borderland. Perttu addresses “individual, post-modern identities, rather than collective, ethnonational identities” (p. 156). The question that arises then is: Why juxtapose texts on a specific historical situation with a text on generic alienation in the contemporary world? Is there any place in today’s world where one could not consider themselves as being in a borderland?

Karina Lukin’s contribution “Soviet voices in Nenets literature” begins with an expression of her surprise at the negative self-images in Nenets early literature. By means of a narratological and contextual analysis of the voices–distinctive (diversity of Nenets voices) and contrastive (to Soviet voice(s))–in Nikolai Vilka’s (Vylka’s) novels from the 1930s, she convincingly shows the positive tone of Nenets voices resonating from beneath the framing of socialist realism and programmatic Soviet modernity; the voices bring forth the message: leave us alone. This conclusion is preceded by a concise explication of the specialized literature, archival sources and interpretation of texts and illustrations from the first Nenets primers. Thanks to Karina Lukin’s *acribia*, everything holds together. *Finis coronat opus*.²

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