

**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 reinstalled 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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