

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*.

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