

# THE TRADITION OF SOCIAL CRITICISM IN SCANDINAVIAN LITERATURE

---

Ovio OLARU

Lucian Blaga University Sibiu, Faculty of Letters and Arts  
E-mail: ovio.olaru@ulbsibiu.ro

---

## THE TRADITION OF SOCIAL CRITICISM IN SCANDINAVIAN LITERATURE

**Abstract:** The present article delivers a short insight into the social roots of Scandinavian literature; the contribution discusses the intersections of literary production and political action in the Scandinavian peninsula, taking into account Swedish exceptionalism and the role of Sweden as importer of European culture and as flagbearer of political progressiveness, as well as the different reverberations of the pan-Nordic “Modern Breakthrough” in its preoccupation with “putting things up for debate.” The rich tradition of proletarian literature in Sweden, doubled by the openly Marxist positions of many canonical Scandinavian authors, create the prerequisites for a literary production whose most recent export, the crime fiction genre most commonly known as Scandinavian Noir, is one of the most political contemporary literary phenomena to have gained international renown.

**Keywords:** the modern breakthrough, Scandinavian literature, Scandinavian Noir.

**citation suggestion:** oLARU, Ovio. “The Tradition of Social Criticism in Scandinavian Literature.” *Transilvania*, no. 7 (2023): 68-73.  
<https://doi.org/10.51391/trva.2023.07.09>.



After a common Scandinavian cultural history that concluded with the peninsula’s Christianization and subsequent separation of old Norse into regional linguistic variants around 1.100 AD, each of the Scandinavian countries started to develop a unique literary identity. St. Birgitta, with her *Revelationes celeste* [Celestial Revelations], is considered the first Swedish author to have gained a status outside of medieval Sweden, and it is only with her that “Swedish culture took its place in a European cultural community.”<sup>1</sup> In Iceland, Norse literature was still dominant<sup>2</sup> and represented a cultural space whose colonization and subsequent Latinization would only take place much later, not least due to the strong tradition of vernacular oral literature on the island.<sup>3</sup> After 1350, a short period of cultural backwardness concludes with the Gutenberg revolution and with the introduction of the printing press: it is the year 1459 and the first book is printed in the Swedish language. Christian Stephensen Bang’s book *Christianiae Stads Beskrivelse* [Description of the Town of Christiania] [1651] is the first book printed in Norway with a printing press established by the author himself,<sup>4</sup> a prodigious theologian. In Denmark, the

Odense Bishop Karl Rønnev had printed the *Breviarium Ottoniense* [The Odense Breviary] in 1481 with the help of a German printer from Lübeck, Johan Snell, who was then taken to Uppsala by Archbishop Jakob Ulfsson in order to print *Missale Upsalense* [The Uppsala Breviary]. The first Finnish book, *Missale Aboense*, was published in 1488 by yet another German printer, also from Lübeck.<sup>5</sup> In Iceland, Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson translated the Bible in 1584 into Icelandic, a rendition which was to be called Gudbrand’s Bible.<sup>6</sup> Slightly earlier, in 1541, the so-called *Gustav Vasa’s Bible* or *Biblia, det är all den helga skrift på svensko* [The Bible, the Entire Holy Script in Swedish], the first Swedish translation of the Holy Script, becomes a hallmark for Swedish literary history. Used extensively up until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as canonical reading, it was widely heralded as a masterpiece of style. With few exceptions, it is clear that premodern written literature from Scandinavia – i.e., sagas aside – consisted chiefly of theological texts, and that during this early stage, Lutheranism and written culture were inextricably bound. Unsurprisingly, most recent histories of Scandinavian literatures emphasize the role played by Lutheranism in Scandinavian cultures and



how it imbued many aspects of their literary production.<sup>7</sup>

Swedish precedence began to make itself clear during the late Scandinavian Renaissance, as Olof Rudbeck published his *Atlant eller Manhem* between 1679 and 1702, claiming that Swedish was the first language known to man and spreading Protochronist myths with respect to the presumed ancient Gothic ancestry of the Swedish people. Prose started to appear during the Golden Age of Swedish literature, namely in the so-called “Era of Freedom,” between 1718 and 1772, as the French and British Enlightenment exerted their overwhelming influence over the entire European continent, transforming French and English into the official languages of cultural exchange.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the written press developed into a medium capable of informing, when not downright shaping public opinion, and influencing political life. Carl Linnaeus and Emanuel Swedenborg are considered the most prominent figures of Swedish Enlightenment, the first for his contributions to nature writing, the second for his “visionary mysticism.”<sup>9</sup> During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, cultural life underwent a massive proliferation in Sweden, not least because this period witnesses the founding of national cultural institutions such as the Royal Academy of Sciences, the Royal Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, and of the Swedish Academy, established in 1786, during the reign of Gustav III – who had returned from Versailles in 1772 –, after the model of the French Academy.<sup>10</sup> Simultaneously, the breakthrough of the novel as narrative form takes place, albeit still under the influence of continental literary trends and “especially as serialized intrigue and adventure novels of the French and English sort.”<sup>11</sup> In other words, Sweden was connected to the Parisian epicentre of the cultural world and was leading in terms of progressiveness and literary novelty among the Scandinavian nations.

In contrast to this effervescent growth, Norwegian literature was nearly inexistent during the Danish-Norwegian Union that lasted from 1387 to 1814, as Norway signed its national Constitution. However, the Norwegian, as well as the Icelandic premodern literature possessed a strong oral literary tradition, transcending the literary influences exerted by the Danish colonizers on the capitals of Christiania and Reykjavík, where the bilingual elites of the Icelandic and the Norwegian educated strata resided. The uncharted proliferation of *rímur* and ballads, together with the “undoubted popularity enjoyed by the Icelandic riddarasögur”<sup>12</sup> until well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century contradict especially Ibsen’s idea that the period of Danish occupation represented nothing less than the “Firehundraarig natten” [The four-hundred-year-old night].<sup>13</sup> For, during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, a powerful German influence began to take hold of Scandinavian literature, preponderantly through the ideas of German Idealism, which ignited an ethnographic interest in popular writing, expressed through collections of ballads and folksongs, folktales, and legends reviving

pan-Scandinavian pride, all while fuelling political ambitions towards cultural independence in all of the Nordic nations. In Norway, this resulted in the interest for the pre-occupation Norwegian language, which ultimately led to the present co-existence of *nynorsk* [“new Norwegian,” initially known as *landsmål*, “the language of the land”] and *bokmål* [“book-language,” i.e., the literary language, initially known as *riksmål*], the former being an attempt at unifying all the Norwegian dialects in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the latter being a Norwegianized version of written Danish. In Sweden, the 1842 Folk School Act greatly improved literacy through the founding of schools in rural milieus, laying the bases for “a lively popular and proletarian writing in the future.”<sup>14</sup> However, the dormant, pre-Christian Norse mythology and its perceived barbarisms initially seemed incompatible with the aesthetic framework of European Romanticism, whose very nature lay in the cultivation of medieval nostalgia and passive melancholy. This is one of the reasons why 19<sup>th</sup> century is crucial not only for the exclusive development of Swedish literary life, but also for a broader international acknowledgement of Scandinavian culture in light of this apparent paradox. In much the same way that Strindberg found a “charming barbarism” in the Gothic style, with its presumably Viking source, ultimately declaring his own Nordic “barbarism” and seeking to establish a “link to the *primitif* purity of the Middle Ages,”<sup>15</sup> Henrik Ibsen in Norway, Georg Brandes in Denmark, Emmanuel Swedenborg in Sweden, and Elias Lönnrot in Finland each contributed to the European interest in Nordic aesthetics and literature precisely through the employment, to a certain degree, of regionally specific elements: literature from the North was indeed sought after because of its mild exoticism and for the manner in which it managed to adapt European content to Nordic aesthetics without becoming mere local variants of European literary movements. This is one of the reasons why a decisively Norwegian Romanticism, “Nasjonalromantikken,” could emerge,<sup>16</sup> or why the Scandinavian rendition of realism, instead of taking a naturalist turn, became known under the term of “den kritiske realismen” [critical realism]. The generically employed expression of “The Modern Breakthrough,”<sup>17</sup> coined by Georg Brandes in his *Hovedstrømninger i det 19de aarhundredes litteratur* [Main Currents in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Literature], appears as

“an energetic and independent manifestation of already extant, aggressive ideas within European nineteenth-century culture rather than as an original contribution built on national cultural features. It is to a high degree a question of an interaction, in which continental stimuli were exploited, transformed, and given a creative expression that in its turn exercised a positive influence on an international literary climate.”<sup>18</sup>

A conglomerate of ideas, worldviews, and philosophical systems first developed in traditional European cultural centres such as the United Kingdom, the German States, and France, and were subsequently imported to Scandinavia and adapted to local cultural life, in order to be ultimately exported back to the centres, which acknowledged and admired their novel exoticism inasmuch as it still vouched self-recognition. Brandes' efforts went towards achieving perfect synchronicity between the "outdated" Danish literature and the perceived progressiveness of European letters,<sup>19</sup> whose strive towards naturalistic representation in prose and the preoccupation for social issues was due to replace the antiquated romanticism of local literature of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with a type of literature that would fully complement Brandes' rationalistic aspirations.<sup>20</sup> Needless to say, his Scandinavian peers fully supported his efforts towards cultural renewal, not least because of the shared political ambition of uniting the entire Scandinavian peninsula under one crown.<sup>21</sup> It is in this rich cultural debate that other, more narrative literary forms, such as drama or the novel, could emerge as more suitable mediums for "putting social issues up for debate," as Brandes himself formulated literature's social role, further claiming that "a literature that doesn't put anything up for debate is about to lose its very meaning."<sup>22</sup> Despite Brandes' dissatisfaction with Ibsen's writings,<sup>23</sup> for instance, he was one of the first authors credited with openly, when not downright aggressively raising the question of women's rights and the emancipation of women in a male-dominated bourgeois society, turning Nora into "the principal international symbol for women's issue."<sup>24</sup> However, the backlash faced by Ibsen on accusations of immorality, on the one hand, and of poor writing, on the other, determined him to write an alternative ending to *Et Dukkehjem* for the German stage, in case it would prove necessary; in this case, the outraged reaction to the innovative character of his works was not due to the "Norwegian backwardness" that compelled him to live most of his life abroad (Italy, subsequently Germany), but resided in the fact that they essentially disturbed a common European belief system. The debate on morality, religion, sexuality, and family lay at the heart of "The Modern Breakthrough" and eventually became a defining feature of Scandinavian literature to come.

Two seem to be the dominant features of Swedish literature following the "Breakthrough": on the one hand, a well-established tradition of mysticism, while on the other, a preoccupation for social issues with strong ideological underpinnings. While the first is a specifically Swedish trait, the second represents the very backbone, I would argue, of the literary cultures of Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Iceland, the countries which have traditionally been classified under the common denominator of "Scandinavia." First of all, it has been noted by several scholars<sup>25</sup> that a dormant

mysticism lays at the heart of Swedish literature, from Saint Birgitta's 14<sup>th</sup> century *Celestial Revelations* to Emanuel Swedenborg's pan-Christian revelations about the afterlife in his 1758 *De Caelo et Eius Mirabilibus et de inferno, ex Auditibus et Visis* [Heaven and its Wonders and Hell From Things Heard and Seen], August Strindberg's later flirtations with Swedenborg in his 1898 novel *Inferno*, where he recounts his troubled bohemian life in Paris and his subsequent conversion to Swedenborgianism, or the mystical idealism with socialist undertones cultivated by feminist writer Ellen Key (1849-1926). Unsurprisingly, Swedish mysticism relies heavily on utopian Christian morality and therefore strongly resembles a form of socialism, which helps explain why it managed to transgress the cultural sphere, ultimately becoming a political factor still relevant to this day. In fact, socialism was hotly debated during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>26</sup> closely following the emergence of the Swedish realist novel around 1830, as well as the birth of the Swedish women's movement. The Finnish-born Swedish feminist writer and reformer Fredrika Bremer, for example, succeeded in cultivating a "religiously coloured social utopianism with humanitarian and idealistic features,"<sup>27</sup> whereas Selma Lagerlöf, winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1909, became the first woman to be accepted in the Swedish Academy in 1914. Socially radical and critical literature gathered under "Det unga Sverige" [Young Sweden],<sup>28</sup> the Swedish rendition of the "Modern Breakthrough," while on the political level, the Swedish Social Democratic Party, *Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti*, after having formed during the 1880s, had its first breakthrough in 1889, when it became a national party and occupied a central position in Swedish political life. The daily newspaper *Social-Demokraten* was established in 1885 and catered to an increasing readership interested in contemporary social issues regarding the working class and the conservation of equity in a growing society. The Social Democratic party led the government in a coalition in 1917 and formed their own government in 1920. The so-called "Saltsjöbaden Agreement" [Saltsjöbadsavtalet], signed in 1938 between the Swedish Trade Union Confederation and the Swedish Employers Association, led to the strengthening of Swedish workers' unions and laid the foundations for the "folkhemmet" ["the people's home"], expression coined by Per Albin Hansson in 1938 and designating the equitable balance between the working class and the entrepreneurs that held the means of production. Basically, the agreement helped establish the Swedish welfare state as it came to be known and appreciated worldwide. The dissolution, as early as the interwar period, of traditional farms in favour of more systematically implemented, industrial, large-scale farming massively transformed the rural environment, bringing it closer to urban standards of living and closing the gap between agrarian society and metropolitan areas. Similarly, in Iceland, the Evening Society, consisting of members of



the Reykjavík department of the Icelandic Literary Society, organized meetings in parallel to the debates taking place in Copenhagen's, Stockholm's, and Christiania's salons during the 1860s and 1870s. Icelandic literary life focused, not unlike the Swedish, Norwegian, or Danish ones, on issues such as education, Darwin's theory of evolution, emancipation of women, and, not least, communism.<sup>29</sup>

Nearly every canonical Swedish author starting with the 19<sup>th</sup> century has expressed left-wing opinion either explicitly or through their protagonists, from Eyvind Johnson's and Stig Dagerman's to Lars Ahlin's anarcho-syndicalist sympathies.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, this led to the establishment of a well-defined and very rich "arbetarlitteratur" [working-class literature] in Sweden, even before the Saltsjöbaden Agreement.<sup>31</sup> Later on, departing from *folkhemmet's* role of nurturing solidarity in an increasingly more aggressive and rapidly globalizing market did nothing but radicalize the Swedish intelligentsia, as well as the public opinion. During the 1960s, many writers travelled to China and returned with ample reports on Chairman Mao's cultural and economic policies. Starting from the mid-1970s, the Swedish Writer's Union, by pushing forward a series of measures meant to improve writers' livelihoods, obtained government funding that made it possible to offer financial subsidies in the form of monthly salaries, which, in turn, transformed writers from independent creators into a sort of public servants. But this did not make them into compliant mouthpieces of state power, because as early as the 1960s, critiques against the welfare state became increasingly harder to ignore: the Swedish intellectual sphere deplored the state of the nation, accusing it of having abandoned its citizens in favour of market interests.

In Iceland, the "Red Pens" writers' group was established in 1933, consisting of the country's most radical intellectuals. Between 1935 and 1938, the group published the yearbook with the same name, *Rauðu þennarnir* [The Red Pens], to which the socialist Nobel prize-winner socialist writer Halldór Laxness also contributed.<sup>32</sup> His prose was heralded as a clear homage both to socialist realism and to the oral tradition of Icelandic sagas, best illustrated through his use of language.<sup>33</sup> In Denmark, modern realism, represented in the works of Herman Joachim Bang, Jens Peter Jacobsen, and most importantly, Henrik Pontoppidan, took on the challenge of igniting debates on contemporary issues, but it was only later, during the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that the depiction of the working class in the works of Hans Kirk and Martin Andersen Nexø imbued Danish literature with a clearer socialist agenda.<sup>34</sup> The 1960s and 1970s saw a revival of realist prose, written especially from a Marxist point of view, given the ideological effervescence of the period, the social unrest, the Oil Crisis, the American Counterculture, the student revolts of '68, the second wave of feminism, the cultural debate occasioned by protests against the World Bank and the Vietnam War, and so on, many of

which were addressed in the pages of the journal *Kritik* [Critique], published between 1967 and 2016.<sup>35</sup> In much the same way, the Norwegian post-war political milieu determined the emergence of several notable authors with distinct proletarian and socialist preoccupations, gathered around the daily newspaper *Klassekampen* [The Class Struggle], but also numerous other regional newspapers, journals, and occasional leaflets, gathered under the archive dedicated to the Norwegian Marxist-Leninist movement and especially to the Norwegian Workers' Communist Party (AKP), available here: <http://www.akp.no/index.html>. Additionally, many authors of the Norwegian literary canon, from Dag Solstad, Lars Saabye Christensen, Per Petterson, and Kjartan Fløgstad depict the Norwegian cultural, socio-political, and economic transition from a mostly agrarian to a heavily industrialized nation, increasingly dependent on the exploitation of oil discovered deep beneath its territorial waters, on the one hand, and industrial fishing, on the other. Most noticeable, however, is the underlying nostalgia in regard to this transition and the cultural changes that it set in motion. Lars Saabye Christensen's *Beatles*, for example, is a Bildungsroman presenting four Oslo preteen friends that take on the names of the four Beatles during the 1960s, as they go through high school together, bearing witness to the Vietnam protests, the music, and the entire countercultural trend of the period, and against the backdrop of a relatively conservative Norwegian status quo. Dag Solstad's 1982 *Gymnasker Pedersens beretning om den store politiske vekkelse som har hjemsøkt vårt land* [Gymnasium Teacher Pedersen's Account of the Great Political Awakening which has Haunted our Country] is a nostalgic throwback to the 1970s, as the young and naïve history teacher Knut Pedersen becomes a member of a Larvik-based Maoist group. Nowhere in these two novels is any hint of regret or later anticommunist reconversion noticeable, i.e., the sympathy for the Left is not overshadowed by patronising tropes in the narrative voice but rather assumed as what it is, the youthful hopes of a radical shift in world politics, notwithstanding the inherent naivety of these aspirations.

Examples abound; however, the chief conclusion is that, alongside an array of national particularities underpinning the history of each and every Scandinavian literature – be it Norwegian pastoralism, Swedish mysticism, or Icelandic isolationism –, an important component of late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Scandinavian literature is the social engagement, doubled by a preoccupation with the welfare state, social-democracy, and with its possible downfall. Albeit underpinning, to a certain extent, many literary works of the past decades, these aspects have most recently been addressed in *Scandinavian Noir*, the middlebrow rendition of crime fiction from the North, one of whose reported aims is to discuss the current state of Scandinavian politics, the destruction of the social fibre, the challenges of



multiculturalism, as well as various nationally specific issues, such as the troubled relationship between Denmark and its historical colony of Greenland – famously acting as backdrop for Peter Høeg's *Miss*

*Smilla's Feeling for Snow* – or Sweden's history of collaboration with the Nazis – a major plot key in Stieg Larsson's *Millennium* trilogy.

## Notes

1. Ingemar Algulin, *A History of Swedish literature* (Stockholm: Swedish institute, 1989), 25.
2. Roberta Frank, "Skaldic poetry," *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature: A Critical Guide* 45 (2005): 157-196.
3. Margaret Clunies Ross, *The Cambridge Introduction to the Old Norse-Icelandic Saga* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 10.
4. Ernst Bjerke, "Et dansk-norsk provinstrykkeri. Nye perspektiver på opprettelsen av det første boktrykkeri i Norge," *Fund og Forskning i Det Kongelige Biblioteks Samlinger* 56 (2017): 147-174.
5. Karin-Helene R Hognestad, *Det trykte ord: Bokens historie i Norge*. Research Report (Trondheim: Universitetsbiblioteket, 2000).
6. Oskar Bandle, *Die Sprache der Guðbrandsbiblíá*. Doctoral thesis defended at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Zürich (Copenhagen, Fr. Bagges kgl. Hofbogtrykkeri, 1956).
7. George C. Schoolfield, ed., *A History of Finland's literature*. Vol. 4. (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 9.; Sven Hakon Rossel, ed., *A history of Danish literature*. Vol. 1. (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 71.; Daisy L. Neijmann, ed., *A history of Icelandic literature*. Vol. 5. (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 174.; Harald S. Næss, ed., *A History of Norwegian Literature*. Vol. 2. (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 46.
8. This also explains why Swedish also has significantly more French loanwords than the other Scandinavian languages.
9. Algulin, *A History of Swedish literature*, 47.
10. Ulf Teleman, "The Swedish Academy of Sciences: Language policy and language practice," *Languages of Science in the Eighteenth Century* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 63.
11. Algulin, *A History of Swedish literature*, 69.
12. Jürg Glauser and Stephen N. Tranter, "Romances, *rímur*, chapbooks. Problems of popular literature in late medieval and early modern Scandinavia," *Parergon* 8, no. 2 (1990): 37-52, 40.; Neijmann, *A history of Icelandic literature*, 245.
13. Knut Mykland, "Firehundraarig natten," *Historisk tidsskrift* 86, no. 2 (1986): 225-237.
14. Algulin, *A History of Swedish literature*, 69.
15. Harry G. Carlson, *Out of Inferno. Strindberg's Reawakening as an Artist* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 1996), 295.
16. National Romanticism in Norway, which had barely just come out of the Union in 1814, but *Den danske Guldalder/ The Danish Golden Age* in Denmark. "National," hence independent; "Golden Age," i.e., a period of unprecedented cultural production. The way each of the two connote Romanticism is symptomatic.
17. *Det moderne gennembrud* in the original Danish, *Det moderne gjennombrudd* in Norwegian, and *Det moderna genombrottet* in Swedish.
18. Algulin, *A History of Swedish Literature*, 112.
19. Rossel, *A history of Danish literature*, 262.
20. Oskar Seidlin, "Georg Brandes 1842-1927," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 3, no. 4 (1942): 415-442, 424.
21. Mary Hilson, *The Nordic Model. Scandinavia Since 1945* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 17.
22. "Det, at en Litteratur i vore Dage lever, viser sig i, at den sætter Problemer under Debat. Saaledes sætter f. Ex. George Sand Forholdet mellem de to Kjøen under Debat, Byron og Feuerbach Religionen, Stuart Mill og Proudhon Eiendommen, Turgéniew, Spielhagen og Emile Augier Samfundsforholdene. At en Litteratur Intet sætter under Debat er det samme som at den er ifærd med at tabe al Betydning." Georg Brandes, *Hovedstrømninger i det 19de aarhundredes litteratur. Emigrantlitteraturen*. (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag, 1877), 17.
23. Ståle Dingstad, "Ibsen and the Modern Breakthrough—The Earliest Productions of The Pillars of Society, A Doll's House, and Ghosts," *Ibsen Studies* 16, no. 2 (2016): 103-140, 106.
24. Joan Templeton, "The doll house backlash: Criticism, feminism, and Ibsen," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 104, no. 1 (1989): 28-40, 28.
25. Algulin, *A History of Swedish Literature*; Stephen Mitchell, "Literature in medieval Sweden," in *A History of Swedish Literature*, ed. Lars G. Warne (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 1-57.
26. Algulin, *A History of Swedish Literature*, 93.
27. *Ibid.*, 99.
28. Per Arne Tjäder, "Det unga Sverige. Åttitalrörelse och genombrottsepok [Young Sweden: The Eighties' movement and the modern breakthrough period]," Doctoral thesis at the University of Gothenburg. (Lund: Arkiv för studier i arbetarrörelsens historia, 1982); Gunnar Ahlström, *Det moderna genombrottet i Nordens litteratur* (Stockholm: Kooperativa förbundets bokförlag, 1947).
29. Neijmann, *A history of Icelandic literature*, 260.
30. Algulin, *A History of Swedish Literature*, 257.



31. Lars Furuland and Johan Svedjedal, *Svensk arbetarlitteratur* (Stockholm: Atlas, 2006).
32. Neijmann, *A history of Icelandic literature*, 380.
33. Peter Hallberg. "Halldór Laxness and the Icelandic Sagas," *Leeds Studies in English* 13 (1982): 1-22; Sigurdur A. Magnússon, "The World of Halldór Laxness," *World Literature Today* 66, no. 3 (1992): 457-463, 457.
34. Børge Houmann, *Martin Andersen Nexø og hans samtid: 1869-1919*. Vol. 1. (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1981).
35. Mikkel Krause Frantzen, "Litteraturtidsskriftet Kritik lukker efter 50 år - men hvad skal vi egentlig med tidsskrifter?," *Politiken*, 16. September 2016. Online: <https://politiken.dk/kultur/boger/art5635975/Litteraturtidsskriftet-Kritik-lukker-efter-50-%C3%A5r-men-hvad-skal-vi-egentlig-med-tidsskrifter>

## Bibliography

- Ahlström, Gunnar. *Det moderna genombrottet i Nordens litteratur*. Stockholm: Kooperativa förbundets bokförlag, 1947.
- Algulin, Ingemar. *A History of Swedish literature*. Stockholm: Swedish institute, 1989.
- Bandle, Oskar. *Die Sprache der Guðbrandsbiblíu*. Copenhagen: Fr. Bagges kgl. Hofbogtrykkeri, 1956.
- Bjerke, Ernst. "Et dansk-norsk provinstrykkeri. Nye perspektiver på opprettelsen av det første boktrykkeri i Norge." *Fund og Forskning i Det Kongelige Biblioteks Samlinger* 56 (2017): 147-174.
- Brandes, Georg. *Hovedstrømninger i det 19de aarhundredes litteratur. Emigrantlitteraturen*. Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag, 1877.
- Carlson, Harry G. *Out of Inferno. Strindberg's Reawakening as an Artist*. Washington: University of Washington Press, 1996.
- Dingstad, Ståle. "Ibsen and the Modern Breakthrough—The Earliest Productions of The Pillars of Society, A Doll's House, and Ghosts." *Ibsen Studies* 16, no. 2 (2016): 103-140.
- Frank, Roberta. "Skaldic poetry." *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature: A Critical Guide* 45 (2005): 157-196.
- Frantzen, Mikkel Krause. "Litteraturtidsskriftet Kritik lukker efter 50 år - men hvad skal vi egentlig med tidsskrifter?" *Politiken*, 16. September 2016. Online: <https://politiken.dk/kultur/boger/art5635975/Litteraturtidsskriftet-Kritik-lukker-efter-50-%C3%A5r-men-hvad-skal-vi-egentlig-med-tidsskrifter>
- Furuland, Lars and Johan Svedjedal. *Svensk arbetarlitteratur*. Stockholm: Atlas, 2006.
- Glauser, Jürg, and Stephen N. Tranter. "Romances, *rímur*, chapbooks. Problems of popular literature in late medieval and early modern Scandinavia." *Parergon* 8, no. 2 (1990): 37-52.
- Hallberg, Peter. "Halldór Laxness and the Icelandic Sagas." *Leeds Studies in English* 13 (1982): 1-22.
- Hilson, Mary. *The Nordic Model. Scandinavia Since 1945*. London: Reaktion Books, 2008.
- Hognestad, Karin-Helene R. *Det trykte ord: Bokens historie i Norge*. Trondheim: Universitetsbiblioteket, 2000.
- Houmann, Børge. *Martin Andersen Nexø og hans samtid: 1869-1919*. Vol. 1. Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1981.
- Magnússon, Sigurdur A. "The World of Halldór Laxness." *World Literature Today* 66, no. 3 (1992): 457-463.
- Mitchell, Stephen. "Literature in medieval Sweden." In *A History of Swedish Literature*, edited by Lars G. Warme, 1-57. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1996.
- Mykland, Knut. "Firehundraarig natten." *Historisk tidsskrift* 86, no. 2 (1986): 225-237.
- Næss, Harald S., ed. *A History of Norwegian Literature*. Vol. 2. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1993.
- Neijmann, Daisy L., ed. *A history of Icelandic literature*. Vol. 5. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2006.
- Ross Margaret Clunies. *The Cambridge Introduction to the Old Norse-Icelandic Saga*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Rossel, Sven Hakon, ed. *A history of Danish literature*. Vol. 1. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1992.
- Schoolfield, George C. ed. *A History of Finland's literature*. Vol. 4. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1998.
- Seidlin, Oskar. "Georg Brandes 1842-1927." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 3, no. 4 (1942): 415-442.
- Teleman, Ulf. "The Swedish Academy of Sciences: Language policy and language practice." In *Languages of Science in the Eighteenth Century*, edited by Britt-Louise Gunnarsson, 63-87. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011.
- Templeton, Joan. "The doll house backlash: Criticism, feminism, and Ibsen." *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 104, no. 1 (1989): 28-40.
- Tjäder, Per Arne. "Det unga Sverige. Åttitalrörelse och genombrottsepok [Young Sweden: The Eighties' movement and the modern breakthrough period]." Doctoral thesis at the University of Gothenburg. Lund: Arkiv för studier i arbetarrörelsens historia, 1982.

Acknowledgment: This project has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement No. 101001710)



# VIZIUNEA ȘI ROLUL LUI OCTAVIAN C. TĂSLĂUANU ÎN POLITICA ECONOMICĂ A ROMÂNIEI

**George-Bogdan TOFAN**

Academia Română, Filiala Cluj-Napoca, Institutul de Istorie „George Barițiu”  
Romanian Academy, Cluj-Napoca, Gheorghe Barițiu History Institute  
E-mail: bogdan.tofan@academia-cj.ro

THE VISION AND THE ROLE PLAYED BY OCTAVIAN C. TĂSLĂUANU IN ROMANIAN ECONOMIC POLICY

**Abstract:** Octavian C. Tăslăuanu was a leading Transylvanian figure, having primarily worked as a publicist and acting as chief-editor of *Luceafărul* (1902-1914, 1919-1920) and *Transilvania* (1907-1914) magazines. The current endeavour compiles a part of his economic and political focus and actions, initiated ever since 1904, as chronicles and articles chiefly published in *Luceafărul*, as well as a series of studies, either left unpublished, or published in different volumes or as press articles, between 1923-1937. Despite their relevance, they still remain relatively unknown to general audiences. Only a few researchers were able to relish in its originality and pertinence, the same ones who are familiar with the life and work of this great intellectual.

**Keywords:** Transylvania, Greater Romania, agriculture, industry, trade.

**Citation suggestion:** Tofan, George-Bogdan. „Viziunea și rolul lui Octavian C. Tăslăuanu în politica economică a României”. *Transilvania*, no. 7 (2023): 74-82.  
<https://doi.org/10.51391/trva.2023.07.10>.



Personalitatea plurivalentă a neostoitului redactor al *Luceafărului*, Octavian C. Tăslăuanu a fost animată nu numai de idealul național, ci și de cel social, prin numeroase luări de atitudine ce vizau în mod special soarta țărănimii române din Transilvania<sup>1</sup>. Aceste preocupări, mai întâi, au avut caracterul unor note și cronici publicate în revista *Luceafărul*, unde era comentată în principal activitatea secțiunilor științifice ale *Asociațiunii*, pe baza rapoartelor prezentate în cadrul ședințelor plenare.

Astfel, începând cu anul 1904, sublinia printre altele, în reportajul său intitulat *Asociațiunea la Timișoara*, de propunerile secției economice, prin care se sugera înființarea unei școli agricole, respectiv necesitatea „aranjării de prelegeri economice”<sup>2</sup>. Un an mai târziu, în cronică *Reuniunea agricolă română din Sibiu*, Octavian C. Tăslăuanu prezenta sintetic activitatea exemplară a acestei societăți model, a cărei activitate se desfășura numai pe teritoriul Comitatului Sibiu, președintele ei fiind Dimitrie Comșa, iar Victor Tordășianu era secretarul reuniunii de 14 ani. În cei 17 ani de existență,

„vrednic de mențiune”, reuniunea

„a aranjat 14 expoziții de vite cornute și 1 de oi, distribuind premii în total peste 3000 cor. Aceste expoziții urmează a se ține în fiecare an în comunele mai de seamă, și la ele participă toți economii din satele învecinate. Între membrii reuniunii se distribuie gratuit vite și oi de soiu – etc., prin care se contribuie simțitor la îmbunătățirea rasei. – An de an în fiecare sat se sădește un pom de model, se țin cursuri practice de oltoit, se distribuie anual 10-30.000 de pomi pădureți grădinelor școlare, și se mijlocește pentru țărani cumpărarea de pomi nobili. Până acum s’au aranjat 3 mari expoziții de poame, struguri și derivatele lor. [...] Tot în Seliște s’a înființat o mare grădină de model, care va fi pusă în serviciul școalei agricole române în pregătire”.

iar pentru îmbunătățirea soiului plantelor

„s-au distribuit gratuit semințe în preț de 3000 cor. Pentru a promova cultura plantelor și viței de vie se țin prelegeri, se distribuie gratuit unelte și se publică broșuri cu povețe