



# Economies of the Literary Nation

## Literary Capitalism and Nationalism in the Long Nineteenth Century

**Budapest, 13–14 June 2022**

A conference organized by 'The Political Economy  
of Hungarian Literature' Lendület Research Group

Library and Information Centre,  
Hungarian Academy of Sciences

1 Arany János utca, Budapest 1051

# Program

Day 1  
13 June, 2022

## Opening Remarks

Keynote Lecture

9:00–9:50 **Galin Tihanov** (Queen Mary University of London)  
*Beyond Circulation*

9:50–10:00 Q&A

## Session 1

10:15–10:35 **Levente T. Szabó** (Babeş–Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár)  
*Consuming Patriotism and the Revolution of Everyday Literary Nationalism. The Nineteenth-Century Hungarian National Protectionist Movement as a Transnational Phenomenon*

10:35–10:55 **Borbála Zsuzsanna Török** (Universität Wien)  
*The Free Market as an Anti-Social Force. Nineteenth-century Critics of Capitalist Economy*

10:55–11:15 **Xavier Andreu-Miralles** (Universitat de València)  
*Selling National Stories. Transnational Imaginaries and National Markets in the Spanish Serial Novel of the Mid-Nineteenth Century*

11:15–11:30 Q&A

## Session 2

11:45–12:05 **Ahmed Nuri** (University of Amsterdam):  
*Building a Nation in and through Literature: The Rise of Print Capitalism, National Literature, and Turkism in the late Ottoman Era*

12:05–12:25 **Abhimanyu Acharya** (The University of Western Ontario):  
*Nationalism on the Stages of Nineteenth-Century Western India: A Critical Exploration through Selected Plays in Gujarati*

12:25–12:40 Q&A

Lunch Break

### Session 3

- 14:00–14:20 Alexandra Urakova** (Tampere University)  
*Historical Novel, National Property, and Literary Debt in the American Context (1820s)*
- 14:20–14:40 Daphne Orlandi** (Technische Universität Dortmund, Sapienza University of Rome)  
*“All advancement is by ideas”: Ralph Waldo Emerson’s Lectures and the Cultural Market of Nineteenth-Century America*
- 14:40–15:00 Elham Shahsavar Zadeh** (York University, Toronto)  
*The Everyday Practice of Nationhood and the Mutual Value Investment of Literature and Material Culture. The Case of Provincial Products in Contemporary Iran*
- 15:00–15:20 Q&A**

### Session 4

- 15:35–15:55 Gergő Balogh** (Eszterházy Károly Catholic University, Eger):  
*Modern Bioeconomies. On Frigyes Karinthy’s Brain Surgery*
- 15:55–16:15 Viktor Kovács** (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest):  
*Cultural and Business Success in the Hungarian National Theatre: The Glory Days of the Folk-Play*
- 16:15–16:30 Q&A**

## Day 2 14 June, 2022

### Session 5

- 9:00–9:20 Philippe Roepstorff-Robiano** (Karl-Franzens-Universität, Graz):  
*Beyond Usury: Jewish Poets and Thinkers Dying in the Works of Freytag, Zola, and Eliot*
- 9:20–9:40 Andrei Terian** (Lucian Blaga University, Sibiu):  
*Economies of Affect in the Romanian Novels of the Long Nineteenth Century*
- 9:40–10:00 Ștefan Baghiu** (Lucian Blaga University, Sibiu):  
*The Cost of Living as a Literary Device: Work, Salary, and Living Costs in the Early Romanian Novel*
- 10:00–10:15 Q&A**

## Session 6

- 10:30–10:50 Lena Magnone** (Carl von Ossietzky University, Oldenburg)  
*Precarious Modernists. Small Nations' Women Writers at the End of the Nineteenth Century, or: Who Could Afford to Be a Modernist?*
- 10:50–11:10 Zsuzsa Török** (Institute for Literary Studies, Budapest)  
*Apostles, Entrepreneurs, or Swindlers? Periodical and Newspaper Editors in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century Kingdom of Hungary*
- 11:10–11:20** Q&A

## Session 7

- 11:30–11:50 Imre Zsolt Lengyel** (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest):  
*Can Literature Unify a Capitalist Nation? Dilemmas of Community and Complexity in Early-Twentieth-Century Hungary*
- 12:10–12:30 Sándor Hites** (Institute of Literary Studies, Budapest):  
*National Literature and the Wealth of Nations*
- 12:30–12:40** Q&A

## Lunch Break

13:30 – 14:00

## Book Presentation

A discussion with Alexandra Urakova on her recently published *Dangerous Giving in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2022).



# Abstracts

(in order of appearance)

GALIN TIHANOV

## Beyond Circulation

In this paper, I seek to reflect on some of the central concepts that inform the current Anglo-Saxon discourse of world literature; I am particularly interested in revealing the implications they hold for how we think and write the history/histories of world literature. “Circulation”, to give but one example, is one such concept that seems to me to be in need of reconsideration, and certainly a concept overgrown with historically attestable metaphors and subtexts drawn from the discourse of economics (some of which I analyse in the lecture with reference to a critique of world-systems theory and how we understand translation). Circulation is a concept helpful and problematic in equal measure. It has widened immensely the geography of world literature and has sharpened our sense of what happens to literary works as they cross the historically mobile borders of different cultural and literary zones (zonality is, as I will try to argue, the specific mode of existence of world literature, both before and during globalisation). But deploying the concept of circulation comes with an opportunity cost: like most viable concepts, it conceals while it reveals. What it conceals is the fact that world literature is not just a complex assemblage of ready artefacts that circulate around the globe. It is above all a process that has temporal depth to it. Our current notion of world literature, certainly in the Anglo-Saxon mainstream, emphasises and studies predominantly the circulation of these ready artefacts; in fact, what circulates, along with these artefacts, are powerful discursive energies, verbal masses at different stages of formation, debris of older and now reconstituted genres, building blocks for poetic and linguistic conventions yet to take shape.

LEVENTE T. SZABÓ

## Consuming Patriotism and the Revolution of Everyday Literary Nationalism

The Nineteenth-Century Hungarian National Protectionist  
Movement as a Transnational Phenomenon

The Hungarian protectionist movement of the 1840s (the so-called *Védegylet*) is usually considered a mere conceptual framework that had few practical consequences. My presentation will focus on the wider (both theoretical and practical) causes and consequences of this first modern Hungarian movement of economic nationalism, namely, the pattern of national protection. From a bird's-eye perspective, I will follow the local embedding and recycling of the transnational pattern of protectionism at the time, from the sweeping success of Friedrich List's ideas in Hungary to the immense impact they came to introduce and frame in everyday nationalism. I will argue that the combination of economic protectionism and everyday nationalism triggered an extraordinary paradigm shift in Hungarian literature and paved the way for a new, modern type of national literary canon, national literary figures, genres and discourses.



BORBÁLA ZSUZSANNA TÖRÖK

## The Free Market as an Anti-Social Force Nineteenth-Century Critics of Capitalist Economy

The nineteenth century marked the institutionalization of private property worldwide. Liberal legislations and colonial administrations enshrined the ownership rights as a staple of the capitalist economy. This process had been both acclaimed and cursed already by the contemporaries; the century resounded of the name of Adam Smith and the Scottish Enlightenment theorists of political economy advocating market economy, while the emerging political left knew Karl Marx as the

most prominent critic of the capitalist property regime. The presentation does not focus on either of these political camps, but on representatives of an intermediary position. More precisely, it studies the stance of those jurists, who did not want to abolish the capitalist regime as such, but took account of its socially destructive effects on the most fragile parts of society and sought to amend it. It is within these circles that the idea complementary to private property, namely, commonly owned one, surfaced as a historical reality and as a legitimate institution, linked to the ideal of a more equitable society. My paper discusses works of three such figures in comparison, while searching for avenues of circulation of the ideas between them: the Cambridge professor and legal counsel to the Indian colonial government, Henry Sumner Maine (1822–1888), the Belgian university professor and Christian philanthropist Emile de Laveleye and the US American intellectual and politician Henry George (1839–1897). Last but not least, the presentation attempts to bridge their thoughts with today’s debates on the commons.



XAVIER ANDREU-MIRALLES

## Selling National Stories

### Transnational Imaginaries and National Markets in the Spanish Serial Novel of the Mid-Nineteenth Century

In the 1840s, there was an explosion of serial novels in Spain, inspired by the success of Eugène Sue and characterized by the accentuated nationalist affirmation against the foreign romantic stereotype of the country. Traditionally, this novelistic format, which quickly became a big publishing business, has been interpreted as the product of the petty bourgeoisie for whom the introduction of a patriotic language and close to that of socialism would have served as strategies to achieve a single objective: commercial success and personal enrichment. Through the analysis of the case of the republican editor and novelist Wenceslao Ayguals de Izco (1801–1873), the “Spanish Sue”, this paper is to revise these interpretations. It will be argued that the Spanish social novel of the 1840s should be understood within the framework of the social reformism of radical liberalism. This reform-

ism used the serial novel to advocate the reconstruction of a harmonious national community. This process involved the articulation of a national literary market and the vindication of the “authority” of Spanish intellectuals to speak about their country in the face of foreign stereotypes.



AHMED NURI

## **Building a Nation in and through Literature: The Rise of Print Capitalism, National Literature, and Turkism in the late Ottoman Era**

This paper explores the complex relationship between the emergence of “national literature,” the role of the “national authors” Ömer Seyfeddin and Mehmed Emin as literary entrepreneurs, and Turkish literature as a site of symbolic capital formation at the threshold of the twentieth century in the Ottoman Empire. Three major formative factors determined the emergence of national language and literature in Turkey. While the first factor refers to the linguistic consciousness and the development of the Turkish writing prose since the second half of the nineteenth century, the second factor comes from a new understanding and a different aesthetic conception of literature due to the adaptations of new literary genres from Europe, such as the novel, the short story, and drama. The third factor indicates the crystallization of the linguistic and cultural national consciousness that correspond to political nationalism due to the conjectural changes in the 1910s and the 1920s.

The increasing influence of the printed press contributed to the formation of a literary reading public in the Ottoman Empire. Newspapers and journals functioned as promoters of the Turkification of the written language and as educational instruments. However, literary references to the ethnic terms Turk or Turkishness, in a national sense, barely occurred until the first decade of the twentieth century. The paper focuses on the impact of Seyfeddin and Emin on the discourse of Turkishness, including their linguistic and literary considerations paving the way for the emergence of a Turkish “national literature”. I also investigate the in-



terplay between the national literary understanding and the nationalist economy policy imposed by the military elites of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) in 1908, which shifted political gears first to Pan-Turkism, later to Turkish nationalism.



ABHIMANYU ACHARYA

## Nationalism on the Stages of Nineteenth-Century Western India

A Critical Exploration through Selected Plays in Gujarati

Through the colonial encounter, proscenium stages modelled after the British theatres became part of the Indian landscape in the late eighteenth century. By the mid-nineteenth century, several proscenium theatres were built in India and the modernization of theatre activities was in full swing. Parsi theatre companies were the first ones to recognize the capitalist potential of theatre activities, and due to their efforts, theatre turned into a full-fledged entertainment industry spanning across India but also in South-east Asian countries like Myanmar and Malaysia. Under the influence of Parsi theatre, several regional theatres, such as the Bengali, Gujarati, and Marathi theatre, among others, were transformed, modernized, and commercialized. The commercialization of theatres also intersected with the period of burgeoning nationalism and anti-colonial sentiments in India following the first war of Indian Independence in 1857. Through an analysis of a handful of plays from nineteenth-century Gujarati theatre, the paper examines the intersections between commercial theatre activities and the rise of the nationalist sentiments in Western India. Did the aesthetics of commercial theatre hamper or aid the articulation of the rising nationalism? What strategies did the theatre-makers in Western India use to subvert or bypass the Dramatic Performances Act (a colonial law introduced by the British in 1876 to closely scrutinize seditious content in commercial theatre)? What implications did the rise of commercial theatre have for the indigenous theatre forms?



ALEXANDRA URAKOVA

## Historical Novel, National Property, and Literary Debt in the American Context (1820s)

The paper focuses on the economies of the historical novel and its national and international marketing on the example of American frontier romance as seen through the lens of two literary relationships, those of James Fennimore Cooper and Sir Walter Scott, and Cooper and Lydia Maria Child. Cooper was tagged as the “Scott of America” as early as in 1821; his literary career and international fame owed much to Scott whose model – marketing the exotic and the provincial – he followed in his fiction. Cooper was resentful about recurrent mentions of his literary debt to Scott claiming his originality and independence. On the other hand, Lydia Maria Child – struggling for the domestic literary market, the author of the historical frontier novel *Hobomok* (1824) – described her rivalry with Cooper in terms of the fight over the territory, that is, the “occupied” “American ground.” These examples demonstrate that American history was seen as a national property while writing a romance was a means of appropriating it; at the international market, it was converted into national currency of a sort. The paper argues that at the same time there were other economies involved in the process of national and international self-representation, namely, the economy of debt and the economy of competition that may be described in terms of potlatch.



DAPHNE ORLANDI

### “All advancement is by ideas”

#### Ralph Waldo Emerson’s Lectures and the Cultural Market of Nineteenth-Century America

Ralph Waldo Emerson, one of the fathers of American literature and a major public intellectual in nineteenth-century America, attempted throughout his life to forge an American identity and argued for a quintessentially American literature that he thought would provide a cultural counterpart to America’s ma-

terial wealth. To do so, he toured the nation extensively – between 1833 and 1881 he delivered around 1500 lectures in 283 cities – and was one of the first Americans to make a career out of lecturing. Indeed, for nearly fifty years “lecturing was Emerson’s primary occupation, the main source of his earned income and the first form of public expression of his ideas” (Whicher and Spiller, *EL*, I, xiii). One might argue that he took full advantage of the new economic possibilities the global market made available to intellectuals, despite his famous denunciation of mindless rampant materialism dominating America’s mind. This may seem contradictory, if not hypocritical, since he obviously exploited the capitalist commodification of culture for his own financial gains. However, the paper argues that Emerson’s role within the national and global cultural market can be understood as a necessary compromise to participate in the conversation related to the ongoing process of America’s cultural growth. Emerson was convinced of the crucial importance of culture in any national project, and although he despised the sheer materialism of his time, he thought that his participation in capitalist practices was legitimate insofar as it aimed at balancing the nation’s materialism against the development of a meaningful cultural environment.



ELHAM SHAHSAVAR ZADEH

## **The Everyday Practice of Nationhood and the Mutual Value Investment of Literature and Material Culture**

### **The Case of Provincial Products in Contemporary Iran**

In this paper, I will discuss the mutual value investment of literature and material culture in making national narratives in the context of contemporary Iran. By this empirical research, I aim to analyze representational value associated with literature and the material value of commodities in one framework in order to develop a new understanding of the everyday practice of nationhood.

Both literature and material culture can contribute to shaping the affective community of the nation through acts of consumption (Moallem 2018). The role of literature in shaping Iranian nationalism is a truism that has been extensively dis-

cussed. Classic Persian literature actively incorporates the narrative of continuity and the continuity of the nation in multiethnic and multilinguistic contexts, such as Iran, with a long history of ruling by non-Persian governors (Kashani-Sabet 2004, Vejdani 2015). These analyses share a top-down approach and take national literature as a means to serve the central state's hegemony. However, the question how people, especially in a provincial setting, may appropriate, diversify and transform this means to make their own narratives (sometimes counter-narratives) of nationalism is all too frequently dismissed.

Through the visual ethnography of a few local businesses, I will show how people invest in the idea of national literature not only to form and legitimize their local identities and local patriotism but also to diversify and expand the state's definition of national literature. I examine ads and packaging of local's brands that use literary figures and legends in order to communicate with consumers on a national scale and promote their local material culture as national commodities.



GERGŐ BALOGH

## Modern Bioeconomies

### On Frigyes Karinthy's Brain Surgery

Having been diagnosed with, in 1936 the widely popular Hungarian writer Frigyes Karinthy had a brain surgery. The costs of the operation, performed in Sweden, were covered by public fundraising. Karinthy's illness and the surgery attempting to save his life (eventually, it gave him two more years to live) were widely publicized at the time in the Hungarian press and Karinthy subsequently even managed to write a book on it. Yet, the whole affair seems not only relevant with regard to Karinthy's private and public life but might also be described as the reconfiguration of the modern author in terms of bio-economics. In the context of a bio-economical approach to literature (which can be traced back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century), Karinthy's case demonstrates how extra (or surplus) value is attributed to a literary author's life (compared to other, ordinary patients suffering

from cancer), that is, how a writer's life becomes life *par excellence*, a life that is exceptionally worth living. In the paper, I will argue that from this perspective life is given to an author as a gift that should reciprocate debts generated in aesthetic communication in the acts of which the subject of the modern reader is forged.



VIKTOR KOVÁCS

## Cultural and Business Success in the Hungarian National Theatre: The Glory Days of the Folk-Play

In the presentation I analyze the genre of “folk-play” (*népszínmű*), one of the most popular comedic forms in nineteenth-century Hungarian theatre, from the perspectives of cultural economy and the concept of national literature. The folk-play, as many other genres in the repertoire of the Hungarian National Theater, drew mainly on Austrian theatrical traditions, those of the *Volksstück*, the *Localstück* or the *Zauberposse*. The early representatives of the Hungarian folk-play were adaptations from German, yet, the genre soon established its own idiosyncratic form. Its emblematic pieces (i.e. the works of Ede Szigligeti and József Szigeti) combined the means of melodrama, the comedy of manners, the market farce and the detective story – and also staged a new Hungarian cultural identity: Performances of Gypsy music and popular mock-demotic songs (*nóta*) in the intermedium secured the sweeping popularity that the genre enjoyed among the lower middle-class audiences of Pest-Buda.

Looking at the period between 1837 (the opening of the National Theatre, or, then, the Hungarian Theatre of Pest) to 1875 (the opening of the Hungarian Folk Theatre), the paper deals with both the cultural and the economic significance of the folk-play, that is, its position among “national genres” and the immense revenues its commercial success generated.



## Beyond Usury: Jewish Poets and Thinkers Dying in the Works of Freytag, Zola, and Eliot

Every nineteenth-century novel features at least one usurer, usually Jewish. Their family members may or may not show the proverbial “propensity to truck, barter and exchange one thing for another” (Adam Smith) typical for the *homo economicus*. In the three novels (written in three different languages) that I analyze there appear three Jewish characters of rather a different mold: Bernhard Ehrenthal in Gustav Freytag’s *Soll und Haben* (1855), the son of the money-lender Hirsch Ehrenthal who writes elegiac poetry in the midst of a clichéd milieu of Jewish thievery; Ezra Mordecai Cohen in George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda* (1876), a theologically astute avant-garde Zionist living in his family’s pawnshop; and, finally, Sigismond Busch in Emile Zola’s *L’Argent* (1890f.), the brother of the most notorious usurer of the Rougon-Macquart series who is working in the back-room of his brother’s office on an economic theory to make capitalism obsolete. None of these characters have any desire to participate in the money-market they are embedded in and all of them are doomed to die of consumption. The question of why these types of Jewish characters are consistently introduced into the milieu of usury and why they all have to be consumed so quickly arises. What (ideological) purpose do Jewish poets and thinkers serve in these novels? How is this this function related to the notion of national literature? And how is one supposed to interpret their demise of a disease that literally consumes them?



ANDREI TERIAN

## Economies of Affect in the Romanian Novels of the Long Nineteenth Century

My paper is an exercise in distant reading and explores the value of feelings based on a corpus containing approx. 160 Romanian novels published between 1845–1916, digitized in the Digital Museum of the Romanian Novel (<https://>

revistatransilvania.ro/mdrr/). The premise of this study is that these novels display a strong tendency to structure the affective discourse according to the patterns of the economic discourse of capitalism, especially in (semi)peripheral literatures. In these “economies of affection”, to borrow the famous phrase coined by Analiese Richard and Daromir Rudnycky, the rhetoric of feeling as a non- or trans-commercial value – which purportedly would evade the capitalist economy – is, in most cases, only a way to renegotiate its value from a better position. This is also clear in the development of two interconnected economic regimes: A homogeneous one, hosting affects that are located in a value scale mirroring the social structures of the emerging bourgeoisie, and a heterogeneous one, through which feelings negotiate their price in relation (or in exchange) to products from other value scales (money, property, social status, etc.). The emergence of both patterns shows how Romanian literature was entering a new phase of nation-building aiming at global integration and competitiveness, rather than ethnographic segregation.



ȘTEFAN BAGHIU

## The Cost of Living as Literary Device

### Work, Salary, and Living Costs in the Early Romanian Novel

Fictional characters acting in texts of literary realism must earn a living too and plots are often driven by this need. In Knut Hamuson’s 1890 *Hunger* money organizes the narrative as far as events unfold along the mortgaging of personal belongings. In Ioan Slavici’s 1896 novel *Mara*, in which Nicolae Manolescu saw “the first *businesswoman*” in Romanian literature, money serves as plot, too, yet in a different sense, as the money of *capitalist endeavor*. Both examples show that during the second half of the nineteenth century, with the breaking down of the old feudal order and birth of capitalism in the European peripheries, *making money becomes the plot*. The rise of Romanian literary realism is enmeshed in class struggle, that is, the clash of old boyars and aristocrats with new capitalists and public servants on their way becoming bourgeois; the bottom of the social strata is com-

prised of voiceless workers and peasants. Even the most conservative critics saw this as a problem: Titu Maiorescu believed that to achieve literary modernization, Romanian literature had to produce a *people's novel* [*roman poporan*] about the life of *common people*.

Friedrich Engels famously claimed that he had learned more from Balzac than from “all the professed historians, economists, and statisticians of the period together”. Following this clue, the paper will look at how individual and public economies were represented in the Romanian novel through a quantitative analysis of the representations of *money, salary, rent* and *living cost* in 260 texts published between 1845 and 1918, based on the archives of the Digital Museum of the Romanian Novel (<https://revistatransilvania.ro/mdrr/>).



LENA MAGNONE

## **Precarious Modernists. Small Nations' Women Writers at the End of the Nineteenth Century, or: Who Could Afford to Be a Modernist?**

In Central-European “small nations” beginning to construct national canons as part of their fight for independence from imperial hegemony in the nineteenth century, there was scarcely other options for a woman wanting to enter the writing profession than to join the nationalist current. Only those who subordinated their self-expression to the nation-building task were granted critical recognition and, subsequently, a place in literary history, or a more mundane recompense, i.e., suitable earnings. How this process influenced women’s writing is especially visible at the end of the era, with the advent of modernism. To put it bluntly: some women just could not afford to join the cosmopolitan postulates of these movements.

In the paper I shall concentrate on two women writers who could not embrace their place as a modernist and, for purely economic reasons, were restricted to the sphere of literary nationalism. The published poetry of Irma Geisslová (1855–1914), an impoverished spinster from Jičín, was a conventional tribute paid to



nationalistic expectations of her political benefactors. Geisslová's more original works, in many respects overshadowing those of the acclaimed Czech decadents, remained in manuscripts and were only discovered decades after her death. Maria Konopnicka (1842–1910), a single mother of six living solely off the fruit of her pen, continued the model of Polish romantic poetry and was treated as a national prophetess at the price of overshadowing her modernist prose and poetic ekphrases. In both cases, contemporary attempts to reinterpret their position proved unsuccessful: The figure of “the mother of the nation” appeared to be more in demand than that of an artistically accomplished female modernist.



ZSUZSA TÖRÖK

## **Apostles, Entrepreneurs, or Swindlers?**

### **Periodical and Newspaper Editors in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century Kingdom of Hungary**

This paper examines the role and status of periodical and newspaper editors in the Kingdom of Hungary during the middle decades of the nineteenth century. By the 1850s and 1860s editors would become pivotal figures in the literary scene, and their writing as well as their entrepreneurship placed them at the heart of the evolving Hungarian literary marketplace. Contemporaries often described them as “apostles” with a prominent role in public life and as agents shaping the dominant trends of public opinion. Due to the economic implications of periodical editing, however, editors were also frequently represented not only as literary entrepreneurs but as swindlers deceiving both contributors and readers. Though expected to be an “apostle” of public matters, including the consolidation of Hungarian-language literature, the editor-entrepreneur in practice often turned out to be a calculating businessman, a controversial figure surrounded by suspicion, mistrust, harsh criticism, and mockery.

In the paper I survey these issues on the basis of textual representations but will also make ample use of caricatures and cartoons published in the satirical magazines at the time. I want to reveal the contested and contrasting notions that

surrounded the figure and status of the periodical editor with a particular focus on the tensions between the moral and the economic imperatives of editing and producing “national literature”.



IMRE ZSOLT LENGYEL

## Can Literature Unify a Capitalist Nation?

### Dilemmas of Community and Complexity in Early-Twentieth-Century Hungary

One of the main reasons why the relationship between liberalism and nationalism was relatively harmonious in Hungary during the long nineteenth century is that liberal policies were regarded, for the most part, as tools in the service of the unification and homogenization of a fractured society. But, over time, it became a more and more prevailing suspicion that the capitalist transformation made possible by liberalism was itself leading to new and even wider chasms: The growing complexity of the division of labor appeared to result, in the long run, in a breakdown of social relations by demanding ever-narrowing specializations. Since the predicted crisis was mainly communicational, art theory became an important outlet for these discussions. I would argue that the field of literary theory in Hungary in the decades before World War I was structured to a large extent according to the different solutions offered to this (philosophically well-documented) conundrum. The fraction that tried to keep up the alliance of liberalism and nationalism had arrived at the postulation of a plain and exoteric literature that would serve as a common language and henceforth criticized works of art they thought were too particular (e.g., Zsolt Beöthy, János Horváth). Another fraction was ready to accept the loss of homogeneity in order not to endanger modernization and as such wanted art to be a mirror that reflected back its own diversity to a more loosely defined nation (e.g., Ignóty, Aladár Schöpflin). The third fraction, however, turned against liberalism in order to save social unity and weaponized art to this end (e.g., György Lukács, Dezső Szabó). The reconstruction of these positions may show what anxieties and hopes regarding modernization had influenced

“the joint march of nationalism and capitalism” and created deep and enduring cultural divisions in a semi-peripheral and ethnically diverse country.



SÁNDOR HITES

## National Literature and the Wealth of Nations

The paper looks at the status of literature as a form of production in eighteenth-nineteenth century political economy with regard to the themes of wealth formation and accumulation. During this period the concepts of nationhood, literature, and wealth were all undergoing a sea change. What I am interested in is how considerations on value and utility, productive and unproductive labor in economic theory informed and were informed by the pervasive “nationalization of culture” (Joep Leerssen) from around 1800. Mainly, in what sense did the perception of national literature and its historical heritage as a set of symbolic and material assets and goods, or as a “productive force”, relate to the shifting understanding of “national wealth”? I will seek these implicit or explicit agendas of cultural and economic nationalism (or the lack thereof) in the political economies of Adam Smith, Jean-Baptiste Say, Friedrich List and John Stuart Mill.

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