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### **Faroe Literature: Scandinavian, Danish, National?**

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The Faroe Islands are an autonomous region of the Kingdom of Denmark, with its own unique culture and language. These 18 islands are located in the North Atlantic, between Iceland, Norway, and Great Britain, and have a population of approximately 50,000 people. Due to their remote location, the Faroes have developed a distinct culture that is different from other Scandinavian countries.

The Faroes were first settled in the Middle Ages by the Vikings, who explored new lands in search of new opportunities. For centuries, they served as an important transit route between Scandinavia and Iceland. However, over time, the islands became poor and isolated, which influenced the development of their culture. Unlike Iceland, the Faroe people did not develop a strong literary tradition until the 19th century, when they began writing in their own language. This situation has put the existence of the original language at risk, especially since the Reformation period, because worship was conducted in Danish and Danish was also the language of the state and schools, while Faroese, through the centuries, was only a language used for everyday communication.

In the early Middle Ages, Scandinavia had one common language, called "Danish" (dönsk tunga). It was the basis for all modern Scandinavian languages. However, the powerful medieval literary tradition developed only in the Icelandic language. The Faroese language has an archaic grammatical structure that makes it difficult for other Scandinavians to understand. It can be considered, along with Icelandic, the closest to the Old Norse language. The Faroese culture dates back to the Viking Age and is part of the pan-Scandinavian cultural space. The Faroe Islands have been part of the Danish kingdom since 1397. Relationships between the metropolis and the dependent territory have been complicated in economic, political, and cultural terms. The period from the 16th to 18th centuries was an era of struggle between Denmark and Sweden for dominance in the North. The Old Norse culture, which was actually pan-Scandinavian, was seen as a Danish heritage due to the

formation of Danish state nationalism. There was little room for the ethnical self-identity of the direct descendants of the Vikings, the Icelanders and Faroe Islanders, in this cultural system.

Denmark effectively "nationalized" Scandinavian antiquities and actively exported manuscripts from Iceland that were considered the cultural heritage of Denmark, the metropolis. There were no written monuments in the Faroe Islands, and the oral tradition was not taken into consideration by the Danes. As a result, the Faroe people did not stand out from the rest of the inhabitants of the kingdom's peripheries, such as Norwegians, Jutlanders, and residents of Bornholm Island.

The main advantage of the oral tradition in the Faroe Islands is the ballad genre, which is usually performed by a choir during a chain dance. Ballads date back to the Middle Ages and often intersect with the plots of Icelandic sagas and rimes (rimur) – a late medieval poetic genre with no analogues in other Scandinavian countries. Faroese ballads are often quite large, with some having hundreds of stanzas. A good example is *The Song of Sigurd* (Sjúrðarkvæði), which is based on the Old Norse legend of Sigurd the Dragon Slayer. Ballads have played a crucial role in preserving the Faroese language, both as a means of communication and as a form of verbal art. The performance of ballads is still an essential part of Faroese culture.

In the late 18th century, Jens Christian Svabo (1746-1824), a Faroese linguist, was the first to start collecting ballads. He also attempted to develop a Faroese writing system based on the Icelandic language. In 1823, Pastor Johan Hendrik Skrøter translated the Gospel of Matthew into Faroese using this writing system. However, his translation did not receive much enthusiasm from the local people, as Danish was the language of the church for them.

Faroese literature began to develop more intensively at the end of the 19th century, and its growth was closely linked to the nation-building process: the creation of a distinct Faroese culture. In the 1870s, a Faroese student group was formed in Copenhagen, which eventually became the Society of Faroe Islanders in Copenhagen (Føroyingafelag í Keypmannahavn) in 1881. The main goal of the society was to revive Faroese culture and language and to help Faroese people separate themselves from Danes and prove their uniqueness (Korovin 2023:681). In this way, nation-building also began with literature.; The Icelanders were a role model for the Faroese people, but unlike them, who had a rich literary tradition, the Faroese lacked a written language. The only text that can be considered comparable to national literature is the "Faroese Saga", which was compiled. O. Markelova writes: "It can be said without exaggeration that the formation of the Faroese nation and the development of their literature (which began in the last decades of the 19th century and continues to this

day) are one and the same process. The subject matter of most Faroese literary works up until the end of the 20th century was connected in some way with reflection on their own homeland and nation, and creating and developing written literature in their native language was one of the main goals of the Faroese nationalism movement from the beginning" (Markelova 2006: 4).

The most significant contribution to the development of Faroese literature was made by Venceslaus Ulricus Hammershaimb (1819-1909). He developed the principles of the Faroese language and published in Danish "The Faroese Anthology" (Færøsk Anthologi) in 1886-1891 in Copenhagen. This book includes essays on history, geography, language, folk tales, several original poems and Hammershaimb's fictions "Folk Life Pictures" (Folkelivsbilleder), which are considered the beginning of Faroese literature. Although "Pictures" were written in Danish, they are considered an important part of Faroese culture. The main challenge for Faroese literature has been that it has been written in two languages. While for Icelandic and Danish literature, writing in a foreign language is not a big issue, it can be a challenge for the Faroese. This issue is still relevant today and can affect the national identity of the people. Obviously, the interaction with Danish literature and the strong influence of Icelandic literature have really enriched Faroese literature. They have given it modern literary forms and language means, helping it to overcome the epigonal period very quickly and find an original way of development. However, for the Faroese, Denmark is a metropolis and relations with it are seen either as complete assimilation, which destroys the national component, or total rejection, where any Danish influence is seen as hostile and denied a priori.

The task of Faroese writers at the beginning of the 20th century was to separate Faroese literature from Danish culture and integrate it into the Scandinavian context, making it an independent and unique phenomenon. Jens Hendrik Oliver (Janus) Djurhuus (1881-1948), the first major Faroese poet, played a significant role in this process by translating world classics into Faroese. He wanted to portray the Faroe Islands and Denmark as two distinct worlds. Danish culture is completely foreign to the Faroese, as seen in the works of Rasmus Rasmussen, who took the pen name Regin í Líð. In his novel "The Tower of Babel" (Bábelstornið, 1909) and the short story collection "The Blinding Light" (Glámslýsi, 1912), Rasmussen argued that interaction with Danish culture was not beneficial in any way.

The most famous Faroese author is Andreas William Heinesen (1900-1991), who occupies a special place in both Faroese and Danish literature. His work vividly illustrates the interaction between cultures, as he was a Faroese who lived on the island for most of his life and wrote in Danish. Heinesen drew the plots and images of

his works from everyday life on the islands, describing the small world of the Faroes, lost in the Atlantic Ocean. Heinesen became one of the most prominent Danish authors and a member of the Danish Academy in 1961. His books have been translated into many languages and opened the Faroe Islands to the world. Heinesen's works and the novel "Barbara" (1938) by Jørgen-Frantz Jacobsen (also written in Danish and filmed in 1997) have become classic of Faroese literature and are often used to judge Faroese culture around the world.

Despite the fact that both these authors were from the Faroe Islands and considered themselves Faroe writers, there is a tendency in modern Faroe literary criticism associated with the idea of nation-building and the radical separation of Faroe culture from Danish culture. Malan Marnersdóttir (Malan Marnersdóttir 2008) and Jógvan Isaksen (Isaksen 1993), who deny any transitional phenomena or borderline situations, deny the right of these writers to be called Faroe writers because the language of their works is Danish. In this case, the linguistic principle is absolute, other factors are ignored, which leads to a narrowing of the scope of national literature. Danish literary scholars mainly classify Heinesen and Jacobsen as Danish authors, because their work only adds to the diversity of national literature – here we can see an expansive approach, where Faroe culture is seen as an integral part of Danish culture. Heinesen is ranked second in terms of translations into foreign languages among Danish writers of the 20th century.

Heinesen offers a unique perspective on his homeland, Faroese, through his writing. His writing style is characterized by a poetic vision of nature, customs, and the way of thinking of Faroese people. He creates a world that is unfamiliar to most people, full of romance and poetry. The writer made his debut with a collection of poems titled "Arctic Elegies and Other Poems" (Arktiske Elegier og andre Digte) in 1921. Throughout his life, he published several poetry books, with his last collection titled "Poems" (Digte) being published in 1990. In 1934 and 1938 he released the socially critical novels "Stormy Dawn" (Bæsende Gry) and "Noatun", which can be considered collective novels – a literary form that was well-developed in Danish literature at that time and was common for left-leaning writers like Hans Kirk. Heinesen's most significant and realistic novel is "The Black Cauldron" (Den sorte gryde), published in 1949. The novel is not only interesting for its social issues, but also for its thoughts about the recent war, which did not directly affect the Faroe Islands but became a significant moral test for the people there. In another of Heinesen's famous novels, "The Lost Musicians" (De fortabte spillemænd), published in 1950, the world of the islands is depicted in a more impressionistic and romantic way. The story is told in a poetic manner, painting a romantic picture of the islands.

A significant place in Heinesen's work is occupied by short stories, which present the world of folk beliefs and fairy tales, ballads. The first collection, "The Magic Light" (*Det fortryllede lys*, 1957), began a new stage in the writer's career, when he preferred the short story over the novel form. In 1964, "Good Hope" (*Den gode håb*) was published. The writer strives to portray the folk culture of the Faroe Islands in all its originality and uniqueness, and the folklore element plays a significant role in recreating the appearance of modern reality. For Danish readers, this material may seem exotic, but for Faroese locals, it is an integral part of their culture. In the short story "Winged Darkness" (*Det vingede mørke*) from the collection "The Magic Light", the world of Faroese folklore comes to life through children's stories. The basis of the narrative is a completely ordinary situation, but the focus is on the image of a world filled with fantastic creatures and extraordinary events.

The book "The Tower at the End of the World" (*Tårnet ved verdens ende*, 1976) is a remarkable example of a genre transformation: the text is divided into separate episodes that are actually independent works of art. The main theme unifying these fragments is the narrator's memory, and there is a strong lyrical element in the novel. A similar approach was used in the novel of Danish writer Arthur Krasilnikoff "The Eye of the Whale" (*Hvalens øje*, 2004), which takes place on the Faroe Islands. Here, a direct connection can be seen with the poetics of Heinesen: "The Faroe Islands serve as a backdrop for all the events in the novel, and they form the center of the hero's universe. This is a place where children's minds are shaped..." (Orlova 2018: 49). The book was enthusiastically reviewed by critics. In a review published in the leading Danish newspaper, "Berlingske Tidende", critic J. Kistrup wrote, "The Tower at the End of the World is a typical example of William Heinesen's brilliant comprehensiveness, where everything that relates to the human experience, through poetry, dreams, and humor, is connected to nature, the universe, and eternity" (Kistrup 1976: 4).

Heinesen creates his own world, where the past and present are closely intertwined, re-creating the very fabric of existence. The appeal to medieval and archaic forms of literature and the game with archetypal images become an integral part of his poetics. J. Isaksen also points out a similar connection to the medieval consciousness and the carnival element in Bakhtin's interpretation of it (Isaksen 2004: 116). It is possible to see similarities between Heinesen's poetics and the writing style of the most famous 20th-century writer, Karen Blixen (Korovin 2018: 44).

For a long time, Danish in the Faroe Islands was seen as "own", but since the middle of the 20th century, it has been understood as "foreign". This has led to a phenomenon of double self-identification in literature, where authors write in both

Faroese and Danish languages. The Faroe Islands have long been culturally isolated, but now they are experiencing the opportunity for cultural dialogue with both Denmark and the English-speaking world through the development of mass media. Faroese and Danish literature are part of a larger literary system that includes all Scandinavian literatures. These literatures have a common origin and are closely related linguistically, but the connection between Faroese and Danish is closer than, for example, the connection between Danish and Swedish, as they share a similar historical background in many ways. I. Neupokoeva argues that sometimes close contacts can have a positive effect, helping to strengthen a literature's internal forces, sparking new ideas, and expanding its social and artistic horizons. However, in other cases, these connections can have negative consequences. Influences that were beneficial in one period may prove limiting at a later stage (Neupokoeva 1976: 217).

It is possible to say that Faroese literature at the end of the 20th century finally separated from Danish literature, which is now seen as a hindrance to the search for Faroese original literary forms. From its very beginning, Faroese literature tended to distance itself from Danish literature, with the focusing on depicting a purely national way of life. One example of this trend is the work of Hans Jacob Jacobsen (1901-1987), the most important Faroese author who used the pen name Heðin Brú. His works were not only translated into Danish but also into other European languages. His first novel, *Mirage* (Lognbrá), published in 1930, was followed by *Heritage* (Fastatøkur) in 1935, both written in a realistic style and united by the character of Högni, a young man who grows up in a small village and becomes a fisherman. In Danish translation, they were combined into one text and published under the title "Høgni" (1946). Published in 1940, "Father and Sons on the Road" (Feðgar á ferð) was a groundbreaking novel in Faroese prose that attracted interest in Europe. The novel dealt with the changes in Faroese society as it evolved from a patriarchal society to a more modern one, leading to conflict between generations.

There has also been a surge in psychological prose in Faroese literature. Jens Pauli Heinesen (1932-2011), the most prolific Faroese author of the 20th century, is the author of 17 novels and 13 short story collections. His literary career began in 1953 with the publication of his first collection of short stories, "The Dark Stable" (Degningsælið). He went on to write "There Wakes the Cow" (Hin vakra kvirran) in 1958 and "Gestur" in 1967. Hanus Kamban, born in 1942, is another prominent Faroese writer. In 2000, Kamban changed his surname from Andreassen to Kamban, following the lead of other prominent Faroese figures. Kamban's work reflects a shift from focusing on purely Faroese issues to covering a wider range of topics and themes. This indicates that Faroese literature has finally developed into an independent

cultural force. Kamban writes primarily short fiction and has published numerous collections of short stories.; His literary debut was "Proteus's Daughter" (Dóttir av Proteus, 1980). The author is known for his ability to create vivid and truthful depictions of the Faroese reality around him, while incorporating modern themes into his work.

The boundaries between states are often easier to define than those between peoples and nations, as states often adopt cultural forms to legitimize themselves as social institutions. These cultural forms are the only objective phenomena that can be studied, as everything else associated with national identity is sometimes not a fact, but based on vague concepts that are not fully understood. In literature, these objective forms of culture take the form of artistic texts that reflect the national and international. Despite the fact that many Faroese writers did not write in their native language and instead used Danish, they are still considered national authors because they never lost their connection to their homeland. Their works, which deal with all the problems, images, and ideas that exist in the Faroe Islands, are strongly connected to this place. In this case, the most important factor in determining the boundaries of national literature is the presence of purely national themes and issues, as well as the author's self-identification.

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### ფარერის ლიტერატურა: სკანდინავიური, დანიური თუ ეროვნული

#### რეზიუმე

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** ფარერის ლიტერატურა, დანიური ლიტერატურა, ჰაინეზენი, ეროვნული თვითიდენტიფიცირება

ფარერის კუნძულები პატარა ქვეყანაა, რომელიც ატლანტის ოკეანის შუაგულში მდებარეობს და დანიის სამეფოს ნაწილია. ფარერული ენა ისლანდიური ენის მსგავსია და სკანდინავიურ ენებს მიეკუთვნება, თუმცა, მას მე-19 საუკუნის დასაწყისამდე, წერილობითი ფორმა არ ჰქონია. სამაგიეროდ, ფარერის კუნძულებზე მდიდარი ფოლკლორული ტრადიციაა შემორჩენილი. ფარერული ლიტერატურის ისტორია შედარებით მოკლეა. პირველი წიგნი მე-19 საუკუნის ბოლოს გამოიცა. ფარერელი მწერლები, ტრადიციულად, როგორც დანიურ, ასევე ფარერულ ენებზე წერდნენ; მათი შემოქმედების მნიშვნელოვან ასპექტს ეროვნული შინაარსი წარმოადგენს. ფარერული ლიტერატურა ასახავს ფარერის კუნძულებზე ყოველდღიურ ცხოვრებას და იქ მცხოვრები ადამიანების ტიპებს. უილიამ ჰაინეზენი იყო პირველი საერთაშორისოდ ცნობილი ფარერელი ავტორი, რომელიც დანიურ ენაზე წერდა და მისი ნაწარმოებები დანიური ლიტერატურის ნაწილად ითვლება. მისგან განსხვავებით, ჰედინ ბრუ თავის რომანებსა და მოთხრობებს, რომლებიც თარგმნილია დანიურ და სხვა ევროპულ ენებზე, მხოლოდ ფარერულ ენაზე წერდა. თანამედროვე ფარერელი მწერლები ისწრაფვიან შექმნან ორიგინალური ეროვნული ლიტერატურული ფორმები, რომლებიც განსხვავდება დანიური ლიტერატურისგან. ახლა, ერთ-ერთი ყველაზე საკამათო საკითხია, შევითქვანთ თუ არა დანიურ ენაზე დაწერილი ნაწარმოებები ფარერული ლიტერატურის ნაწილად.