



UDC 82-4, 821.113.4

Gayane Orlova

Military University

“THE FAROESE ISSUE” IN “NORTHERN ESSAYS” BY J. -F. JACOBSEN

For citation: Orlova G. “The Faroese issue” in “Northern essays” by J. -F. Jacobsen. *Scandinavian Philology*, 2019, vol. 17, issue 2, pp. 307–317.
<https://doi.org/10.21638/11701/spbu21.2019.208>

The article deals with the little-studied works by Jørgen Frantz Jacobsen, a Danish-Faroese writer, journalist and public figure of the first third of the 20th century. During the 1920s–1930s J.-F. Jacobsen wrote a number of articles devoted to the Northern Europe for one of the oldest Danish newspapers *Politiken*. Some of those articles were published posthumously under the title “Northern essays” in 1943. The article focuses on the political essays devoted directly to the Faroe Islands. In his articles Jacobsen systematically defends the idea of self-government of the Faroe Islands. Determining the status of the Islands as an inorganic part of Denmark, emphasizing their geographical isolation, Jacobsen consistently pursues the idea of the authenticity of the Faroese people and the uniqueness of the Faroese language and culture, insisting on the need to revise relations with Denmark. The issues of self-determination of the Faroe Islands, national and linguistic identity are central to the political articles of Jacobsen. The writer believes that the social, cultural and economic problems existing on the Islands are rooted in forcing social-historical processes caused by external factors. In the polemical essays, the author’s high level of literary skills is combined with a well-thought-out structure and argumentation, which makes it possible to consider them to be a means of influencing public opinion.

Keywords: J.-F. Jacobsen, Danish literature, Faroese literature, Northern Essays, Polemical Journalism, Scandinavia, Faroese culture, national Identity.

The aim of this study is to analyze J.-F. Jacobsen’s ideas expressed in his political essays.

The literary heritage of Jørgen Frantz Jacobsen (1900–1938), who lived a short but productive life, is relatively small. *Barbara*, a novel,

published in 1939, after the writer's death, is the most famous of his works, but the main body of Jacobsen's texts are nonfictional prose, which, among other things, reflect the political views of the Danish-Faroese writer and journalist.

During his lifetime, Jacobsen published two books about the Faroe Islands: *Denmark and the Faroes (Danmark og Færøerne)* (1927) and *The Faroes: nature and folk (Færøerne, natur og folk)* (1936). For many years (from the mid-1920s) he also collaborated with a large Copenhagen newspaper *Politiken*. In 1932 the cooperation should have evolved into a permanent one, but was prevented by the writer's poor health as he was seriously ill with tuberculosis, which later caused his premature death [Koppel, 1943, s. 8]. Jacobsen, however, succeeded in creating a number of essays devoted to Northern Europe, some of them were published posthumously under the title *Northern Essays (Nordiske kroniker)* in 1943.

THE TARGET AUDIENCE OF JACOBSEN

For several reasons of historical, cultural and political nature the development of Faroese literature took place in a rather specific way, and the figure of Jacobsen, a writer and publicist, is far from being quite common. Born in Torshavn (the Faroe Islands) in a mixed Danish-Faroese family — “en baggrund, som senere fik ham til at karakterisere sig selv som ‘national hermafrodit’” [Isaksen, 2013], — Denmark educated, he was significantly attached to both cultures, wrote in Danish, considering himself Faroese, and appealed to the Danes, protecting the interests of the Faroe Islands.

A conscious choice of the working language is not unique either to Faroese literature or to the world culture as a whole. A number of Faroese authors wrote in Danish, e. g. William Heinesen, Adrian Johansen, Eilif Mortansson, Regin Dahl [Markelova, 2019]. A deliberate choice in favour of the dominant language can be made for different reasons: the insufficient knowledge of the national language or its low status, the lack of the literary version of the national language as well as for political and economic considerations. However, for Jacobsen, the status of Faroese language and culture and the Faroese's right to relative economic and political independence was the fundamental issue. This stance is taken consistently throughout his journalistic works. The opposition of his working

language to the manifestation of national identity in Jacobsen's political writings in a situation of cultural confrontation is therefore noteworthy.

O. Markelova presumes that "Y.-F. Jacobsen acts deliberately as a mediator of Faroese culture in Denmark (and, ultimately, outside the Kingdom of Denmark)", since it is important for him "not only to represent the national culture outside the Faroe Islands, but also to equate it with the culture of Denmark and the world culture" [Markelova, 2005, p. 5]. In the case of "Barbara" Jacobsen used the principle of "dual address", while his political essays are directed mainly at the Danish audience, he strives to convince Danish readers of the importance of the natural geographic, cultural and linguistic exclusiveness of the Faroe Islands, which autonomy does not threaten the integrity of the Kingdom of Denmark as a political phenomenon.

THE MAIN ISSUES OF "NORTHERN ESSAYS"

"Northern Essays" include 19 articles, written in different years and referring to different themes: historical and cultural development, political and economic relations of Scandinavian countries, the nature of Scandinavia and the highlights of northern cities. Nine out of 19 works are devoted to the Faroe Islands, mainly to the relations with Denmark and Norway, four others to some degree concern Norway-Denmark and Iceland-Denmark relations or the postcolonial status of these countries. "Faroese" essays create a complete picture of life on the islands in the relevant period, covering its various aspects: political, economic, cultural, social and domestic. As for the approach to the material, the essays have a greater or lesser degree of polemicity and descriptiveness. Predominantly descriptive are those about Faroese folkdance (*Nogle Ord om den færøske Dans* (1927)), the beauty of Faroese nature (*Den yderste Kyst* (1936)), and Jacobsen's articles about the northern cities — Edinburgh (1936), Stockholm (1932), Torshavn (1930) Bergen (1933) and Prussia (1933). The essays *Et nordisk sprogs undergang* (1937, devoted to the Shetland Islands), *Kongeriet Skotland* (1936) *Øjeblikkets Island* (1926) and *Det suveræne Island* (1926) have a minimal degree of polemicity, although refer to the theme of cultural and economic independence and political autonomy. The Islands autonomy is the key message of truly polemical essays, most of which are directly devoted to the Faroe Islands. These include: *Danskheden paa Færøerne* (1925), *Færøerne og*

Norge (1926), *Færøsk Selvstændighed* (1927), *Havfiskeri* (1930), *Norske Komplekser* (1932), *Danmark-Norge* (1933), *Moderne Udvikling i en Nøddeskal* (1936), *Det sjette Sprog i Norden* (1937). Written in different years these eight articles cover the whole history of the islands and the nature and the effects of the relations between Denmark and former or current parts of the Kingdom. Jacobsen used historical facts as a basis for building arguments in defense of his main theses, which he consistently defended for more than a decade: 1. The Faroese are a separate and independent nation, different from the Danes, possessing their own national identity, history and culture. 2. The Faroese language is a separate language, distinct from other Scandinavian languages, it must be maintained and developed. 3. The cultural and economic independence of the Faroe Islands is not a threat to the integrity of the Kingdom, but, on the contrary, can strengthen the relationship with Denmark.

Defending the rights and freedoms of the Faroese Jacobsen constantly emphasized this absence of threat, the existence of fraternal ties and the loyalty of the Faroese people towards Denmark. He referred to his own origins as a proof of his objectivity and impartiality.

The arguments for Faroese independence provided by Jacobsen are carefully thought out and extremely convincing, while the statement of unbreakable friendship bonds between the Faroese people and the Danes sounds like a mantra designed to reassure the opponents. Jacobsen consistently relied not on the commonality of Denmark and the Faroe Islands, but on the contrary the differences between them. On one hand, this arrangement of accents may well be related to the fact the writer unconsciously focused on the issue he really was worried about. On the other hand, taking into account the level of rhetorical skills, it seems rather to be a deliberate manipulation aimed to counteract the dissatisfaction and fears of the Danish audience and justify the innocuous intentions of the pro-Faroese movement. A quite clear logic can be seen behind such a strategy: if there is actually nothing to lose, so there is no point in fearing and resisting imaginary losses.

THE LEGAL AND CULTURAL STATUS OF THE FAROE ISLANDS

The “highly urgent” “Faroese issue” [Jacobsen, 1943, s. 12] — the Faroe Islands self-determination and national awareness — is the central issue for Jacobsen. This is reflected in the style of his writings, which,

being exquisit and descriptive in general, here in the political writings becomes passionate and enthusiastic. The theme of national identity is developed both in *Færøerne og Norge*, which is not directly related to the Denmark-Faroe line, and in obviously non-Faroese *Norske komplekser*.

Relying on the history of the Faroe Islands, the Faroese language and the Danish-Faroese relations, Jacobsen in his works about national identity and self-determination consistently and defiantly indicated that he understood, but did not share the feelings and fears of the Danes. The latter, due to the sharp territorial reduction of the Kingdom over the previous 100 years, were suspicious of the national movement of the Faroese. The eventual cession of Norway in 1814, the loss of Schleswig and Holstein in 1864 as a result of the Second Schleswig War, the loss of the last tropical colonies in the Caribbean (so-called Danish West Indies) in 1817, the treaty on Iceland's sovereignty in a personal union with the Danish king in 1918 gradually turned Denmark — once one of the most influential monarchies of the world — into a dwarf state with limited resources and a small population. For the Danes the Faroe Islands as a self-governing territory meant their de facto loss, both political, economical and cultural. Jacobsen based his argument in favor of self-determination on the fact that the Faroes had always been culturally independent, and by no means were a part of Denmark in terms of mentality and language.

All the losses of Denmark, the writer explained, had so far been connected with the loss of alien elements, while the Danish core of the Kingdom remained intact, as well as the very concept of “Danishness”: “Det egentlige Danmark er urørt. Det er de fremmede Bestanddele af Riget, som er faldet fra. Riget er herved snarere blevet stærkere end svagere” [Jacobsen, 1943, s. 11–12].

Jacobsen himself determines the status of the Faroes (and Greenland) as “inorganic part of Denmark” [Jacobsen, 1943, s. 12]. The loss of this territory, according to Jacobsen, could be compared with the loss of Holstein, unlike the loss of Schleswig which was estimated by Denmark as its truly “Danish” area. Such hypothetic loss, however, could and had to be prevented as it was sore and reckless because it concerned a “fraternal nation” — “broderfolk” [Jacobsen, 1943, s. 12], the people, who stayed loyal citizens of the Danish Kingdom within over 500 years. The misperception of the Islands as a nationally Danish creation could lead to the breakup as the Faroes were Danish from the state-legal aspect

only [Jacobsen, 1943, s. 12]. It was the key point, the author supposed [Ibid., P. 24]. As for the Islanders the Danes and the Faroese were two different nations while for the people of the mainland it was not quite so. It was the Faroese disaffection of being one part of a homogeneous state which could result in a threat to the territorial integrity and separatist ambitions [Jacobsen, 1943, s. 23–24]. At the same time the writer didn't underestimate the role of “Nordic-oriented” Danish culture. The awakening of faroese national feelings (instead of “danification”) followed these cultural interaction [Jacobsen, 1943, s. 17]. Jacobsen himself separated the representatives of Danish creative class, taking into account their respectful attitude to the language and culture of the Faroe Islands, and Danish politicians, bureaucracy and media, whose opposition to the national feelings of the Faroese led the problem to administrative deadlock [Jacobsen, 1943, s. 21, 158].

LANGUAGE POLICY

For Jacobsen the issue of national identity was equal to the linguistic identity, and the development of the national language became a priority theme in his works.

Jacobsen himself perfectly mastered both Danish and Faroese — “Med deres far talte Jørgen-Frantz og hans søskende dansk, mens de med deres mor og hinanden talte færøsk” [Larsen, 2011], — which made him personally a disinterested party. Nevertheless, his patriotic feelings made him talk about the war of languages and draw parallels to the dominance of German in Denmark of the 18th century [Jacobsen, 1943, s. 21].

Indeed, the Faroes found themselves in a sort of artificial diglossic situation, when Danish became the only written language, the language of bureaucracy and official communication, while the Faroese was used as a spoken language for daily communication. The difference between them acquired thereby a social character. “Danishness” on the islands was associated with bureaucracy, while bureaucracy was perceived as the opposite of the Faroese people, “en fremmed Kaste” [Jacobsen, 1943, s. 21].

At the time of Jacobsen, the parallel existence of two languages, quite organic in an earlier era, became increasingly difficult due to the growing role of reading and public education. That left two possible pathways for the future of the region: Faroese had either to get a full value in

society and supplant Danish, or to be totally replaced by the latter, ultimately lose its status and disappear, as Norn once had disappeared from the Shetland Islands [Jacobsen, 1943, s. 18–19].

Significant harm to Faroese was done by the derivation of proper names and geographical names, especially in the General Staff terminology [Jacobsen, 1943, s. 13–15]. The similarity of two languages, according to Jacobsen, exacerbated the situation.

Faroese, a Western Scandinavian language, could not be perceived as a dialect of Danish, an Eastern Scandinavian one, like it often happens with closely related idioms, for example, with some East Slavic languages, Moldovan and Romanian or Limburgian. For a long time Faroese did not meet the criteria of functional completeness, which implies the existence of a written standard. However by the time the Northern Essays were created, there was already a full-fledged literature in Faroese. The existence of the “sixth Scandinavian language” for the Faroese people was a fact. Nevertheless, the language still did not achieve an official status.

At the same time Jacobsen indignantly rejected the suggestion that Faroese might be a dialect of Norwegian or Icelandic, although his arguments were extremely lame, referring to the feeling of protest expressed by both Faroese and Danes [Jacobsen, 1943, s. 157]. The writer did not consider it necessary to be convincing when separating Faroese from the historically close Norwegian and Icelandic, but paid attention to opposing the more distant Danish. The latter he took as a threat to the survival of the Faroese language.

But the main problem — and the threat — perhaps more urgent than domination at the administrative level, Jacobsen saw in using Danish as a teaching language in Faroese schools. The situation with the language of instruction that had emerged in 1845, when systematic school education was introduced on the Islands, was legalized by a Royal Decree (Kgl. Anordning) of January 16, 1912 (§ 7) [Kühl, 2013, s. 16; Poulsen, 1981, s. 30–31]. In regard with the existing situation of ongoing conflict Jacobsen got a reason to speak about a quarter-century-long confrontation [Jacobsen, 1943, s. 162].

According to Jacobsen, the fact that Faroese was de facto used for teaching proved an indisputable evidence of its viability. It is quite natural to make a choice in favor of the native language. Any attempt to artificially model the situation of communicating in a foreign language,

when teaching any discipline except a foreign language itself, creates an additional obstacle to the perception of the material and complicates the educative process: “Lærere og Børn maa selvfølgelig tale det Sprog med hinanden, som de falder dem naturligst at benytte. Og det er Færøsk. Rene Færinger taler altid Færøsk indbyrdes — selv i danske Omgivelser falder det dem besværligt at henvende sig til hinanden paa Dansk. Det føles unaturligt og skabagtigt...” [Jacobsen, 1943, s. 160].

Language policy became the main point of accusations against *Sambandspartiet* (Union Party), which policies had led to the establishing of the state language as the only teaching language in schools. The loss of the majority in the Faroese parliament in 1928 and the softening of the position of the party in 1935 did not change the situation. For Jacobsen that was a great disappointment. Consequently internal disagreements developed into the opposition between the Faroese, on one hand, and Danish government represented by the Ministry of Education, on the other hand. Naming enlightened Danes among the proponents of the Faroese language, Jacobsen softened his bitter rhetoric, generally extremely emotional and tough (among other things, he characterized the position of his opponents as stubborn, non-pedagogical and undemocratic [Jacobsen, 1943, s. 162]). He tried to demonstrate, that the Faroese national movement was not hostile to Denmark, but on the contrary, almost tinged with the Danish spirit.

THE ROOTS OF CONFRONTATION

The adverse linguistic, social, economic and political situation was rooted in the historical background of the Faroe Islands. The main source of the problems, according to Jacobsen, was hidden in the processes that had taken place over the past 80 years, since the abolition of the Royal Danish Trade Monopoly.

Three centuries of monopoly, having led to the isolation of the Faroe Islands and slowed down their economic and cultural development, also had a beneficial effect, allowing the Faroese culture and language to survive and not to be superseded by the dominant culture and language, as it once happened in Norway.

The abolition of the Royal Danish Trade Monopoly in 1855 was a turning point in the history of the Islands. The acquired “freedom” should have led to totally positive results, but the traditional rural so-

ciety, which retained some sort of medieval patterns, turned out to be the least prepared for drastic and, in many ways, artificial changes. Jacobsen was not far from the truth when he claimed that all life spheres, without exception, came under attack: the language, the purity of which was now threatened by foreign loan words; the health of the population, whose diet had suddenly changed qualitatively; social life that was not keeping pace with technical progress; the traditional culture that capitulated to public education in the form of school textbooks, illustrated magazines, photo albums and religious sects; the economy, hooked on subsidies etc.

A giant leap, and in fact, the change of formation, resulted in growing pains, alarming deformations and weakening of the social organism. The scale of the phenomenon could be compared to the effects of the abolition of serfdom in Russia: what should have become a universal good led to discontent; it was the abolition of the monopoly that triggered the development of the national movement. The Faroese happened to be victims of the “shortening”: the evolution that the rest of Europe had undergone in 400 years, the Faroese had had to go within 80 years [Jacobsen, 1943, s. 133]. Cumulatively, this led to a trivialization of various spheres of life: “Overalt holder den moderne Tid sit Indtog, men stadig i sine ringeste og billigste Former” [Jacobsen, 1943, s. 132]. In such a short time span, the social organism could not have developed naturally, though it is an open secret that naturalness is the key to prosperity, regarding both language and economy.

CONCLUSION

For Jacobsen, the resolution to the “Faroese issue” lay essentially in the political sphere and included recognition of cultural and linguistic autonomy, political and economic decentralization. According to the writer, the synthetic processes in Scandinavia should have been preceded by an analytical separation process [Jacobsen, 1943, s. 54].

Being a strong political ideologist by nature (and supporting the Self-Government Party, *Selvstyrepartiet*), Jacobsen consistently carried out the idea of Faroese self-determination like a skilled political technologist: he tried to change his opponent’s position, relying on factual material, and skillfully handled this material, using rhetorical pathos as a tool of persuasion in order to influence public opinion.

The Faroese language became the teaching language in Faroese schools on December 12, 1938, just a little less than nine months after Jacobsen's death.

REFERENCES

- Isaksen J. Den lunefulde Eros — Jørgen-Frantz Jacobsen. *Den store danske. Dansk litteraturs historie*. Gyldendal, last updated on: April 04, 2013. Available at: http://denstoredanske.dk/Dansk_litteraturs_historie/Dansk_litteraturs_historie_4/Den_lunefulde_Eros_-_J%C3%B8rgen-Frantz_Jacobsen (accessed: 16.05.2019).
- Jacobsen J.-F. *Nordiske Kroniker*. København, Gyldendalske boghandel, Nordisk Forlag, 1943. 164 S.
- Koppel V. Forord. *Jacobsen, Jørgen Frantz. Nordiske Kroniker*. København, Gyldendalske boghandel, Nordisk Forlag, 1943. S. 7–10.
- Kühl K. Dansk på Færøerne og færødansk. *Mål og Mæle*. 2013, no. 35 (4). S. 15–22.
- Larsen R. W. Jørgen-Frantz Jacobsen. *Forfatterweb*, 2011. Available at: <https://forfatterweb.dk/oversigt/jacobsen-joergen-frantz> (accessed: 22.04.2019).
- Markelova O. A. *Formation of Faroese Literature and Faroese National Self-Awareness*: PhD Thesis Abstract. Moscow, 2005. 28 p. (In Russian)
- Markelova O. A. *Formation of Faroese Literature from Djurhuus to the Present Day*. Available at: <http://odri.msk.ru/odri/neizdannoe/olga-markelova-farerskaia-literatur/> (accessed: 15.05.2019). (In Russian)
- Poulsen J. H. W. Nogle ord om lovgivning og færøsk sprog. *Sprog i Norden*. København, Dansk Sprogævn, Gyldendal, 1981. S. 29–33.

Гаянэ Орлова

Военный университет

«ФАРЕРСКИЙ ВОПРОС» В «СЕВЕРНЫХ ОЧЕРКАХ» Й.-Ф. ЯКОБСЕНА

Для цитирования: Orlova G. “The Faroese issue” in “Northern essays” by J.-F. Jacobsen // Скандинавская филология. 2019. Т. 17. Вып. 2. С. 307–317. <https://doi.org/>

Статья посвящена малоизвестной стороне творчества датско-фарерского писателя, журналиста и общественного деятеля первой трети XX в. Йоргена Франца Якобсена, а именно его политической публицистике. На протяжении 1920–1930-х гг. Якобсен сотрудничал с одной из старейших датских газет «Политикен». Некоторые из его работ о Северной Европе были изданы посмертно в виде сборника «Северные очерки» (1943). В статье рассматриваются очерки, посвященные непосредственно Фарерским островам и имеющие политическую направленность. В своих работах Якобсен отстаивал принципиальную для него как для фарерского патриота идею самоуправления Фарерских островов. Определяя статус островов как неорганической части Дании, подчеркивая их

географическую обособленность, Якобсен последовательно проводил мысль о самобытности фарерского народа и уникальности фарерского языка и культуры, утверждая необходимость пересмотра отношений с метрополией с учетом этих факторов. Вопросы самоопределения, национального самосознания и идентичности языковой личности являются центральными в политических статьях Якобсена. Истоки существовавших на островах социальных, культурных, экономических проблем писатель усматривал в форсировании социально-исторических процессов, вызванном внешними факторами. В полемических очерках высокий уровень литературного мастерства автора сочетается с продуманной структурой и аргументацией, что позволяет рассматривать их как средство воздействия на общественное мнение.

Ключевые слова: Й.-Ф. Якобсен, датская литература, фарерская литература, Северные очерки, полемическо-публицистическая литература, Скандинавские страны, фарерская культура, национальная идентичность.

Gayane Orlova

PhD in Philology, Associate Professor,
Military University,
14, B. Sadovaya ul., Moscow, 123001, Russia
E-mail: gajane-orlova@yandex.ru

Орлова Гаянэ Корюновна

кандидат филологических наук, доцент,
Военный университет,
Россия, 123001, Москва, ул. Б. Садовая, 14
E-mail: gajane-orlova@yandex.ru

Received: August 12, 2019

Accepted: September 16, 2019