

THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN MAGAZINE

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The
ICELANDIC
CANADIAN



ISSN 0013-0444

Vol. 60 #1 (2006)

The ICELANDIC CANADIAN

VOLUME 60, No 1 (2006) • WINNIPEG, CANADA

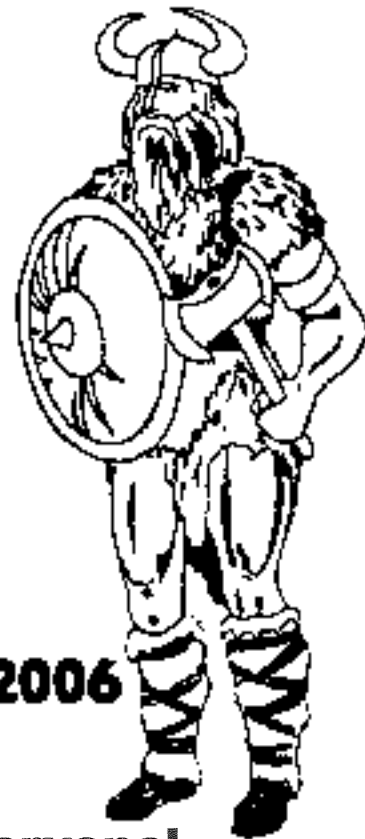
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THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN

North America's quarterly magazine in celebration of the Icelandic Heritage published by Canadian Icelandic Heritage, Inc., Winnipeg, Canada.

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

Canadian - \$32^{CDN} per year, \$64 for two years.
U.S. & International - \$40^{CDN} per year.
Single copies - \$8.00^{CDN} plus postage.
(We accept U.S. & Canadian funds)

Typed submissions of articles, book reviews, short stories and poetry are welcome. Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. E-mail submissions welcome: icelandiccanadian@yahoo.com.
VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT: www.icccanmag.com

The views expressed in all contributions which appear in **The Icelandic Canadian** are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the view of the publisher or editorial committee.

PAP registration # 09999 and Postal Agreement # 1397893

Printed in Winnipeg, Canada.

On the Cover



PHOTO BY LINDA COLETTE SIGURDSON

Jon Sigurdsson statue at the Manitoba Legislative grounds

Editorial

by Erla Wankling

As President of the Jon Sigurdsson Chapter IODE, I am honoured to have been asked to write an editorial on our organization in this our 90th Anniversary year. As I reflect on the history of the Chapter, I am continually amazed at the significant contributions its members have made, over the years, to the Icelandic community and to the community-at-large. This group of energetic, hard-working women place great value on their Icelandic heritage and, while remembering it, serve their Canadian community faithfully and diligently through their extensive service work, their love of education and their love of meaningful citizenship.

The National Chapter of Canada IODE was formed in 1900 as a national, patriotic, women's service organization, with active Chapters in every province of Canada. During their most active period there were thousands of members of IODE throughout Canada. On March 16, 1916, due to the efforts of Mrs. J. B. (Gudrun) Skaptason, 25 women joined as Charter members to form the Jon Sigurdsson Chapter, choosing the name of the great Icelandic patriot and statesman.

The first years, 1916 to 1918, when membership reached a high of 150, the Chapter was involved in the war effort, sending parcels to service personnel overseas. Their work carried on after the war, when assistance was given to returned soldiers and their families. Similarly, during World War II, members were engaged in Canada's war effort sending parcels of hand-knit articles and other comforts overseas, as well as visiting veterans in hospital and helping those in need. "Welcome Home" receptions were held at the Royal Alexandra Hotel after both wars, the first in 1919 with an attendance of 600 people and the second in 1946 with 700 people attending.

In 1923, these determined, energetic women published *Minningarrit Islenzkra*

Hermanna (in Icelandic) containing photographs and service records of over 1,300 soldiers, sailors and nursing sisters of Icelandic descent who served with Canadian and United States armed forces during World War I. In 1990, the Chapter published another monumental work, *Veterans of Icelandic Descent, World War II* and, in 1993, published *A Supplement to Veterans of Icelandic Descent World War II*. These publications contain brief biographical and genealogical sketches, as well as many photographs, for over 2,240 men and women of Icelandic descent who served with the Canadian and United States armed forces. More recently, the Chapter has been involved in a partnership with the Book of Life-Vesturættir in establishing and maintaining a website for information from these three publications. Ryan Eyford, presently a Ph.D. student at the University of Manitoba, with support from the Jon Sigurdsson Chapter, was instrumental in establishing the website which he continues to maintain. Veterans who were missed altogether, or lacked a picture or biography, can still be included. The website is: www.bookoflifeonline.com/Veterans.htm

The Jon Sigurdsson Chapter has supported many programs in schools. In the 1930's, the Chapter assisted in the purchase of library books for the school at Hecla, MB, a program that ran for many years. Presently the Chapter is supporting Mulvey School in the inner city of Winnipeg with gifts of arts and crafts material, books, games, mitts and toques. Last year the Chapter presented books to a teacher at Lord Nelson School for her special needs class. To participate in the National Chapter IODE "Read for Life Program", the Chapter presented books to each of the children between ages one to six years at a community-based program at the Magnus Eliason Community Centre. Donations are made each year to women's crisis centres in Winnipeg and to projects ini-

tiated by the National Chapter that include a lunch program in Labrador elementary schools.

In 1945, the Jon Sigurdsson Chapter made a proposal to the Icelandic National League that the two organizations could, "form a partnership for the purpose of building a new auditorium and club rooms, suitable for use by returning veterans, that will stand as a memorial to those who fell in service." The Chapter immediately began to raise and set aside funds for this purpose in their new Memorial Fund and the first public event staged was a pageant, "The Symbol of Iceland". Although their proposal was not acted upon, the Jon Sigurdsson Chapter continued their dedication to planning and providing a lasting memorial to veterans of Icelandic descent. In 1953, the Jon Sigurdsson Chapter sponsored a "play-writing" competition to feature pioneer life in an Icelandic community. Laura Geir of Mountain, North Dakota was awarded the prize for her play, "In the Wake of the Storm". This play was produced by the Chapter, with the proceeds going to the Fund, and was presented in Icelandic communities in rural Manitoba and North Dakota, as well as in Winnipeg. (Recently, this play was performed by a group in North Dakota who were invited to Iceland to present it there.) The Memorial Fund continued to grow and, in 1988, money from the fund was used to purchase a grand piano that was presented to the Betel Home Foundation, and placed at Betelstadur in Winnipeg. In 2000, the Chapter purchased a grand piano for the Johnson Hall at the Betel Waterfront Centre at Gimli. Each piano bears a plaque to identify the gift from the Jon Sigurdsson Chapter and reads, "To honour the memory of the Icelandic Pioneers and those Icelanders who lost their lives in the armed forces during WWI and WWII." The most lasting and important tribute to veterans of WWII, however, is the publication of *Veterans of Icelandic Descent, World War II* in 1990 and the *Supplement to Veterans of Icelandic Descent World War II* in 1993, which are previously mentioned. Initial "start-up" funding for this project came from the Memorial Fund.

Over the years, the Chapter has support-

ed a number of fundraising events in the community. In 1951, support was given to the Endowment Fund to establish a Chair of Icelandic Language and Literature at the University of Manitoba, and in 1995 the Chapter supported the Campaign for Funds for the Icelandic Chair. A gift to the VIP Millenium Campaign in June, 2000 for the Icelandic Collection, Elizabeth Dafoe Library, University of Manitoba, provided a Bison terminal for use in the new facility. In 2005, the Chapter gave a donation in support of the Logberg-Heimskringla Future Fund Capital Campaign.

A favourite project, initiated in 1937, is the scholarship program. Over the years the program has grown and many academic and music students have received assistance through these scholarships. In 2005, the Chapter presented 17 scholarships totalling \$6,900.00 at the annual Scholarship Presentation Ceremony. These scholarships are awarded to Manitoba students attending universities or post secondary educational institutions.

June 17 is an exciting time for the Chapter when members conduct a wreath-laying ceremony at the statue of Jon Sigurdsson on the grounds of the Manitoba Legislative Building in Winnipeg commemorating Iceland's Day of Independence. Following this ceremony, a musical program has been held, most recently at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, jointly sponsored by the Jon Sigurdsson Chapter, the Fron INL Chapter and the Consul General of Iceland. This year, to commemorate the Jon Sigurdsson Chapter's Ninetieth Anniversary, plans are being made for a special event, in conjunction with the wreath laying ceremony, to celebrate this occasion on June 17th. This event will be publicized in the Logberg-Heimskringla.

The Jon Sigurdsson Chapter IODE has brought honour to the memory of Jon Sigurdsson with the work they have accomplished, with their continuous involvement over the years to improve the quality of life for children, youth and those in need through education, social service and citizenship programs. We gratefully acknowledge the support of the community-at-large.

He had a sister in Canada

by Guðrún Ágústsdóttir
photos courtesy of Johanna Wilson



Valtýr as a young man

In 1860 a little boy was born at Árbakki, Skagaströnd, Húnavatnssýsla, which is in Northern Iceland. When he reached the age of confirmation (13-14) his mother and step-father began thinking about emigrating to the New World with the three children living with them. The plan was that his two sisters, who lived elsewhere, would join them later. However, the young lad decided on his own that he would not go with them. He later told the story this way: that in the summer of 1873 he ran away from home “bare headed, wearing only his underwear”. According to one source, the reason was that he wanted to go to school; not just any school, but the Latin School in Reykjavík, and later the University of Copenhagen. The decision to stay behind proved fateful for him, his family, and for Iceland. Last year on the 144th anniversary of his birth his biography was published, from which I have received much of my information for this address. The biogra-

phy was written by Jónas Thor, historian. In 1874 his mother, step-father and their two children left on their long journey to Canada. The Westfarers’ record (Vesturfararskrá) states that Símon Símonarson, a 35 year old farmer, his 39 year old wife Valdís Guðmundsdóttir, 8 year old Guðmundur Símonarson, and 2 year old Guðrún Símonardóttir had left with St. Patrick bound for Ontario. The young boy, Valtýr, stayed behind. Símon and Valdís went to Kinmount, Ontario with their two children and from there to New Iceland a year later with their son Guðmundur. Símon became a well respected man and he kept a diary all through his life. In his diary he wrote about the journey to Canada and the settlement there. Here they are in Toronto:

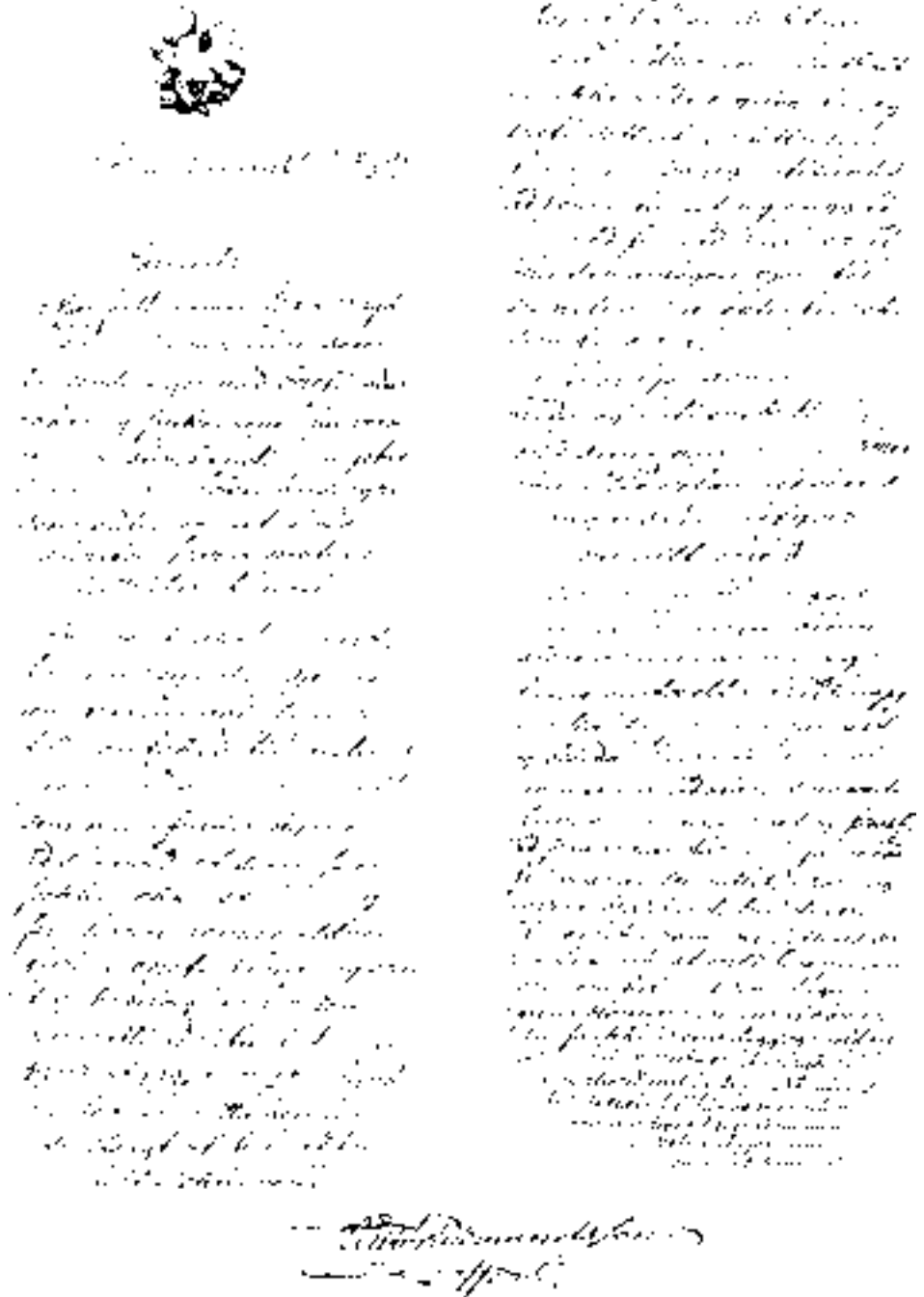
In Ontario.

“I carried my little Guðrún but my Guðmundur walked. I thought the buildings so high and the streets so narrow that the street was like a narrow ravine at home in Iceland, but the travelling was different, for the streets were paved with stone.” The following day the people were allocated to the newly built huts, which were numbered, 1,2,3,4,5, and 6. There was considerable space between them. Our family, and eight others were assigned to the number four hut. It will be left to the imagination what the atmosphere was like inside.”

Símon continues to describe the journey to Kinmount, but that story is well known and will not be retold here. We also know that the people lived under very poor conditions in Kinmount. There was little work to be had and little food as well, the children got sick and little Guðrún died eight days after they arrived in Kinmount.

New Iceland.

They moved on to New Iceland where the dream about New Iceland was to be



realized. The people were gathered from various places in Ontario and another journey began.

After about a month's travel, the last short distance on flat-boats, steamer-towed from Winnipeg "and on the twenty first of October the steamer Colville towed us on our way to Willow Point . . . A stiff breeze blew from the south . . ." There Valdís delivered the little boy, the first to be born in New Iceland, exactly 130 years ago. Valdís was a good midwife and delivered many children both in New Iceland and Argyle.

Valdís travelled to Winnipeg to work in domestic service. In 1876 Símon began building his new house, on his own land and the work of building took two days, because Símon had already cut the logs required. He planted potatoes and then he went to Winnipeg with his son, Mundi, to meet with Valdís. They stayed on in Winnipeg. Símon working for Taylor at making flat-boats for the party of Icelanders who arrived that summer. The first group came with Sigtryggur, 750 people, and the second with Halldór Briem with nearly 450 people. Símon went back, finished the roof of his house, and moved in, in late September. "I named the place Skógar (Woods)." It was rightly named for the land was for the most part heavily wooded. The cows arrived at the end of July, 1877, 250 of them from Minnesota. The settlers had been without milk for two years, and we can just imagine how welcome these creatures were. Símon and Valdís called their cow Búbót, (Bountiful).

On September 14, 1877 Lord Dufferin visited Gimli.

Guðrún is born in the bushes in Gimli, 1878.

"On Saturday, March 16, 1878, at four o'clock in the afternoon Valdís gave birth to a daughter. Rebecca Johnson was in attendance. The child was christened on Palm Sunday, by Reverend Jón Bjarnason, and named Jóhanna Guðrún."

Símon and his family left New Iceland in March, 1881 for Argyle. There they lived for a long time, until they moved to Winnipeg and later to Selkirk where Valdís died in 1923, at age 89 and Símon died 1927. He was a diligent man and a good farmer and is thought to have made out well in the West (Canada).

Símon's diary is a treasure, now safely kept at the University Library of Manitoba, in the Icelandic Collection. He never intended to publish his diary, "it is highly personal and does not attempt to tell a comprehensive story of the settlement."

Valtýr stayed behind.

Now back to Valtýr Guðmundsson who stayed behind because he wanted to get an education. Where did this very poor boy in North Iceland get the idea that he could attend school like the children of well-to-do people did. One explanation could be that his father had attended the school at Bessastaðir. When he died in 1865, Valtýr was five years old, and inherited his properties, not his books or manuscripts.

Another explanation could be that while Valtýr lived with Símon and Valdís at Heiðarsel, where he ran away from, Valtýr and a neighbour's son formed a friendship and that friendship lasted as long as they lived. This man was Stefán Stefánsson, who later became Headmaster of the Akureyri College and was among the foremost naturalists in Iceland during his lifetime (*Flóra Íslands*). Undoubtedly these two bookish boys talked about their desire to get education. It appears that later the people at Heiði assisted Valtýr with obtaining work at Sauðárkrókur and got a private teacher



Guðrún at the age she would have visited her brother.

that subject.

The first Icelander to get a PhD degree in history.

Valtýr graduated from Latin School in 1883. He arrived in Copenhagen in September, 1883 and was accepted for Nordic Studies, but first he had to write an examination in philosophy. He wrote to his mother, Valdís, in Argyle, quite pleased with the results in spite of worries about his economic situation. He worked all along with his studies. In the winter of 1885 his mother was able to support him financially for the first time with the result that he was able to concentrate on his studies. She and her husband, Símon, his step-father, were able to follow his progress step by step through numerous letters across the ocean. In 1887 he graduated and his master thesis was very well received. He was encouraged to continue his studies and in 1888 he was able to write his mother and bring her the good news that his thesis had been accepted for a doctor's defense. A year later he wrote his mother again and told her that he had been appointed teacher in Icelandic history and literature, at the University of Copenhagen. At that time 14 years had passed since Símon and Valdís left Iceland and Valtýr, almost thirty years old, had completed his PhD degree in history, the first Icelander to do so. His doctor's thesis was on *Housing in Ancient Iceland*.

Valtýr Guðmundsson published the magazine *Eimreiðin (The Railway)* 1895 - 1917, which was considered to be among the best Icelandic magazines. Many of its subscribers lived in Icelandic settlements in North America and his step-father, Símon, worked at helping him distribute the paper. In 1889 Valtýr married Anna Jóhannesdóttir, but she was in poor health most of her life and died in 1903.

Valtýr the politician.


Valtýr was not only a scholar, he became an important politician and had a seat at Althing (Parliament) for a decade and a half. He fought hard for Iceland's independence from Denmark, where he

for him and his friend, Stefán.

After Valtýr ran away from home, at age 13, he lived on various farms in Húnaþing, often under difficult circumstances. He wrote numerous letters to his mother in Canada and in 1878 he described his poverty in a letter to her, but also mentioned that he had obtained good work and had been able to buy clothes. He was, of course, an orphan with his family living on another continent and the conditions of orphaned youth in Iceland at that time were, to say the least, terrible.

In the fall of 1877, at the age of 17, he entered Latin School in Reykjavík. Valtýr had to rely on himself; the inheritance from his father did not go far, and he soon began teaching along with his studies. In a letter to his mother in 1881 he said that he wanted to study grammar because he enjoyed

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chose a certain route which aimed at unraveling the political knot rather than cutting it. He was a leader of a movement on the Constitutional Issue and many people expected him to become Iceland's first cabinet minister in 1904. His political strategy was named for him and called "Valtýska", Valtýs Party which all Icelanders have heard of. The main aim of "Valtýrism" was for Icelanders to get their own cabinet minister, stationed in Denmark. The reason for this view was that he felt it was a more realistic one than demanding a cabinet minister in Iceland on the first round. Political changes in Denmark actually made this proposal of Valtýr unnecessary, when a newly elected government in Denmark offered Iceland a cabinet minister in Iceland.

Valtýr died 1928, at age 68. He had requested that his earthly remains be taken to Iceland. He never lived in Iceland, after he left to attend school in Denmark. He attended Althing in summers and always kept his teaching position in Copenhagen. He was well known as a scholar and politician and the announcement of his death was published in papers in the Scandinavian countries, Iceland and in North America and many memorial articles were written about him. His funeral was held at the Reykjavík Cathedral.

Did Guðrún and Valtýr ever meet?

Now we have made a quick overview of his life. Did Valtýr ever meet his little sister, Guðrún, the little sister that was born in the bushes in Gimli? In the letters Valtýr wrote to his family in Canada he often mentioned a possible visit. Valtýr also wrote beautiful and warm letters to Guðrún in his small and beautiful handwriting.

Valtýr met his family once. It happened this way: A professor in chemistry at Harvard University, by the name of Horsford, became very interested in the history of Vikings in North America. He studied various archeological remains in the area of Cambridge, Massachusetts and discovered that the remains he had studied were from the Viking era and that the place called, Hóp, in the Sagas had been at

Cambridge where Þorfinnur Karlsefni and his men stayed during their exploratory trip. The professor's interest was so intense, that on his death-bed he commissioned his daughter to continue the research. That she did with much energy. She studied Icelandic so that she could read the Sagas and other sources in the original language. She most likely read *Greenlanders' Saga* and the *Saga of Eric the Red*, besides other writings. She sought Valtýr Guðmundsson's assistance, who had written his doctor's thesis on *Housing in Ancient Iceland*, and asked him to examine the ruins of buildings in Cambridge. He stayed in Massachusetts for six weeks. We will not deal with the results of this study here. But this was Valtýr's opportunity to visit his mother, step-father, sisters and brother. He traveled to Winnipeg and in his travelogue he says: "I was quite excited as I moved west-ward with the Pacific Railways, as for a long time I had wanted to see the Icelandic settlements with my own eyes. Manitoba, and Argyle, were of special interest to me, because there I had many relatives; a mother and step-father whom I had not seen for 22 years, a married half-brother and three half-sisters; (Valdis had left two older daughters in Iceland. They joined the family in the Argyle district where they married, Anna and Kristjana.) and so added to my relatives, but the youngest at age 17 was unmarried. I had never met her because she was born in America and I was interested in meeting her". He arrived in Winnipeg where his brother, Guðmundur, met him. Also there to meet him were the editors of the Icelandic papers, Sigtryggur Jónasson, MLA for Manitoba, and Eggert Jóhannsson. The paper Tribune also got hold of Valtýr and he had to tell them thoroughly about his studies at Cambridge. Valtýr spent two days in Winnipeg, looking around and meeting people.

Valtýr is impressed with the energy of Icelanders in Canada.

He was impressed with the energy of Icelanders living there and their interest in maintaining their Icelandic heritage and



Valtýr with the Order of the Falcon

culture, he especially praised their interest in building an Icelandic library and university. From Winnipeg Valtýr and Thorsteinn Erlingsson, who had joined him, traveled to Argyle. There Valtýr met his mother, Valdís Guðmundsdóttir and his step-father Símon Símonarson, along with his youngest sister, Guðrún "whom he now saw for the first time." As you can imagine this was a joyful reunion as such a long time had passed since I had seen my family and relatives.

A well-spring of ideas.

Valtýr spent about three weeks in Canada, mainly in Argyle and Winnipeg. He kept his eyes open and was impressed with many things he saw; he was very interested in railway transportation for Iceland. Today, 110 years later, that has still not happened in Iceland. He challenged his fellow countrymen to follow the example of Western-Icelanders in many respects and reminded them that they have received good and useful suggestions, both through letters they have written to friends and relatives, but also in articles in papers. He pointed out that soon many Western-Icelanders will want to travel to Iceland to see their country of origin "they are very

interested in visiting the places of their youth; about 100 of them are planning to travel "home" at the turn of the century, and some have begun setting money aside." He also mentioned the "Icehouse" idea freezing plants, which came from the Nordal's in Canada and became a reality in Iceland. He also mentioned that the market for Icelandic literature had increased, since the Western-Icelandic settlements began growing. And he said that presently more Icelandic books are bought in America than in Iceland; but of course the economic conditions have an effect on that. He continued, and answered at the same time voices in Iceland which tried in every way to stop people from moving to North America. "There is no way we can stop people from moving West by reviling America and Western-Icelanders, and denying them what is true and fair. That is not fair play either. It would be better to join hands and work at increasing production, improving transportation and job opportunities, that people would know they had opportunities in Iceland. It would also undoubtedly prove very opportune if Icelandic farmers would send their young sons to America to stay for some time to learn from their countrymen. Although farming methods were quite different, their eyes would open for many things and they would be able to improve on many things when they returned, if only it was to teach people how to use new tools."

When Valtýr left Canada, his mother and Simon gave him a gold watch. Nothing needed to be said. But a gold watch, would have been nothing but a dream, back in Húnavatnssýsla in 1874.

During the next few years he continued to encourage Icelanders to familiarize themselves with progresses relating to the job market and transportation abroad and his stay in North America was a well-spring of new ideas and suggestions to him.

Willard Fiske, Arthur M.Reeves and Caroline Foulke Urie.

His sister, Guðrún, was teaching in Árnes when Valtýr arrived. He heard that she was a good teacher and that the stu-

dents valued her greatly. This gave him the idea, that she, only 17 years old at the time, could take on teaching Icelandic to a well-to-do young lady in Richmond, Indiana. The pupil was Miss Caroline Foulke, who was a niece of Arthur M. Reeves, (1856-1891) a man of considerable wealth, who was a great friend of Iceland. He was well versed in Icelandic and was the author of *Wineland the Good*. Teacher and pupil formed a life-long friendship and they maintained constant touch through correspondence until Caroline died. All her letters to Guðrún are of course in Icelandic. (Winter 1956: The Icelandic Canadian). Miss Foulke became well known as Caroline Foulke Urie, a friend of Jane Addams, of Hull House, Chicago, and a prominent worker for world peace. Her husband was the medical doctor to the president of the USA, Theodore Roosevelt.

Willard Fiske, the great friend of Iceland and beneficiary of Icelandic literature, visited Iceland between July and mid October, 1879 and traveled around the country. Two of his students traveled with him, one of whom was Arthur M. Reeves. They came ashore at Husavik, Skjalfandi, and Fiske's travelog contains detailed descriptions written by Reeves on life there, housing and the excellent reception they received. After viewing Dettifoss, Reeves mentioned that it was comparable to Niagara Falls. Willard Fiske was a professor in Old Norse and German at Cornell University, Ithaca, as well as head librarian of the university library. The Icelandic Collection in Ithaca is his accomplishment. It is the largest collection of Icelandic books outside Iceland. Arthur M. Reeves translated *Piltur of Stulka*, by Jon Thoroddssen, which he called *Lad and Lass*, published in London in 1889. Valtýr read the translation over and gave good advice. He also translated *Haensnaporir's Saga*, *Floamanna Saga* and a part of *Eyrbyggja Saga*. Valtýr and Reeves became good friends when Reeves spent the greater part of the month of May 1889 in Copenhagen with Valtýr, studying Icelandic and reading ancient literature. They had begun translating *Laxdaela Saga* when Reeves died in a train accident, in his

home district in 1891. Caroline wanted to honour her cousin by studying Icelandic. She donated her university papers, both Icelandic and English, to the Department of Icelandic at the University of Manitoba.. It was of great value to the collection.

Guðrún visits Copenhagen and Iceland in 1897.

Valtýr and Guðrún continued their correspondence and Valtýr wanted Guðrún to visit him in Copenhagen. He said that she could stay with him and his wife Anna for as long as she liked, and they would try to find ways to get her all the way to Iceland, when Valtýr has to attend parliament meetings.

In 1897 Guðrún visited Copenhagen and wrote a letter to her parents. She told them that she had seen a play by Henrik Ibsen in the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen and even had the privilege of meeting him and his wife and not only that, but Björnsterne Björnsson. The occasion was Ibsen's 70th birthday where his play *Brandur* was being staged. And she was the seat mate of George Brandes, while her brother Valtýr made a speech at the opening of the University of Copenhagen. There she met with a very tall man and learned that he was the crown prince of Denmark, later King Christian the X.

Of course the strong willed Guðrún and her strong willed brother Valtýr fulfilled their dream of visiting Iceland. There she met with her pupil Miss Foulke, who had acquired a background for her Icelandic visit partly by her study of *Njáls Saga* and *Laxdæla Saga* during the previous term.

In 1958 Guðrún visited Iceland again, 80 years old at the time, and accompanied by her granddaughter. She visited the Althing (Parliament) among other places. The purpose, among others, was to deliver a painting of Valtýr which she had asked the excellent Icelandic artist, Kristín Jónsdóttir (1988-1959), to paint. Kristín was a daughter-in-law of Stefán Stefánsson's from Heiði, Skagafjörður; Valtýr's friend from his youth who had actually named his son for him. This painting by Kristín still hangs in the Althing

Building, which is very appropriate. Upon her return to Canada Guðrún wrote her travelogue and delivered it at the Icelandic Canadian Club.

Guðrún confides in her brother.

Guðrún and Valtýr's correspondence continued. She confided in her brother that she knew a young man, by the name of Jóseph B. Skaptason, and asked him whether he knew anything about him. Valtýr answered right away and said that of course he is familiar with his people although he did not know Jóseph himself. Jóseph's forefather, of course, attended the famous "National Meeting at the Latin School in 1851" and his people were well known and respected. However, Valtýr wanted to give her some advice and said that she need not take the first offer she got, there are other fish in the sea and they may also be in Iceland or Copenhagen. He indicated that a sister of a parliamentarian and university professor could have many opportunities. It is not difficult to read between the lines that he was very interested in bringing his sister closer to himself. She is his only relative who could possible move closer to him. But Guðrún does not let her brother influence her decision. She married Jóseph B. Skaptason in 1901. He became prominent in the Icelandic community in Winnipeg and filled positions of responsibility in the service of the Manitoba and the Federal Government, first in the service of the Provincial Secretary of the Manitoba Government, then as Chief Inspector of Fisheries for Manitoba. Theirs was a very happy marriage.

Guðrún's life story in her own words:

How did Guðrún spend her life after her marriage to Jóseph B. Skaptason. She herself wrote a short description of her life, so that is why we can let Guðrún describe her life in her own words:

"Of public affairs that I have been involved in the first and most important is the temperance movement. I was made a life time member of the Hekla chapter in the Good Templar organization. I was made the custody person of the main

branch and I founded three branches for young people during the time I was in charge. In 1916 I organized the Jon Sigurdsson IODE Chapter with Icelandic women in Winnipeg. I invited to a meeting at my place, women from three Icelandic congregations here in Winnipeg. I thought that we women could not be idle while our men were fighting against the imperialism by the German authorities. Now the chapter is 35 years old and has done much for our social life here. It has added cooperation and compassion among Icelanders. When we moved to Selkirk I became a life time member of their organization. The greatest accomplishment of the club was the publication of *Minningarrit Íslenzkra Hermanna*. It cost a lot of money, 10,000 dollars. Because our chapter had sent parcels and had corresponded with the soldiers, we could gather names and information for the book.

Icelandic soldiers in England during the First World War.

I was one year in England during the war. I tried together with Jóseph to do as much as possible for the Icelandic soldiers. Most memorable is the celebration of Christmas when we had 40 for dinner. It was very enjoyable to come together, speeches, poetry made on the spot and singing all night and lots to eat and drink. I was regent of the chapter for 17 years, have always made the welfare of the chapter being my main goal, that is to strengthen and assist our fellow beings and improve education. I was the president for three years of the Unitarian Congregation in Winnipeg, also the first president and for many years with the charitable committee of the congregation.

I was vice president and on the executive committee of the church ladies club for many years. I was made a life member of the General Alliance in Boston at the time of my 70th birthday, as shown in *Brautin* 1948, published by our church club.

The family.

You can see from this that I have been industrious, as I have also written many

many lectures and had a large household. My parents lived with us until they died. We brought up three daughters. Margrét Hólmfríður, the daughter of Björn Blöndal and Björg Björnsdóttir, Halldórssonar from Úlfsstaðir in Loðmundarfjörður in Norður-Múlasýsla in Iceland. I took her when she was sixteen months when her mother died and raised her as my own. She has five living children.

Anna Guðrún Hólmfríður, the daughter of Wilhelm Kristjánsson and Þrúður Guðmundsson, they both died in the Spanish flu epidemic in 1918. She was 20 months old when she came to us and we took the place of her parents. She had one son. (Later she had two daughters, information from Johanna Wilson).

Jóhanna Guðrún is our own daughter. She married an English man, has always lived in the family home, she has three talented children.

The evening of my life.

Now I have come to the evening of my life. Everyone has been very good to me. When I retired from the position of president of the Jón Sigurdsson Chapter, I was honored by the chapter by making me a life member of the Provincial IODE chapter, to which the Jón Sigurdsson chapter belongs, I had been an officer in my chapter for 20 years. I am therefore a life member now in four organizations, that is an honour I feel I cannot express my gratitude for well enough. Great gifts I have been given, but it is the love and friendships that have accompanied me all my life, that I appreciate most, and hope to enjoy to the end of my days. "

Many here may remember Johanna Guðrún Skaptason. In the Icelandic Canadian in 1960 there is an article/obituary written by W. Kristjánsson after Guðrún passed away in October, 1960. Many memorial articles were written about both siblings, Valtýr and Guðrún. After Valtýr's death, many memorials were written in the Scandinavian countries, and in 1960, the year he would have turned 100, most of the Icelandic papers ran articles on him, and two lengthy articles appeared in Lögberg-Heimskringla.



Guðrun Skaptason

His biography which was published last year, concludes with these words: "In my estimation he was Iceland's most important politician in the 19th century, other than Jón Sigurdsson."

Guðrún was respected and revered here in the West and the same is true in Iceland. She is written about in many places after her death. I mentioned earlier that Guðrún visited Iceland at age 80 along with her granddaughter. The travelogue she delivered at the Icelandic Canadian Club still exists and it is amazing how many she appears to have known in Iceland and how many knew her. Jónas Jónsson from Hrifla, one of Iceland's best known politicians and former cabinet members, chauffeured her around the capital and showed her important cultural places. She visited the bishop, leaders of women's organizations, men in the business life, not only in Reykjavík, but all across the country, because although one is 80 years old one is able to tackle travelling on poor roads and across second rate bridges. She was clearly a welcome guest wherever she went.

Copenhagen – Winnipeg – Reykjavík.

Now we have mentioned three Icelandic capitals. Copenhagen, which was Iceland's capital for more than 400 years, Winnipeg which was the capital of the Icelandic settlements in North America and Reykjavík, the one true capital of Iceland. In this talk of mine I wanted to connect these cities and I found this approach handy. It shows us, I hope, how siblings who grew up in different countries could be closely connected; he alone, drifting along, and poor some of the time, she born in the back-bushes at Gimli with loving parents. They loved and respected each other all their lives both before and after they met, when Guðrún was 17 years old and Valtýr 37. He wrote before he left Iceland that he was most looking forward to meeting his sister, Guðrún, whom he had never seen until he arrived in Canada. He was clearly not disappointed. He met a 17 year old lady who was teaching in Árnes Manitoba and trusted her to go to Indiana, USA to become a private teacher in Icelandic. She was so successful with this project that her student Caroline became fluent in Icelandic and a specialist in *Njáls Saga* and the *Laxdæla Saga*.

One hundred years ago Copenhagen was an important part of the Icelandic world and so was and is Winnipeg. Copenhagen was the capital of Iceland for more than 400 years. Today there are more students furthering their education in Denmark than in any other country in the world outside of Iceland, and Danish is still taught in all Icelandic primary schools.

Valtýr Guðmundsson refused to leave with his family to the New World. They settled in Winnipeg, while he struggled to get an education and lived most of his life in Copenhagen. He always thought of Iceland, but his closest relatives lived far away. Still he had close connections to his family in the West; he was a kind of a metaphor of the fate awaiting many Icelanders at that time. The triangle Copenhagen, Winnipeg, Reykjavík put their mark on his life.

Svavar and I feel fortunate to have been appointed to serve our nation in all these

three countries/capitals, two in the past tense, one in the near future.

Editor's Note: This address was given at the Johnson Hall in Gimli, Manitoba after the *Walk to the Rock* on October 21, 2005.

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Letters from Valtýr Guðmundsson to his sister and parents. Private collection.

Letters from Guðrún Skaptason to her parents and family. Private collection.

Letters from Caroline Foulke Urie to Guðrún Skaptason. Private collection.

Guðrún Skaptason's diary from her trip to Iceland in 1958. Private collection.

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Úrklippur úr íslenskum, dönskum og norskum blöðum úr fórum Jóhannu Wilson, þar sem skrifað er um Valtý. Mest frá andláti hans 1928 og á aldarafmælinu.

Spotlight

by Marianne Jonasson

Hrafnhildur Arnardóttir recently exhibited her work “Left Brain, Right Brain” at Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art in Winnipeg. Light brown braids representing the right side of the brain, or creativity are organic in design. A separate mass of dark braids represents the left side of the brain, or logic in a more linear pattern. Together, they resemble a large braided rug rich in texture. The effect is beautifully interesting. I had the opportunity to interview Hrafnhildur at Plug In. Here is an excerpt of our conversation.

Hrafnhildur Arnardóttir (HA): In my art, because the hair has been braided, it becomes like a drawing. Each installation is different. I don't decide before what they look like. The way we style our hair projects an image to the world. We're obsessed with hair. A person with very beautiful hair is almost guaranteed to do better in life. The hair is a dead cell, or waste product. We put so much value on these “leftovers” of our body. It's about vanity. We like to control it, tame it, and make it beautiful. In movie love scenes, they take down the hair. It's all about the animal or the emotion, being free from control.

Marianne Jonasson (MJ): The Victorians had a tradition of braiding hair from their loved ones to create a memorial to those who had passed on. Did this influence your work?

HA: That fascinated me – the perversion of it. It's hair, but not on somebody's head. In Iceland, there is an old tradition of creating little flowers out of human hair, to decorate a dead person's picture. I came upon a flower like that in an antique shop in Iceland. They were so small and delicate. I wanted to see them on a larger scale. It

would be like the dream hair of a giant.

MJ: Do you use natural or synthetic hair?

HA: You can buy long hair, but it's really expensive. To me, the synthetic represents hair. It is not 100% vital that it is real. But when I work on smaller scale, I like to use real hair – it has a totally different texture - more beautiful, more emotion – it's not robotic.

MJ: The photos of Bjork wearing your braided headdress reminded me of African braiding techniques.

HA: It is very much inspired by the hairdressing in black culture. I moved to New York and saw amazing women with elaborate braids woven into sculptures of flowing hair. It was amazing to me. So ornamental.

MJ: How else has New York influenced you and your work?

HA: The city has been good for me in many ways because of my interest in fashion and the concept of vanity. In New York you can go out highly decorated in the middle of the afternoon. It's a freedom of expression, this madness there. I've been there twelve years now, so I don't know where the Icelandic background begins and ends, and where the New York one comes out. It is very intertwined.

MJ: Winnipeg is an island with the nearest large cities located very far away. This isolation causes many of our artists to become highly individualistic. Does a similar situation exist in Iceland?

HA: Yes. You're in the middle of nowhere and very self-contained. You have to create your own entertainment. One reason why I was so creative as a kid was because I was bored. When I moved to New York that element was taken away from me – being bored. For the first half year, I needed to absorb. Now, I almost feel afraid to take advantage of all the things offered there –the entertainment, the shows and music. In order to find time to be by myself and work, I have to create isolation. In my mind, there are two very different accents – Iceland and New York: introvert and extrovert. I can only survive in New York because I have Iceland. I can only be in Iceland because I know I have New York.

MJ: Where do you see your work going?

HA: I see myself moving away from using only hair in my work, like I've done for the past few years. I have started to use other materials, for example photographs. The work still resembles the drawing elements in the wall pieces, but is getting more installation oriented. I combine various elements to create an imaginary world the viewer steps into. I am now working in drawing and small-scale sculpture as well as big installations.

MJ: What would your fantasy art piece be if time or money was not a factor?

HA: I am currently working on my dream piece. It involves gold in large quantity. I want to represent gold as fragile and vulnerable. I am working on a small piece. My dream would be to make a larger version.

MJ: Could you explain the shoplifter moniker used on your website?

HA: Somebody misheard my name Hrafnhildur as Shoplifter. I started doing fashion and that seemed like a hilariously perfect clothing label. This name Hrafnhildur- in New York no one can pronounce it. So it's freed me from it, saying Shoplifter.

Hrafnhildur Arnardóttir's work can be viewed on her website, shoplifter.us



Hrafnhildur
Arnardóttir



Right brain Detail Kjarval



**Björk
Guðnadóttir**

by Freya Arnason

VOLCANA – Icelandic Panorama is a contemporary art exhibit, featured at the Plug-In gallery in the Winnipeg Exchange District until February. The exhibit, curated by Kevin Kelly, showcases the art of five female Icelandic artists. I had the pleasure of interviewing Björk Guðnadóttir, a young Icelandic artist whose installation art incorporates a variety of materials including fabrics, drawings and photographs.

Björk developed an interest in art at an early age, intrigued by the process of creation. Her mother and her grandmother enjoyed knitting and sewing, which inspired Björk's love of fabrics.

Björk initially studied tailoring in Paris with the intention of working in theatre and film, but she fell in love with the artistic aspect of working with fabrics. She applied at the Art Academy in Oslo, Norway where she studied for two years. Björk finished her Masters of Fine Arts in Northern Sweden in 1999 and has been creating art ever since. She has participated in several group exhibitions and her art has been featured in a number of private shows. She recently received a one year grant from the Icelandic Cultural Ministry and looks forward to exploring new artistic directions throughout the year.

This gifted artist does not design her art with a specific plan in mind, but instead follows instinct in the process of creation. She prefers to create art that relates directly to the body and is, in itself, an experience. She describes her art as "a history for the senses".

The inspiration for this particular installation stemmed from a previous project, commissioned by the Iceland Scouts. Björk was asked to create capes for their

national convention that represented their logo. The interesting shapes and colors of the left-over fabric from the capes reminded her of a landscape, which inspired her to begin this project. The vibrant colors- red, blue, white, yellow and green have been arranged to convey a nature theme, representing water, sun, grass, fire and ice.

Björk constructed her uniquely volatile landscape on site, amalgamating available gallery space and materials into a distinctively symbiotic fixture which entices the viewer and ensconces them in a nostalgic feeling of childhood, home and hearth. This installation includes methodically placed felt pieces on the floor and lower portions of the walls, in concert with a hanging photograph of two figures wearing her felt capes. Unification of this piece is completed by the inclusion of a hand drawn image which adds a tone of mystery to the installation.

Björk enjoyed her first trip to Canada and is looking forward to visiting again to travel and sightsee. During their stay the artists made a trip out to Gimli, Manitoba where they were able to tour the town and meet the Icelandic Canadians who still identify strongly with their Icelandic roots. The unique show has provided a wonderful opportunity to maintain and to strengthen cultural and artistic ties between Iceland and Canada.

Volcana was organized by Kevin Kelly, who became friends with these Icelandic artists while attending Rutgers University in New York. He is a guest curator at the Plug-In gallery, where Björk's art can be viewed until February. She will also be participating in two upcoming shows in Reykjavik. One is called "porcelain" which focuses on statues and sculptures made from porcelain. The other will be featured in a gallery called "fuql," which means bird. Visiting with this gifted young artist and experiencing her distinctive installation was a delight. Volcana is a must see for all those interested in art, Iceland and Icelandic culture.

GIMLI IGA
 Your Hometown Advantage
 Ron & Ingvar Karrek

by Kristine Perlmutter



Pordís Aðalsteinsdóttir

As I shared a cup of tea with Pordís Aðalsteinsdóttir during her recent trip to Winnipeg, I asked her whether she made her art primarily for herself or if she sought opportunities to show it to others. In answer, she allowed me a peek into her creative process which requires a balance between solitude and the society of others. Solitude is required for the work to be born but she also requires time to be in the world- to rejuvenate, reflect and collect inspiration for further work. For the next few months, she hopes to have some uninterrupted time in her studio. At one point, she felt such a need to work away from the world that she moved to an Icelandic village where she was unknown and did nothing but work. At the same time, she became hungry for feedback and wished to share her creations with others. “You make the work in response to some need that you have,” says Pordís, “but it is lonely if nobody ever comes to see your work or cares about it.” She currently makes her home in New York City and finds, paradoxically, that the crowdedness and heterogeneity of the culture gives her the mental space she needs for making art. For the reflection and self-nurturance that is the other pole of the process, she feels lucky to have the homogeneity, physical space and landscape of Iceland to return to.

A painter who works primarily in acrylics, using oils for accents, Aðalsteinsdóttir has recently begun working in mural paint that is impervious to weather. This is in response to having her billboard size paintings (12 feet by 16 feet) installed in outdoor sculpture garden venues and having to prepare the paintings to function as outdoor works. A fine artist, Pordís is represented by Stefan Stux Gallery in New

York City and finds being represented by a gallery very helpful in getting her projects out into the world.

As with most artists, Aðalsteinsdóttir finds it difficult to characterize her work other than to say that she paints flat figures. She always begins with a feeling and a story, seeing the completed painting on the canvas before she begins. Although she might doodle a bit, sketching her ideas out before painting them is not her practice. She makes oblique references to Bible stories, folk art, fairy tales and fantasy in her work, hoping to leave the viewer with questions. The paintings are discreet, understated and demanding of the audience. The colors are muted, the importance of negative space is in evidence and the daily domestic round is infused with poetry. She has had to learn to not be embarrassed about making images that might be questionable to some. “When you put your work on display,” she suggests, “you are opening up yourself and making yourself vulnerable. You don’t know what kind of reaction the work will get and you don’t want others to think you’re not cool, but that is a fear you have to ignore.” Looking at her paintings, one is drawn to the bruising that often appears on the figures. Her explanation is that the bruising is more about the feelings being documented than it is about the physical. It is possible to love differently, for example, when you see someone’s vulnerability- their dark side, their sad side.

Pordís suggests that the fact that there isn’t the same tradition of visual art in Iceland as there is, for example, of literature, gives artists a certain freedom. They are not weighed down by Icelandic art history and advance expectations about what art should be. She tends to make references to art history in her work in a way that amuses her e.g. by casting “macho” artists of the past in a feminine light. In Iceland, she felt, however, that painting, her medium of choice, was viewed as old-fashioned and “not seen to be the thing these days.” In New York, she began using painting as a main medium to comment on painting itself. There, she saw painting taken seriously as part of the modern art scene.

Asked how she feels about how her art is interpreted, Thordis suggests that it is always interesting, sometimes surprising, to learn what reactions people have. She finds it fascinating to see how different people read differently what they see. Even if she feels that people are totally off in terms of what she had in mind, she finds that each response makes her think and helps her to grow as an artist. You can’t take things personally. You are stretched by each response. You can even get really curious from reading a bad review. She feels a piece or a show must have something in it to evoke such a negative reaction. Her response is that “everything is inspiring, even if I don’t like it.”

If you have an opportunity to view Pordís Aðalsteinsdóttir’s work, seize it. She will show you how she sees the world and it will influence how you see it for yourself.

Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi



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by Kerri Taverner

I had the pleasure of meeting Margrét Blöndal, a Contemporary artist participating in the VOLCANA Icelandic Panorama exhibit currently featured at the Plug-In Institute of Contemporary Art in the Winnipeg Exchange District. Margrét, the 4 other VOLCANA artists and curator Kevin Kelly, toured Gimli the day after their exhibition's grand opening in Winnipeg.

The artistic group drove out to our small lakeside town of Gimli, which is the largest settlement of Icelanders outside of Iceland. On this journey they visited Betel and met our community elders of Icelandic descent, giving them the opportunity to converse about the area, the people and their stories in the Icelandic language.

After visiting the New Iceland Heritage Museum, their last stop on their journey was Willow Island. The artists visited White Rock; a tribute that my grandfather and his brothers established to honour the first Icelandic settlers.

It was a rare and exciting opportunity for me, as a visual artist of Icelandic descent, to sit down for coffee and pon-nokokurs and discuss art with these creative women. Introductions were made, which were followed by a discussion of where the artists were from in Iceland. Naturally, this was followed by a conversation about who was related to whom in Iceland and in Gimli. As it turns out, Margrét is related to our very own, Senator Janis Johnson.

As we became more comfortable with each other, our conversation turned to the art show at the Plug In gallery. I asked the group how they felt their diverse mediums came together as a whole in this exhibition. There was a consensus that a fusion and



Margrét
Blöndal

natural synthesis had been created by the varied works. There is a flow of the organic from piece to piece and space to space, which creates a genuine feel for the landscape.

I had the pleasure of focusing on the artwork of Margrét Blöndal, who was born in Reykjavik, January 28th, 1970. Art has been an important part of her life since she was a young girl. Her education in the arts began in 1986 at the Art School of Reykjavik, Iceland. She furthered her training by obtaining her Bachelor's of Fine Arts at The Icelandic College of Arts and Crafts in 1993 and then completed her Masters of Fine Arts at Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University in 1997.

Margrét has previously had the honour of showcasing her art in numerous solo and group exhibitions around the world. She has several pieces in public collections and has won a number of awards for her work.

As an installation artist, Margrét uses commonplace objects to construct dynamic work with an emphasis on concept and space. Blöndal creates interior landscapes, exposing a variety of layered meanings and interpretations for the viewer, which in a unique sense, echoes elements of Iceland's distinctive culture and embodies its current Contemporary art scene.

Her piece featured in the exhibition is titled "Foam holes, loops, rubber, ribbon leaning, diagonal swayed cloud of particles, slightly off horizon sticks, bubbled, sprayed and blue, 2005" and takes the space of an entire room. This installation requires the viewer to step into the space and open their eyes. One must look and think and then think again, to become integrated with the work and to truly feel what is evoked by Margrét's transformation of the space.

I wish I had been able to watch Margrét transform the materials and the space into the feeling of home, security and warmth that the exhibit invokes. Margrét's choice of materials, combined with the sparse inclusion of colour adds an element of melancholy.



Vengeance and Violence: Honour, Love and Revenge in Saga Iceland

by Brynn Enright

Violence in saga Iceland and violence in our contemporary culture are at first glance treated very differently, both in the way each society understands or responds to it, and in the ways in which it is depicted.

For the most part, that is a fair statement to make. After all, one could quite rightly point out the general lack of neighbours chopping each other up over an incident of name-calling. But there are some similarities which our modern society might tend to overlook. By studying the Icelandic family sagas, I intend to explore violence in saga Iceland in a way that may uncover some of the reasons for this violence, and also question just how violent a society they may have been. In doing so, we may discover that much of the modern world has the same desire to protect honour or seek revenge on that irksome neighbour that the early Icelandic settlers apparently did, albeit in a less active way.

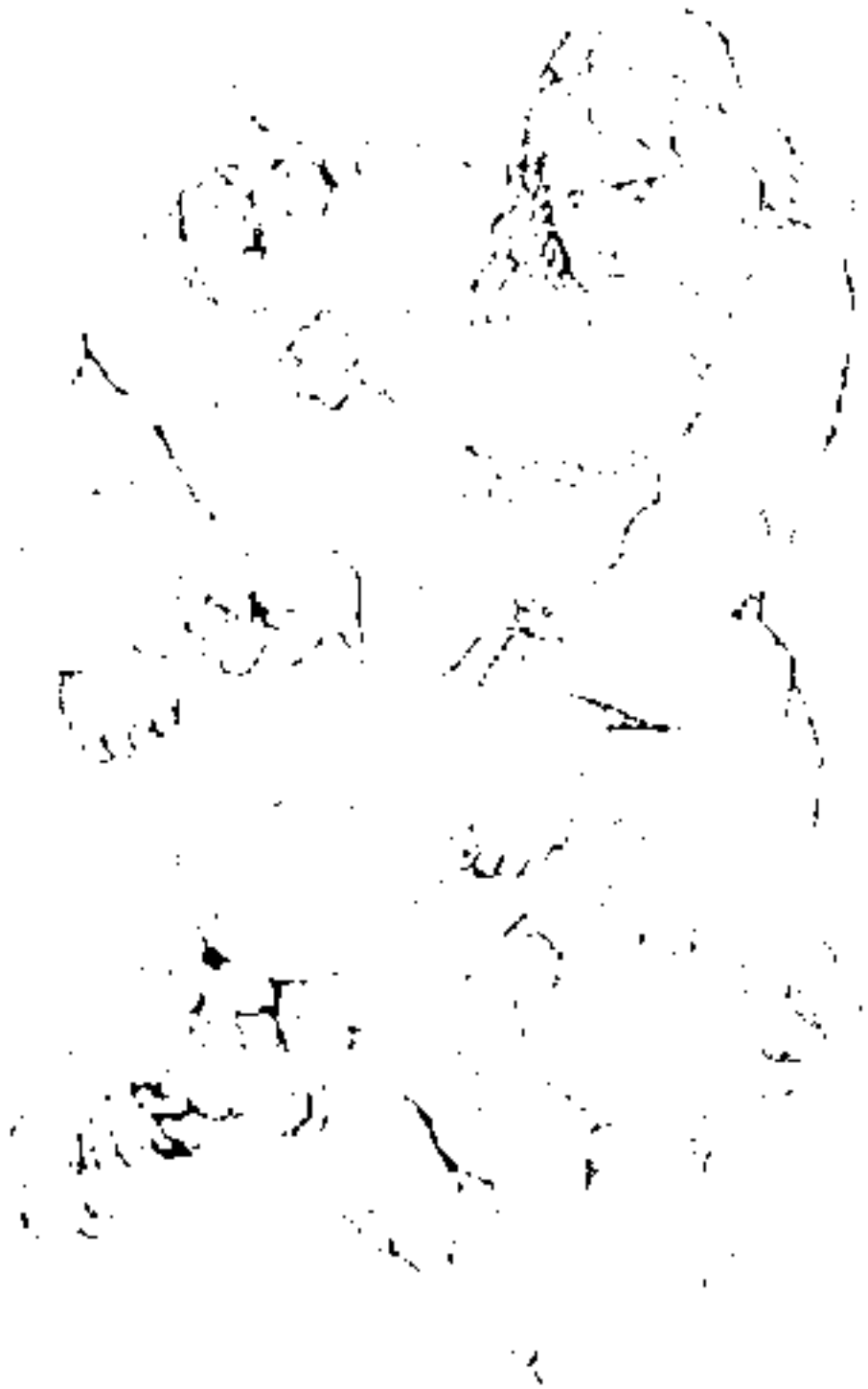
We must first decide whether or not the sagas themselves can be used as a reliable source for describing the saga time, or söguöld.¹ Helping with the impression that sagas did represent actual events, is the way in which they are written; "The narrative is presented simply as a report of events, without any comment, interpretation or other intervention from the narrator."²

Furthermore, the sagas tend to be full of elaborate genealogies, which does nothing to guarantee that they are historically accurate, but certainly helps the reader to make that assumption. At the very least, we can use these genealogies to date the saga beginnings, "anchoring the events of the saga in real historical time"³ and we can verify some events as having actually happened -- the birth or death of a historically real person, for example, as recorded in the Icelandic text Landnámabók. "But we can only rarely check the sagas against any

other source."⁴ Perhaps the conclusion that we may come to in regard to the historical accuracy of the sagas, then, is that we may consider them to be the closest thing to a record of the söguöld we have, and thus suitable for this discussion.

There is one more hurdle to get over with respect to the sagas. As a reader, it is difficult to separate the multiple layers of time presented in the sagas. We must first remember that the söguöld was not written about until much later. There is a span of several hundred years between the time in which the events may have occurred, (around the 9th century) and the time in which they were finally written down (thought to be the 12th century and later). Additionally, looking at them today we find another degree of separation between when they were written and the current time of the contemporary reader. Having such a separation between us and the events of the sagas immediately makes it harder to appreciate the Icelandic society and culture of the time, and also results in the inevitable comparisons to our own. Since I intend to compare one aspect of both cultures later on, this is not a problem unless we give in to the temptation to judge either culture while making these comparisons.

Having established the above, we can now begin to explore the topic at hand. The sagas seem to depict a society that is much more casual about violence than we as a reader may be accustomed to or even comfortable with; "Readers are amused, or repelled, by the laconic way in which rather gruesome events and grievous losses are experienced or described."⁵ It is not difficult to locate an example of this in many of the family sagas; a quick read of Gislí's saga will recount for us oozing entrails which hardly seem to bother the owner,⁶ or nearly humorous descriptions of chopped limbs as in Njal's Saga.⁷ Whether we finally



decide that such descriptions are funny or appalling is not completely relevant; either way we are struck by the frequency of them.

This can result in equating saga Iceland with a violent culture. "Most people consider the society of the Icelandic sagas a violent one, an excessively violent one for that matter. The sagas, after all, are stories of feud, vengeance, and honour."⁸

Certainly many others have viewed them as violent. But in stark contrast to this approach, there has been some consideration of saga Iceland as an overall peaceful society: Even when several hundred farmers assembled, there were very few deaths.

As seen from the sometimes exaggerated crisis situations in the sagas, small groups might be sufficiently motivated to kill a few of their opponents, but larger groups found solutions, avoiding large-scale fighting. As a society Icelanders consistently acted with restraint.⁹

The feuds which in the sagas seem so often to result in death were, as Byock notes, probably not as violent as the literary account would make them out to be. "The family sagas often exaggerate situations of crisis."¹⁰ However, that is not to say that the type of feuding which results in violent death did not exist:

Icelandic blood feud was a form of vengeance-taking. It involved deep, smouldering animosities leading to repeated reprisals. The taking of vengeance was understood as action that satisfied honour, and exchanges of violence could go on for a

very long time, frequently over generations.¹¹

Even as Byock states that violence and vengeance as presented in the sagas were actual occurrences on occasion, we are also reminded once more that "feuding in Iceland was not always blood feud. At its simplest, feud involves prolonged animosity leading to exchanges of insults and/or violent acts against property or persons, including injury and even manslaughter."¹² (It is important to keep in mind that there is a distinction between manslaughter and murder in early Icelandic society.) Even so, manslaughter seems to the contemporary reader to be a bit extreme, to say the least. Why should a supposedly "restrained" society react so violently in some cases? What are some of the reasons for these violent acts? The most common explanation has in fact already been mentioned twice, a fact which I point out only to demonstrate how intertwined the concept is with saga Iceland; traditionally, the answer has been the concept of honour.

In an honour-based culture, which saga Iceland most certainly was, your honour and the honour of your family and kin was all important:

Honour was more than just a set of rules for governing behaviour. Honour permeated every aspect of consciousness: how you thought about yourself and others, how you held your body, the expectations you could reasonably have and the demands you could make on others; it determined the quality of your marriage

and the marriage partners of your children. It was your very being. Honour was then not just a matter of the individual; it necessarily involved a group, and the group included all those people worthy of competing with you for honour.¹³

And "it has long been noted that shame is the flipside of honour."¹⁴ Thus to maintain honour, any insult or slight intended to shame the individual was a very real threat to that individual. "In Iceland, loss of honour signalled that the individual was incapable of defending either himself or his property."¹⁵ This helps to explain how we can go from a person first being insulted in some way, to that person responding with violence." The sagas reveal that medieval Icelanders, living in an honour-based culture, perceived little difference in the amount of wrong done by a blow or by a verbal insult, even a homicide or an insult. Verbal affronts and physical affronts were collapsed into a single general category of impingements on one's self and one's honour."¹⁶

There is, however, a problem with labelling the struggle to maintain honour as the root cause of much of the violent actions or harsh feuds. "The sagas show that some people were remarkably skillful in maintaining honour without having to settle every account, even some pretty big accounts."¹⁷ The importance of honour in the Icelandic saga society remains undiminished, but the response to a threat to one's honour was not always blood-shed. Indeed "honour was always sensitive to context and circumstance. Bloodtaking was not the only course of honour. In certain settings honour could be won by making peace, by ignoring an insult, even by forgiving."¹⁸ Likewise, not all feud which did result in violence seems to have stemmed from honour in the first place.

Besides honour, a possible explanation for the origin of the numerous violent feuds in saga Iceland has been presented as love and all of its related emotions—or more specifically, the ways in which love and all of its related emotions would spur the characters into action:

What our analyses have shown is that among a number of the longest and best

sagas from the classical period, we can identify two types of causes for the bloody and tragic conflicts. That is, in addition to the first pattern, consisting of the drive for achievement and the appetite for wealth and honour, there exists a second pattern based on the erotic drive, which—whether freely acted upon or thwarted—may set in motion sequences of events catastrophic to the small society in which they take place: collisions between rules—whether legal or customary—and individuals who transgress the rules.¹⁹ "when things go wrong in a saga it is usually because the two patterns of honour and love have merged and work together."²⁰ It may seem somewhat ironic that love should be the root of eventual violence. But it is just as much of a potentially volatile emotion today as it must have been in saga Iceland (if the sagas are any indication). Much of the time, when things begin to go terribly wrong it does have something to do with love, lust, or that ever present phenomenon "which lurks in the shadow of love:"²¹ jealousy. "Nobody denies that jealousy is closely related to love. The one who loves is always worried that his love will be taken away from him, that his beloved may start loving somebody else."²² If we consider what impact such a scenario would have on one's standing in society—on one's honour—we can see how dangerous this combination of emotions could have been.

Consider the events of *Laxdæla Saga*. This particular saga is perhaps best known for its depiction of the love triangle between Kjartan, Gudrun and Bolli, and certainly things did not go smoothly for any of these characters because of it. But what is especially interesting to note is that there were plenty of other events in the saga which could presumably have instigated the desire for vengeance, but it is not until love (or rather unattainable love) is introduced that things truly begin to fall apart:

The saga narrative has related numerous conflicts between men up to this point, but the conflicts between such major characters have not been insoluble. Conciliators like Hrut and Olaf have always been able to prevent the worst. For the first time

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now, when the humiliations visited on characters include an erotic dimension, the danger becomes unavoidable, even though Olaf tries harder to forestall it than at any other time in the saga. Peace makers can deal with boundary disputes and inheritance squabbles; confronted with erotic outrages their powers fail them.²³

When we talk about love as it is depicted in the sagas, it is important to remember that "the saga does not care about quiet languishment; what the saga cares about are social consequences."²⁴ And more often than not, the consequences can be vengeful feud, carried on for generations.

And what of our own generation? I suggested earlier that our own society may be more closely related to the Icelandic attitudes of vengeance, and to some extent violence, than many people might be willing to recognize. As far as violence is concerned, I suspect I do not need to go very far with a description of the excessive

amounts of violence permeating our own contemporary society to prove my point. Half an hour of watching television, playing first person shooter videogames, checking out the latest action film, or truly listening to certain music lyrics will reveal much about the way in which the Western world is obsessed with violent behaviour. I do not mean to pass judgement on any of these things; my intentions are merely to remind the reader that there is some undeniable fascination with violence in today's culture. But obviously there is a difference between one who admits that they enjoy watching violent movies, and a person who is willing and able to kill another human being over a dispute of any kind. I do not wish to suggest that these are the same thing. What I am interested in determining is just how much we share the desire to defend honour or exact vengeance, in whatever way it now manifests.

Consider the following situation. You greet an old friend at a Christmas party. They have brought you a thoughtful and expensive gift, and you have nothing to give in return. Even if your friend claims they neither want or need anything in return, I suspect many of us would feel obligated to get that person a gift regardless:

The official discourse of commerce and the ideology of the free gift are two sides of the same anti-honour coin. Yet the norm of reciprocity persists, almost with a vengeance. We still feel, even as we refuse to understand it or admit it, that gifts oblige us and that wrongs oblige us to make return and even up accounts. We still feel bound to return kindness and we feel frustrated when we are prevented from returning wrongs.²⁵

The situation with gift giving is not unfamiliar to readers of the family sagas. That is one way in which we share a similar sense of honour and reciprocity. It is the same with our sense of 'payback.' Most people do not condone violence, and yet there is always a part of us that believes it is okay to hurt someone if they have threatened or hurt us or our loved ones first: "The morally and emotionally satisfying feature of revenge is that it is the person

typed victim in our model who is doing the violence and the person typed violator who is finally humiliated and victimized."²⁶ Here is where we may be closer to the saga Icelander interpretation of vengeance than perhaps most people would like to admit. It is true that we do not generally kill for revenge, yet the desire to even up the score remains. "Although a system of blood - vendettas and other such forms of revenge are no longer part of our social conventions, private revenge for injuries and insults frequently occurs. It is considered natural for people to want to hit back and is by no means always frowned upon."²⁷ Why is certain violent behaviour acceptable (to some extent, of course) and other behaviour completely unacceptable? The answer has already been discussed above—it seems to depend on whether or not the violent act is in self-defence or defence of others; on whether it is "justified":

Violence is understood to be disordering and hence disruptive of established boundaries and established orders. This is perhaps the most consistent intuition we have about violence. We are thus less likely to perceive violence when we believe for whatever reason that it is merely the coercion necessary to make things the way they ought to be.²⁸

We do start to run into some philosophical problems here. I do not propose to be able to do much more than touch on the moral, ethical, spiritual, or psychological debates which are raised as soon as we start giving permission to act on what would seem to be justifiable vengeance.

I only mean to show that the concept of vengeance is still alive and well, and does not deviate all that much from saga Iceland's model. The difference is in the degree to which we act upon these impulses, if we do at all.

Violence for the sake of vengeance, then, is prominent theme in the Icelandic sagas, and presumably was an important part of the early Icelandic society as well. As a whole, Icelandic society during the söguöld was probably not an overly violent society in most ways. The violence that did occur is thought to have been somewhat exaggerated in the family sagas, and can be

understood with respect to ideals of honour and revenge; underlying the desire for revenge was the constant need to defend or prove one's honour to the rest of the community. Furthermore, love (or lack thereof), and sexual relationships provided passion for disputes which lead to feud and violence. It is not difficult to find similarities between the underlying events of the sagas and some of our own contemporary notions of vengeance, although the decision to not act on them is a fundamental difference. So although it would seem that violence and vengeance are viewed and acted upon very differently in either culture, I would suggest that the rift is not as large as most readers would initially suspect.

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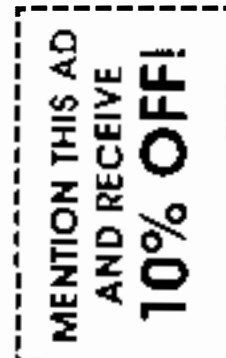
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Celebrating over a century of Icelandic settlement in British Columbia

Press Release



Kristjan Kristjansson and Ellen Kristjansdottir

(Victoria, B.C.) April 3, 2006 – Iceland Naturally, a renowned North American celebration of food, fun and travel will mark its first appearance in Victoria, British Columbia from April 17th to 23rd, 2006. Currently in its sixth year, Iceland Naturally has enjoyed great success in many major cities including Toronto, Ottawa, Edmonton, New York, Boston, Washington and Minneapolis.

For over a century, Victoria has enjoyed an historic and cultural connection to Iceland. The first settlers arrived in 1883 – 1887 from Manitoba and a few from North Dakota. Many settled around Spring Ridge, which is now known as the Fernwood District. Here they built homes, started businesses, organized a church and became productive members of the community. These early Icelandic settlers were one of the first pioneers to help build the Canadian Pacific Railway, establish teaming and supply businesses and even become an elected member of government serving as a past Premier of British Columbia.

“Boss” Byron Ingimar Johnson was elected Liberal Premier of British Columbia and served from 1947 to 1953.

To commemorate this milestone, the Government of Iceland will be hosting a series of activities in the province. These prestigious events will feature musical performers from Iceland. Victorians are invited to enjoy the lively sounds of Ellen Kristjansdottir and Kristjan Kristjansson. These talented artists will be performing from April 19-21, 2006 at the Hotel Grand Pacific and from April 19-22, 2006 at the Blue Crab Bar & Grill.

Besides enjoying international musical talent, Victorians will be treated to the culinary delights of Chef Siggi Hall. Chef Hall has pleased the palates of some of the world's top dignitaries and soon he will be tantalizing the tastes of Victorians. Iceland's certified master chef, Siggi Hall, has appeared on over 300 international television shows such as CBS Early Morning Show, Fox Morning Show, National Geographic TV and various Scandinavian

and European TV programs. Chef Hall, whose restaurant in Reykjavik was recently voted “one of the most exciting new restaurants in the world” by Conde Nast Traveler. Chef Siggi Hall will be teaming up with some of Victoria's finest chefs from the Hotel Grand Pacific and the Blue Crab Bar & Grill to create a delectable menu of Icelandic cuisine.

Victorians can sample “A Taste of Iceland” and be entertained by musicians from Iceland at the Hotel Grand Pacific – 463 Belleville Street and the Blue Crab Bar & Grill – 146 Kingston Street during the Iceland Naturally “Taste of Iceland” event from April 17th to April 23rd, 2006.

The Icelanders of Victoria will also be hosting their 87th Annual Convention of the Icelandic National League in Victoria at the Hotel Grand Pacific from April 20th to 23rd, 2006. Participants are expected from all over Canada and the United States.

The Icelandic Minister for Transportation and Tourism will represent the Government of Iceland at these celebrations and will meet with B.C. dignitaries, B.C. Ministers and Her Honour Lieutenant Governor Iona V. Campagnolo.

For further information visit our website at [HYPERLINK "http://www.icelandnaturally.com"](http://www.icelandnaturally.com) www.icelandnaturally.com or to arrange an interview, please contact Fred Bjarnason, Icelanders of Victoria President, (250) 387-2089.



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Letters from Friðjón Friðriksson

Translated by unknown source



Friðjón Friðriksson

Letter 24

May 13 1882

My dearest friends!

I received yours of 7th and 15th of February on the 4th inst.,

A thousand thanks for kind words and sympathy. We are all well now, Aurora had the measles last week, but has got over it now. Business is first rate, I have since April sawn 140 thousand feet of lumber. Price will be high this summer.

Victoria is running on the Red River.

The weather is cold and not a shower of rain yet, still the green grass is cropping up.

The Icelanders in this country are prospering. Let us thank the merciful

God. If you cannot come over this summer you must come the next, if possible. I intend to write you by next steamer from Leith June 20th, but our mail from Icelandic River (only once in two weeks) might be too late, hence I send this card.

I wrote to brother Arni this morning and asked him to send you J & B yeast cakes my dear Mrs. B.

We send our love to you. May God be with you and bless you and your dear little children forever and ever.

Your sincere friend and brother.
Fr. Fr

Letter 25

On board the Victoria on Lake Winnipeg, October 9, 1882

Dear friends,

I thank you very much for your letters written on the 2nd and 14th of August. The weather in Iceland is certainly dismal and it could have disastrous consequences, but God who is constantly watching over us will undoubtedly help.

I am not going to write a long letter this time, and there, I am going to concentrate on business matters.

Last fall, I sent \$2.00 to John and Wattle solely for "Sunday School Times." I thought that it was enough payment for the annual subscription of this magazine including postage. On the 4th of this month I sent him \$2.25 asking him to send you the magazine. On the same day I sent \$4.00 to Harper Bros. for "Magazine" and \$2.00 to Belling and Co. for "Norden." I assumed that you wanted these publications even though you never asked me to pay for them. I did not send any payment for "Den Kristelige Talsmand", the Christian Agent, I thought that you didn't care for that magazine since you have the

"Sunday School Times." Maybe I was wrong.

I am now on my way home from Winnipeg. The future does not look good, the weather has been very bad on the lake this summer. I talked with some Icelanders at a meeting in Winnipeg. Since you asked me, I informed them about your reasons for not coming here until 1884. I pointed out that you resented the fact that some were of the opinion that lack of interest prevented you from coming earlier. Furthermore, I asked people to bring their feelings about this in the open, resulting in their revealing their disappointment. After thinking about the matter for a while they realized that your reasons are perfectly legitimate. They said that they had never been offended by your decisions, and they said that they intended to wait until you could come to serve as their minister because you are the one minister who they like the best. Those who talked the most were A. Fridriksson, Kr. Jonsson, and Jon Julius, and most of the others agreed with those. I am sure that people are not offended by your not being able to come as soon as they had wished for. Those who might have resented this fact have now realized that they were wrong. I think that you should come as soon as you can.

I think that Icelanders didn't gain anything by H. Briem's work here, but both sides are probably to blame for that (i.e. he and the congregation). Icelanders hold religious meetings every Sunday in their cultural house. More people attend these meetings than Rev. H. services. Generally speaking, however, people are not extremely religiously oriented, but one good man - with the help of God can do a lot to change that condition.

Financially, Icelanders in Winnipeg are doing as well as can be expected. All who want to work can find work paying \$2.25 - \$3.25 a day. The cost of living has not changed much lately, it is maybe slightly higher. A great number of people now own the houses and grounds where they live. Some, who have recently bought their houses, find themselves in financial trouble especially with the date of payment coming up. On the whole Icelanders'

profits this year have been enormous, but by now that "boom" is over, and it is no longer possible to make money in real estate like last winter. Every able bodied man can, nevertheless, provide for himself and his family through common work. It is just great how fast the north western parts of the country are becoming populated and how rapidly these parts develop. I am going to send you a few copies of the "Free Press" so you can see for yourselves how much things have changed since you left.

In New Iceland everyone is doing nicely but there is actually not much progress. Everyone is content since they can leave whenever they feel like it.

My business is going very well. Our profits this year will be some \$6,000 - \$8,000 if we manage to sell our lumber as planned. The profits are of course to be divided between the three of us, and most of it is invested in our business, steamboat, mill, etc.

I am now in the process of preparing lumber for next winter. I hope to be able to go ahead with it as soon as I get home.

I have had Sigtryggur's house fixed, and I hope that it will be warm and comfortable this winter. My wife is pregnant, otherwise she is healthy. I know that you join us in prayer for God's help when the day of delivery appears. Aurora is healthy, lively, and promising.

God bless you,
Your loving friend, Fridjon

Editorial Note: It has come to our attention that the letters we have been publishing from Fridjon Fridriksson were most likely not translated by Miss Sigurbjorg Stefansson. Several factors have lead to this conclusion, and we are currently uncertain who translated these works. If any of our readers can assist us in this, we would be only too happy to hear from them. Our apologies for this error.

Poetry

Prisoner of the Sky

by Avery Simundson

The flag waves desperately, trying to escape from its shackles,
A prisoner of the sky.

It twists and wriggles madly, ravaged and beaten by the wind,
Teasing it gently now, then tugging it harshly, now whipping full force, threatening to rip
out its very stitches.

The grass below waves and laughs
"Sssssss, ssssss, shhhhh..."

The dandelion seeds, floating on the wind, are carried upwards.

They tickle the flag, tormenting it cruelly

"We are freeeee..." they whisper to the flag, before they float away.

The flag strains to join them, cursing the bindings that hold it back.

It shrieks desperately, knowing it cannot be free,

But it cannot even make a sound, save for the flap flap flap as it is jerked back and forth.

A passing car, a brash, arrogant machine,

Spits a cloud of dust at it, and grinds away into the heat waves, disappearing into nowhere.

The flag coughs and chokes through the soundless sobs.

The wind screams at it, howling and whistling through every single space in the threads that
fight to keep the flag whole.

"Give up..." it hisses. "Givvve uuup..."

The flag tries to cry out in rage, the pain intense, as the wind rips through it with full fury,
And it knows that the wind is playing with it, as a cat plays with a mouse before the kill,

And it knows that it cannot escape.

It will never escape.

There is no escape.

Then the wind is gone, leaving the flag limp and injured

Lost and hopeless,

A prisoner of the sky.

Book Reviews



The Problem with Chickens

By Bruce McMillan and Illustrated with
paintings by Gunnella

Reviewed by Lorna Tergesen
Published by Houghton Mifflin
Company, \$21.95

As a bookseller and book lover, it is so wonderful when a book comes into your hands that truly excites you. This book was recommended because of its great reviews in so many prestigious papers and journals. It was awarded the best illustrated book in 2005 by the New York Times, also great accolades from Parent's choice Foundation approved award seal and Publishers Weekly Best Children's Book 2005. Bruce McMillan is no stranger to writing books or photographing material based in Iceland. An ardent photographer, he often spends his summers in Iceland but lives in Shapleigh, Maine. One of his other recent works that deals with Iceland is *Nights of the Pufflings*. Bruce has either written or done photographic work for some 48 books to date.

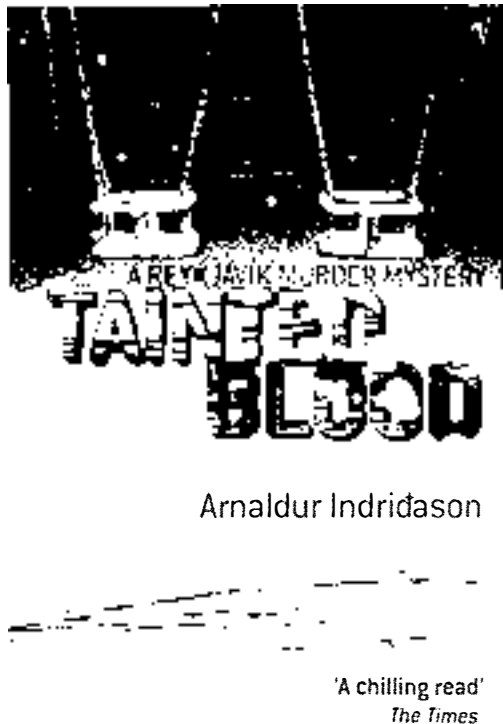
This story, *The Problem with Chickens* is meant for very young children. It is a fantastical tale using some factual activities of our culture. We have all heard of the Icelanders collecting eggs from the nests that lie precariously on the cliffs of the mountains.

The Icelandic women of the story need eggs. They buy some hens and things go well until the chickens begin to think that they are women too. I won't explain the entire story but the best part of the book is the illustrations by Gunnella. The women are in national dress, always robust and full figured.

There is a wonderful sense of humour to all the illustrations.

I was unfamiliar with Gunnella and so I Googled for information on her. There I found a delightful website with much more of her direct, stylized, colourful art: www.gunnella.info

Her name is Gudrun Elin Olafsdottir. She was born in 1956 and studied at the Icelandic College of Art and Craft (1974-76). She began her career as a graphic artist and has developed into a full time artist. Her youth was spent with her Amma in Siglufjordur. The influence of that period plays heavily into her current work. She has exhibited widely, many shows in and around Iceland but also in Sweden and the USA. The best news is that Bruce McMillan and Gunnella are preparing another book that will be ready in the spring of 2007 entitled *How the Ladies Stopped the Wind*. I will definitely be watching for it!



Tainted Blood

By Arnaldur Indridason

Reviewed by Helen Sigurdson

Published by Randon House, 275 pages,
\$21.95

Tainted Blood, the gripping crime novel written by Arnaldur Indridason is set exclusively in Iceland. All characters are Icelandic and all scenes take place in Iceland and it deals with current Icelandic issues.

Indridason has written several Icelandic crime thrillers. He was born and raised in Iceland. He won the prestigious International Glass Key award for the best Nordic crime novel three years in a row for *Lady in Green*, *Jar City* and *Silence of the*

Grave. *Tainted Blood* was first published under the name, *Jar City*, and it was his first novel translated into English.

What makes *Tainted Blood* so interesting to English speaking readers is that it transports them to another country and culture. It might be noted here that one cultural aspect is that Icelanders use first names, therefore, readers will get used to police and criminals being called by their first names. It takes the reader into the criminal and drug addicted community in Iceland. Although the criminal element in Iceland seems to be a very small minority, its impact is the same as anywhere in the world.

During the thrilling quest to solve the crime, we learn a lot about Iceland. We visit many different communities and meet Icelandic doctors, scientists, investigators, criminals and drug addicts and people of the general public. We also learn about ourselves as we ponder our reaction to criminals and deviant people.

The story begins with the discovery of the body of a sixty-nine year old man in the basement apartment of a house in the Nordurmyri district of Reykjavik. As the two detectives examine the body and contents of the apartment, they discover that the murder weapon appears to be a heavy glass ashtray. A note on the body stating, "i am HIM" with the last word in capital letters becomes the primary clue to solving the mystery. Detective Sigurdur Oli asks, "Isn't this your typical Icelandic murder?" "Yes", Detective Inspector, Erlendur Sveinsson answers, "A pathetic Icelandic murder."

The two detectives who come to solve the murder mystery are incompatible but well balanced characters. Arnaldur has used these officers in three of his other novels of the same genre. Erlendur is the quintessential detective of many books and movies. He is middle aged, rather ruffled, smokes, has health problems, is divorced and is alienated from his family. Although he is frustrated by her behaviour, he has concern and compassion for his drug addicted daughter. He is tenacious and completely committed to his work and will go to any length to solve a crime. Sigurdur

Oli, on the other hand, is well dressed, conservative, settled and composed. He is a perfect foil for Erlendur.

Erlendur finds an old faded photograph of a child's grave in the back of drawer in the victim's apartment. This leads to a search for the identification of the child. The trail of clues being uncovered sets in motion a thorough investigation of the hidden life of Holberg, the victim. Erlendur discovers that Holberg has been responsible for at least two savage rapes. The search for the rape victims takes Erlendur, Sigurdur Oli and a female colleague, Elinborg, on an interesting sequence of interviews of people in notable landmarks such as Keflavik, Husavik, Thingvellir, the University of Iceland and the world renowned, Genetic Research Centre. In his search for Holberg's friends, Erlendur finds that the man who took the picture of the child's grave has been missing for twenty-five years so another mystery is added to the plot.

At the heart of the novel is the work of Iceland's Genetic Research Centre and the use of genetic tracking. Erlendur is able to follow clues as to the identity of the murderer through the use of information gathered from genetic medical data. His search leads him to a doctor who still has several jars containing organs preserved in formalin. These are decades old and he has used them for his own research. Apparently organs were preserved in formalin in glass jars and stored in a special room. These organs were available for teaching and research. The room was called *Jar City*, hence this was chosen as the first name of the book.

Arnaldur's use of Iceland's Genetic Research Centre to help solve the mystery of who killed Holberg provides an engrossing query into the implication of the Genomics Company located on the outskirts of Reykjavik. The Company has collected medical records, genetic and genealogical information on almost every Icelander.

Of particular note is Arnaldur's revelations as to how police treat women, especially rape victims. The description of scenes involving taunting questions by

police officers and the grin on the faces of rapists being questioned are so well written that it is impossible not to be affected. There is also the case of a bride who refuses to go to court because she knows she will not be believed.

Tainted Blood has all the required elements of a thrilling murder mystery. It is an amazing documentation of the intricate procedures which must be followed to solve a crime. Arnaldur has written a clever mystery which can be enjoyed as a crime novel and for its reflective revelations about many social and political innuendos.

Rev. Stefan Jonasson

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Contributors

FREYJA ARNASON is completing her masters program in Political Science at the University of Manitoba.

GUDRUN AUGUSTDOTTIR has served her homeland by being very active in politics and social movements, particularly in promoting Equal Rights for Women. She was Vice President of the Board of Directors of Reykjavik as the European City of Culture 2000. She is married to Svavar Gestsson. They served as the Icelandic Consul representatives in Winnipeg 1999-2001.

BRYNN ENRIGHT is a Fine Arts student at the University of Manitoba, with a Major in Sculpture and a Minor in World Religions. Her work often incorporates animal imagery and numerous mythologies, both of her own creation and inspired by existing world myths. For her own interest, she has studied Norse and Icelandic culture and literature. Perhaps not so coincidentally, Gimli, Manitoba is one of her favourite places.

MARIANNE JONASSON is a visual/performance artist living in Winnipeg. She is also an art instructor at the Winnipeg Art Gallery.

KRISTINE PERLMUTTER is a special education resource teacher and freelance writer living in Winnipeg. She is married to Bill Perlmutter and is the daughter of Borga and the late Dr. Bjarki Jakobson, all of whom have been heavily involved in the Icelandic community. She spent twenty-five years as a member of the editorial board of *The Icelandic Canadian*.

HELEN SIGURDSON is a retired teacher. She wrote a book, *I Wanted You to Know*, which is her life story. She has written book reviews for the Winnipeg Free Press and has facilitated a life story writing program at the Stradbroke Senior Centre. She lives in St. Vital with her husband, Frank

EVERY SIMUNDSON is currently 17 years old and in Grade 11 at Arborg Collegiate. She loves photography and sports of all kinds. One day, she hopes to travel the world.

BRYNNA STEFANSON is a first year fine arts student at the University of Manitoba. She was born and raised in Gimli, where she learned to appreciate all things Icelandic.

KERRI TAVERNER is an artist of Icelandic descent, hailing from the large Arnason family. After completing her Fine Arts degree at the U of M in 2002 she moved out to Gimli where she is an active member of the arts community and continues to practice in her field.

LORNA TERGESEN is acting Editor of *The Icelandic Canadian Magazine*. She is involved in the Icelandic community, enjoying her cultural heritage, and sharing it with others.

ERLA HELGASON WANKLING was born in the Grund district, north of Baldur, MB, to Sigurveig Christopherson and Kristjan Helgason. After retiring as a Registered Dietitian at the Health Sciences Centre, she is enjoying life as a wife, mother, amma and active member of the Icelandic Community.

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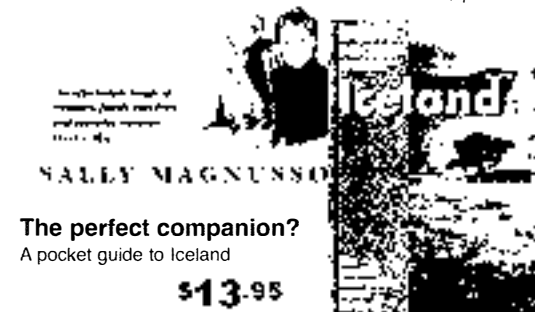


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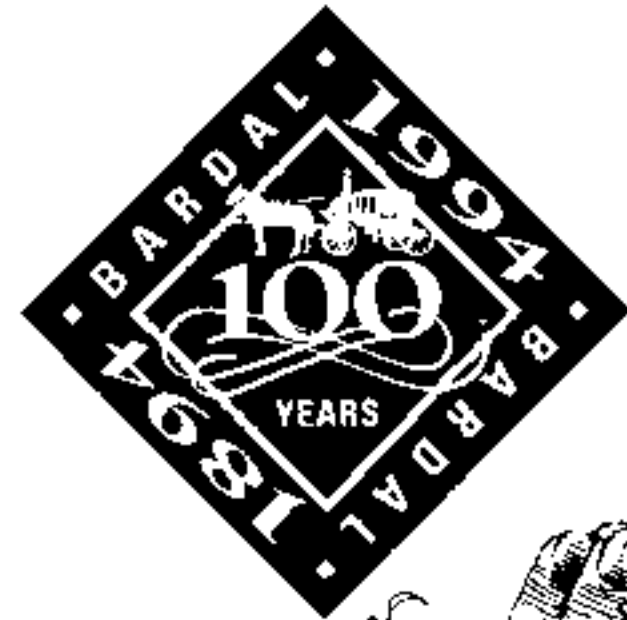
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The back page

Stephanie Ingalls making laufabrauð under the supervision of Þruður Helgadóttir, who assisted the Selkirk Bruin chapter celebrate Christmas.



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