

ICELANDIC CONNECTION



ISSN #1920-423X

Vol. 72 #1 (2021)

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ICELANDIC CONNECTION

VOLUME 72, NO 1 (2021) • WINNIPEG, CANADA

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ICELANDIC CONNECTION



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 \$40 CAD yearly, \$80 two years U.S. & INTERNATIONAL \$46 USD yearly

E—JOURNAL \$30 CAD /\$30 USD

SINGLE COPIES \$10 CAD plus postage

WE ACCEPT U.S. & CANADIAN FUNDS, MASTERCARD AND VISA

ON OUR WEBSITE: Payable by Credit Card or PayPal at www.icecon.ca

Typed submissions of articles, book reviews, short stories and poetry are welcome.

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E—MAIL SUBMISSIONS WELCOME editor@icecon.ca

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

Printed in Winnipeg, Canada by Dycom Direct Mail and Lögberg—Heimskringla

ISSN: 1920—423X

ON THE COVER



PHOTO COURTESY OF ELIN THORDARSON

Der Himmel über Hecla

Editorial

The Family Saga

by Elin Thordarson

Ang Lee's film *The Ice Storm* (1997), opens with a young Tobey Maguire giving the following monologue in a crackling teenaged voiceover:

In Issue No. 141 of The Fantastic Four, published in November 1973, Reed Richards has to use his anti-matter on his own son, who Annihilus has turned into a human atom bomb. It was a typical predicament for the Fantastic Four because they weren't like other superheroes. They were more like a family, and the more power they had, the more harm they could do to each other without even knowing it. That was the meaning of the Fantastic Four, that a family is like your own personal anti-matter. Your family is the void you emerge from and the place you return to when you die. And that's the paradox, "the closer you're drawn back in, the deeper into the void you go."

It is a film about the slow, sad dismantling of two families during the Richard Nixon era set in New Canaan, Connecticut. And the comic book reference it opens with is an apt demonstration that we humans are obsessed with trying to understand the "family"; our own families, the violent attachment to them, our distinct interrelations with each other, and our

genealogies and lineages. And all the primeval, primordial and chaotic qualities that make them up. And it seems from the earliest outset of the creation of literature we as humans have been occupied with narratives whose centre is the family as a kind of character. Consider the *Íslendingasögur*, the medieval Icelandic family sagas; prose narratives based on historical events that mostly took place in the ninth, tenth, and early eleventh centuries. Written down primarily in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the sagas' focus is on history, especially genealogical and family history and they give us a look at the struggles and conflicts that could play out in what was known as the Saga Age (870 to circa 1056), the period from settlement to when the first bishop in Iceland founded a church in Skálholt. They are an early example of narratives that revolve around family, and are most often concerned with maneuverings in social position, marriages, and revenge or feuding. They are the stories of a unit that acts as though it is an organic whole comprised of individuals.

Whatever trajectory family narrative took from the sagas, history has determined it has ended up in the contemporary style. Where instead of being a socio-economic function, modern

contemporary artistic examinations of the family have made an art form out of family as dysfunctional, unemotional, full of secrets or withheld words (though this last one can harken back to the saga age for sure). A Canadian example of the contemporary style of family narrative is the novel *All Families are Psychotic* by Douglas Coupland. Within the story of the Drummond family, whose lives spin out of control during a family reunion at Cape Canaveral, is a cultural item we all might recognize with heartbreak which ends up on the black market. The sealed, little white envelope with the word 'MUMMY' written on it, that the world remembers seeing on a wreath during Princess Diana's funeral procession. Do you remember it? In *All Families are Psychotic* it is a much sought after perfect crystal of all the words that are never spoken between a child and his mother.

And really, that's what this literary journal is all about isn't it? The Icelandic "Connection" we are referring to is family, it's lineages. It's what connects us to Iceland and to each other. But let's be clear, we are often talking about the past here and people who have long ago turned to dust. Real people, our real ancestors who had very real lives and felt the things we felt, everyday of their lives. And so our family stories will always have a home here and we always welcome submissions of diaries and letters or even written recollections. But even our poetic pieces are often pinned on family. In a way, a major function of our journal is to recapture the lost and thus save it from destruction, from the void that we have emerged from and which threatens to take us back, or at least in our minds it does. However, I'll stand by the statement that *Icelandic Connection* is a triumph over the destructive power of time.

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Konrad (Konnie) Johannesson Memoirs and Diary, 1910–1919

by Brian Johannesson

Continued from Icelandic Connection Volume 71 Number 4

Part II: Conclusion

Life at the Flying Instructor's School was great. Outside of the cookhouse we were completely under canvas (*see figure 3*). We lived in tents, our Officers' Mess was a tent, the N.C.O.s and men had bell tents. We had 2 wooden frame-covered hangars erected on the fringe of the Saharan desert. The whole desert was our aerodrome. Sand was everywhere. Shifting winds would move sand around like drifting snow. Somedays we would be landing close in to our Hangars, other days we would be using a bare strip of desert surface, perhaps half a mile away. Further out in the desert these sand dunes would be 10 to 15 feet high with bare strips in between. Here we often practiced forced landings, a very necessary procedure in those days. Engines were none too reliable and often let us down.

I recall one instance during a morning exercise in aerobatics, doing what we called a "whip stall", when we inadvertently did a "tailslide". This manoeuvre consisted of a zoom into the vertical position, putting the engine on top, and allowing the aircraft to whip like a weighted arrow into a full dive again. But in this instance it didn't want to whip, but started down, going tail first.

This tremendous force on the ailerons in reverse, actually tore out one of the cable control fittings of the balance cable, so that our lateral control was missing. Fortunately, we had lots of height and we were able to effect a safe landing in the desert.

We had been so absorbed in our predicament that we had failed to look to see in which direction the aerodrome lay. So, having landed in one of the valleys between sand dunes we were completely surrounded by sand hills. With the sun almost directly overhead, we had no idea in what direction lay home. After sizing up the damage to the aircraft and deciding against trying to fly back I climbed to the top of the nearest sand hill and found that we were a good five miles away from our aerodrome.

I hated the thought of abandoning the aircraft and walking back over the sand dunes. If a wind should come up, the aircraft could easily be buried and perhaps hidden entirely. So, I decided to taxi back to the aerodrome. This sounds quite feasible and possible, but aircraft do not taxi up steep sand hills. Hence the road back was a long circuitous route, trying to find



PHOTOS COURTESY OF BRIAN JOHANNESSON

Figure 3: tentlines

valleys connecting up going in the general direction of the 'drome. Luck was with us that day, for we finally made it back. The trip was several hours in duration due to the fact that we had an air cooled rotary Monosoupape (*single-valve*) engine. We had to stop periodically for minutes on end to cool off the engine. By the time we got back flying was over for the day, and a search for us was already underway. The aircraft was repaired overnight and ready for Service next morning, none the worse for its unusual experience.

We had it pretty easy at F.I.S. at first, only two pupils were allocated to each Instructor. This meant only about two hours instruction in early mornings and then again in the late afternoons or evenings. We did not attempt to fly in the “heat of

the noon day sun”, the temperature was just too high for our mechanical horses, to say nothing of the drivers. Most of our flying was done within approximately two hours of daylight and then again two hours before sunset. Having to rise with the sun, practically; our sleep was split into two periods, a noon day siesta along with the usual night period, when weather permitted. The weather in this instance being atmospheric temperature, which was at the time a little hard to take.

Around camp we were allowed to dress more or less as we pleased. Most of us wore light khaki shorts, socks with native sandals, an open neck shirt and a pith helmet. But when we went into Cairo, we had to put on dress uniform, including coat and belt, properly buttoned up to meet



Figure 4: violin

the requirements of Regulations. There was no such thing as being properly dressed in shirt sleeves in those days. Consequently, we seldom went into Cairo until the sun was well down towards the horizon. Life in Cairo was interesting, never a dull or quiet moment. The incessant peddling and soliciting on the streets, and the perpetual parade of Femmes and Madames in carriages was enough to entertain any young 2nd Lieutenant with only a few piastres in his pocket. Like the old lady in the dress shop who said "I only came to look", we just couldn't afford to "try anything on", not even for size.

Being stationed at flying schools all the time in Egypt, I had met a very large number of flyers, both while they were on courses and at their home aerodromes. We did quite a bit of visiting back and forth as distances between 'dromes was seldom more than an hour's flying.

Sunday June 16th: Arose 7:15. 'Barney' Oldfield down. Hung around Shepherd's Hotel until 5:30.

In this way I got to know Oldfield, who later became the personal pilot of Lawrence of Arabia. Oldfield was with me originally at the Pool Flight at Heliopolis. He went up the line in the Middle East, flying an R.E.8 and later a Bristol Fighter, doing reconnaissance work with the Artillery and strafing the Turks. We never knew of his association with Lawrence until we read about it in a book by Lowell Thomas. Barney Oldfield was a six-foot raw-boned individual. We called him Barney because the name Oldfield was famous at the time for automobile racing in the States. He was a cool customer and nothing ever rattled him. Besides this, he picked up the "Gippo" language fast and could make himself understood when the rest of us were at a total loss.

Wednesday June 19th: arose at 5:30. Station Pilot for the day. Tested black Avro in afternoon. Slept in Orderly Room, retired 9:20 pm.

Saturday June 22nd: Arose 6:15. Low stunting for War Correspondent. Got Canadian Mail.

Sunday June 23rd: Arose 6:15 am. Took up Vineberg. Forced landing made him sick.

Monday July 1st: Arose at 5:30 am. Went down to Cox's, drew 5 pounds. Had big dinner at Shepherd's for Major leaving for England. Everybody pretty well oiled. Pushed Major in through train window. Tender back home at 11:30 pm.

Monday July 8th: arose at 4:30 am.

Up for 2 hrs. 15 mins. Orderly pilot, stayed in camp all day, read & slept. Flew black Avro in afternoon. Took up mechanic Williamson. Testing Nieuport.

Sunday July 14th: Arose 4:30 AM. Did 1:40 mins. Forced landing at Hilowan. Clouds very low and fog. *Several crashes, one fatal.*

Monday July 15th: Arose at 6:30. Stayed in camp all day, Defence pilot. Flew black Avro at 6:10. Took up Ward, side-car Orderly (?).

Tuesday July 16th: Rigging day. Went downtown in morning and exchanged my violin for model Strad. Saw about renting a piano for mess. (*That "model Stradivarius" is still in the family, one of Konnie's great-granddaughters now has it as a family historical artifact (see figure 4). An earlier estimate to restore it to a playable condition for another great-granddaughter was quite unrealistic.*)

Wednesday July 17th: Did 2 hrs 20 mins. Stayed in camp all day. Piano arrived. Bannerjee tried it out, played in Mess in evening.

Sunday July 21st: Arose at 4:30 am. Up for 2 hrs 15 mins. Stayed in all day, played violin in Mess with Bannerjee on piano. Had musical evening.

Friday July 26th: Arose 4:30 am. Did 2:50 mins. Zoomed quarters at 5:00 am. Fellows asleep got sore. Finished for day at 8:00 am.

Sunday August 4th: Arose at 5:30 am. *Boyce had bad crash.* Went out to him in machine, flew in and got tender, ambulance stuck in sand hills. Tender stuck three times. I drove, then got it out.

Thursday August 8th: Flew in afternoon 1:20 mins. Handley-Paige (*Bomber*) arrived.

Wednesday August 21st: Arose 5:30 am. Did 1:20 mins. Flew Nieuport for first flip 15 mins.

Thursday August 22nd: Did 2:20

mins, 25 mins on Nieuport.

Wednesday September 4th: Total time in air so far 217 hours 40 mins.

Thursday September 5th: Arose at 7:00 am. No flying. Amalgamation of S.A.G. and A.F.S. F.S. formed. Machines moved. Packed up flight stuff ready to move to Khanka. Retired about 10:30 pm. Wrote folks and told them new address.

Friday September 6th: Solo and formation flight to Khanka 15 minutes.

Monday September 9th: Two new pupils, Rich and Cowell.

Monday September 23rd: New course: Wright and Capt. Ashmead my pupils.

Wednesday September 25th: Arose at 5:30 am. Had a small sand storm about 5:30 pm. Could hear distant roar of thunder. Lightning visible all evening. No rain.

One of my most vivid recollections of Eastern luxury was the Mess Dinner we had upon the occasion of a visit from General Allenby and his Staff. We went overboard on this one, rented silver and dishes from a Hotel in Cairo and hired a French Chef for the occasion. Dinner included Roast Quail no less, and consisted of some twelve courses. Between toasts and courses served, we kept a flock of hired waiters busy half the night. It must have been a wonderful party, my share of the costs on my Mess bill ran into two figures in Egyptian pounds. We had everything except dusky maidens dancing behind their shimmering veils and sheer pantaloons. This we couldn't buy.

All the while the war was raging in France and the Middle East. News would reach us of friends and acquaintances who had made the supreme sacrifice. We would drink a silent toast to their memory in the Mess, and recall our association and experiences with them I am sure that each and every one of us present on these occasions felt guilty in some ways, by reason of our "plush" assignment to School Flying. We would have no doubt had the

opportunity to do our bit on Active Service, had the war lasted long enough.

Monday October 7th: Arose at 5:30. Course No. 3 started. Byron and Fletcher my pupils. Did 3:10 mins. Practiced formation in afternoon.

Tuesday October 8th: Arose at 5:15. Did 2:45 mins. Practiced another formation. Rather good. Went to see Manager of Cox's Bank. Ordered to cable to London re my Account.

Friday October 11th: Arose at 5:15. Did 2 hrs 50 mins. Practiced another formation. Flew over to F.S. in afternoon. Took off in formation from there and flew over assault at arms. (?) Stunted for crowd. A great success, complimented by General. Back in camp at 5 pm.

Monday October 14th: Arose at 5:15 am. Flew 2hrs 10 mins. First rumours of peace. Retired about 9:30 pm. **Monday October 21st:** New course: Pratt and Travers my pupils.

Monday November 4th: Arose at 5:30 am. New course started No. 5. Flew formation for Sultan. Stayed in camp rest of the day.

Monday November 11th (Armistice Day): Arose at 6 am. PT Parade. Flew 2 hrs 15mins. Great excitement awaiting results of Armistice. News came through at 7:00 pm. Great joy. Everyone drunk. Drove into Cairo, Shepherd's Hotel (was) mad. Retired 12:30.

Tuesday November 12th: Arose at 6:30 am. Did formation flight over Cairo to Helowan and FS. Had breakfast at Helowan. Went into Cairo. Back on 11:30 train retired about 12:00

Saturday November 16th: Arose at 6 am. Did 45 mins. Stayed in camp all day, didn't feel well. Spanish influenza coming on.

Thursday November 21st: Arose at 8:30 am. Had breakfast in bed. Read. Hung around camp all day. Very fed up, anxious

to get back home. Retired about 10 pm.

Monday December 23rd: Arose at 6:30 am. Flew over to AFS (Advanced Flying School). Had breakfast at S of A (?) Review of training brigade at 11:20. Fly-past for General Allenby at 12:30. Nearly collided with Mac. Stunted later. *Dobbie killed*. Retired 10 pm.

Wednesday December 25th: Stuck around with Doc in morning. Played violin. Had big dinner, sipped of the wine that is red. Slept in afternoon. Served (Christmas) dinner to the men at 6 pm.

Thursday December 26th: Filed negatives (*in the album they were still in in 1972*) and pasted snaps in Album. Moved into a Hut. Fixed it up in afternoon. Had hot bath. Made a clothes rack and table. Fixed up pictures. Retired about 9:30 pm. Mosquitoes bad.

(At this point Konnie's flying time was about 372 hours)


After the cessation of hostilities, we put through two six-week courses at our school before disbanding. I, as a Canadian in the R.A.F. was sent back to England on January 19th, 1919, to a Repatriation Camp at Salisbury Plain. From there I went on indefinite leave awaiting assignment to a Draft bound for Canada. This transpired in about three months, the interval being filled with travelling and sightseeing. This was all at my own expense, so it was rather hard on my pay balance at Cox's.

I arrived back in Canada on May 22nd, 1919 just a little over two years from my embarkation overseas. I did not dream at that time how the flying experience gained in these two short years would influence the rest of my life.

Endnotes:

With the exception of the years 1919 to 1928, Konnie was involved in aviation in Winnipeg and northern Manitoba for the rest of his life.

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*KONNIE JOHANNESSON,
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Figure 5

In 1920 he played the defence position on the Winnipeg Falcons, the Canadian Olympic Hockey Gold Medal winners at Antwerp in April 1920.

He received Temporary Commercial Pilot's Certificate (Flying Machines) No. 13-W-29 on July 16th, 1929 from the Air Board of Canada.

He also received "Above average Pilot and above average Instructor" ratings from the Department of National Defense, Air Service, Ottawa, on February 15th, 1932.

He became Airport Manager and Chief Flying Instructor of the Winnipeg Flying Club in 1929. Two of his more distinguished students of 1932 were:

- Group Captain Johnny Kent, DFC, AFC, Virtuti Militari. Commander, Polish Squadron, R.A.F.
- Group Captain Al Bocking, DFC &

Bar, CD. Commander XI Squadron R.A.F. In 1932 he started Johannesson Flying Service, flying passengers and freight from Winnipeg mostly to points north and east of Lake Winnipeg (see Figure 5).

On July 17th 1939 he was appointed as a Master Flying Instructor by the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators of the British Empire.

During WW II Konnie operated a Flying School in Winnipeg, (see Figure 6) teaching Icelandic-speaking students to fly so that they could join the R.C.A.F. Three of these students later returned to Iceland to form Loftleiðir, now merged with Icelandair.

His older son Kenneth was in the R.C.A.F. during WW II, posted to RAF Station Upavon in England as a Flying Instructor. He also received "above-average" ratings as both Pilot and Instructor.



Figure 6: Konrad (Konnie) Johannesson and Johannesson Flying Service

His fourth grandson, Allen, after flying for 31 years, recently retired as a Captain with Jazz Air, an Air Canada subsidiary.

In 1947 Konnie bought a strip of land north of Winnipeg stretching between Highway 9 and the Red River. After a 3-year legal battle he started Rivercrest Airstrip Ltd., combining a landplane and seaplane base with an aircraft repair and overhaul business.

Konnie retired from active flying in 1949, but continued operating an aircraft repair and overhaul service at his private airstrip and seaplane base at Rivercrest, just north of Winnipeg, until 1967. He died of pneumonia in Winnipeg on October 28th, 1968. He was buried in Brookside Cemetery with his wife Freda and older son Kenneth now beside him and a full view of Winnipeg Airport on the horizon to the south.

Childhood Recollections in Iceland

by Arngerður “Gigi” Grímsdóttir Fríðriksson



Arngerður “Gigi” Grímsdóttir Fríðriksson

I was born on a small farm on the west coast of Iceland, Barðastrandasýsla, the fourth of ten children. My parents, who were both orphans, had been placed with different farmers, and worked as farm hands until they got married.

The little house consisted of two rooms, a kitchen in the middle and a small hallway. For water, a little hut was built over a nearby stream and there was a wooden box which held water to rinse clothes. This was called brunhús. Light was provided by oil lamps; heating came from the kitchen stove which burned peat.

Like most families, our farm was on an inlet near the sea, so the livelihood was from fishing and farming. My father had

a little motorboat which was also used for transporting supplies from the village on the other side of the fjord. Our seashore, which was all white sand, was a treasure for us kids as we could collect shells and other things from it. Our other toys were lambs’ horns, or leg or jaw bones. We pretended each piece was a farm animal. Almost all of our clothing was made at home. Socks and mittens were all hand knitted and shoes were sewn from skin.

When I was five years old, I remember my mother sitting on the bed at night, knitting and teaching me the alphabet. She never walked between farms unless she had her wool ball under her arms and was knitting.

Sand was used to scrub the wooden floors. I remember my two older sisters doing that.

By 1930, we had moved to a bigger farm in the same neighbourhood. The house was two-story, had a well and later on, water was pumped into the house, which my mother thought was a big luxury.

As I was going on to six years old, my mother was quite ill. I was asked if I would like to leave home and live somewhere else. Soon I agreed. My mother had been brought up with my foster father’s family and they wanted to help out for a while. I never went back except for a visit to the farm, but we were always in close contact as my parents came to shop and visit in the village.



PHOTO COURTESY OF STEFAN FRIDRIKSSON

Gigi Fridriksson with wearing her Icelandic Skautbúningur

I remember the day I left. My older sisters had been teasing me that I would be a cry baby when I left. No, I didn't cry; but my mother stood crying on the seashore as I left with my father across the bay in his little motorboat.

Patreksfjörður was a prosperous fishing village with two trawlers, a freezing plant where the ice was cut from the lake, a fish meal plant, a machine shop and general store. These were all family owned businesses by Ó. Jóhannesson & Co. There were also three other small stores. All goods were moved about on flat wagons on railroad tracks. There was also an old Ford truck and it was a treat to get a ride with the driver.

My foster father was a marine engineer who ran the machine shop near the dock. When we arrived, we stopped in there and I thought it strange that this was the house I would live in. We then walked through the village and came to a big, beautiful house where we had lunch. Then, my father left, and only then did my tears break loose. My foster mother carried me around and gave me some treasure to play with.

My foster father's mother lived at home and became my teacher. I had to do reading, writing and arithmetic for a certain period each day as we didn't start school until age 10. The minister visited each home once a year and tested the children in reading. In the spring following our school year, we had to take a reading test at the school. The school year ran from October 1st to the end of May. The hours were 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. There were about 30 children in each class. Ten and eleven year olds were together' and twelve and thirteen year olds were together. At the end of the school year, we had a big assembly. There was a gymnastics show, the choir sang and there was a showing of our handicrafts, as this had always been an important school subject.

For leisure in the winter, we went skating, on sleigh rides and skiing. There were no ski poles. The skis were tied together with a rope which we balanced and steered with down the hills. After getting down to the bottom, we climbed back up again. The young tots skied on barrel boards to start with. In the summer, we went mountain climbing, fishing, rowing and swimming in the sea.

In 1938, my foster parents decided to move to Reykjavík, and they asked me if I wanted to come with them or go back to my parents. This was a major decision for me to make. I remember staying awake at night thinking about all the angles ... I decided to go along.

When we moved in the fall, It was my

first trip on a big ship. It took ten hours and I was seasick almost the whole time.

Oh, how exciting Reykjavík looked to me. The main streets, Austurstræti, Bankastræti and Laugavegur with all the stores; Hafnarstræti where all the wholesaler importers were located. It all seemed so big to me.

I had one year of public school in Reykjavík. At that time, there were only two public schools, Austurbæjarskóli and Miðbæjarskóli. I went to MB. It was a six day school week, as all work was. One thing I was not very fond of was when the nurse came in the classroom with a big jug of cod liver oil and poured it into our mouths, although we did get a pint of milk afterwards. The other thing that was new to me was the school dentist. We were called in two at a time, alphabetically. The dentist looked into my mouth and said, “what the hell do you eat?” Well, it must have been all the *harðfiskur* we helped ourselves to on rainy days, sitting in the fish sheds where the fish was drying in Patreksfjörður. I was lucky though, no drilling. This dentist was known for skipping the drill.

Swimming was compulsory at school. We had lessons at Sundhöll on Báronstígur once a week for a couple of months. Gymnastics was also compulsory and afterwards we had to go to a shower room for hot and cold showers. Hot and cold water poured from the ceiling, there was no way out, as the caretaker took care of the switches. We also had to take cooking for four hours a week.

As public school finished, we all had different summer jobs. Many went to farms; my first summer out of school, I was a mother’s helper (babysitter).



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE NEW ICELAND HERITAGE MUSEUM

**The silver filigree belt and silver crown
from Gigi Fridriksson’s
Icelandic Skautbúningur.**



Later in my school years, I worked at different summer jobs. I was a bank messenger for Kauphöll, a mortgage company. One thing in particular sticks in my mind. The boss was on holidays and his partner sent me to the bank with a note for 50,000 kr. "You don't need a bag," he said. "Phone me when it comes through. I will tell you what account to deposit it to," I phoned. "Bring in the cash," he said. It was quite a stack of bills, as at that time, we didn't have bills larger than 50 to 100 kr. I don't think I've ever run faster in my life, over a narrow wood plank which covered the trench, from Útvegs Bank across Lækjartorg with my arms wrapped tightly around the bundle of cash. There were lots of young men in the trench, as they were digging the heating system for the city, and did they ever whistle at me. I arrived at the office, assisted in recounting the money and took it back in a briefcase to the same bank for deposit. The same poor teller just said, "now Mr. A is on holidays." A few years later, I happened to work with one of these men and he hadn't forgotten me with the big bundle of money.

In the summer of 1942, I worked on a farm in Rangervallasýsla. While there, I visited a farm named Húsum which had mud floors throughout the house. I had never seen this before, it was probably the last of its kind, it was really clean too.

Working hours on the farm were from 8:00 am to 8:30 pm. Meal times were 7:30 for coffee and light bread; 10:30 for a light lunch of skyr, bread, harðfiskur; the main meal was at 3:00 pm; a late afternoon coffee break between 5:00 and 6:00 pm brought out to the fields; and at 8:30, a meal much like the lunch. We only worked these hours during the harvest season due to the long daylight hours.

One summer, I worked at a fishing plant in Dalvík, on the north coast. As most young people, I experienced many different

kinds of work during my education.

May 10th, 1940 is a day all Icelanders remember. This was when the British invaded Iceland. It was a frightening sight to see soldiers everywhere with guns on their shoulders. In May 1944, while the war continued, Iceland voted for independence. On June 17th, we joyfully celebrated being an independent nation after nearly seven centuries of foreign rule.

In the mid 1940s, I worked for two years in a flower store. Once, during the lunch hour, a big, handsome navy officer walked in. "Oh my God," I thought. My English was so poor that my heart sank into my stomach. To my big surprise, however, the man spoke beautiful Icelandic. He happened to be the late Valdimar Björnsson from Minneapolis.

My last job in Iceland was with Blöndalh hf, a grocery importer, a candy factory and a coffee roasting plant. I worked on customer accounts and sales. This was at a time when we had shortages and coffee was rationed by coupons. I had to divide all the goods between the customers so everyone got something. It wasn't easy, but somehow I kept everyone satisfied.

All Icelanders enjoy singing. My closest girlfriend, Margaret, was the daughter of Pétur Jónsson, the opera singer. At his home, we had many good concerts as he gave lessons to a few of our best opera singers: Guðn. Jónsson, Magnús Jónsson, Ketill Jónsson, Ól. Magnússon from Mosfell Sigfús Halldórsson and others.

I also remember that once I was at a birthday party that ended at 2:00 am. With my aunt as a leader playing her guitar, we marched and sang down Laugavegur and through town. People were coming to their doorways in night clothes to see these marvellous singers. Those were the good old days. I have many fond childhood memories.

May 1, 1991.

Moon Face Smiling

by Diane Stephenson

I killed my Icelandic grandmother. For many years the words “Kristin was a saint, but she died after seeing Diane,” ricocheted through my child soul. Eventually, I learn that my grandmother (reverently referred to as “Amma”) was dying of stomach cancer but clung to life until she could lay eyes on me, the new baby. I was christened not with an Icelandic name, but with a name representing the ancient goddess of the hunt and moon.

Tonight, I stand, mesmerized by the moon suspended in the black hole of the sky. My eyes peer into the shadowy cracks of that wrinkled surface and I hunt for a face. The moon is the face of Amma, as remote and craggy as her Icelandic homeland. Cloud wisps float across the moon as family snippets drift in and out of my head. I see pictures of Ísafjörður, the barren northern homestead where Amma was born. I imagine the horror on her mother’s face when they had to adapt to new ways after volcanic ash rendered their farmland inhospitable. The life of fishing and collecting eider down on the island of Æðey sustained them until the awful day when many died in a fishing accident. I smell the salt of the voyage to Canada by great grandmother and young Kristin and expect that they too suffered seasickness.

The scent in my nose becomes acrid, as I visualize a grown Amma and her family as they lie in the ditch desperately breathing into their clothes as a forest fire rips across Northern Ontario. Another

generation, another farm, another adaptation. Amma and her husband move to Lake of the Woods, where life is reputed to be both hard and happy though Kristin is determined that her children get a proper education. This insistence leads to another move and another life in Niagara Falls where my father and his siblings become educated, grow up and go to war. Ultimately Amma and grandfather move to rugged Tobermory, likened to the homeland. It is here that the legendary Sunday dinners are held, soup is thinned and fishes and loaves enacted for all. It is here that great grandmother, known for her recalcitrant refusal to learn English, sings lullabies and recites poetry to my older sisters. Amma, apparently run ragged, yet uncomplaining, was adored by her children and grandchildren and always harboured an endless supply of homemade wintergreen candies.

I remember this home which would now be considered a quaint log cabin. Wood smoke mingles with the rancid smell of hides being tanned and stuffed beast heads glare from the walls. On the mantle is a small wedding picture of my young grandparents stern and resilient.

As the cloud wisps pass, the cardamom smell of *vínarterta*, an Icelandic cake, wafts from my kitchen. Repetitions vibrate from one generation to the next, one exquisite landscape to another. The sky colours as Iceland shares its famed *Borealis*. As the moon face smiles, a streak of light stretches across from Amma to me and back again.

Net Setting Amateurs

by Ian Johnson

Cranberry Portage, Northern Manitoba, in the late '60s was a golden time for me and my best bud Ed; country lads. Our house was on the shore

of Lake Athapap, “the finest lake in the world,” my Dad would say. And he should know, a New Icelander born in Riverton, a veteran of the Navy in World War II and a helper with his father Magnus Johnson who fished commercially on Lake Winnipeg during the lean years before the war. But I digress, the real story here is how Ed and I, high school comrades, ventured out onto the lake to set Dad’s prized 300-foot net for some world famous lake trout. My parents were away that fine August weekend, so theoretically we were quietly borrowing Dad’s net and actually didn’t have permission, but this was a true Icelandic outing after all.

Setting a net in a sports fishing lake is frowned upon and actually the game wardens would have my left nut along with Dad’s new 16-foot Lund boat if they caught us! This required stealth and we were up



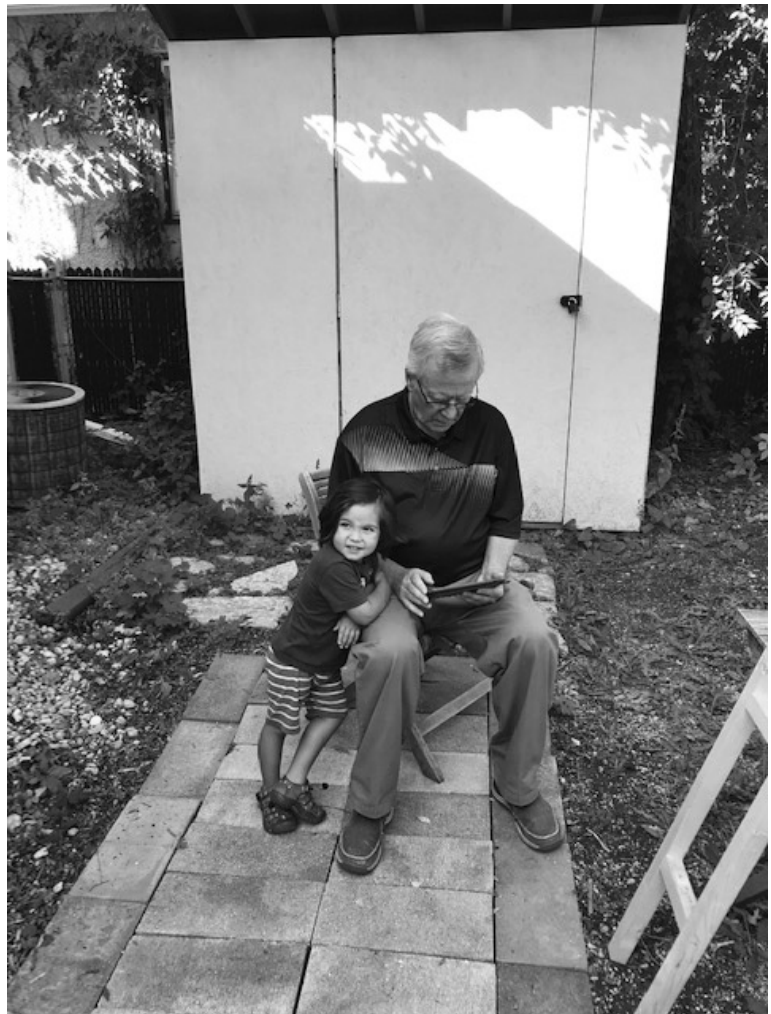
Ian Johnson

for it, a couple of budding seafarers. And in fact I had been Dad's helper on late night net setting trips before. He loved to bring in a batch of lake trout, late fall, when they were gathering in the shallow waters of the reefs. Ed and I thought would be setting in the deep waters of Lake Athapap, leaving the net during the day and scooping it up early morning. Our plan of action was to sit over the net to ward off any snoopy fishermen trawling our way, so they couldn't snag Dad's prized net or, horror of horrors, if the game branch lads came by for a spot check. It was a dicey deal, but we were Vikings after all and what could go wrong?

The lake was in perfect shape that fine morning, not a ripple to be seen and when you peered over the side of the boat it was clear down to the sandy bottom; like another world, minnows and seaweed set the scene. Ed was the lookout man scouting ahead for dangerous floating logs or reefs below the surface that could clip Dad's new 20 horse Merc. We travelled at half speed leaving a heavy wake of waves breaking on the far shores, this was Athapap in August prime. The proper name was Lake Athapapuskow which meant "rock on both sides" in Cree, so thinking back we

should have remembered this. Storms could stir up quickly and from our home to the end of the lake was a lengthy 22 miles of clear, fresh northern waters; those waves had a long way to roll. But this didn't prey on our minds, adventure was in the offing and a rousing song from The Beatles pierced the air as our well used cassette recorder was cranked up.

Soon it was down to business, time to set the net. Hand over hand I carefully doled out the featherlight mesh, one side with heavy metal leads that stretched the net down and then wooden corks which



Ian Johnson and Grandson Lenno

kept it straight up. A five-foot-wide trap for catching unlucky fish, hopefully big tasty lake trout although a mixture of others like whitefish, tullibee and nasty jackfish would join in the mix.

“*Já, já* Ed we are on a roll now, *það er í lagi*,” I liked to throw a bit of Icelandic Ed’s way, which confused him with his Polish roots.

“Just keep it straight, Johnson, no squawking,” he retorted. Ed’s job was to paddle the boat slowly backwards as I doled the net out. All was going smoothly. The mighty lake was like glass and in no time the net was set with heavy cinder blocks tied to each end as it slowly floated down until it hung mid water, waiting for passing fish to be

caught. Time to stretch out in the boat, so pleased with a job well done, happily puffing on Colt Cigars soaking up the warm summer heat. Northern Manitoba at its finest. Marking the position of the net by lining it up with a crooked spruce on the far shore and a small island of birch, we would leave it overnight and haul it in at first light. That was the plan and now it was time to set up camp on the sandy shores of Eight Mile Beach.

Ed had scored a special for our camping, a bottle of Imperial Rye Whiskey, a unique treat for us and cans of Coke for the mix, this was high class. Our pup tent barely allowed us in, but we rolled out our sleeping bags then got the camp fire roaring, it was time to sample the rye. Ed was the thirsty type so he played bartender while I switched on some new music, an up and coming Winnipeg band, The Guess Who. Oh, the stories we told, and they got wilder as the evening rolled along here on the shores of Lake Athapap, even the loons were joining in with their sad, echoing call, the lake was alive for us that night. Overhead the Big Dipper held sway while the Milky Way floated across the sky, so clear you could reach out and almost touch it. Too soon we had to turn in, a big day tomorrow and hopefully a net full of fish. Was that a strong breeze creeping up? Didn’t matter, we were lights out as soon as we hit the sleeping bags, that Imperial was potent stuff I recall.

Morning came too soon and with a jolt.

“Jesus, Johnson, wake up there is a bloody bear at our cooler,” Ed bellowed. And sure enough I carefully opened a reddened eye to see a young black bear rolling out our food cache perilously close to the water. With a mighty roar and a clanging frying pan we sent the young,



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black intruder back to the thick bush, it was a couple of very hungover lads freaking out. This was not a good omen for starting out. The nosy bear was long gone but a strange glow and clouds that I had never seen before were forming in the west and they were headed our way.

Then the shit hit the fan, or I should say more appropriately, waves were forming bigger each minute and began pounding our beach. It was time to go, not a moment to spare.

“Ed move your buns, hold the bow out into the waves and I will load up. This storm is looking nasty and don’t see it ending, *flýttu þér!*”

You never saw two young lads hustle faster than that day, we were scurrying about like newborn crabs and in no time the Lund was slowly inching away from our camping spot. I was sure I saw the bear peering out from the willows, was he really laughing at us? Luckily the net was quickly found, I had marked it carefully so hand over hand it came in. We set a record for net retrieval I’m sure, even time to count our catch, a decent seven lake trout and one must have been ten pounds, so that was a bonus.

Now the spooky part, our trip to safety, so this was dicey. The low clouds had settled in and a heavy fog formed. My bearings were lost but realizing that the waves were running west to east and home was northeast I steered the boat in roughly the right direction, I bloody well hoped.

“Ed perch yourself up on the bow, keep the boat from flipping!”

He gave me a ghastly look and tightened the straps on his life jacket, this was getting serious. The waves at one point were six footers, the biggest I had ever seen, our boat struggled to make it over and then I had to slow the Merc as we followed in a rush down the wave, then goose the motor, its revs screaming

to climb the next wave. This tiring seamanship lasted for an hour until very gradually I noticed the waves were ever slightly slowing and wasn’t that a familiar island off on our port bow, yes it was Big Perch Island, I had my location now, the end was in sight.

Ed even swivelled around to give me a thumbs up, two happy lads we were, and I guess in the future we would leave the net setting to crafty Icelanders like my Dad, this was too tricky. Come to think of it, Ed and I decided university was a wiser choice over commercial fishing and that was the path we chose. But we would never forget our net setting experience one rough August weekend on majestic Lake Athapap, memories to cherish.

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I'm very excited, and honored in fact, to be able to announce the establishment of The Goodman Writer's Grant. This is a \$4000 grant administered by the Canada Iceland Foundation and offered through the journal *Icelandic Connection*, who have made up a selection committee. The grant's aim is to assist an emerging writer whose intention is to publish a work of writing. It will be offered every year for the next five years, ending in 2026.

Your work must be written in English. You can write in the form of your choice (novel, treatise, collection of poems, historical documentation, etc.). There are no criteria around word count, but the writing should be of a length appropriate to the format and content. If the work is longer than a novella, it is suggested that you submit a representative chapter for the application. Your work must be unpublished at the time of application and you should provide clear intentions of the publication plans for the piece. The work may be complete or incomplete, but if incomplete,



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you should provide sufficient content to clearly demonstrate the character of the finished work. Lastly if selected, yourself, the grant recipient, should be prepared to provide acknowledgement of the grant's support upon publication.

Icelandic Connection will be accepting submissions for the 2021 award until Friday, October 1 at 4PM CT, with the award recipient being notified by December 1, 2021. Please fill out the application form provided on the *Icelandic Connection* website and forward your completed application form and writing submission via email to editor@icecon.ca.

This grant would not be possible without the generous support of Dr Ron Goodman.

The Raven

The following piece of music, *The Raven* or *Hrafninn*, is an example from the *sagnadansa* and *fornkvæði* categories of Icelandic musical and literary forms. The *sagnadansar* are a traditional Icelandic custom and according to Jón Þorarinsson, the Icelandic composer and writer on music, in his *History of Icelandic Music before 1800*, they are a part of a common Nordic heritage.

Different from the word *saga* meaning story, *sagna* means something along the lines of tale or sketch. And *dansa* of course means dance. These are dances performed still today, generally in a kind of medieval ring style, with the accompaniment of the recitation or chanting or singing of a *fornkvæði*. *Forn* meaning ancient and *kvæði* meaning poem.

According to Vésteinn Ólason in his work *Sagnadansar* the *fornkvæði* undoubtedly springs out of the cultural stream that takes over after the time of the ancient literature is complete. They are developed after the *saga* age and can be traced back no earlier than about 1550 in Iceland, coinciding with the Protestant Reformation in Europe. And it is believed that in Europe, the character of the *sagnadansa*, the telling of a story in poetic language, with end rhymes, divided into verses, can trace its roots back to France during the Middle Ages.

It was not until the 19th century that the *sagnadansar* of the Nordic countries were published together by an

A. P. Berggreens in a collection entitled *Folke-Sange og Melodier*. Meanwhile it would not be until the early 20th century when the famous folk song collector and publisher, the priest at Siglufjörður Bjarni Þorsteinsson published a nearly 1900 page long collection of the Icelandic *sagnadansar* where no one thought there was any value. The *fornkvæði* were deemed somewhat curious but no one was interested in preserving the melodies. In fact, Arni Magnusson, when he would come across music notation in his manuscript findings, would famously cut them out and use them as binding filler! At any rate, Bjarni's 1900 page reprint of Berggreens Icelandic content is indeed preserved and is known to us today as *Íslensk þjóðlög*.

The *fornkvæði* *Hrafninn* has been translated into English as *The Raven* by Dr. Skúli Johnson, while the North American Icelandic composer S.K. Hall has arranged the melody originally found in Berggreens' text. It's likely however that this melody and poem would have been passed down to S.K. and Skúli orally as it is a very well known *sagnadansa* among the Icelandic people. We have placed the music deliberately in the very centre of the issue in the hopes that it will rest open on any music stands among our readership. Enjoy this ancient poem, set to a modern arrangement.

See score on page 24

Raven

Icelandic Folk Song, trans. by Prof. Skuli Johnson

Icelandic Folk Song, arr. by S. K. Hall

Andante ♩ = 76

mf

Voice

Flies the rav - en at e - ven -

Piano

6

Voice

ing, He must not flit by day. Hard is his

Pno.

11

Voice

spi - rit - sor - row - ing; Rest he find not

Pno.

3

2

16 *rit.* *p*

Voice

may. Late flies the rav - en at e - ven.

Pno.

HRAFNINN

Hrafninn flýgur um aftaninn,
 á daginn ekki má.
 Harður er rauna hagarinn,
 hvíldir kann ei fá.
 Seint flýgur krummi á kvöldin.



Steingrímur Kristján Hall



Skuli Johnson

Sympathy for a Jötunn: The Justification of Loki's Actions

by Adam Hansson

You'll find that many of the truths we cling to depend greatly on our own point of view.

Obi-Wan Kenobi, Return of the Jedi

One of the most poignant descriptions of Loki lies within Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda*, when readers are told, "That one is also reckoned among the Æsir whom some call the Æsir's calumniator and originator of deceits and the disgrace of all gods and men. His name is Loki or Lopt..." (26). Further names for Loki include Lökkemand, Lokke, Luki, Loptr and Hveðrungr, revealing him to be a not only complex, but also enigmatic figure. Yet those with only a passing familiarity with the Nordic mythos often place him in one of two roles: either as comedic relief, or as the quintessential adversarial figure of Norse myth. It could be argued that Christianity dominates Western thought processes to an immense degree even in contemporary times, and that this leads to a lack of relativistic perspective(s) when dealing with topics that are anathema to a given era's predicated values. Tribalistic dynamics in mass psychology can still apply when encountering concepts like blood vengeance, that today's society considers barbaric; a conceited form of thinking often takes shape, which smacks of the "noble savage" argument of yesteryear. Yet regardless of what prompts such disregard for previous traditions and

laws, this essay contends that Loki was not simply a primeval nihilist seeking to dance among Miðgarðr's ashes, but rather an individual whom had suffered intensely under the hands of an oppressive and manipulative regime. When examined in light of the societal and cultural obligations shared by many denizens of Norse mythology, including the Æsir pantheon themselves, Loki's suffering proves so grand in scope that his acts of vengeance were born out of isolation rather than malevolence. Considering the legal norms of the Scandinavian countries during the medieval period while acknowledging the anthropomorphism prevalent in Nordic myth will not only exonerate Loki for any and all wrongdoing, but also shift the blame towards the truly guilty – yet unrepentant – Æsir.

The Corruption of Sworn Fellowship

Betrayal is the only truth that sticks.

Arthur Miller

William Ian Miller describes the notion of *fóstbræðralag* or blood brotherhood as an oath-dependent aspect of the medieval Nordic culture. This complex pact was subject to public reinforcement, based on "The sense that the implicit obligations of kinship, friendship and affinity needed occasionally to be supplemented by obligations undertaken with great formality" (174). Within this

framework, it is safe to assume that any such hallowed enterprise required a firm commitment by both participants involved, as all troubles and concerns were to be considered shared regardless of the context. If Loptr was a depraved and malevolent being from the very onset, it seems curious that Óðinn would even subject himself to these sacraments in relation to such a being in the first place. Jan de Vries offers a keen insight into the decision by this so-called “calumniator” when mentioning that, “According to the *Lokasenna* [*Loki’s Quarrel*] he has in former times sworn blood brotherhood with Othin and there is no reason whatever to suspect him of bad intentions” (202). If anything, at this point it is Loki who should have been suspicious of Óðinn, since an important aspect of the All-Father’s attitude toward giants (such as himself) can be seen in the nearly genocidal pogrom that had been ongoing against the Jötunn race – until the sole survivors escaped to the edges of the world by sailing away on a tide of their own blood. Whether Loptr originally perceived Óðinn’s offer of blood as an authentic attempt at settlement for the killing of the giant Ymir (the forebearer of the Jötunn race, i.e. the family lineage from which Loki hails) during the Æsir’s creation of the world, or as an effort to halt further aggression between the Æsir and the Jötnar, it seems that the initial settlement had been accepted in good faith.

Of course, it has been demonstrated time and time again within the Nordic mythology that oaths sworn by Óðinn are broken whenever it is in his best interests. Indeed even among the strongest contenders Óðinn might still be deemed



Jötunn

a notoriously untrustworthy, deceptive and manipulative god. This assertion is best proven within the poem *Hávamál* (*Sayings of the High One*) from *The Poetic Edda*, as it is here that the All-Father directly admits likely malfeasance on his part when instructing humankind in political tactics:

If you’ve another, whom you don’t
trust,
But from whom you want nothing
but good,
Speak fairly to him, but think falsely
And repay treachery with a lie.
(19)

With Loki often depicted as a powerful figure within the Jötunn faction, one with a great aptitude for both the oratory and sorcerous arts, it would



Loki and Hodur by C.G. Qvarnstrom

seem entirely remiss on Óðinn's part to ignore any such potential threat prior to the advent of Ragnarök. Considering this propensity for strategic deception alongside the oracular knowledge that Óðinn gains from the seeress during the *Völuspá* (*Seeress's Prophecy*) in the *Poetic Edda* it makes clear how Loptr is quickly placed within the camp of the enemy. The seeress tells the All-Father that "A ship journeys from the east, Muspell's troops are coming, and Loki steers" (10). With this condemning statement concerning the end times, whatever possible benevolent or noble intentions Loki may have had in accepting the pact would have been inevitably met with secretly preordained hostility, especially when he is considered the enemy by a known prevaricator. Indeed Óðinn, like any great Machiavellian figure, would likely attempt to manipulate and use a potential enemy for his own gain.

Given the likelihood that any unscrupulous motives behind Óðinn's oath of blood-brotherhood were obscured behind false words and pleasantries, another catalyst would then be required to prompt the quintessential misgiving that had been brewing within Asgard. While the Æsir's penchant for cruelty is demonstrated consistently throughout Norse mythology and affords many illustrations to which Loki would have been a direct witness, the Æsir's ongoing disdain for any associated with the Jötunn race (constantly manifested in the deeds of Þór) would only serve to quicken the gestation of mistrust within Loki's breast. With their greed and propensity for murder well known throughout the mythological cycle, it was the building of Asgard's walls and the ill-fated recompense the builder received afterward, which would tear back the veil of civility that obscured Loki's newfound social network. Daniel McCoy attests within *The Viking Spirit: An Introduction to Norse Mythology and*

Religion, that during the culmination of this tale, "The terrified gods spoke of breaking the oath they had sworn to the giant mason, and of killing him before he was able to finish his work" (165). This violation of a sacred oath reveals the ease with which social and legal conventions could be cast aside by the Æsir, especially when dealing with those of the inferior Jötunn bloodline, thus hinting at how miniscule Loki's worth was perceived to be by those who were supposedly considered kin – at least, based on the word of Óðinn.

While this would certainly foment doubt on Loki's behalf concerning his social standing, what truly hindered any credibility that the Æsir may have had in future dealings with Loki, occurred when they sought to blame him for their own shortcomings. Nothing speaks more eloquently of moral decay and prejudicial treatment amongst the supposedly divine when, "Though all of the gods were to blame for this sorry state of affairs, having all sworn the same oath... they found a scapegoat. Loki, they recalled, had gone out of his way to argue on the giant's behalf... They resolved to put him to death" (McCoy 165). Loki receives two very specific revelations based on this nearly unanimous decision of both the Æsir and the Vanir; his efforts in negotiation had been dismissed as an act of malevolence, and despite the bargain being agreed upon by the entirety of the pantheon – sans Þór – his life is considered of lesser worth in comparison to the wages agreed upon. The builder's requested wages of the sun and the moon seems to pale in comparison to the agreed-upon marriage of Freya; the Æsir's choice of betrayal and violence rather than keeping their oath and allowing the marriage to proceed is certainly consistent with a xenophobic or negatively ethnocentric view of blood purity (and in Norse mythology, marriage negotiations often seem to be the continuation of war

by other means).

The entire episode raises the question of whether Loki could ever be considered an equal in the eyes of the Æsir and Vanir, to say the least. While Loptr does manage to avoid being slain, and moreover is able to resolve the situation in a positive fashion for his foster-kin after they have threatened his life to force him to perform an act of witchcraft, it is important to note that there was no outside force that compelled these deities to give their sworn oath of safe conduct and fair bargaining to the builder. Instead, like an errant child fearing punishment for lying or possessing a grasping nature, they were exceedingly quick in placing culpability on the one individual that was unlike themselves, all in an effort to remain blameless and find justification for their actions. Taking all this into account, if there had been a fair number of doubts on Loki's behalf concerning the validity of his sworn brotherhood with Óðinn, this unjust condemnation by the Æsir would inevitably cement them. With this episode as the catalyst which fomented distrust between Loptr and the Æsir, it was the eventual subjugation and torment of his bloodline by those he had considered kin, which initiated his drastic change from misguided trickster to violent antagonist.

The Abuse of Family and The Loss of Kinship

Mother is the name for God in the lips and hearts of little children.

William Makepeace Thackeray

In medieval Scandinavia familial bonds were extremely important, to the point of structuring a person's world. In *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking: Feud, Law, and Society in Saga Iceland*, William Ian Miller attests that kinship and sworn obligations each required ongoing reinforcement: "Keeping good kinship did not come naturally. It required work and foresight to maintain the bonds in working order. This task was aided by norms of mutual aid and reciprocity. And it was also aided negatively by anticipated threats from others" (164). Within this social construct, kinship bonds could be interpreted as both a duty and a source of strength which could be drawn upon by any individual who held such ties. Thus, to remove the kinship bond is to remove an obvious source of power, which is precisely what occurred with regards to Loki's progeny.

As Chart 1.0 makes evident below, none of Loki's natural children emerge unscathed from Asgard's manipulations. All four children should have been

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considered extended family (being born outside of wedlock is not a problem for Óðinn's son Þór, for example), yet instead they were enslaved, imprisoned, banished, or mutilated by the Æsir. Perhaps the reason was the Æsir's disgust with their abnormal forms, or the Æsir's fatalism regarding the seeress's prophecies; on the reasoning behind the torment of Loki's children, see *The Poetic Edda* (10-11) and *The Prose Edda* (27). While this persecution may

commonly be accepted as a necessary evil, it would actually serve as the final tipping point that drove Loki to seek vengeance. If the brood of Loki had been treated with respect, any inherent antagonism Loki may have held towards the Æsir and Ásynjur could have then potentially been muted or eradicated, thus preventing both the Father/Mother and his children from striking against the gods during the advent of Ragnarök.

Chart 1.0: Loki's Natural Children

Appellation	Parents	Description	Treatment by the Æsir	Justification
Sleipnir	Svaðilfari & Loki	An eight-legged Stallion born of Loki. He was conceived shortly after Loki was forced to distract the giant mason's workhorse, under pain of death, during the building of Asgard's walls.	After being carried to term by Loki in the form of a mare, the firstborn of Loki is commandeered by Óðinn, serving as his steed throughout the Nordic cosmology.	There is no known justification within either the <i>Poetic Edda</i> or the <i>Prose Edda</i> for this enslavement, but Óðinn (and his chosen heroes like Sigurd the Volsung) benefit from it.
Hel	Loki & Angrboða	A woman who is normal on one side of her body, the other side displays the pallor of death and decay.	Banished to the underworld that shares her name, this child of Loki had taken no action towards the Aesir.	The Æsir were concerned about Hel and incited a preemptive banishment and punishment.
Fenrir/ Fenrisúlfr Fenris-wolf	Loki & Angrboða	A giant wolf capable of speech and possessing intelligence, cunning, and concern for his reputation.	First tolerated by the Æsir, the Fenris-wolf is later deceived and bound by sorcerous means. The bound wolf is then mutilated with a blade set between its jaws.	A prophecy alluded to Fenrir slaying Óðinn. His rate of growth was of great concern to the Aesir; action was taken as soon as he was strong enough to pose a threat.
Jörmungandr/ Miðgarðsormr (Midgard Serpent)	Loki & Angrboða	A giant serpent capable of encircling the whole world by grasping its own tail in its mouth.	Cast into the Ocean surrounding Midgard.	A prophecy alluded to Jörmungandr slaying Þór during Ragnarök.

While the most visible of the Æsir's motives and justifications concerning Loki's brood have already been established, their actions also contained a hidden side involving political effects such as dependence and protection. William Miller further expounds upon the intricacies of

kinship bonds by stating, "The networks established and maintained were mobilized in matters of sustenance and support, law and feud, conviviality and mourning" (139). Because Loki had been upholding his bond with Óðinn by constantly assisting the Æsir in their squabbles and battles against

the Jöttnar, he may have been viewed as a traitor by the majority of his own people, who would always see him as tainted by association with the race of beings that sought the extinction of any and all of Ymir's brood. Thus isolated from the Jöttnar, any support Loki could have received for his natural children from their father's bloodline was eradicated; these children were forced outside of the established hierarchy of both peoples, which inevitably gave rise to Loptr's resentful acceptance of being perceived as a bondman or having garnered dependent status, in exchange for being afforded security against potential enemies (many of whom are in fact his own kin), thus placing him further under Æsir influence and control. Public devaluation aimed at isolating the target by removing the political and societal benefits of kinship inevitably includes a psychological aspect. Loptr's two children with his wife, the Ásynjur Sigyn, should have been considered as legitimate offspring, but he would have been justified in worrying about their fates given his own uncertain status among the Æsir and their treatment of his other children. Moreover, as the United Nations acknowledges, a quantifiable measure cannot be placed on parental love: "The loss of child custody places fathers at a significant risk of physical and psychological ill health" (73). Evidence of paternal bereavement can be seen throughout Old Norse literature, for example in Egill Skallagrímsson's poem "Loss of Sons." The view that Loki indeed agonised over his children's suffering must be given proper consideration; and a bereaved mind would be more likely to find a solution in culturally sanctioned vengeance.

Lawful Retaliation and the Price of Vengeance

Revenge is an act of passion; vengeance

of justice. Injuries are revenged; crimes are avenged.

Samuel Johnson

In this context, it is debatable whether or not Loptr's involvement in Baldr's death was even criminal. To truly discern whether his actions were righteous or illicit, the edicts of that time period must be considered in light of Harold Berman's view that, "A society's belief in the ultimate transcendent purpose will certainly be manifested in its processes of social ordering, and... will likewise be manifested in its sense of an ultimate purpose" (4). In essence, if the law is based on the divine, then the divine would conversely be constrained within the laws that have been created, especially within a culture where words purportedly held preternatural power.

With the precept that divine law held all accountable having been established, one need not even deny Loki's culpability in the slaying of Baldr in order to defend him against the Æsir. The core of the argument is whether, based on pagan statute, murder was committed in the first place. The key to comprehending Loptr's actions must be found not only in a cultural perspective, but also in lawful sanction. The *Grágás I* defines murder thus: "It is murder if a man hides it or conceals the corpse or does not admit it" (146). It also explains the means to ensure a legal killing:

The killer is to publish the killing as his work within the next twelve hours; but if he is on mountain or fjord then he must do it within twelve hours of returning. He is to go to the first house where he thinks his life is in no danger and tell one or more men legally resident there and state it in this way: "There was an encounter between us," he is to state, and name the other man and say where it was.

Further legal intricacies notwithstanding, the scenario in which the death of another is considered a sanctioned killing has been clearly defined; one simply has to admit one's handiwork in proper fashion and a settlement can be reached. As it turns out, Loki cannot in fact be found in violation of this procedure, except in exceeding the legal requirements by announcing his culpability for the killing before he has even reached a "house where he thinks his life is in no danger." In the poem *Lokasenna (Loki's Quarrel)* in the *Poetic Edda*, he admits to the killing in front of Baldr's kin in an overtly public manner when stating:

Frigg, you want me to say more about
my wicked deeds;
for I brought it about that you will
never again
see Baldr ride to the halls.
(85)

With this stated, all conditions have been met; culpability in Baldr's death has been established, all those present had witnessed how it had occurred and the confession had then been done within hallowed congress, at a major feast where the obligations of oaths can be publicly called upon. Unfortunately, the same paradoxical congruence of both culture and law prevents any sort of settlement as, once again, the Æsir and Ásynjur demonstrate their conceited disregard of the law that they themselves have instituted. In summarizing the Æsir's treatment of Loki after the death of Baldr, Daniel McCoy observes the torment and mutilation that Loki endures:

The gods carried the terrified Loki
to a cave. There they brought his
two beloved sons, Vali and Nari.
The gods turned Vali into a wolf
and made Loki watch as one of

his sons tore apart the helplessly
screaming and flailing body of
the other. The gods then drew
Nari's entrails out of his corpse,
drilled holes in three large rock
formations in the cave and tied
Loki to the rocks with his son's
bowels.
(259)

Whether or not Loki was concerned with the aftermath at this point seems superfluous; time and time again he had suffered under the cruel ministrations of the Æsir, so he had to be cognizant of the possibility that such oath breakers and deceivers would justify even torture, witchcraft and killing, presumably based on the "divine right" to violate their own laws. Loki had taken the first few steps of vengeance directed at the Odinic dynasty lawfully, but their response escalated the situation, giving him and his surviving children no option but to fight against the Æsir at Ragnarök.

Fimbulwinter On The Horizon

You can have peace. Or you can
have freedom. Don't ever count on
having both at once.
Robert A. Heinlein

Modernity comes with many biases, especially when considering tales which come from a very different historical context. The cultural and legal traditions which may have justified Loki's violent retaliation, as a righteous reaction to both persecution and torment, are alien to most modern thought processes, and in peaceful societies they may be instinctively dismissed as relics of a barbaric era. Yet whoever seeks to understand the trials and tribulations of Loki and the Æsir, would do well to

acknowledge that just as Loki was both persecuted and manipulated by the Æsir according to a sanctioned caste system based on blood purism and conquest, so too was his vengeance fully prescribed within the established boundaries of law that permeated this mythos.

Several key elements have been exposed and examined concerning the motivations behind Loptr's actions; the violation of kinship bonds, the betrayal of his trust, and the slaughter of his kin. Any one of these would be reason enough for him to act as he did, and yet it was only at the end – when numerous chances had been given to the Æsir and summarily ignored – that his hand was seemingly forced. It should come to no surprise that Loki's prescribed actions were at once violent and both legally manipulative in nature, as the nature of the game in Asgard was clear by this point. However, having risked everything, Loki's family and person were made to suffer in response, in the harsh terms of a pantheon desperate for control over any possible rivals.

A complicated figure, regardless of whether he is perceived as villain or victim, trickster, giant, or demigod, Loki's actions can be seen in a more favourable light by considering them in the context of culturally sanctioned vengeance in medieval Scandinavia, particularly in the context of biological and social kinship bonds. Seeing Loki's unstable position in relation to such bonds, and the resulting strife for his offspring, may garner a fair

bit of sympathy for this maligned and often misunderstood entity. Within the context of archaic Nordic law, Loptr sought justice.

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Haunted Heroes

by Kevin Jon Johnson

As Karl Popper noted, by necessity, we have finite knowledge, yet our ignorance is infinite, so much then depends upon faith; life often calls upon us to act without perfect knowledge, so the rough edges of doubt circumscribe our choice, mixing chance and calculation, working towards the light but often casting dice in the dark. Our finite reach often embraces tragedy. Comedy can happen too, but it often bears the scars of tragedy, a bitter sweet reality in this life.

In *Grettir's Saga* a Swede named Glámr tends sheep at a haunted farmstead, but after refusing to fast during Yule-tide, he is found dead in the snow and then Glámr becomes an afturganga (again walker) that haunts the area.

Grettir Ásmundarson will fight and successfully slay Glámr, but Glámr's curse will lead Grettir down an unfortunate path. As a result of this curse, Grettir will only grow weaker, become disastrously unlucky, begin to fear the dark, and he



IMAGE COURTESY OF ANDREW SMITH / CREATIVE COMMONS

Hamlet, the Philosopher by Lord Ronald Sutherland-Gower, 1888.
Bancroft Gardens, Stratford-upon-Avon, England, UK.

becomes an outlaw, doomed to loneliness (Grettis saga, Wikipedia).

He will also face an early death. The steep sided, volcanic island of Drang, in the Skagafjörður in northern Iceland, will become Grettir's final bastion.

When a hero encounters evil, it may leave a taint; he may become haunted by remembrance of the encounter, in a fashion similar to post traumatic stress disorder, a common diagnosis of military personnel returning from active combat in recent decades. The Mayo Clinic website defines it as follows: "Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that's triggered by a terrifying event – either experiencing it or witnessing it. Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares and severe anxiety, as well as uncontrollable thoughts about the event."

Evil leaves a stain, and war dispenses a riot of evil. Many Icelandic Canadians and Americans returning from World War Two suffered with PTSD, but the medical establishment had not yet recognized it as a mental illness. It led some to alcoholism, an attempt at self-medication, and damaged many households. The stain of evil expanded, and the general society gave returning military personnel very little attention, for after all, they had come back from war in one piece, howbeit a crazed piece, with invisible fracture lines ramifying their souls.

A German industrialist and a member of the Nazi Party, Oskar Schindler (1908 – 1974) "saved the lives

of 1,200 Jews during the Holocaust by employing them in his enamelware and ammunition factories in occupied Poland and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia" (Oskar Schindler, Wikipedia). In returning to West Germany after the war, Schindler became an alcoholic, using liquor to try and quash the demons he had faced.

The four masterpieces by Shakespeare also feature haunted heroes. The ghost of the King haunts prince Hamlet. The prophecies of the witches, his murder of Duncan, the ghost of Banquo, and finally the suicide of his wife, haunt Macbeth. His own missteps, magnified at first by the Fool and later by his madness, haunt King Lear. His jealousy, augmented and manufactured by Iago, haunts Othello.

With our limits, when we step into the breach and directly face evil, it leaves a stain. Our mental framework warps under the weight of evil, and like Grettir, returned warriors, Oskar Schindler, or the heroes in Shakespearean tragedy, despite our courage, the psyche has exacted a steep price for our confrontation with evil.

Half blind, we stumble towards the light, and youthful vigour often confronts evil with a faith in resilience, but with the encroachment of age, the shadows may deepen and the scars to the psyche may not have enough time to fully heal. Such haunting represents a tragic aspect of any hero, and their ongoing struggle to overcome this tragic haunting reveals a further dimension of their courage.

The Giantess as “Other” in *The Poetic Edda*, *Ynglinga Saga*, and Gerður Kristný’s *Bloodhoof*

by Amélie Roberts

Since the beginning of time, giants and giant women have existed in Old Norse-Icelandic mythology (Larrington 3). “Seeress’s Prophecy” tells us that some of the first beings were giant women, and that the seeress herself was a giantess

(Larrington 4). They were described as “mighty and powerful,” and played an integral role in the creation of the world (Larrington 5). In other stories, the giantess is paired up with a god, such as in the story of Freyr and Gerður



Gerður

in “Skirnir’s Journey” (Larrington 61). However, the treatment of the giantess in Icelandic literature is not something to be simply brushed aside. The Sámi people were often referred to as giants, trolls, and dwarfs in the old texts (Mundal 348-349), which makes Gerður’s experience in “Skirnir’s Journey” that much more problematic, especially from a post-colonial perspective. Through the analysis of “Skirnir’s Journey,” parts of the *Ynglinga Saga*, as well as Gerður Kristný’s contemporary reinterpretation of the story of Freyr and Gerður in *Bloodhoof*, this paper will discuss the deeply troubling implications that arise when the giantess is portrayed as the “other.”

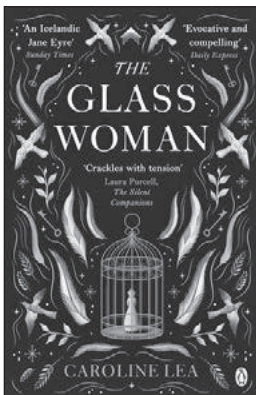
In *The Poetic Edda*, “Skirnir’s Journey” tells the story of how the giantess Gerður came to be united with the god Freyr (Larrington 61). Catching sight of Gerður

while looking into Giantland, Freyr is overcome with lovesickness (Larrington 61). Out of desperation, Freyr hands over his horse and sword to his page, Skirnir, who travels to Giantland in his stead (Larrington 62-63). Told from the perspective of Skirnir, the poem describes his journey to Giantland on behalf of Freyr in order to convince Gerður to agree to a rendezvous with his master (Larrington 61). After initially refusing, Gerður is forced into agreement when Skirnir threatens murder as well as an attempt to inflict a terrible curse on her (Larrington 64-65). Although Skirnir returns with the news of Gerður’s terms, *The Poetic Edda* does not go into further detail concerning Freyr’s and Gerður’s meeting (Larrington 68). However, Gerður is referred to as the wife of Freyr in the *Ynglinga Saga* (Sturluson 14), and

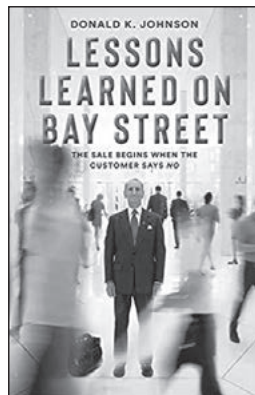
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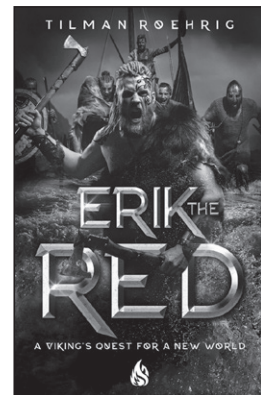
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their son Fíolnir as the “ancestor of the Yngling dynasty of Norwegian kings” (Larrington 61). Freyr’s descendants are called the Ynglingar, as Freyr was also referred to as Yngvi-Freyr (Sturluson 14).

In comparison with the limited information provided in *The Poetic Edda* and the *Ynglinga saga* on the story of Freyr, Skirnir, and Gerður, Kristný’s *Bloodhoof* retells the story from the point of view of the giantess Gerður (Crocker 6). Although the male gaze commands the narrative structure of the original sources, *Bloodhoof* confronts the reader with the disturbing implications of Gerður being reduced to a sexual object (Crocker 7). Kristný, by granting Gerður complete agency, effectively allows the giantess to reclaim her identity, which challenges the reader to reconsider the actions of Freyr and Skirnir for what they are: male violence (Crocker 6). Going further than the original sources, Kristný portrays Gerður as a woman who is forced into a sexually abusive relationship with the cruel Freyr (Crocker 2). Mere lovesickness is transformed into a much more destructive and possessive lust which consumes Freyr so that he takes on a wolfish personality (Kristný 93, 98, 103). His violent desire for Gerður literally rips apart her body (Kristný 100-101, 109, 110), and ultimately leaves her pregnant (Kristný 114-115). However, Gerður defies all odds by resurrecting herself, physically piecing her body back together (Kristný 110). Gerður’s resilience ultimately prevails. By the end of *Bloodhoof*, the giantess has given birth to a son, and the reader is left with the hopeful image of Gerður and Fíolnir sitting on Odin’s throne together, overlooking all worlds (Kristný 124).

In the original sources, the reader has no choice but to objectify Gerður the giantess along with Freyr when her beauty

catches his attention, and to accompany Skirnir when he “bullies” Gerður (Larrington 61) into unwilling submission (Crocker 6-7). Although the male gaze is still present in *Bloodhoof*, Kristný presents it in a way that is revealing. When Skirnir and Freyr are mentioned, Kristný draws the reader’s attention to their eyes, which are described as glassy (Kristný 32, 44), selfish (Kristný 29, 37), wolflike (Kristný 93), and lifeless (Kristný 111). By reducing men to only their eyes, *Bloodhoof* illustrates the dehumanizing nature that objectification has on a person, whether a god or a giantess. Additionally, Kristný’s focus on reflection is a significant theme throughout *Bloodhoof*, which seeks to show the reader the reality of the inner self (Kristný 59, 88, 90), regardless of



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gender (Kristný 111).

The story of Freyr and Gerður served as a literary model for other stories in Old Norse mythology. For example, in the Norwegian king's saga *Ágrip*, the story of the Norwegian King Haraldr Hárfagri and Snæfríðr shares many similarities with "Skirnir's Journey" (Mundal 350-351). Both Freyr and King Haraldr Hárfagri were overcome with "blind" (Mundal 351) desire for women who were described as "bright like the sun" (Mundal 352). Gerður and Snæfríðr's beauty is unusual, as giant women were more often than not portrayed as exceptionally ugly and wicked in some old texts (Gallo 4). Conversely, waiting is a common aspect in both of their stories (Mundal 352). Although Gerður was a giantess, Snæfríðr was in fact the daughter of a Sámi king (Mundal 351). Snæfríðr and King Haraldr Hárfagri's marriage is thought to follow the original mythic pattern that began with Freyr and Gerður (Mundal 350-351). Although King Haraldr Hárfagri is said to have loved Snæfríðr to the point of sitting beside her dead body for three years, nothing is said about the union of Freyr and Gerður (Mundal 351). However, Gerður Kristný's *Bloodhoof* attempts to fill in the gaps.

In order to understand just how needed Gerður Kristný's *Bloodhoof* is in response to original sources such as *The Poetic Edda* and *The Ynglinga Saga*, there are certain topics that need to be discussed. In particular, giants have often been associated with the Sámi (Mundal 348), Indigenous peoples that coexisted alongside their Nordic neighbors (Mundal 346). The Sámi were referred to as the "other" and portrayed as giants, trolls, and dwarfs in Old Norse-Icelandic texts (Mundal 348-349). Giantland was arguably modeled off of the land that the Sámi people inhabited, often

up North and separate from Nordic people (Mundal 349). Sámi culture was considered to be different from Nordic culture to the extent that the Sámi people were "interpreted and understood in the light of mythic patterns" (Mundal 348). However, perhaps the most fascinating and pertinent to this discussion is the representation of the Sámi woman in the form of the giantess (Mundal 350). In Old Norse-Icelandic myths, the giantess plays an important role in the creation of the royal family by uniting with a god in order to produce a "proto-king", such as in the case of Freyr and Gerður (Mundal 350). Although the Sámi themselves were not necessarily respected or revered, their combined Sámi/Nordic offspring received praise in old Norse literature, such as *The Ynglinga Saga* (DeAngelo 280). Sámi women, mythologized as giantesses, were objectified for the sole purpose of giving birth to heroes (DeAngelo 280).

In Iceland, the Sámi were regarded as "an alien people belonging to a distant land" (Palsson). According to the *Landnámabok*, the Book of Settlements, which documents ethnic roots in Iceland, many of the original Norwegian settlers were descendants of Sámi/Nordic relationships (Palsson). Some of these settlers were said to be skilled in sorcery and witchcraft (Palsson). The Sámi (DeAngelo 277) and their mythic giant/troll/dwarf counterparts were generally known to be skilled in the art of magic (Gallo 2). Although "Skirnir's Journey" makes no mention of Gerður the giantess resorting to magic, Kristný's *Bloodhoof* highlights the magical link between mother and daughter (Kristný 72-73) which causes Gerður's mother to appear to her in dreams (Kristný 84) in order to provide comfort. In addition, Gerður's profound connection with her homeland is noteworthy not only because it is

something that is shared by both mother and daughter, but also as it emphasizes the importance of protecting the land (Crocker 8).

Magic believed to be used by the Sámi was often intertwined with an “extraordinary” knowledge of the landscape, as well as weather patterns (DeAngelo 274-275). Their “superhuman” ability to “move quickly through the deep snows” on skis contributed to the belief that they possessed magical powers (DeAngelo 274). The Sámi were also thought to be “simultaneously more and less than human,” and were regarded as shapeshifters who could transform themselves into animals as well as giants and trolls (DeAngelo 275). Although some men were said to have magical powers, magic was usually portrayed to be the weapon of choice for women in Old Norse-Icelandic Literature,

and was used in order to prevent violence and protect family honour rather than to inflict harm and violence (Friðriksdóttir 412, 428). By contrast, Skirnir’s threats and attempt to curse Gerður by carving runes into a magic wand is that much more unsettling, as Gerður doesn’t resort to magic in order to protect herself (Larrington 66-67). Skirnir’s sorcery is obviously evil and contributes to the violence against Gerður in both “Skirnir’s Journey” and *Bloodhoof*.

In conclusion, “Skirnir’s Journey”, parts of the *Ynglinga Saga*, and Gerður Kristný’s *Bloodhoof* all address the “other” in the form of Gerður the giantess. As a female being, Gerður is objectified, silenced, and torn away from her homeland in order to satisfy Freyr’s sexual desire. In *Bloodhoof* she is given her voice back, in a fictional retelling that seems to contain more truth than the original. The representation of



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Gerður as a giantess, points towards the strong possibility that she was a Sámi woman, arguably the very definition of “otherness” in Old Norse-Icelandic society. As many scholars, poets, and writers have begun to reinterpret the medieval legacy of Old Norse-Icelandic literature in postwar Iceland, the woman’s perspective is finally being discussed, as well as the significance of the Sámi people. This is hopeful.

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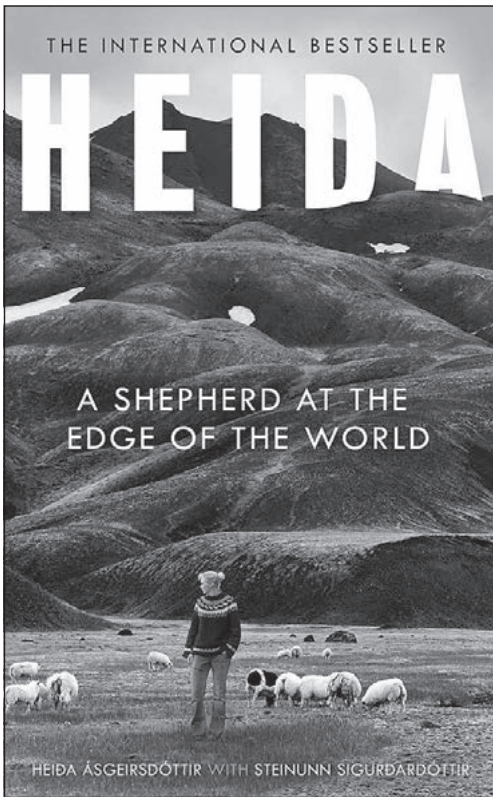
Book Review

Heiða: A Shepherd at the Edge of the World

by Steinunn Sigurðardóttir

Translated by Philip Roughton (2019)

Reviewed by Elin Thordarson



Heiða is the biography of Heiða Ásgeirsdóttir, a sheep farmer living at Ljótastaðir, a farm in the south of

Iceland. That is to say, this is the biography of a sheep farmer/ former fashion model/ police officer/ park conservationist/ sheep pregnancy scanner/ newly named Green Party representative.

The translation begins with an introduction written by the author herself, none other than Steinunn Sigurðardóttir. Steinunn is of course best known for being a poet and novelist, in particular, to the English-reading world, she is known for the translations of *Tímabjófurinn* (The Thief of Time 1986), and *Hjartastaður* (Heart Place 1995). *Heiða* is her first non-fiction piece. In her introduction she makes clear that a kind of disappearing act occurred on her part in order to bring forth Heiða's authentic voice, which she explains is a mixture of modern and old fashioned that had to look right on the page. It's a curious notion she asks her English readers to consider, that she has hidden herself in the writing, but is it curiouser that she mentions it at all? And is it more curious that I'm bringing it to light in my review? I mention this because I found it to be an altogether strange pronouncement from a writer (like a magician giving away her

secret, performing the sleight of hand and then reminding the audience: “look! It was me all along!”) And because the book opens in this way it took me some time to grapple with the piece. To hold it still and get a better sense of it once I’d had a chance to refocus my vision. But then, perhaps this is an intentional way of getting the reader to look closer.

Heiða is split into four chapters, based on the seasons and the kinds of farm work required then and the types of memories that have occurred across each one. It’s a farm-procedural, it’s a diary, it’s reminiscences, fragments, poetic attempts and often very banal. Undoubtedly the most compelling parts of the read were the deep dives into what ewes are like. What their personalities can be like, their behaviors, the types of mothers they can be; as comforting and sorrowful, and occasionally disturbingly violent or cold hearted. It is especially the chapter when Heiða is a sheep pregnancy scanner for part of the year that is most unforgettable. It is tiring, it can be cold and wet, and she can scan 1300 ewes in a day, determining the count of lambs in utero for that farm, and then moving on to the next location to do it again.

The book has been incredibly well received in Iceland, and is also considered an international bestseller. It’s said that Heiða’s notoriety as a political figure increased overnight and Steinunn’s readers and critics were awed by the fiction writer’s chameleon act, as she mentions in her introduction. In the original Icelandic it was the third best-selling novel in Iceland in 2016 and garnered two awards. One reviewer claims that its popularity may be based on Heiða’s past venture into modeling. Perhaps. However I’m reluctant to place much emphasis on the short period

of young Heiða’s life when she was a model living in New York, as other reviewers have done. It seems they are drawn to the tension that must lay between a glamorous life in a big city and a simple one spent alone on a sheep farm. It is true, our sheep farmer was a teenage model in North America for a time. But she quit early on and entered the agricultural college, committing her existence to the prosperity and everyday running of her family’s farm. Instead, the tension in the piece doesn’t lie with giving up fame for the family farm, its dark undercurrent is the pending construction of the Búland Power Plant by a company called Suðurorka, and the tactics they use to acquire farm land for their massive and environmentally destructive projects. The plans near Heiða’s farm include damming the river Skaftá with a structure that would be as tall as Hallgrímskirkja in Reykjavík.

There is a passing moment when a farmer from the east, from the region around the Kárahnjúkar Hydropower Plant, visits Heiða’s area and tells the people there: *you probably think this project can’t possibly happen, it’s too insane. But if you don’t wake up now it will be too late.* And so Heiða is pulled into local politics in order to stop the acquisition and expropriation of farmland. This part is so gripping because the readers, ones familiar with it, are reminded of the cautionary tale out of the east of Iceland of how the environment isn’t something to intrude upon in this way and that there are those who would destroy it for personal gain. I get the sense that it’s the reminder of what happened in the east with the construction of the dam and the destruction of the natural environment, paired with the belovedness of the author and a new direction in her career that has contributed to *Heiða* being an award winning best seller.

POETRY

Twilight 58630

by Elin Thordarson

O Fish-God, Ark of our world!
In the curved horn lying in a roughshod grassland clings
a dew of sadness.

O giant, mighty ploughman!
Discover this horn and throw it past the skies/
For though the sadness is done
It is remembered.

What mystery, what wintering family saga
Flowed into the summer of my young memory?

I sense only I retain a memory of this moment.

A woman, old, in life's deep twilight
finds my father's name in a telephone book.

What crisis, what blood on what altar?

She tells him in her ancient voice over telephone connection
that he is her son and she is his mother.

I am witness to, quietly: "Yes, that is my name, but I'm not your son, I'm sorry."
And the connection is stopped
gently back in the cradle.

The blood freezes in its trickle over the edge.
The waterfall dries up in an instant.

O dwarf, trickster and truthsayer!
Tell us this woman did not cry anymore for a baby she lost
with the same name as my father.

Contributors

ARNGERÐUR “GIGI” FRIDRIKSSON was born June 13, 1925 near Patreksfjörður, Iceland and immigrated to Canada in 1949. She married Jon Fridriksson in Winnipeg and moved to Montreal and later Toronto. She had three children and two grandchildren. She was fiercely proud of her heritage and was involved for many years in the Icelandic Canadian Club. She was made an honorary member of the Icelandic National League in 2010. She passed away January 21, 2021.

STEINGRÍMUR KRISTJÁN (S.K.) HALL was born in Gimli, Manitoba, to parents who were originally from Þingeyjarsýsla. He received a Bachelor of Music at the Gustav Adolphus University in St Paul, Minnesota. In 1906, he and his wife moved to Winnipeg where he taught piano and singing and became the organist at the First Lutheran Church, a position he held for 30 years. He also conducted a brass group. In 1936, he and his wife moved to Wynyard, Saskatchewan (Vatnabyggð), where Steingrímur taught at the University of Saskatchewan. Steingrímur published three collections of songs; a large number of instrumental works remain unpublished.

BRIAN JOHANNESON grew up with hockey memorabilia all around him but found it only of curiosity value at the time. His father Konnie had played defence for the 223rd Battalion hockey team and for the Winnipeg Falcons for several years, including 1920, the Olympic year. By 1999 he had enough documents, diaries and artefacts to create his first Winnipeg Falcons website. Then he rewrote it entirely in 2006 after acquiring his mother’s scrapbook, a treasure trove of several hundred newspaper clippings about the 223rd Battalion and Falcons teams. His Falcons’ website is at www.winnipegfalcons.com

IAN JOHNSON is a 67-year-old part time pharmacist in The Pas, Manitoba. He is married to Marie (happy 40th anniversary this year) and has two boys, Lief and Erik, who are all grown up and live in Winnipeg. He is really proud of his Icelandic roots and enjoys writing about his father Palmi Johnson’s era, “they were the true New Icelanders and have lots of tales to tell and uncover.”

KEVIN JÓN JOHNSON is an essayist and currently a teacher of English in Japan.

DR. SKÚLI JOHNSON was born in 1888 in Iceland and came to Winnipeg with his parents at the age of one. He attended Isbister School and later Wesley College. He received a Rhodes Scholarship in 1905 to study at Oxford University. In 1927 he joined the Classics Department at the University of Manitoba and later became Department Head. As translator he translated between Icelandic, Greek and Latin and was as much at home with the Icelandic sagas as with the classical poets. He was a member of the Humanities Research Council of Canada, a founder of the Humanities Association of Canada, a Knight of the Order of the Falcon and in 1954, a year before his death, he was made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.

AMÉLIE ROBERTS is based in Winnipeg, Treaty 1, where she studies English Literature at the University of Manitoba. Some of her current research interests include folklore, Métis history, and Indigenous language revitalization. Amélie holds a Bachelor of Music degree in viola performance from the University of Ottawa, and has performed in various music festivals throughout Canada and the United States. In her free time, Amélie can be found attempting to become the next World AeroPress Championship winner or cozied up in front of a good period drama.

DIANE STEPHENSON is a retired nurse and freelance writer living in Ottawa. Her grandmother, Kristín Þórunn Sigurðardóttir, emigrated to Canada in 1894 at the age of 7.

ELIN THORDARSON, the editor-in-chief of the *Icelandic Connection*, is a writer, translator and mother from Winnipeg, Manitoba.



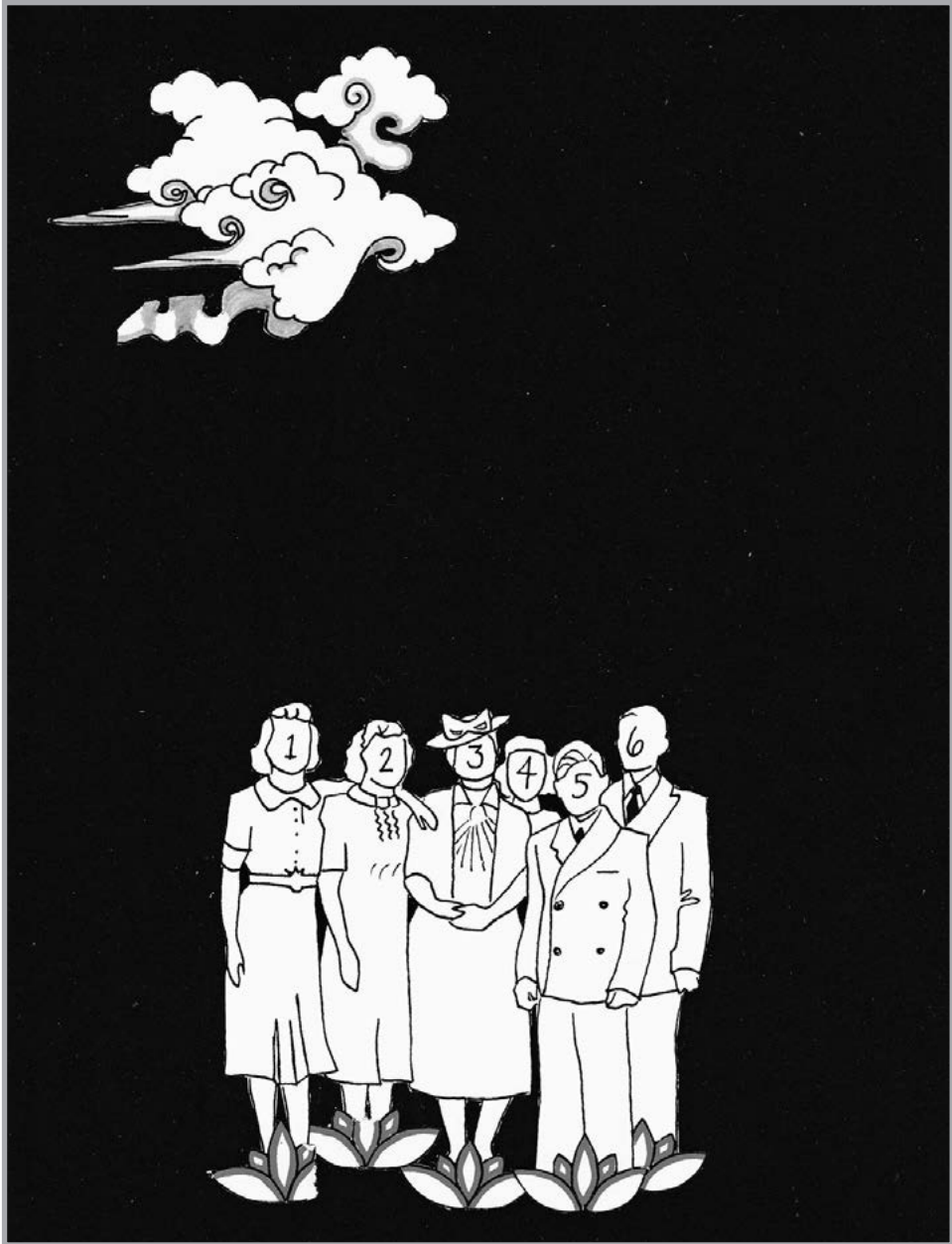


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Davíðssaga

The Back Page

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