

THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN MAGAZINE

CANADA
ICELAND
FOUNDATION
INC

An organization funded by Canadians of Icelandic Descent, dedicated to the preservation of their Cultural Heritage

For scholarship
information,
please contact:

canadaiceland@netscape.net

Gifts and bequests support our ongoing work

The ICELANDIC CONNECTION



ISSN 0012-1716

Vol. 63 #1 (2010)

ICELANDIC CONNECTION

VOLUME 63, No 1 (2010) • WINNIPEG, CANADA

	On the Cover	3
	Editorial - Rev. Stefan M. Jonasson	4
	Chasin' Rainbows - Norma Guttormsson	9
	Verndari minnisins: Snæfríður Íslandssól in Halldór Laxness' Iceland's Bell - Christopher Crocker	18
	On Being Canadian - Away from Home - Heida Simundsson	26
	I believe . . . - Leah Bjornson	32
	Undan Snjóbreidunni What Lies Beneath the Snow - Part 4 - Jo-Anne Weir	33
	Importance of Thor in Early Iceland's Late Paganism - Chelsea Bristow	37
	Llama Escape A day in the life & the great escape - Connie Geller	40
	Poetry - Eric McKinnon, Jennifer Cogswell	42
	Book Reviews	
	My Winnipeg - Reviewed by Susan Claire Johnson	47
	Time in a Bottle - Reviewed by Janice Halldorson	49
	Contributors	51
	The Back Page	52

ICELANDIC CONNECTION

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

MANAGING EDITOR / LORNA TERGESEN
CORPORATE SECRETARY / LORNA TERGESEN
DESIGN & TYPOGRAPHY / KAREN EMILSON

SENIOR EDITORS

FAMILIAR ESSAYS / ELVA SIMUNDSSON
FICTION / HELGA MALIS
INTERVIEWS / HELGA MALIS
POETRY / DAVID ARNASON
REVIEWS / LORNA TERGESEN
SCHOLARLY ESSAYS / NORMA GUTTORMSSON
COMPETITIONS/ VALERIE HOSHIZAKI-NORDIN
MISCELLANEOUS ARTICLES / STEFAN JONASSON, SIGRID JOHNSON, SUSAN CLAIRE JOHNSON, AVERY SIMUNDSSON, HEIDA SIMUNDSSON, ELVA SIMUNDSSON
WENDY JOHNSON BROWN

REGIONAL EDITORS

SASKATCHEWAN / DARRELL GUDMUNDSON SEATTLE / ROB OLASON
BRITISH COLUMBIA / KRISTJANA MAGNUSSON CLARK, NORMA GUTTORMSSON

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

BUSINESS MANAGER-TREASURER / RICK LOFTSON
ASSISTANT MANAGERS / MOYRA BENEDIKTSON, VALDINE BJORNSSON
ADVERTISING & PROMOTION / ALLISON HOLM

Subscriptions, advertising & editorial correspondence:

The Icelandic Connection, Box 1156, Gimli, Manitoba R0C 1B0 CANADA
CONTACT: Lorna Tergesen (204) 642-9650 to inquire about the magazine.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

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

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

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.

PAP registration # 09999 and Postal Agreement # 01251716

Printed in Winnipeg, Canada.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Publications Assistance Program towards our mailing costs.

Canada

On the Cover



A collection of covers spanning seven decades

Editorial

Our Evolving Identity

by Rev. Stefan M. Jonasson

If you weren't paying close attention, it's entirely possible that you may have missed a significant change on the cover of this issue of our magazine. After nearly sixty-eight years as *The Icelandic Canadian*, we've changed our name to The Icelandic Connection, which better reflects the contents and constituency of this periodical, while remaining faithful to the inspiration which gave birth to it in the first place.

As it happens, ours isn't the only magazine to change its masthead this year. After ninety years as one of Canada's leading historical publications, *The Beaver* recently changed its name to Canada's History, since it became apparent that the name which had served it so well in the past had become a barrier to its future success. "It is more than just a name change," according to its editor Mark Reid, "it's a reaffirmation of who we are and what we do." Reid's words apply equally well to our magazine's decision to become the *Icelandic Connection*. Our new name really is a reaffirmation of who we are and what we do.

A couple of years ago, our magazine board received a letter raising a simple but provocative question that we had faced before, which essentially asked, had we considered the advantages that a more inclusive name might bring in recruiting both contributors and subscribers? While

the magazine's contents have always addressed the interests of people who care about Icelandic culture and heritage throughout the English-speaking world, and especially across North America, its name has suggested that we serve only a fraction of that potential audience.

Those of us who have served on the board over the years have pondered this question ourselves but, before now, there was only one occasion when we addressed the matter formally. At the time of the magazine's fortieth anniversary, in 1982, the board considered a change of name as we entered our fifth decade of publication. In the autumn issue that year, we included an insert noting that there had been an increase in the number letters received suggesting that we adopt a name that would better reflect the fact that the magazine served people on both sides of the 49th Parallel, while asking subscribers to share their views on the matter along with a few additional questions about the magazine's contents and subscription rates. Individual reactions to the idea of a name change were mostly negative or indifferent, so the board backed away from proceeding with a change—at least for the time being. More than a quarter of a century has passed since then! I was a relative newcomer to the board at that time, so while I favoured a name change, I was neither surprised nor unhappy when it didn't actually material-

ize. Some twenty-seven years later, I wish we had decided then to proceed. You see, there were at least three flaws in the process we followed to solicit reader input. Firstly, we failed to propose a striking new name, so many readers simply responded that the existing name was fine, although a few strident souls vigorously objected to any change at all. While board members were virtually unanimous in believing a change was in order, we hadn't arrived at a consensus on a new name before asking our readers to weigh in on the matter. Secondly, although the responses we received were mostly negative or indifferent, fewer than five percent of our subscribers actually responded and we made the "rookie mistake" of generalizing on the basis of a small sample. In hindsight, I suspect the overwhelming majority of our readers didn't care what we called the magazine, just as long as we continued to deliver the interesting and informative articles they had come to expect. Finally, one important group was excluded from our sample, namely those potential subscribers who didn't read the magazine precisely because its name suggested that they were not included in its target audience. We backed away from a name change without fully weighing its effect on those who might have subscribed had we adopted a more inclusive name and identity.

Over the past two years, the board decided to act. Our reasons are both practical and philosophical—practical in the sense that we need to expand our subscription base if we are to remain viable as a publication, philosophical in that we genuinely aspire to be inclusive of all those who wish to maintain an "Icelandic connection" in the English language. I will confess that *Icelandic Connection*

was not initially my personal favourite among the new names we considered but it has really grown on me since it was first suggested. After all, this is not a matter of clinging to individual tastes and preferences. No, we were looking for the name that would best reflect the magazine's current identity and mission—and we found it in "Icelandic Connection." More than any other possibility, it reflects who we are and what we do.

Beyond its obvious merit as an accurate name to describe what we are about, *Icelandic Connection* also serves to help us better imagine our future. At a time when the print media is struggling to survive, and as many newspapers and magazines are closing their doors, it is essential that we expand our subscriber base. The truth of the matter is that our readership has been aging and slowly declining, so it is essential that we cultivate a new generation of contributors and subscribers who will be as committed as previous generations to preserving and promoting the Icelandic identity across North America and beyond.

When *The Icelandic Canadian* was first launched in 1942, its editor, Laura Goodman Salverson, compared the inspiration of its founders to the spirit of the old Norse mariners who "turned their prows into unknown seas, their eyes trained upon far and strange horizons . . . Not the known but the unknown was their quest; not the past but the future was their abiding obsession." It is easy to forget what a bold experiment the magazine was in those early years, proposing as it did to transmit Icelandic heritage and values in the English language, while being accused of deserting the ancestral tongue by those who predicted the magazine would not survive for very long. Indeed,

some suggested that those who described themselves as Icelandic Canadians weren't "true" Icelanders at all, expressing a sense of real betrayal by those who had come to see themselves as Canadian citizens of Icelandic ancestry, rather than "Western Icelanders."

In its second issue, *The Icelandic Canadian* identified five purposes for its existence, which Paul A. Sigurdson later summarized, quite succinctly, as the desire "to preserve, in print, the best of our Icelandic heritage, and weave it harmoniously into the strands of the Canadian fabric." Among its stated purposes, the magazine sought to increase awareness of the Icelandic heritage among children of mixed marriages, stimulate the virtues of citizenship among Icelandic Canadians, and present "the position" of Icelandic Canadians to the people of Canada. Each of these objectives is best understood as imperatives facing the era in which the magazine was founded but the remaining two seem more timeless—"to assist in making the things of value in our Icelandic heritage a living part of ourselves" and "to provide a means whereby Canadians of Icelandic extraction can become better acquainted." Substitute people for Canadians and you pretty much have the primary mission of our magazine as it has been lived out ever since.

It was quite natural that its founders chose to call their new quarterly *The Icelandic Canadian*, since they were, in the words of Will Kristjanson, "a new generation, Canadians of Icelandic descent, sharing the wealth of two cultures." In the beginning, the magazine commenced publication as a project of the Icelandic Canadian Club in Winnipeg, which had been organized four years ear-

lier, so its name originally reflected the identity and aspirations of its sponsor. Most of the original subscribers were members of this club. However, it is impossible to overestimate the influence of then-prevailing attitudes in the larger Canadian society. This was wartime, after all, and foreign speakers were viewed with suspicion by many. Before the outbreak of hostilities, for example, the Icelandic ministers in Manitoba were sometimes invited to broadcast services in Icelandic over the radio; during the war, these services were subject to screening by censors and they eventually ceased altogether. So there was a strategic value to the term Icelandic Canadian—the noun being a declaration of citizenship and patriotism, while the adjective proudly identified ancestry and heritage. Still, there was opposition in the Icelandic community: one correspondent, writing in Lögberg, suggested the magazine was launched, at least in part, to encourage enlistment in the armed forces. It wasn't long, though, before the initial quarrels subsided and *The Icelandic Canadian* began to attract subscribers south of the border and even across the sea. By the 1960s, one-quarter of our subscribers were found in the United States, some of them expatriate Canadians who had moved south for work or retirement.

When we look back over the years, we realize that we have had several loyal American subscribers and we have often published materials about the Icelandic community in the United States as well as in Canada. In fact, we have devoted whole issues to Icelandic American topics, ironically (and insensitively) wrapped in a cover bearing the name of *The Icelandic Canadian*. We aspire to be more genuinely inclusive—not only of our

American readers but of all those who love things Icelandic, wherever they happen to live in the world. The Icelandic National League of North America stands out as a noble example of how we have been aware for decades that our cherished ancestral identity transcends the national boundary between Canada and the United States.

Moreover, our natural constituency is even larger than our immediate North American context. The reality is that we now have subscribers throughout the English-speaking world, as well as residents of Iceland who find our magazine to be a welcome addition to the Icelandic-language periodicals they read at home. In addition, there is a growing number of people without any Icelandic background at all who nevertheless love things Icelandic and are curious about how the Icelandic heritage has come to be adapted and expressed here in North America and, indeed, in other places around the globe. So while our name has changed to be more broadly inclusive and to represent a more expansive identity, our essential mission remains the same—to make the things of value in our Icelandic heritage a living part of ourselves and to connect people of Icelandic ancestry and their friends by helping them to become better acquainted. These are the Icelandic connections we seek!



CONSULATE OF ICELAND

Gordon J. Reykdal
Honorary Consul

17631 - 103 Avenue, Edmonton,
Alberta T5S 1N8 CANADA

Tel.: (780) 408-5118
Cell: (780) 497-1480
Fax: (780) 443-2653

E-mail: gord@csfinancial.ca

Thank You for
Your Generosity

Lilia Arnason

Esjan Chapter

Gail Einarson McCleery

Gimli Icelandic Canadian Society

Ruth Hilland

Icelandic Canadian Club of Toronto

Borga Jakobson

Jon Sigurdson Chapter IODE

Brian K Laxdal

Pat Odegard

T Kenneth Thorlakson

Chasin' Rainbows

by Norma Guttormsson

CHARACTERS

Radio Announcer	The male voice has a friendly local inflection characteristic of the Saskatchewan twang.
Ingólfur	Ingi is 68 years old. He has a rather slow and authoritative manner of speaking, sometimes abrupt, but always caring. He is cautious and protective. His countenance is warm with an engaging smile. He is a heavyset man who wears a beard. He has lived on the farm all of his life within a few miles of a small town.
Vilborg	Borga is Ingi's twin sister. She has a sweet manner and her clear soft-spoken voice is pleasant and appealing. She is naïve and talkative. She receives comfort from her faith. Her long hair is in two braids that are tied on top of her head. She was also raised on the farm and has lived there all her life.
Intruder	The Intruder is in his late teens. He is coarse and speaks loudly at times with occasional abusive language. Because of his inexperience, he exhibits some nervousness. He is thin and needs a haircut and a shave.
Stefan	Stefan has a mature voice. He has a cheery personality and indicates a genuine concern for Vilborg and Ingólfur. He lives in the small town nearby where he is the pastor of a church.

TRANSLATION

Borga mín – pronounced 'meen' - my Borga (female name)

Ingi minn – my Ingi (male name)

Pabbi – Dad, Daddy

vínarterta – festive cake made in layers

Hvað er sv● glatt sem góðra vina fundur er gleðinskín á vonarhýrri brá? – What is so joyful as good friends getting together and an expression of joy shining upon their eyes?

Eins og – As

góða nótt – good night

sofðu rótt – sleep calmly, peacefully

elskan – darling, my love

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The action of the play passes in the kitchen of a farmhouse in rural Saskatchewan during the summer at the present time.

ACT ONE

Scene I

A Saturday evening at sunset

Scene II

The following Sunday morning at dawn

SCENE I

The play opens with B•orga and Ingi sitting at opposite ends of the kitchen table in front of the window that faces out to the farmyard and adjacent to the closed door which is right of the stage. The door leads into the storm porch. The barn is situated directly across from the house and can be seen from the kitchen window. Ingi and B•orga are listening to a Country Western program on the radio that sits on the table, while finishing a mug of coffee and a piece of cake. The phone, a sugar bowl and serviettes are also on the table. During this scene, the sun is setting and the light in the kitchen gradually becomes darker. When the curtain rises, a storm is approaching: thunder is heard and raindrops fall audibly against the windowpane. A tune is fading away to close the program.

RADIO ANNOUNCER W-e-ll – this brings our program to a close for another week – hope you’ve enjoyed listenin’ as much as I’ve enjoyed bringin’ your favorite music into your homes or wherever you may be and that’s for sure! Remember to keep those emails comin’ and your cards and letters for ‘Request Time’. Take care and I’ll be here with you again – God willin’ – so until... (click)

INGI (turning off radio) B•orga mín – better to turn the radio off with that storm comin’ up – don’t ya think? And of course, we should be gettin’ off to bed!

BORGA I guess you’re right. It’s been a wonderful day, hasn’t it?

INGI And it seems to be comin’ to a spectacular finish!

BORGA Ye-ah.

INGI (putting a sugar cube into the side of his mouth and sipping his coffee) I’d say it sounds like fireworks for our birthday. That’s for sure!

BORGA Ooh – it sends sh-sh-shivers up my spine.

INGI (teasingly) Oh, come on now, Borgia mín. You should be used to it by now after 68 years of prairie storms!

BORGA Well, I do love listening to the raindrops on the window. They have always talked to me and the...

INGI Oh I know! I think they’re sayin’. (whispering audibly) ‘Pitter, patter, pitter, patter, better tiptoe up to bed.’

BORGA (laughing) Ye-ah, I can hear that – but the smell and the feel of the rain have always been so sweet and comforting... (thunder) Oh, Ingi minn! This thunder reminds me of a hot summer day when Pabbi would take us out for a boat ride and then a storm would come up and we’d have to run for cover

suddenly...

INGI Ye-ah! And then we’d pretend ‘n play boat when we got home again...

BORGA Soaking wet! And then we’d pretend in the big easy chair ‘n you’d sit up on the high back and be the captain...

INGI ‘Cause I always said I’d never heard of a lady captain, eh?

BORGA And you’d make the sound of the motor ‘n I’d sit on the arm and make the wind and ‘specially the spray ... Oh! – how we’d love to feel the spray on our faces and arms. That was always the best part!

INGI (chuckling) But I didn’t exactly appreciate you spittin’ on me when you were pretendin’... Come now, finish your coffee.

BORGA (taking down her braids and starting to untie them) You know, it was so thoughtful of Stefan and Sigga to drive out and bring us a vinarterta.

INGI W-e-ll – they’ve being doin’ it for years!

BORGA I know – but it was still sweet of them to drop by for a visit. And they know how much we love to sing Hvað er svo glatt...

(singing softly) Hvað er svo glatt sem góðra vina fundur er gleðinskín á vonarhýrri brá? Eins og...

INGI (getting up from table) Here – take my hand and we’ll go up to bed now.

BORGA (shuffling along together) They never seem to mind the drive from town, do they? Of course, it’s not very far, thank goodness.

INGI Let’s sleep in tomorrow a little bit, eh...?

INGI and Borgia exit kitchen. Their conversation is heard offstage.

BORGA (yawning) It’ll only take me a few minutes to brush my hair and get dressed for bed – up- up- up!

INGI Whew! It’s so warm up here, Borgia. I think we’ll have to leave the window open a little bit – don’t ya think?

BORGA M-m, it’s not raining too hard yet – but I’m not sure if ...

INGI No worries! Goða nótt, elskan – good night and sleep tight.

BORGA And don’t let the bedbugs bite! Thank you for a lovely day, Ingi minn. Goða nótt – sofðu rótt.

SCENE II

As the scene opens offstage, there is the sound of heavy wind and rain. The storm has accelerated and awakens Ingi. He gets out of bed to close the window which faces the back

of the house. There is the sound of a car driving into the yard. When the curtain rises, there is very little daylight in the kitchen just before sunrise.

INGI (closing window and calling to Borga) Borga! Borga!
I got up to close the window and there's someone drivin' into the yard!

BORGA Hm? Wh-what was that?

INGI I said – someone's drivin' into the yard, of all things!

BORGA Oh, probably somebody lost. What time do you think it is?

INGI Don't know for sure – but it's light enough to be dawning.
I'll go down and find out who it is and you - you stay in your bed. Do you hear me?

BORGA M-m ... Be careful, Ingi – take your time.
Knocking on the door is heard followed by heavy thumping.

INGI (shuffling into kitchen while calling loudly) I'm comin' ...
I'm comin' ...
Ingi opens the kitchen door and exits to the storm porch. The thumping on the door continues. There is the sound of the backdoor being unlocked and opened.

INTRUDER (offstage) Let me in, eh? I'm not gonna hurt ya. What a hell of a night!!

INGI (offstage) Come in!
(closing door and leading intruder into kitchen) Do you need any help? Are you lost – need directions somewhere?
When the Intruder enters the kitchen, he is wearing a balaclava and carrying some rope.

INTRUDER (dropping rope by door) Ya might say that – direct me ta yer cash and I'm outta here! (switchblade clicks) Ya don't have ta worry 'bout this – it's fer my own protection.

INGI Just wait a minute! We don't keep any money out here and ...

INTRUDER Give me a break! I've heard of the likes of you – ya wealthy farmers keep all yer money stashed under the mattress or in the attic or some other God-forsaken hole! Show me where it is and I'm gone!

INGI (firmly) No! You're mistaken! There's no sense doin' this. Stefan has always managed our affairs at the bank in town.

INTRUDER (standing close to Ingi and sneering) Look! I'm gonna rip this place apart if ya don't speak up! So start talkin'!!

BORGA (offstage) Who is it, Ingi – anyone we know?

INGI (firmly) Go back to bed, Vilborg! I'll look after things!!

BORGA (shuffling into kitchen) Who's there – somebody lost?

INTRUDER Where's the bloody lights in this place?

BORGA Oh! - Oh! Who - who are you? Wh - What do you want?

INTRUDER (feeling for lightswitch beside door and turning it on) Money is all I want!! ... Sit down, both of ya! I'm not gonna hurt ya!
Ingi and Borga take their places at the table.

INGI I told you! We don't keep any money here!

INTRUDER (opening cupboard doors) I'll start my search right here.
Huh! Would ya look at that – (jeeringly) a cookie jar!
(emptying some coins onto counter) Full! Full of coins!
Is this what ya call yer - yer petty cash? ... Eh?

BORGA Leave that alone! That's for our offerings and lottery tickets.

INGI Hush, Vilborg!

INTRUDER (sneering laughter) I could use a bit o' gamblin' money myself, but I'm not about ta buy a ticket ta heaven!
(stuffing coins into his pockets) What the hell are ya starin' at? Sometimes ya look right at me and sometimes ya stare at the wall! Ya know what? Ya need a blindfold, that's what!
(looking around kitchen) Here! This will do. Teatowels work for blindfolds.
(tying one around Borga's eyes) Could never figger out why Ma called 'em – tea-towels!

INGI (firmly) A blindfold is not necessary.

INTRUDER (cuffing Ingi on the back of his head and covering his eyes with a teatowel) Oh yeah?

INGI Hey! Take it easy – there's no reason to get rough!

INTRUDER But now – I can git this damn mask off. I hate wearin' one!
Tyin' ya both to yer chair ain't a bad idea either. That's why I got rope – just in case I need it!
The Intruder takes a quick glance into the front room.

INTRUDER Okay – let's get ya tied up. (grabbing rope) Yer makin' me nervous.

BORGA (crossing Borga's wrists onto her lap, tying them together and her body to the chair) Ouch! Don't be mean! ... Ingi? Do you think the rain is letting up now? These roads can really get bogged down in gumbo, can't they? ... Hey! You might get stuck – and real good!

INGI Be still, Borga mín!

BORGA Do you live around these parts, mister?

INTRUDER (tying Ingi's hands and his body to chair) Are ya kiddin'? Jes' passin' through! I'd never live 'round here – or like this! You got nothin' – ya don't even have TV! So I guess that means

ya gotta have a bundle stashed somewhere, eh? ... Savin' fer a rainy day? This rainy day may be my lucky day!!
 (lowering voice) Are ya gonna talk, ol' man? I really don't believe in violence...

INGI (firmly) I told you! There's nothin' here! Look 'round for yourself and leave us be.

INTRUDER Okay! I'll look 'round your front room.
 The Intruder exits the kitchen into the front room which leads upstairs.

BORGA (whispering) Ingi – thank God it's Sunday. We'll be rescued.
 (singing plaintively) Amazing grace – how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see. 'Twas grace that ...

INTRUDER (returning to kitchen) I'm goin' upstairs. I'm gonna have ta cut up yer mattress, so better...

BORGA Oh! Stefan will be coming to pick us up for church and he'll ...

INGI Be quiet, Vilborg! Don't say anything more!

INTRUDER (switchblade clicks) Yer not goin' nowhere, lady! In fact, ya can jes' phone that Stefan and tell him yer sick.

INGI (rooster crows) Oh, I think it's a bit early to be callin' him.

INTRUDER What was that?

INGI That's our rooster. Snorri crows every mornin' – 'bout six-thirty.

INTRUDER What's this guy's number anyway?

INGI W-e-ll – just press 1 – the speed-dial.
 The Intruder puts the phone in front of Borga, then presses the number. The phone rings three times.

STEFAN Good morning – Pastor Stefan here.

BORGA (nervously) Uh - H-Hello ...? Vilborg calling – not too early, I hope.

STEFAN Oh, Vilborg, my dear. Is everything okay? How are you after your celebration?

BORGA Uh – well – that's why I'm phoning – not so well, really. Ingi and I are a bit under the weather just now, and – uh – we'll not be coming to church this morning.

STEFAN It seems a bit inclement I should say – but it looks as if the storm is passing now. It would truly make us all somewhat dreary – or perhaps – we enjoyed too much vínarterta...?

BORGA Oh no, not at all! I loved every piece and thank you again so much for your kindness.

STEFAN We'll be singing your favorite hymn this morning. Open My Eyes Lord.

BORGA Open my eyes, Lord, I want to see Jesus...

STEFAN That you will, Vilborg, my dear – someday – and that's for sure!
 Well, we'll miss you both – but I hope you'll feel like coming to the Olson's for coffee in the afternoon. Their twins will be christened at the service, you know.
 The Intruder grabs Borga's upper arm to make her hurry up.

BORGA Yes – uh – thank you for reminding us – but I'm sorry – we'll be rather tied up and - and - won't make it. I must go now...

STEFAN Take care – and Ingólfur, too. Bye for now and I'll be in touch.

BORGA And soon, I hope – bye, bye.

INTRUDER What was that all about? I got stinkin' tired holdin' the phone to yer ear, ya know! I take it he's not comin'?

BORGA I'm - I'm not sure. Why don't you believe us and leave us alone?

INTRUDER I was jes' noticin' yer barn out there, eh?

BORGA You know what? You're an intruder and you'll soon be a thief. Do you want to be like the thief on the left and be damned eternally?

INTRUDER Who cares?! Ya know – yer not gonna tell me a thing, but I've got all day. (exiting kitchen to go upstairs) And I'm sure I'll find what I'm lookin' fer up here!

BORGA (whispering) Ingi? Do you think he'll want to go into the barn?

INGI I don't know. He's got a knife, y'know. I sure don't wanna provoke him. ... Don't talk so much, Borga mín!

BORGA I'd sure like to have a cup of coffee! Maybe, he'll want one too.
 (whining) I'm awful weary of sitting like this – wish he had tied us into our beds...

INGI (rather jokingly) W-e-ll – we'd be more comfortable and that's for sure! I wonder where he comes from – probably not from 'round here – but I'm not about to ask any questions! I just want him to get on his way. (twisting his wrists and trying to loosen rope) If I could get my hands loose, we could phone the RCMP.

BORGA (whimpering) Oh – why is this happening to us?

INGI I hope he doesn't do anything stupid!

BORGA I doubt that he will. He's just a kid – but still – I'm so afraid!
 INGI (hearing footsteps) Sh – here he comes.
 INTRUDER (entering kitchen) It's a bloody mess up there and nothin' to be found! Sure hope I'm not wastin' my time!! I coulda bin way down the highway by now – but it was rainin' so damn hard –couldn't see a thing, so I pulled off onto your dirt road ...

BORGA (emphatically) Would you like a cup of coffee?
 INTRUDER Forget it! I want a - a pot o'gold!!
 BORGA I can tell you're not from around here because nobody ever robs anyone in our area. It's unheard of! You know...

INGI Stop it, Borga!
 The Intruder opens more cupboard doors and drawers in the kitchen.)

BORGA (clearly) You know, you're nothing but a two-bit-operator. You're a young, good-for-nothing. What do they call it these days...?

INGI Borga!
 BORGA A punk! That's what you are!
 INTRUDER Shut up!
 BORGA It's true! You don't like hearing that, do you? You're a no-good punk and you have no business...

INGI Borga! Stop talkin'!
 BORGA (starting to cry) You have no business coming into our home 'n getting us out of our beds 'n turning our place upside down 'n...

INTRUDER (switchblade clicks) I said to shut up!!
 BORGA (sobbing heavily and biting her lower lip) Please - please, don't hurt us - don't hurt us...

Pharmacists:
 ERNEST STEFANSON
 GARRY FEDORCHUK
 CLAIRE GILLIS

642-5504

PS PHARMASAVE

Centre and Fourth / Gimli, MB / R0C 1B0

INTRUDER I'm goin' outside!!
 The Intruder exits the kitchen door into the storm porch. There is the sound of the backdoor being opened.

BORGA (speaking quietly through her tears and licking her lower lip) My lip is bleeding, Ingi. (sniffing) He can't stop me from praying – just like the persecuted Christians say – (sobbing) they can hurt their bodies all they like – but they can never stop them from saying their prayers and scriptures... (sobbing continues)

INGI Borga mín, please - please be still.
 INTRUDER (entering kitchen) I guess it's the barn now! How come it's all boarded up with two-by-fours?! That's gotta be the place!
 INGI W-e-ll – we're not farmin' ourselves, ya know. The men will come to harvest the crop and they'll get the barn opened up again. There's equipment – lifetime of junk – that's all.

INTRUDER I need a crowbar ta git that door loose 'n I s'pose the tools are in there, too! That's a hell of a fix!! (shouting) Do ya know what I mean. eh? Do ya hear me? ... (shouting louder) Are ya deaf? Do ya see what I mean??!!

INGI (haltingly) No! ... We don't see! My sister and I are blind! We've been blind since childhood and we ...

INTRUDER I'm gittin' outta here! Blind! Blind! – yer blind...? Sister? ... Ya shoulda spoke up, ya jerk!!

BORGA (whimpering) Oh, dear God in heaven...(sighing)
 INTRUDER (walking out of house and leaving doors open) I'm gone!! (noticing rainbow and calling out acidly) Y'should see this rainbow! – biggest one – ever!! And they say there's a pot o'gold, too!!

INGI (hearing car revving and roaring out of yard) Don't tell me he's gonna leave us like this? ... (sighing) Guess he's chasin' rainbows!

BORGA Oh, Ingi minn! The promise - the rainbow promise! He's gone! Sure hope someone phones us soon.

INGI (twisting his wrists and trying to loosen rope) W-e-ll – we'll have to figger out a way to answer it – don't ya think, Borga mín? That's what I'm gonna be thinkin' 'bout.

BORGA (smiling while humming with sincerity and a slight quiver in her voice) What a Friend We Have in Jesus.

THE END

Verndari minnisins: Snæfríður Íslandssól in Halldór Laxness' Iceland's Bell

by Christopher Crocker

On its surface Halldór Laxness' *Iceland's Bell* might appear to be nothing more than a historical novel; A novel composed in the years of Second World War, during the period where Iceland's independence loomed large – a period of reorganization - when many writers' turned their gaze to the past, amidst the chaos of the war, searching for those “national and universal values for which the struggle was being waged,” that only distance could properly bring into relief. Doubtless the work is historical, though it is interesting to note that Laxness avoids any specific dating of its events, and, at the time of publishing, Halldór himself noted that his characters – though some are based on real historical figures –, their actions, and the style of the work conforms to its own exclusive laws. In this regard, one could read *Iceland's Bell* less as a study of historical events, but – based on the measured style of the work – rather as a study of historical narrative forms, namely those of the Old Icelandic sagas, and the medieval Norse literature.

But, before considering the nature of Halldór's stylistic debt to the Old Icelandic sagas, and medieval Norse literature, in any individual piece, it would be useful to look more broadly at his long-standing dialogue with these canonical works. Beginning as early as possible, we are drawn to one of the first pieces published by Halldór, under his own name, in the children's newspaper, *Sunshine*. In this letter to the “Sunshine Children,” the 14 year-old Halldór takes on a didactic, though tender, tone and along with other advice, he encourages the young West Icelanders to love their fatherland, and promotes his deep appreciation for the Icelandic sagas, setting the gauntlet by telling his audience that he had read them all by his eleventh year. This early enthusiasm for his countries' great works is not surprising for a young writer still searching for a place to set his feet, though, his later response is equally unsurprising in the wake of the critical reception of his early work. By the time he had reached his twenty-first year, Halldór had all but washed his hands of Snorri and those “old Icelandic fogeys,” stating that, “On the whole I do not think it is possible to learn to write Modern Icelandic from Old Icelandic; something else is needed.” It may have been expected that a maturing Halldór would have soon realized that the immensity of history weighs less on a writer when, rather than turning away from it, one chooses to engage oneself with it. Perhaps this revelation would have come sooner but for the harsh conservative reception that met Halldór's

first mature work. He was surely taken aback when the publication of his novel *The Great Weaver from Kashmir* was welcomed with calls citing the work as beyond reasonable and even pornographic. In this light, at a time when some of those very same commentators began to doubt the merits of parliamentary democracy, and began to imagine, “the resurrection of a Viking-age society controlled by priest chieftains,” it is easy to forgive the young writer for turning his back on the works that these cultural-philistines held in such reverence. In the wake of the backward looking status-quo, Halldór and his contemporaries were compelled to usher in modern Icelandic literature not as a rehashing of the sagas and their rural setting, “but rather as a reaction against traditional prose fiction and a society based on farming.” As difficult as this may have been for Halldór at the time, it is unimaginable that his successes would have reached such heights had he been able to rest his reputation on his early works, had he been embraced so openly by this as-yet modern society. As the years progressed, Halldór began to see the medieval literary heritage of Iceland, less as something that he had to reject, but rather as more of burden, or shadow, from which the modern writer had to emerge. In later years, after having written most of his great novels, Halldór reflected upon the restrictions that the saga-heritage posed to the contemporary Icelandic writer, he had “described ... the profound extent to which the Icelandic ‘School of Literature,’ with its strict rules, has become second nature to his countrymen, and how ‘the standard set by the Golden Age’ still dominates today the literary opinions of the public as well as of the critics.” He was little surprised that,

“such poor wretches as myself and people like me, engaged in the laborious work of writing books, often feel downhearted in this country; any ordinary simpleton can prove beyond dispute that we are worse writers of prose than men who fashioned *Njáls Saga* or *Hrafnkels Saga* or *Heimskringla*; and similarly, that as poets we have declined considerably since the tenth century, when the poet of *Völuspá* stood beneath this vast sky of Iceland and could not spell his name.”

By this point, and even a few years earlier, he had come to realize, that to successfully navigate through the long shadows of the Old Icelandic literary heritage a writer was better served to engage with the giants of the golden age, and a maturing Halldór, by the 1940s, had entered into a “multilayered contemporary dialogue with Icelandic tradition.” It was during this period – the war years – that Halldór wrote a great deal of literary essays, stockpiling his ammunition for “a larger cultural struggle: the conflict over the control of Icelandic literature and publishing.” In addition to his essays, in 1941 Halldór published a translation of *A Farewell to Arms*, a novel by Ernest Hemmingway, one of the few contemporary novelists he openly admired, and in whose leading characters Halldór finds,

“the carefree spirit of play and merriment in the midst of misfortunes; the naively sincere honesty coupled with the cool insolence of the gangster; the realist's precise and objective appraisal of facts despite the general state of turmoil around him, together with a boundless contempt for prolixity and emotional rant; and finally the hidden certainty, terrifying yet met without fear, that all is in the process of being lost.”

It would not be a far stretch to apply

**GIMLI
AUTO LTD.**

Your Ford, Mercury,
Lincoln Dealer
Covering the Interlake

642-5137

Halldór's description of Hemmingway's character portrayal directly to the sagas themselves, and in doing this it is easy to see how his work on the Hemmingway translation helped him to prepare for his next novel. Doubtless, both his essays, and his work translating Hemmingway, helped Halldór find the special style and tone to express the spirit of his next work, *Iceland's Bell*, but perhaps no project assisted him more in this task than the assemblage, and publication of his – fiercely debated – modern-spelling editions of the Old Icelandic sagas. For, as large a part as the cultural struggle played in Iceland during the 1940s, Halldór was still an artist, and his interest in the sagas and the cultural traditions of Iceland were not solely entrenched in battle, but also had “its roots in his [artistic] struggle with narrative methods.” Perhaps it was during this period- when his leftist ideology was eclipsed by the narrative of Icelandic history and tradition, when he realized that he could work his way to full legitimization “only through an investment in tradition, when he first managed “to create a space for himself as a ‘guide’ to the qualities and values of novelistic and national narratives” - that Halldór fused his former role as an artist, and his future role as a “national” poet nearest to perfection.

Turning now to *Iceland's Bell*, in

approaching the piece one is presented with a work that is flooded with direct references to the Old Icelandic sagas, and medieval Norse literature. From the boorish rogue Jón Hreggviðsson's perpetual invocations of Gunnar of Hlíðarendi; his embarrassing effort in contesting the troll women of Húsafell; his wrestling match with a dead man; his journey to, and through, the European kingdoms, which echoes the common journey of his saga forefathers – though in a quite perverted manner; to the manuscript collector Arnas Arnæus, whose singular mission in life is to collect and to preserve the “soul of the Nordic peoples,” which “is to be found in Icelandic books.” However, Halldór was not only interested in compiling fleeting references to the old works, and in the character of Snæfríður Íslandssól – the third canvas in Halldór's protagonist-triptych – he truly channels the narrative forms of the Old Icelandic sagas and medieval Norse literatures into his modern novel. In *Snæfríður*, Halldór has assembled “all that is mysteriously unasailable in the life of the nation: the dream and the saga above and beyond the grimness of each new day.” According to Halldór himself – from a 1944 interview – in *Iceland's Bell*, he had been “trying to describe things from the exterior rather than the interior,” and he hoped to

achieve a style where “thoughts and feelings are conveyed through dialogues and physical reactions.” The descriptive, swift, and objective style, which he employs consistently throughout the novel, finds its peak when Snæfríður is present, more specifically, through her interactions and dialogues with other characters.

There is little doubt that, in *Snæfríður*, Halldór had intended to channel something of “the harshness and pride of her forebears, the women of the söguöld.” However, to accomplish this it was not merely enough to decorate her with bright clothing, azure eyes, and golden belts and rings, it was necessary that her character recall something of the unique nature of her ancestors. Early in the novel, when Snæfríður's father, the magistrate, questions her disinterest in –

what seems - a good marriage offer, Snæfríður responds by saying that, “A woman who has met a splendid man finds a good man ludicrous,” and that she would “Rather the worst than the next-best.” The perceptive reader recognizes in these words the language of the sagas, perhaps recalling such sentiments as, “I'll marry no man as long as I know Kjartan is still alive” or - if not emotionally matched, more syntactically similar - “Though I treated him worst, I loved him best.” In this way Halldór was able to echo the saga characters in Snæfríður's voice, without simply transcribing their narratives onto his own, and perhaps juxtaposing the characters phrasings, as above, the reader is able to see in the character of Snæfríður something of a “study of Guðrún Ósvíf(ur)sdóttir in *Laxdæla Saga*.” Later in the novel, after



Old fashioned hospitality & modern convenience set on historic Hecla Island

Explore Manitoba's Icelandic Heritage

Solmundson Gesta Hus

B & B and Wellness Centre

Hecla Island, Manitoba

204-279-2088

hecla@mts.net • • www.heclatourism.mb.ca

**Get in touch with your roots with
Lögberg-Heimskringla,
the Icelandic community newspaper.**

Published in English, **L-H** connects
you with Icelandic news
across North America
and in Iceland.

SEARCHING FOR
EVERYTHING ICELANDIC!

www.lh-inc.ca

L-H is now offering a **FREE 3 MONTH**
Online Only Access Trial
To sign up, call **1-866-564-2374**

Snæfríður has seemed to have fulfilled her prophesy, and has indeed married the worst, the reader, again, hears the women of the sagas – perhaps Guðrún once more – channeled in her voice, when the Reverend Sigurður tells her husband Magnús that she – Snæfríður – had said that “she loved the man who would sell her for nothing more deeply than the man who would give everything to have her.” Considering only these short, powerful phrases, it may be difficult to see that Snæfríður’s voice recalls the sagas not only in what she says, but also equally in how she speaks. It is when Snæfríður speaks in a less-riddled, more emotional fashion that the reader is more objectively able to see her character’s true heredity. In perhaps her most emotionally fueled sentiment, Snæfríður implores the Baron of Marselisborg to,

“Do as you please, take my foremothers’ silver ... take all of it. Sell us like livestock. Send us to the heaths of Jylland where the heather grows. Or, if it suits you, keep beating us with your whips back at home in our own country. Hopefully we have done enough to deserve it. A Danish ax rests upon Bishop Jón Arason’s neck throughout eternity, and that is fine ... We Icelanders are truly not too good to die. And life has meant nothing to us for a long time.”

This passage, with its simple measured style and short sentence structure, use of common conjunctions, and the use of the full stops where half-stops would seem more suitable, certainly recalls the common saga-style. This style, which in the sagas, seems to direct the reader away from the presentation of plot, rather directly to the plot itself, only draws more attention to itself in a modern novel, in Iceland’s Bell, especially, in this particu-

lar instance, when contrasted with the florid, and redundant language of the Baron:

“... as far as justice is concerned, ma chère, it is clear to me that the Icelanders have chosen their man, the man whom they consider the best. And from what I have heard, it was this very galant homme who deprived the honorable old magistrate, your father, of his estates and honor.”

Where the baron decorates his words with foreign phrases and repetitive pronouns, Snæfríður – though under immense emotional duress – shows great self-control in speaking with both economy and precision, thus adhering to the saga-characteristic of Northern restraint.

It is in this characteristic of northern restraint where Halldór again displays Snæfríður’s roots in the Old Icelandic sagas. Looking at the emotional world of the sagas in general the modern reader would likely find in the emotional displays of many of the characters “a kind of nonchalance that borders on insensibility.” This is not to say that the saga characters are bereft of emotional displays, but rather that their emotional lexicon is quite disparate from that of the modern reader. In *Njáls Saga*, after Hallgerd’s sees her foster-father’s – Thjostolf – bloody axe, and realizes that he has killed her husband, she greets him only with laughter. The uninitiated modern reader is dumb-struck at this emotional display, and may only later realize that there is a possibility that this was a strategic move on Hallgerd’s part to disarm and to deceive Thjostolf – though one can never be sure. In much the same way, the reader, along with her fellow characters, are led astray by Snæfríður’s emotional responses, the most striking of which

occur during her dialogues with the Reverend Sigurður, where “her self-assurance and self-will assert themselves against his demands for humility before God and the authorities.” In one of the lengthiest dialogues in the novel, when the Reverend admonishes Snæfríður “concerning her way of life,” at once praising her character, and cursing her choices, failing through words to convert her to a life virtue, and, as a final effort, with hands trembling, he shows her a contract by which her husband had sold her a cask of brennivín. Snæfríður,

“took the document from him and read, and as she did, his eyes were prepared to swallow any movement on her face. Her face, however, was still; her mouth was closed, her expression perfectly empty, having returned to the state it always preferred, ever since childhood, whenever her smile disappeared. She read the contract carefully twice, then started laughing.

“You laugh,” he said.

“Yes,” she said, and continued reading and laughing.”

The Reverend – possibly along with the reader – finds her response incomprehensible, and is at a loss to understand how a proud woman could respond to, what should be, devastating news in such a fashion. Even if the Reverend fails, the reader can surely hear an echo of Hallgerd in Snæfríður’s laugh. But, at this point, the question might arise as to whether a woman who would respond to this news in such a way, whether Snæfríður could be considered a proud woman at all?

Certainly, it must be the case that she is proud woman; however, to realize this we must again look to the sagas, and to Snæfríður’s own words. Recalling her

dialogue with the Baron of Marselisborg, the reader need only read the powerful sentiments – which, themselves, recall the Eddic poem *Hávamál* – that bookend the earlier quoted passage to realize her conception of pride. She says that,

“There is a verse by an ancient Icelandic poet ... which goes something like this: Though a man loses his wealth and his kin, and in the end dies himself, he loses nothing if he has made a name for himself.”

and that,

“there is one thing we can never lose while one man of this race, rich or poor, remains standing; and even in death this thing is never lost to us; that which is described in the old poem, and which we call fame: just so my father and mother are not, though they are dust, called ignoble thieves.”

Snæfríður’s pride runs much deeper than the merely personal, and she displays this through the final third of the novel in her pursuit to clear her father’s name. Like the characters of the saga her greatest concern is her family’s honour, and, after a series of deaths, she alone was left to pursue her father’s case. Again, it might stand to reason that such a powerful sense of pride on a familial level, and such a – seemingly – lack of pride on a personal level is a glaring contradiction, but to the female characters of the sagas, standing lovingly by your husband, and taking part in his toil was only natural, generally, it was only in extreme cases where the wife stepped forward with “the passion of a fury.” In this case, Snæfríður, in many ways, is no different, when she finds her husband lying on the ground with a broken leg, after having sold her for a cask of bren-

nívín, trying to cut off her head with an ax, and accusing her in the choir doorway in Skálholt of having slept with Arnas – her father’s rival –, she solemnly sets to work treating the poor man’s wounds.

In this instance, having cited her invocation of the words of *Hávamál*, the reader can see Halldór reaching even further back, to medieval Norse literature, in his study of narrative forms, and in the character of Snæfríður. Again, the perceptive reader can see in Snæfríður many characteristics common to the Skjaldmeyjar (shield-maidens) of medieval Norse literature, more specifically how in some ways she parallels the character Brynhildur, Óðin’s shield-maiden, of the Saga of the Volsungs and the heroic poems of the Elder Edda. These shield-maidens are “not goddesses, but they belong in the world of gods and heroes ... they are potential partners, standing on an equal footing with the male heroes,” and are “permitted to develop within the male warlike sphere and the biological female one.” These women are often beautiful, and despite their ability to take on traditionally male qualities – the ability to perform heroic feats, the ability to engage oneself in the fate of one’s family and brothers-in-arms, etc., they are no less capable of fulfilling the traditional woman’s role. From the examples cited above: Snæfríður’s sense of familial pride, her quest to clear her father’s name and restore her family’s honour, and add to this her desire to join the men in riding to the assembly, one can see clearly her longing to take on the male role. At the same time, as noted above, Snæfríður, throughout the novel, in her duties as a wife, adheres strongly to the traditional female role. But, these heroic women do not merely fuse the two gender roles together; more so, they excel above

all others and take on a sort of human heroic stature. On the first full introduction to Snæfríður, a churchwoman notes that, “they’re teaching her [Snæfríður] Latin, history, astrology, and other arts far beyond the reach of any other woman who’s lived in Iceland,” and throughout the novel she is “described as being ‘absent’, as being virtually independent of material things, and raised above them.” In this way Snæfríður assumes her own heroic stature, and her role as a modern shield-maiden is consolidated when, in the opening paragraph of the middle section of the novel, Halldór reintroduces her;

“Seated there in her bower is a blue-eyed woman, her complexion golden-cast, embroidering upon a cloth the ancient wonder of how Sigurður the Völsung destroyed the worm Fáfnir and carried its treasure away.”

Doubtless Halldór had remembered the matchless Brynhildur’s homecoming in the *Saga of the Volsungs*,

“She stayed in a bower with her maidens. More skilled in handicraft than other women, she embroidered her tapestry with gold and on it stitched the stories of the noble deeds that Sigurd has wrought: the slaying of the serpent, the seizing of the gold, and the death of Regin.”

and, holding these passages together, one immediately draws the genetic link between the two characters.

Halldór, in the 1940s, had published a long essay on the *Old Icelandic Sagas*, and he opened this essay with a disclaimer stating that, though he held no academic authority with regard to the sagas, “an Icelandic writer cannot live without constantly thinking of the old books.” It seems that early in his career, while he was aware of this fact, he saw this maxim

not as a challenge, but rather as a curse upon the young writer. Eventually though, he came to realize the value of the golden age works to the Icelandic novelist, and Halldór (Hall D’Or), accepting this challenge, engaged openly with the *Old Icelandic Sagas*, and medieval Norse literature, and, in at least one instance, used this experience to craft not only an exceptional character, in Snæfríður, but an exceptional novel, which stands on the meeting place of tradition and modernity. Perhaps one important question that remains regarding Laxness’ sourcing of the *Old Icelandic Sagas*, and the medieval Norse literature in the character of Snæfríður in Iceland’s Bell is: why did he chose a female character to represent these literatures? Surely the heroic feats of Gunnar of Hliðarendi or those of Sigurður the Völsung are more famous, the feuds among the early Icelandic farmers more numerous, and was it not Arnas who held the soul of the Nordic people on his bookshelves in Copenhagen? Perhaps Halldór had asked himself the question of whether it is an inherent property of islands to make their women into the guardians of their memory.

Works Cited

Primary Sources

Laxness, Halldór. *Iceland’s Bell*, trans. Philip Roughton (New York: Vintage International, 2003).

Njal’s Saga, trans. Robert Cook (New York: Penguin Books, 1997)

Sans soleil (Without Sun; Sunless). [Film] Directed and Written by Chris Marker (France: Argos Films, 1983).

The Sagas of Icelanders, ed. Örnólfur Thorsson (New York: Penguin Books, 2001).

The Saga of the Volsungs, trans. Jesse L. Byock (Berkeley: University of

California Press, 1990).

Critical Sources

Andersen, Lise Præstgaard. “On Valkyries, shield-maidens and other armed women – in Old Norse sources and Saxo Grammaticus” in *Mythological Women: Studies in Memory of Lotte Motz* (Wien: Fassbaender, 2002), pp. 291-318.

Durston, Linda Suzanne. *Irony in Old Icelandic Family Sagas: A Rhetoric of Reconstruction* (Michigan: UMI Dissertation Services, 1994).

Eysteinnsson, Ástráður. “Halldór Laxness and the Narrative of the Icelandic Novel” in *Scandinavica: An International Journal of Scandinavian Studies* (London: Norvik Press, 2003), Vol. 42, No. 1, pp.47-66.

Guðmundsson, Halldór. *The Islander: A biography of Halldór Laxness*, trans. Philip Roughton (London: MacLehose Press, 2008).

Hallberg, Peter. Halldór Laxness, trans. Rory McTurk (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1971).

Miller, William Ian. “Emotions and the sagas” in *From Sagas to Society: Comparative Approaches to Early Iceland* (Middlesex: Hisarlik Press, 1992)

Thomsen, Grímur (eds. Cowan, Edward J. and Pálsson, Hermann). “On the Character of the Old Northern Poetry” in *Studia Islandica* 31, ed. Steingrímur J. Þorsteinsson (Reykjavík: University of Iceland – Faculty of

Liberal Arts and the Icelandic Cultural Fund, 1972)

On Being Canadian - Away from Home

by Heida Simundsson

**Bangkok, Thailand
December, 2009**

I just finished a very interesting and enjoyable book by Roy MacGregor titled *Canadians: A Portrait of a Country and Its People* (Toronto: Viking Canada Publ., 2007). The topic of Canadian identity has been on my mind for the past several months and, as you read on the back cover, this book “come(s) as close to capturing the feel and flavour of Canada as words allow . . . a remarkable book.” MacGregor talks about topics that built and shaped our country and things that today make up our country; the topics range from politics, to prairies, to hockey, to Metis’ rights, landscape and trains, to immigration, and everything else between and outlying.

I have made attempts before to summarize my ideas of Canada and my nationality but have a hard time putting it into words. I realize after reading this that I just don’t know enough about the history and the general population. I just haven’t seen enough either. How can I attempt to summarize Canadian-ness if I haven’t seen or experienced the many very different cultures, landscapes, ideas and ways of life you can find within my country?

MacGregor did not even reach any kind of definite conclusion in three hundred-some pages. And this was after travelling across the country and talking to many different people in different walks of life. He just explored and discussed the Canadian identity, not really drawing any

conclusions. Reading this book has instilled a desire to travel more of Canada, talk to different people, and see things for myself . . . explore and discuss.

A little background: I am a fourth-generation Canadian of Icelandic descent on my paternal side and my maternal family has been Canadian since the early days of the fur trade. I am in my final year of a Bachelor’s Degree in Education from University of Winnipeg. The U of W program offers fifth-year students the opportunity to finish their last year in a work-study program in Thailand. Thus it is that I find myself spending my first winter away from Canada; teaching in an English-language school in Bangkok. Being away from home has made me realize how very much Canadian I am.

I’ll share with you some of my favourite parts in the book, or a few parts that really hit home with me. At the end of the book, the most definite conclusions MacGregor comes to about being Canadian is that Canada is just what it is to each individual. He talks about his memories as a child at a place called Lake of Two Rivers. I didn’t quite catch if this was where his home was, or if it was a summer retreat of some sort, but it sounds like it was one of his favourite places and he continues to revisit it as an adult.

He writes, “Lake of Two Rivers. Roots and Rocks. The place I think of when I first think of Canada. My Pier 21 – where I landed at the age of three days and have stayed ever since.” This has been a thought similar to mine when thinking about the Canadian Identity. In

such a huge diverse country, being Canadian has many different meanings to everyone. Canada is your favourite place, your memories and your friends and family. Canada is the places your heart remains and everyone has a different Canada within them. And the more you see, the wider perspective you have, but still it is too vast and too diverse to sum it up within one person. MacGregor comments, “I am grateful to journalism’s entree for getting me around so much of this enormous bumblebee of a country. And yet I suspect I’ve seen but a fraction of the fraction David Thompson saw in a lifetime of exploring. It’s probably easier to cup the morning mist that rolls along the gunwales of a canoe than it is to fully grasp the width and breadth and astonishing variety of this land and its people.”

I have always been proud to be Canadian in a quiet, subconscious sort of way, but didn’t realize that I was more patriotic than many people until recently in my multiculturalism class. It took me by surprise that many of my fellow teachers did not share the same pride and love for Canada that I did. This was the jumping off point for my interest in Canadian identity. I wondered what it was that made me love and take pride in my nationality more so than others my age.

MacGregor made me think a little when I read the following passage. “No

wonder nine out of ten of us told the Globe and Mail survey that the thing that spoke to them most about this thing called Canada was the vastness of the landscape. This, even with the growing fact of urban life suggesting otherwise.” This passage made me think that maybe I am more “connected” with being Canadian because I grew up with the vast landscape. I am from rural Canada and very proud of that fact. I love the openness outside of cities and I love the emptiness of it. This has always been my Canada, in the same way MacGregor thinks of Lake of Two Rivers of his Canada. Perhaps this is some sort of source for why I see being Canadian as such an integral part of my identity. MacGregor talks about Pierre Trudeau’s love for being outdoors and his love for the canoe. Trudeau wrote in an essay once, “I know a man whose school could never teach him patriotism, but who acquired that virtue when he felt in his bones the vastness of this land, and the greatness of those who founded it.” MacGregor is of the opinion that this unnamed man was in fact Trudeau himself. But the opinion that you have to be connected to that vastness and beauty of the landscape to become patriotic is an interesting one to ponder.

Another subject that really hit home with me was the chapters on Agriculture and rural Manitoba; as I’ve already men-

Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi



PRESIDENT: Gerri McDonald

*Support Icelandic culture and heritage
by joining your local chapter, or contact:*

THE ICELANDIC NATIONAL LEAGUE

#103-94 First Ave. Gimli, MB ROC 1B1

Tel: (204) 642-5897 • Fax: (204) 642-7151

inl@mts.net

tioned, “my Canada” is rural Manitoba and my farm and small town where I grew up. MacGregor noted that at one time about 80% of the population of Canada was rural and 20% urban, but now those numbers have switched. One passage reads, “. . . the traditional farm, and its psychological hold on an entire province, is not something that’s easily abandoned. ‘The mistake an economist makes,’ says MacKinnon (former Saskatchewan finance minister) who now teaches history at the University of Saskatchewan), ‘is to look at the pie and then say agriculture is just not that big of a slice. But it’s a big part of the psychology.’” This interested me, as I grew up on a farm, and am very proud of it as are many of my friends, but the reality is that I had move to the city to get an education, maybe to get a job. And I wonder how much of that country attitude, pride, and lifestyle (the psychology) comes into cities with us—why is it that the country/rural psychology has such a strong hold. I think MacGregor is right when, in many parts of his book, he points out that Canada is a very sentimental nation. We tend to hold on a lot to memories and things that may not be very valuable or useful, but because they mean something special to us. MacGregor writes, “I think, that we are not yet totally alienated from physical earth, and let us only pray that we do not become so.”

MacGregor told a story of a son and his dad running a small family farm and discussed a person’s connections to the land. The pair were having a hard time making a living, and it is a question of what keep people going on, when it would be easier to cash it all in and get a job that delivers a steady paycheck and less worry and hard work?

Roger Epp, a Saskatchewan native

and Alberta political scientist student, was quoted in the Regina Leader-Post: “what if you are rural people rooted four generations deep in prairie soil and you are attached to that place in ways that don’t make sense in the current economy, which tells you to get mobile and find a job? How do you articulate that and how do you defend it?”

This is something I’ve struggled with before. How do you define or explain your attachment to farming and the land. Very few people grew up like me, tracing pictures in the dust on the panorama window on the inside of a combine, searching for hours for kittens in scratchy straw bales, getting yelled at for playing in the flax bins and tracking it into the house, falling face first into barnyard puddles, or enjoying simple picnic lunches on pokey canola stubble. Even my friends who lived in town just don’t have the same feelings I have for rural life. You really can’t explain to people who didn’t grow up doing it. There is something for doing everything with your own two hands, some kind of empowering feeling. You are tough and proud of it. You work hard all day, by whatever the weather allows you to do, and at the end of the day you are tired, sore, sweaty, hungry, but happy and content. I just can’t explain, but I wish I could.

I took a creative writing course two years ago, and a few times I tried to pen something that portrayed the love and connection a farm kid has to the land, but I would just get frustrated because my words were just never enough. And with so much of the Canadian population living in urban centres, there are less and less people to understand me. I guess the same way I don’t understand the pull of those bright city lights that seem to draw in and keep so many. All I know is that

with those city lights, you can’t see the stars at night.

The book talks a lot about the oppositional nature of Canada. We are full of opposites everywhere you look. Different parts of Canada just do not understand each other because they are often at opposite ends of opinions, beliefs, issues, and ideas. This is why we seem to have trouble finding a unifying, common identity. One of my favourite passages that illustrated this emotionally was in the chapter on Canadian sovereignty in the north. The story was of Adrienne Clarkson building a cairn at the most northern point on Ellsemere Island, which is the most northern point of Canada. All the people involved placed something inside the pile of rocks before it was sealed and the last contribution was from a Canadian soldier in attendance by the name of Julie Verner. She was described as a “fair-haired, bespectacled soldier.” MacGregor saw her standing for something, he writes, “she was born in Sault Ste. Marie, pretty much the mid-point of the Trans-Canada highway that runs from one side of the country to the other. She was the child of a francophone father and an anglophone mother and had married a man whose heritage was neither. She was also the mother of four young children, the elder two now able to talk freely to their Poirier grandmother in Rouyn-Noranda who spoke no English at all.” It was pointless to place a flag as it would not last very long, but Julie wanted to make sure anyone who opened this, in any number of years later, would know that this was our land, our place - Canada. “And so, very carefully, with eyes beginning to sting, Julie Verner reached up and tore the small Canadian shoulder patch flag off her uniform. She rolled it over once in her hand and then dropped the tiny flag in and

turned away, tears now freely flowing. Taken one way, it looked like disrespect to the uniform. Taken the right way, it was merely a soldier serving her country. Canada, a country that so often makes no sense at all. Canada, a country that, every so often, makes total sense.”

We are a country and we are people of many different backgrounds, beliefs, lifestyles, appearance, and we have trouble finding common ground to support each other and understand one another, and maybe there is never anything that completely unites every one of us, but finding those things that make us feel Canadian come about every now and then and we are all proud to be Canadian at some point. Something as simple as a whole town going out and cheering on the local hockey team, or as big as wearing a uniform with the maple leaf fighting for peace, unites some of us at certain times. We all have our things that make us Canadian. Maybe it’s a group of teachers in Thailand sitting around talking about what we like to do during the winter months back at home and something will unite us. What else besides something as simple as our passports? We don’t need anything else to unite us, we are all citizens of a country that doesn’t require us to look the same, believe the same things, eat the same things, and so on. We live in a country where we don’t even have to be simply Canadian, we are French-Canadians, African-Canadians, Philippino-Canadians, German-Canadians, Chinese-Canadians—Icelandic-Canadians—and so on. We live in a country where we get summer and winter and everything in between. We have mountains, deserts, prairies, oceans, lakes, forests and tundra. We have cities and we have vast amounts of land where we can be anything or anybody we want

to be. The possibilities seem as endless as the country itself. What more do we need to feel proud—we are all Canadian.

Feeling strong patriotic feelings for my country makes me wonder what my ancestors felt like when they immigrated to Canada.

How hard is it to leave a country that you feel such pride for and connection to? Could I ever think of leaving Canada forever, it being such a strong part of my identity? I admire the courage of my ancestors for making it possible for me to grow up in a great country where I am safe and healthy and don't have to think

about leaving in search of a better life; if I decide to leave, it will by choice and not necessity. I am enjoying my time in Thailand experiencing a very different environment and culture (and climate) from that in which I was raised, but I really do believe I will return home one day soon and I will always be Canadian in my heart.

I'm glad I got the opportunity to think more about and appreciate my nationality. If you are at all interested in the Canadian identity, read the book that prompted all this. I enjoyed it!


Thorvaldson Care Center

Over Four Decades of Caring for the Elderly

◆◆◆◆

Our modern two storey care facility is government approved and specifically designed to offer a homey atmosphere in a safe, contemporary setting. We are located in Osborne Village, convenient to all amenities and services.

Personal furnishings welcome



Government Approved • 24 Hour Supervision

The Licensed Practical Nurse and certified staff cater to the residents' personal care, comfort and supervision. Medication is administered, personal hygiene and all nursing services are a part of the daily routine. Our doctor makes regular weekly visits to monitor the health needs of our residents.


Our goal over the years has been to provide a moderately sized, non-institutional environment with services to meet the needs of those in the later stages of life. We seek to maintain a quiet, comfortable atmosphere where our residents can feel cared for and safe in a home-like surrounding. We strive to maintain the health, vitality and quality of life of each of our residents.

THORVALDSON CARE CENTER
495 Stradbrook Ave. Winnipeg, MB R3L 0K2
(204) 452-4044

We welcome inquiries
Herman O. Thorvaldson


A LONG STANDING TRADITION

(204) 949-2200 (204) 642-7124



- Traditional and Contemporary Funerals
- Preneed Arrangements
- Garden of Memories • On-Site Crematories
- Parking • Across from Brookside Cemetery

3030 Notre Dame Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3H 1B9
www.nbardal.mb.ca
Email: info@nbardal.mb.ca



I believe . . .

by Leah Bjornson

I believe in cement shoes.

They keep our heads forever looking up while our feet sink in the mud. Clouds pass and obscure our view, casting shadows that distract us from the life of which we caught a glimpse. That life we saw is a dream; we are stuck in a different reality, built out of limitations and desire. Our companions plod on beside us with a gloomy air, without any conviction to escape this mundane march. We hear the thudding footsteps to our left, and the drudging paces to our right. The stiffness in our joints has long since become a phantom pain, as if a shade sits on our shoulders and whispers of what used to be. The urge to flex our toes and arch our feet is a distant and hazy memory. But when I hang my head, I am reminded of my cement shoes, and so I lift my eyes and plan for better days.

It's easy to follow in the footsteps of cement shoes. With every step, the ground sinks deeper and the path grows more permanent. As the dirt sinks, it

becomes harder and harder to escape. Day after day, the earth shifts and we find ourselves eye-to-eye with ferns, then rocks, then ants. The others have become ants themselves, drones without dreams of what could be. Their choice has been made: security and conformity instead of risk and individuality. So they turn and carry on, content in their cement shoes.

Still, I believe in cement shoes. They strengthen my resolve to pull my feet out of the mud and search for the world above. Every step is a reminder to continue to struggle against restrictions and boundaries. It requires enormous effort to lift my feet out of the trench-like path, stomped into existence by orthodoxy. The swollen river of my peers tries to carry me along, but little do they understand my drive and determination to break free. Each handful of dirt, every inch upward, brings me closer to the surface, until finally I pull myself over the edge. Gasping and panting, I arch my feet, wiggling one toe, then another, then all ten at the same time. Casting a sideways glance at the flood of heads and shoulders below, I about-face and advance with my head securely in the clouds.

I believe in cement shoes.

- Leah Bjornson

Rev. Stefan Jonasson

**ARBORG UNITARIAN CHURCH
GIMLI UNITARIAN CHURCH**

9 Rowand Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3J 2N4
Telephone: (204) 889-4746
E-mail: sjonasson@uua.org

Undan Snjóbrei[unni

What Lies Beneath the Snow - Part Four Revealing the contributions of Icelandic pioneer women to adult education in Manitoba, 1875 - 1914

by Jo-Anne Weir

Part four

Editor's Note: This is a continuation of an article that began in issue 62, #2 of the Icelandic Canadian. The final installment will appear in the next issue.

The last area of influence listed in the conceptual framework is that of Immigrant Peoples. The many Icelandic immigrants to arrive in Manitoba during the time period of this research (1875-1914) required assistance, which influenced the activities of the Icelandic pioneer women. The women responded through the efforts of the Icelandic Women's Society and the Lutheran and Unitarian Ladies' Aids groups. Active involvement in these groups provided non-formal learning opportunities for the Icelandic pioneer women. The following historical narrative describes the influence of the Icelandic immigrant people on these women's groups.

This historical narrative develops a theme that emerged from the seventh and final area of influence shown on the conceptual framework: Immigrant Peoples. This refers to the influence that new immigrants arriving in Manitoba had on the educational activities of the Icelandic pioneer women. The women responded to this influence with the creation of volunteer community and church groups. These types of groups provide non-formal learning opportunities (Merriam and Caffarella, 1999, p. 28) for the women involved as members. Specifically, the Icelandic pioneer women of Manitoba formed The Icelandic Women's Society in 1881 to receive and assist new immigrants from Iceland when they first arrived in Winnipeg. In addition, they formed Lutheran and Unitarian Ladies' Aid societies in Winnipeg

and throughout Manitoba to continue to assist the immigrants in later years. The effect of these efforts by Icelandic women created a social welfare network for the Icelandic immigrants at a time when very few government supports were in place (Glenboro & Area Historical Society, 1979, p. 65).

The Icelandic Women's Society and the Ladies' Aid societies work not only benefited the Icelandic immigrants, it also contributed to the non-formal learning of the women themselves.

Large numbers of Icelandic immigrants arrived in Manitoba during the time period of this research, 1875 - 1914. During this time period Icelandic immigrants continued to arrive in Manitoba each year, with particularly large numbers in 1876 (approx. 1200), 1883 (approx. 900) and 1886 (approx. 350). By 1900, an estimated 10,000 Icelanders lived in the province (Thor, 2002, p. 219). The Icelandic immigrants who arrived were often without means to support themselves, and most could only speak Icelandic. They required assistance for basic necessities such as transportation, food, lodging and employment. With few provincial supports in place, immigrants relied on their ethnic communities and families to provide whatever support they could. The Icelandic community provided support to their fellow Icelanders despite also being relative newcomers to the province and only having a few among them who were financially well-established (Kristjanson, 1965, p.165).

The Icelandic community was committed to assisting the Icelandic immigrants just as others from their community had assisted them when they arrived (Gimli Women's Institute, 1975, p. 479). There was a belief in mutual assistance, and often that belief took

the form of a group or society that worked collectively to help others in the community. Women had just begun to form women's organizations in Iceland around the time of the emigration period (Matthiasson, 1977, p. 29) and they continued that practice in Manitoba.

The first group organized exclusively by and for women was The Icelandic Women's Society in 1881. This society evolved from a collective concern some women had for the welfare of the newly arrived immigrants and for the vulnerability of others in their community within an urban centre (Kristjanson, 1965, p. 175). One of the founding members, Rebekka Johnson, was chosen to be president, and the society began meeting on a weekly basis. They raised money through donations and various efforts, including the presentation of a drama and the hosting of a banquet. With funds available, the Women's Society began to assist those in need.

The Women's Society's main focus was to assist newly arrived Icelandic immigrants. The Society assisted them through the arrival process in Winnipeg by acting as English translators. One woman in the Society counseled young Icelandic women as to suitable places of employment. Most members of the Women's Society, and their families, took the immigrants into their homes, providing food, lodging and guidance. At one point there were not enough Icelandic homes available for the immigrants to be billeted, and so for two weeks Women's Society members, Kristrun Sveinungadottir and Bjorg Palsdottir, provided meals at the Immigration Shed for the Icelandic immigrants (Kristjanson, 1965, p. 180). The Society also worked closely with the Icelandic Progressive Society to arrange transportation for the immigrants to the Icelandic communities of Selkirk and New Iceland (Kristjanson, 1965, p. 180). The Progressive Society was another group of Icelandic men and women who assisted the Icelandic immigrants. The Canadian Immigration Agent in Winnipeg, Captain Grahame, who became a friend of the Icelanders, commented on the pattern of assistance to Icelandic immigrants after observing the work of the Women's Society and the Progressive Society for a couple of years:

As usual, the Icelandic residents of

Winnipeg and the surrounding country flocked to meet their friends, each one taking a share of the work, in cooking and otherwise providing for the comfort of the newcomers, and considering these people were possessed of little or no means, they were satisfactorily disposed of in an incredibly short time (Grahame, quoted in Kristjanson, 1965, p. 181).

As the first Icelandic women's organization in Manitoba, the members of the Icelandic Women's Society must have learned many new skills through this non-formal means. Many of these women had been part of other organizations prior to 1881, but they were now given opportunities to play a larger role. Their fundraising projects and direct assistance to immigrants indicate potential learning in areas of leadership, organization, budgeting, problem-solving, networking, and counseling, to name a few. In addition to their own non-formal learning, they contributed to the informal learning of the Icelandic immigrants by taking them into their homes and sharing what they had learned about adapting to life in Manitoba.

As the numbers of Icelandic immigrants arriving in Winnipeg began to decrease, the need for the Icelandic Women's Society also decreased. This group of women continued to assist others through a different format called the Women's Society of the First Lutheran Church of Winnipeg (Thorvaldson, 1995, p. IV). Apparently, most members of the original Women's Society were Lutherans, and so this was a logical next step. Their leader was Lara Bjarnason who had also been a member of the Icelandic Women's Society. The group soon referred to themselves as the Ladies' Aid of the First Lutheran Church, as that was the English term.

Ladies' Aid societies of both the Lutheran and Unitarian churches were established throughout the province. They functioned to provide assistance to their church and community. Their community assistance provided a second level of support to Icelandic immigrants in addition to the initial support received through the Icelandic Women's Society in Winnipeg. The Ladies' Aid societies were the most widespread volunteer organizations that the Icelandic pioneer

women were involved in during this time period of 1875 – 1914. The research revealed very high numbers of women involved in the Ladies' Aid of their churches. The list below provides the Icelandic names given to the societies and the years they were established. The years indicate that the churches and their Ladies' Aid societies were formed shortly after the settlement was formed. This is an incomplete list because in some cases, the records referred to a Ladies' Aid group but did not give the name of the group or the year in which it was formed. Also, sometimes a Unitarian congregation was recorded with no record of the Ladies' Aid society. It is probable that one existed, but not recorded.

The Ladies' Aid societies focused a lot of their energies on fundraising. It was clear to these groups that in order to provide assistance to the church and for those in need, they needed to raise funds. Their fundraising events included staging dramas (Arborg Historical Society, 1987, p. 97) and organizing concerts which featured entertainment, speeches and debates (Arborg Historical Society, 1987, p. 47). They also raised money through box socials and tombolas, which were draws where numbered tickets were sold and later drawn for prizes (Gerrard, 1985). In Winnipeg, The First Lutheran Ladies' Aid and the Ladies' Aid of the Icelandic Unitarian Church raised funds annually by selling refreshments at the Winnipeg Industrial Exhibition (Stephenson, 1953, p. 27; Petursson, 1954, p. 2). These are examples of the various ways that the Lutheran and Unitarian Ladies' Aid societies raised considerable funds and were able to assist their church and community.

The Ladies' Aid society meetings were where the ideas for the various endeavors were born. Women often had to walk three to four miles to meetings, with their babies in their arms and young children along as well (Rural Municipality of Argyle, 1981). Here women could find fellowship, hear news from Iceland, share their news of people in need, and propose ideas for fundraising and the disbursement of those funds. Meetings also devoted time to lectures, readings or entertainment (Petursson, 1954, p. 3). Through these meetings and activities, women learned

by non-formal means. Many of the skills they learned were the same ones listed earlier in this historical narrative as skills learned by the Icelandic Women's Society: leadership, organization, budgeting, etc. Again, similar to the Women's Society, the Ladies' Aid societies contributed to the informal learning of the Icelandic immigrants they assisted. The Ladies' Aid societies in the Icelandic settlements and the immigrants they assisted formed a mutually beneficial learning community.

The two-fold mandate of the Ladies' Aid societies began with service to the church (Rural Municipality of Argyle, 1981, p. 145). The women's efforts resulted in much needed donations towards major projects such as the purchase of land, pianos, organs and pews. Through their budgets they also purchased such items as equipment and communion ware (Petursson, 1954, p. 2; Rural Municipality of Argyle, 1981, p. 184). In this way, the Ladies' Aid societies were valued and respected contributors to the spiritual life of their communities.

A second and equally valued contribution was the community assistance outside of the church that the Ladies' Aid societies provided. The advent of the Social Gospel provided a window of opportunity for women, one outside the private world of their homes. Under the Social Gospel, women could become involved with public activities, helping others while still maintaining their social acceptance within their communities. Pursuing these activities under the auspices of the church's Ladies' Aid Society gave the involvement even further acceptance. This activity provided women with many opportunities to use and develop their skills in the public sphere. Many embraced the idea, given their exposure to similar activities in Iceland. The Social Gospel came at a time when Icelandic pioneer women felt confined by the prevailing Victorian belief that determined women's place was in the home. It also came at a time when many Icelandic immigrants in Manitoba were in need of assistance. The synergy of these factors led to an active involvement in Ladies' Aid societies by Icelandic pioneer women in Manitoba, with the new Icelandic immigrants as beneficiaries.

The ways the Ladies' Aid societies

helped others was varied. In some cases it was as direct and simple as buying a cow for a widow (Rural Municipality of Argyle, 1981). In another case, it was through the support of a system such as Mikley's Help in Emergency organization. As the name indicates, the women saw their role as helping anyone in their community in an emergency (McKillop, 1979, p. 131). In Swan Lake, as in many other communities, the Ladies' Aid functioned similarly to the Icelandic Women's Society in Winnipeg. They opened their homes to the new immigrants, assisted them in finding housing and employment, and taught them what they themselves had learned about surviving on the Manitoba prairies (Lundar and District Historical Society, 1980, p. 372).

The Ladies' Aid Society of the First Lutheran Church in Winnipeg saw a need for elderly Icelandic immigrants who were in

some cases homeless and without the ability to speak English. It seemed unfair for these people to spend their final years in a care home surrounded by people who couldn't understand them, in terms of language or culture. The president of the Ladies' Aid, Lara Bjarnason, first voiced the need for an Icelandic "home for the elderly", which set off a series of events resulting in the creation of Betel Home in Gimli (Thorvaldson, 1995, p. 11). This home continues to operate today and is one of three homes administered by the non-profit Betel Home Foundation. Whether providing for others in small ways, or in major projects such as Betel Home, the Ladies' Aid societies played an important role in their communities. Many such acts of compassion and generosity by the members of the Ladies' Aid societies were revealed in this research. Once again, it is remarkable how these women found the time or energy to take on these projects in the face of their own day to day hardships.

Before closing, it is important to note how the Icelandic pioneer women worked within their Ladies' Aid societies without need of personal recognition. They did not seek to have their names attached to their achievements. This is best demonstrated by the humble symbol of the Ladies' Aid of the 1st Lutheran Church of Winnipeg's important role in the creation of the Betel Home in Gimli. The symbol is a flagon, or vessel, which was a gift presented by the Ladies' Aid to the Church in 1890 (Thorvaldson, 1995, p. 100). This beautiful silver-plated flagon continues to be used each Sunday as part of the service of holy communion and bears the inscription "fra nokkrum konum" (from a few women). This beautiful act of humility by the Ladies' Aid Society gives us some understanding of why the history of women goes unrecorded.

This historical narrative has described the work of the Icelandic Women's Society and the Ladies' Aid societies that resulted in a social welfare network for the new Icelandic immigrants arriving in Manitoba. It is the last in a series of seven historical narratives which have made up the findings of this research. The next chapter discusses these findings and provides implications and recommendations from this research.

Importance of Thor in Early Iceland's Late Paganism

by Chelsea Bristow

Thor of the Æsir, son of Odinn and Jord, husband to Sif, father to Magni, Modi and Thrud, principal deity to men and ruler of Thrudvangar¹ was one of the most important worshiped figures in Iceland's late paganism period.

'To our ancestors Thor was tall and strong, handsome and dignified; he had a red beard, and gripped Mjollnir in his hand' (Munch 12). Thor is and always has been known first and foremost as the god of thunder, and second as a god of fertility for it was he 'who guarded the men and their labours from the wild forces of nature, personified as Giants' (Munch 10). Thor lived amongst the Æsir gods in Valhalla who were constantly at war with the giants and on occasion had feuds with the Vanir². Though not great with words, Thor was the chief warrior, defender and peace keeper for the Æsir. He frequently traveled to the land of the giants and there is scarcely a tale told not ending in brawl when speaking of these adventures.

Thor journeyed to the land of the giants on his chariot pulled by two male goats named Tanngrist and Tanngrisnir³. These goats were of great value to him because he could slaughter them for provisions while traveling then resurrect them with Mjollnir⁴ to make use of them again and again. This magic however only worked if the goat's bones and hide were all intact, as told to us by Snorri Sturluson in *Gylfaginning*, when Thor and Loki begin their journey to giant land. While on this journey Thor generously invites a farmer and his family to join in on his evening meal as thanks for lodging him in their home, asking only that they leave the

bones behind upon the goat's skins he laid out before the fire.


The greedy son of the farmer, in spite of this, decided to crack open a bone and indulge in the marrow. When morning came and Thor consecrated the goats with Mjollnir, he noticed that one of the goat's legs was flaccid. This deeply angered Thor and although he clenched his hammer, he showed mercy and took with him the farmer's two children as servants thus saving them their lives. These two children have followed in Thor's service ever since.

Thor carried with him three powerful possessions: a pair of Iron gloves called Jarngreipr with which he could crush rocks and grip his hammer; a belt of strength called Megingjord which doubled his might; and a hammer called Mjollnir which helped him to win his battles. Of these three objects of power, the greatest was his hammer Mjollnir. It has been said that Mjollnir 'would hit anything at which it was thrown and return to the thrower's hand' (Davidson, Scandinavian 70). Snorri tells us in chapter five of his *Skaldskaparmal* that it is Loki who tricks the dwarves Eitri and Brokk into making treasures for the gods, one of which being Thor's hammer Mjollnir. The story begins when Loki, as a prank, cuts off all of Sif's⁵ hair and when Thor gets word of this, he has the mind to break every bone in Loki's body, yet comes to an understanding when Loki swears to get the Sons of Ivaldi⁶ to make hair for Sif out of gold. After the hair is made (along with Odinn's spear Gungnir), Loki wagers his head in a bet with two dwarves that they cannot make three treasures as good as the ones made

1 Thrudvangar (Plains of Strength) – Snorri's Edda. 2 Vanir is the other clan of gods in late Norse paganism.

3 Tanngrist (Tooth Gnasher), Tanngrisnir (Snarl Tooth). 4 Mjollnir is Thor's hammer, read more page 2

5 Sif is Thor's wife, little is known of her except she has hair of gold, is mother to Thor's daughter, Thrud, and also to Ullr who is a stepson to Thor. 6 The Sons of Ivaldi were a group of dwarves or dark elves.



counter
DRUG MART

Great Values

Pharmacists
UT. Egolfson • B. Whitby

Free Prescription Delivery

Monday - Saturday	9 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Friday	9 a.m. - 8 p.m.
Sunday	Noon - 4 p.m.

ARBORG PHARMACY

Ph: 376-5153
Fx: 376-2999

by the sons of Ivaldi. The dwarves take this bet and make a bore with bristles of gold, a gold ring called Draupnir⁷ and iron hammer called Mjollnir.

While these treasures were being created Loki disguised as a fly tries to thwart the dwarves so he may win the bet, yet fails in his attempt and all that is done by his thwarting is the hammer came out with a short handle. Loki ends up keeping his head that he lost in the bet by further trickery in saying he hadn't bet his neck so there was no way they could cut it off. Mjollnir is thought to be of the utmost importance to the Æsir gods because it is what 'holds Asgard secure against the giants' (Davidson, *Gods and Myths* 80) and is the all that can keep Loki at bay, as we see in vs. 55 of *Loki's Quarrel* (Larrington 94):

'All the mountains shake: I think Thor must be on his way home:

He'll bring peace to those who quarrel here, all the gods and men'

As the Æsir greatly value Mjollnir. Thor too prizes it above all else. In Thrym's poem Thor awakens to find his hammer stolen and sends Loki to find its whereabouts. Loki returns to tell that the giant Thrym has hidden it eight leagues below the earth and will not return it unless Freyja is brought as his wife. Thor commands Freyja to go to Thrym so that he may have his hammer back, yet she refuses with the other Æsir on her side. Then Heimdall suggests that Thor should dress up as Freyja to retrieve his hammer himself and although Thor is less than pleased with this idea he agrees to do it, 'because he knew that the moment was bound to come when the hammer would be brought out and laid upon his lap, and he would thus get it back into his own hands' (Davidson, *Gods and Myths* 80). The poem ends with Thor being brought the hammer whilst in disguise and then killing Thrym for his treachery.

Early Icelanders thought of Thor in the highest degree and showed their loyalty to him by wearing pendants in the shape of Thor's hammer around their necks. These pendants were also believed to be good luck charms. The Christians tried to convert the Icelanders to their religion, but many stayed

true to their Pagan beliefs and continued to worship Thor. In early 1200 a new Thor's hammer was designed that resembled an upside down Christian cross (see figure 2). Perhaps this was simply a sign of Christianity merging into Iceland or maybe it was the Pagan's way of holding on to what they believed in while still having the respect of those around them that believed in only one God.

Though Mjollnir helps Thor defeat giants, defend Asgard and restrain Loki, let us not forget it is Thor himself who accomplishes these tasks. Thor is extremely audacious and although hot tempered at times he is well loved and appreciated by all the Æsir. In chapter 3: The Giant Hrungrnir of skaldskaparmál in *Snorri's Edda* we see just how dependable Thor is when the Æsir grow tired of the giant Hrungrnir's boasting that he is going to 'lift up Valhalla and take it to Giant Land, bury Asgard, and kill all the gods except Freyja and Sif, whom he wanted to take home with him' (Sturluson 87). Thor enters Valhalla with his hammer quickly after the Æsir call upon him and asks who allowed the giant to drink there and why Freyja is serving him. The giant replies that it was Odinn who invited him there. Thor then tells Hrungrnir that he would be sorry that he accepted that invitation and although the giant is very cunning and tries to trick Thor into defeat by allowing him to return to Giant Land and retrieve weapons and a giant man made of clay. Thor still whole heartedly defeats the giant for the Æsir.

Amongst Thor's ability to stand up for the Æsir, he is also known to be able to eat and drink an impressive amount. As Snorri shows us in chapters 46 and 47 of *Gylfaginning*. Thor takes part in a contest to prove to Utgarda-Loki⁸ how much he can drink. He is brought a horn from which he is to drink as much as he can from, and although with each drink he takes, Thor only slightly lowers the level of liquid in the horn, we later learn that Utgarda-Loki has tricked Thor and the horn he has been drinking out of is in fact the ocean so the fact that Thor even lowered the amount of liquid at all is a very impressive

⁷ The bore with Bristles of Gold becomes Freyja's and The ring called Draupnir becomes Odinn's. It is said that Draupnir has the ability to multiply itself. ⁸ Utgarda-Loki is the King of Utgard which is a fortress in Giant Land

feat! We are made known of Thors great capacity to consume things again in vs. 24 of Thrym's Poem when Thor is dressed as Freyja and sitting down at a feast with the Giants before he is given his hammer back:

They came together there early in the evening,

and ale was brought for the giants;

he ate one whole ox, eight salmon,

all the dainties meant for the women,

the husband of Sif drank three casks of mead.

Thrym was astonished by how much his wife to be just ate, and Thor replied that Freyja had been so eager to come to Giant Land that she hadn't eaten for eight nights.

Thor was the most renowned of the late Pagan Deities. His strength, bravery and temper kept Asgard safe from the giants and Loki the trickster under control. Thor was not noted for his words but for his loyal and legendary actions, he was and is continually celebrated

by believers in Norse Paganism.

Works Cited

Davidson, H. R. Ellis. *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe*. Great Britain: Pelican, 1964.

Davidson, H. R. Ellis. *Myths and Symbols in Pagan Europe*. Great Britain: Syracuse, 1988.

Davidson, H. R. Ellis. *Scandinavian Mythology*. U.S.A.: Paul Hamlyn, 1969.

Larrington, Carolyne. *The Poetic Edda*. Great Brittain: Oxford, 1996.

Munch, Peter Andreas. *Norse Mythology Legends of Gods and Heroes*. 4th ed. Rev. New York: The American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1963.

O'Donoghue, Heather. *From Asgard to Valhalla*. New York: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, 2008.

Sturluson, Snori. *The Prose Edda*. Trans. Jesse L. Byock. England: Penguin, 2005.

TERGESEN'S

GENERAL MERCHANT • GIMLI,

tergesen@mts.net

BOOKS WE ARE TALKING ABOUT

PASSION

A fast paced novel of espionage and romance

\$19.95

Time in a Bottle

A story about women and their addictions

\$16.95



PHONE ORDERS WELCOME

Llama Escape

A day in the life & the great escape

by Connie Geller

The school bus had just left. I was sitting in my farm kitchen here in southern Saskatchewan, reveling in the solitude, reading the newspaper, in my scungy housecoat when the doorbell rang.

The dogs started barking, ALL FIVE of THEM! Standing at the door is this lady, beautifully turned out in an 'Haute Couture' outfit. She informs me that she is terrified of dogs, gives me the once over, and starts backing away from me like I have a suppurating disease on my face. As she is backing away she says very timidly "I think that your llamas have escaped. There are three llamas on the road east of the elevator." And with that she scurries back to her car. I didn't even get to thank her much less get her name. You may have guessed, I was mortified!

I ran and got dressed in my well coordinated outfit (ancient jeans, older sweatshirt and a prehistoric jacket) tore out to the barn for some grain for luring (bait) and headed down the road, talking to myself. After I had walked for about two miles and decided that I was on a fools errand (did I mention that it had started to pour?) I caught a glimpse of movement in the middle of a field. Sure enough there were three of our yearling llamas - Canadian Ice, Hallmark and Windstorm, happily grazing away on some farmers crop!

Ha! Ha! All is not lost! but how am I ever going to get them out of there and home? (Still talking to myself!). Well there was nothing for it but to try 'the old white bucket ploy.' I held the white bucket over my head, shook the grain and called at the top of my voice 'Llamallamallama'. They looked up. "Mommeee!" They came running!... Hey, this isn't going to be too bad. (Talking to myself, again) The first thing I tried, worked. "UH,

HUH" I had temporarily lost my head ... and clean forgot that I still had to walk about two miles back on the road. ...Well the road seemed like a good idea! Nice easy walking - until the first car came along.

Whoosh! Back into the field. Did you know that a young llama can do a standing broad jump of about eight feet!

"Lllamma llamallamallama" 'shaka', 'shake', 'shake!' "Come on Stormy, come to Momma". AH, Ha! it's working (talking to myself again!) Back off the field - up out of the ditch in ankle deep water (it's raining remember) and BACK onto the road.

SLOW LEARNER, what can I say?

I had managed about a hundred yards when a diesel truck came along in the opposite direction from us.

He was very polite and slowed right down, however - "Mommee, this is really scary!!" The llamas turned around in front of the truck and took off full tilt down the road AWAY from home. For a moment I chased after them. Yeah, that is really smart - now they are running away from me AND the truck!

I went back to the trucker and said, "If you will just stop for a moment maybe I can get them into this field."

Yes, I said that! It was the field or a merry chase to the next town.

"Okay", he says. "I'd get out and help you but I am in a real hurry..."

"Oh, that's okay, thanks anyway," say I, ...who knows darn well that another body, ANY other body would be a huge help!

"Lllamma, llamallamallama," shaka shake shake. You could just see those little guys thinking.

"Wait a minute we have fallen for this before. There is probably something a lot bet-

ter this way."

And they continued up the road in the opposite direction from home.

And of course here comes another truck barreling up from the other direction! Now they were surrounded by scary things so they stopped dead in the middle of the road and would not move.

If I went towards them they would back away from me.

"LLLLAMMA Llamallamallama", shaka shake shake! "Come here, come to mamma . . . please.

Come this way, into the ditch, off the road, pretty please".

Into the ditch??--but there is water in it! (Llamas aren't fond of wading)

You've gotta give the truckers credit - they were quite patient! As they sat in their warm, dry trucks, in the pouring rain, even the guy who was in a hurry.

If I looked bad when I answered the door, I was a real treat now with rivulets of water streaming off my head and down my back, clad in an old soaking wet jacket and mud up

to my ...


Finally, the llamas followed me into the ditch. The truckers waved me a cheery smile and off they went. So, now I said (talking to myself again! still?) "The road is probably not such a good idea after all". (easy walking not withstanding). There was nothing for it but cross-country!

If you've ever trudged through Saskatchewan gumbo in the rain, you will remember the forty pound clods of clay that accumulate on your shoes. Shoes? shoes, you say. Why weren't you wearing boots?

Boots?? How was I supposed to know that I would be three hours trying to lure three well fed baby llamas out of a field of succulent tender shoots with some clearly uninteresting (and now sodden) grain.

So, now with the llamas safely back in the barn, here I sit in my kitchen, reading the paper with my rain drenched hair, wrapped in a towel, back in my scungy housecoat (I got soaked to the skin) and if anybody rings my doorbell - I'LL SIC THE DOGS ON THEM!!!

Cash for old Icelandic Books



- books
- journals
- newspapers
- magazines
- correspondence
- diaries
- manuscripts
- photographs, etc.

CONTACT _____

JIM ANDERSON BOOKS

204-287-2397 j39anderson@mts.net

840 Lyon Street, Winnipeg, MB R3T 0G7

Poetry

by Eric McKinnon

Organized Disarray

On the coffee table
Clustered magazines sit.

I breathless stand and watch
The pile make sport of gravity.

Depravity would dictate
That I intensify the chaos.

Laos in Thirty Days
Of Sightseeing Travel

Unravel, you conglomerate of thought,
And fall to carpet.

Carpetbaggers, The
Made an entertaining read.

Indeed, I have it all —
Trash and classic in juxtaposition.

Any supposition that I dwell in disarray
Is slanderous and groundless.

Boundless am I in my literary pursuits,
The pile shows it.

Grows it?
Oh, yes. Daily.

Out My Hospital Window

As written of by bard of old,
In russet touch of morning cold,
The thoughts of man, unsung, unfold,
As brightly dawns the day,
Long ago, far away.

The selfsame thoughts I understand,
The onward quest of mortal man,
The torch that's passed to little man*,
An afi from a distant day,
So long ago and far away.

- Inspired by "By The Hospital Window by Kristjan Palsson, *Kvaedabok*. "Little man" is what my afi named me in his poem written below. I didn't 'go away', Afi did. The 'bard of old' I refer to, in line one, is my afi. The second line, in my poem, is inspired by the first line in his poem, *By the Hospital Window*.

By the Hospital Window

by Kristjan Palsson

Little man has gone away!
Little man will always stay,
Always stay within my heart
Though today we have to part.
And my fondest hope is this:
May I always stay in his.

- *Kvaedabok*, Winnipeg: Columbia Press, 1949, page 287.

Afi

Have you of my afi heard,
Thoughtful man, superb with word?

“Little man has gone away!”
Kvaeðabok, page two-eight-seven;
He wrote those words,
Then went to Heaven.

Now my afi’s voice is still,
No more walks to Selkirk mill,
No more talks with him until
I’m on the Other Side.

He was a true Icelandic poet,
And people of the town did know it.
Kvaeðabok does truly show it,
In verse did he abide.

I miss him still, I must confess,
Of rhyme and thought and depth I guess
The world has just a little less
From the day my afi died.

You’ve never of my afi heard,
That thoughtful man, superb with word?

My Afi was Kristjan Skarphedinsson Palsson.

I knew him although I was only three years and four months when he passed away. I have fond memories of him to this day.

He was a self-made man, working his way up to, I think, second class engineering papers, with only a formal grade two education. This while supporting a wife and five children.

He was a steam engineer at the Selkirk Rolling Mill until his death. Those were the days of twelve hour shifts. Mom told me there were three engineers at "the mill," if one was sick the other two worked twenty-four hours. If two were sick, Afi would be there thirty-six hours straight. He also had been in charge of a fish station up on Lake Winnipeg, before working at the mill.

Viking Raider

Silent as a sleeping ram,
The longboat glides.
Inside, the harbingers of death
Joust with mouth,
Crudeness pouring to the four winds
Which are owned by Old Norway.

We all have a past,
Except those that have been
Earth-elevated to the exalted position
Of gossipier,
Where there is no internal evil.

But what of our other past?
The string of loins trailing back
To the wherever.

Great, great, great
To half an eternity,
Grandfather,
Were you a shield carrier?
An axe bearer?
For want of a more refined term,
A bloody monster?

I stare across great waters
For the answer,
But the deeps do not reply.
They are quiet —
Silent as a sleeping ram.

Legacy

by Jennifer Cogswell

When I look into the mirror
I see echoes of your face
Memories of the past so dear
Float through time and space

Thoughts become more distant
Yet the feelings still stay clear
Your smell, your touch, your smile, your warmth
I feel you are always near

Your gentle spirit filled with life
My mind wanders through the past
Your time on this earth was precious
And I know it was not meant to last

I know you are always with me
Even though we are apart
Your legacy lives within us
I sense an imprint on my aching heart

Some day we will be in heaven
Singing with the angels above
Feeling once again you with me
Filling my heart with love

- In memory of Nana

Book Reviews



My Winnipeg

by Guy Maddin
Coach House Books, 191 Pages

Reviewed by Susan Claire Johnson

Happyland seems like a mythical place which Guy Maddin has dreamt up to meet his story telling needs. And thus as I sit in my house in Wolseley on a street between Aubrey and Dominion, reading about the former home of Happyland Amusement Park, I feel compelled to go to the computer and Google 'Happyland.' Yes actually, it did exist, right where the author said...I saw the

historical postcard pictures of it on a few websites. Ironically I'm reading Maddin's book in the physical context of his story.

Another interesting twist is, located in my dining room, there is a piece of art created by Jennifer Hamilton, the great great granddaughter of Thomas Glendenning Hamilton a 'distinguished Winnipeg medical doctor and politician, (who) held at his home elaborately documented séances in the hope of contacting his dead son' (p. 63).

The art piece is an old Ouija board which has painted upon it a pair of hands covered by what appears to be puffs of white clouds. I mention this personal information, to illustrate Maddin's unnerving ability to connect the reader to 'Pegger' stories in a way that makes one feel at home in his book. Not that everyone owns a piece of art they can literally connect to Maddin's stories. However everyone can be a part of the collective unconscious of Maddin's childhood stories and thus resonate with the emotions emulating from snippets of his anecdotes about hockey, winter, fur coats and purses, the painful and joyful experience of one's evolution into adulthood.

Throughout 'My Winnipeg' are stories that make you feel like you are talking to an old friend. You've known them for a long time you are very well familiar with their characteristics and despite hearing their stories over and over again, you haven't grown tired of them. As with old friends there is always an expected amount of gossip. And one responds with

the questions of “Is that really true?” “Did that really happen?” And Maddin is clear that My Winnipeg’ blurs the line between fact and fiction’ (cover page)

This is what makes the book interesting. The reader is exposed to factual information that seems completely bizarre and unbelievable such as If Day, a simulation of an invasion by Nazi Soldiers enacted in February, 1942 in the fair city of Winnipeg to improve the sale of Victory Bonds to support the war effort.

The format of the book surprisingly engages the reader. Parts of the script, a third party narration in regard to revisions of the transcript and sidebar stories about the content allow one to read the book at leisure. And give the opportunity to make trips to reference sources to check between fact and fiction of My Winnipeg’s content.

Like the filming of movies with several cameras, the book explores the subject matter of ‘Maddin’ from various angles. The stories range from humorous and self-deprecating (a common Manitoban genetic trait); to rude and vaudevillian to hauntingly touching. Not all readers will appreciate the male fascination with urination and erection. Plus the ‘English proper’ in some will find samples of the collages and pictures offensive versus artistic.

Correction

The last issue of The Icelandic Canadian was excellent. However I beg to differ with Glenn Sigurdson where he suggests Guttormur Gottormsson never set foot on Iceland’s shores. Actually he went as an honoured guest just around 1960 accompanied by his daughter Begga Sigurdson.

This can be easily confirmed by Heather Ireland his granddaughter.
Sincerely, Erla Jonasson

But it can’t be disputed that Maddin’s vulnerability is allowed to show through in his work. He provides a quick glimpse into the psyche of family pain and then quickly shuts the door with a humorous poke.

I liked the book. Maddin’s delivery was honest and engaging. The contributions of fellow artists provided an added unexpected dimension to the story of Maddin himself.

Like Andy Smetanka, the animator for My Winnipeg who explained his desire to have everyone in his town to view Maddin’s movie Careful as such: “Part of it of course was wanting to bask in a little reflected brilliance: wanting people (movie audience) to recognize Maddin’s brilliance and therefore my brilliance for recognizing his brilliance before them.

Thus the reason I want you to read My Winnipeg. So you can see how clever I am for seeing the exquisiteness of Guy Maddin’s gifted storytelling methods, his willingness to let down his defenses and appreciating the whole of his stories. From the rude to the beautiful and from the hilarious to the tragic. You don’t have to be from Winnipeg, or Canada for that matter, to enjoy the stories. So let down your defenses and pick up the book and read at your own pace.



Time in a Bottle

By Janice Halldorson
Author House, \$16.95

Reviewed by Helga Malis

Janice Halldorson, author of *Time in a Bottle*, has written this book in part, in an attempt to help women addicts see themselves in the behaviours exhibited by her characters. Her hope is that if addicted women can identify with one or more of these characters, they will no longer feel alone and isolated, and so can reach out to the help that is available and get on the

road to recovery.

Halldorson’s women abuse the gamut of substances, as well as gambling, unaware that it is not just the substance that is their problem. But the author understands that addiction is a disease of the mind, body and spirit; only when all of those aspects of the addict are addressed will the healing begin.

Halldorson is a brave in choosing to write about women and their addictions. Many in main stream society ignore the problem and many more don’t want to read about these desperate female addicts and their hope-less lives. The book is worth reading to understand how lives can get out of control and how hard it is to remedy.

The book features a chapter on each of nine women, Claudia, Gina, Dianne, Terrina, Joy, Shilo, Lylja, Miriam and Holly. Halldorson describes their home life, parents and siblings, etc. to establish the setting and point out the dynamics, tensions and stresses that have an effect on how children grow up and the kind of scars they can carry into adult life as a result of poverty, parental fighting, unfairness, not having friends, etc.

These stories are not easy to read as Halldorson does not shield us from the subject’s reality. Some families are chaotic; some empty of love, some where only perfection is rewarded. There is a lack of nurturing in some of these families, almost no praise, and either great expectations or none at all, leaving the child and later the woman, with very low self esteem, few interpersonal skills and with a checkered school record.

As you read you just want to get into

the book and tell the woman to “smarten up’ or “can’t you see what you are doing?” But that would not be helpful, as all of these women have told themselves that many, many times.

The author explains how secrecy is a large part of addiction; secrecy about inner and outer wounds, about behaviours that nobody must find out about, about family and the belief that you cannot change no matter how hard you have tried. Some of Halldorson’s women will have an insight into their own condition, sometimes they meet someone who recognises the real problem and helps her to deal with it.

Icelandic Camp 2010 Íslenskar Sumarbúðir 2010

For over 30 years the Icelandic Camp has given young people a chance to study Icelandic language, learn about the Icelandic culture, sing Icelandic songs and create friendships and memories that will last a lifetime.

Just 2 miles north of Gimli, Manitoba, Canada, Camp Veselka overlooks lovely Lake Winnipeg. With a huge recreation room, dining area, 6 cabins, indoor showers and huge open fields Camp Veselka offers a wonderful place for all Icelandic campers to gather.

When:
Sunday July 25th, 2010 - Friday July 30th, 2010

Where:
Camp Veselka, Gimli, Manitoba, Canada

Day Campers = Ages 5-8
Full Campers = Ages 8-15
Jr. Counselors = Ages 15-17

For more information visit:

or
icelandiccamp2010@gmail.com



Icelandic Language Classes - Saga Stories - Icelandic Culture & History - Arts & Crafts - Icelandic Music - Gimli Film Festival - Much More

Contributors

LEAH BJORNSON is the daughter of Kit Bjornson, and her family has been a member of the Icelandic Society for the past few years. Leah is 16 years-old, currently enrolled in Carson Graham Elementary, and is interested in written and spoken language and acting.

CHELSEA BRISTOW is a Fine Arts student at University of Manitoba. She is the daughter of Clayton and Doris Bristow.

JENNIFER COGSWELL is currently in the final stages of completing her masters of education degree at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario. She is moving to Montreal to pursue her PhD. She is a classically trained singer who teaches history, music, and drama.

CHRISTOPHER CROCKER is from Corner Brook, Newfoundland. He is a MA student in the Department of Icelandic Language and Literature at the University of Manitoba, studying medieval Icelandic and Norse Literature.

NORMA GUTTORMSSON is the daughter of the late Dr. Pétur Guttormsson and Salín Reykdal, is a second generation Icelandic Canadian. Since retiring from teaching ESL, she now has more time to pursue her hobbies. Norma lives in North Vancouver. She has four children and four grandchildren.

SUSAN CLAIRE JOHNSON is a second generation Icelandic Canadian who was raised in Selkirk, MB. She is presently an instructor in the Child and Youth Care Program at Red River College she is passionate about anything Icelandic and very keen about the work of Canadian Icelandic artists not only from Manitoba but all over Canada.

REV. STEFAN JONASSON is a Unitarian minister by vocation but a storyteller and historian by avocation. He presently serves as Director for Large Congregations with the Boston-based Unitarian Universalist Association while moonlighting as minister of its tiny Icelandic-heritage congregations in Arborg and Gimli. When he's not living out of his suitcase, nor lingering at Huldúkott, his cottage near Arnes, he calls Winnipeg home.

ERIC MCKINNON enjoys writing. He is the co-author of *Don't Worry Its Just Wind* and is a member of the Lake Winnipeg Writers group.

HELGA MALIS is a board member of the magazine, contributing in many ways to her Icelandic community. She was the President of the Gimli Icelandic Canadian Society which hosted the 90th INL Convention in Gimli.

HEIDA SIMUNDSSON grew up on a farm, just outside of Arborg in the Interlake region of Manitoba. She is an education student at the University of Winnipeg, completing her fifth and final year abroad teaching ESL students in Thailand and completing her course work. She enjoys chocolate, coffee, and playing the guitar, and brings friends and these things together as much as possible.



PHOTO BY CANDICE MURPHY

The back page

Artwork by Steina Bessason entitled *Peace in the Family*
Actual size is 3 feet by 4 feet