RLA

Reykjavík
Literary Agency

ICELANDIC MODERN CLASSICS

1918–1945

1945–1970

1970–1990

1990–2000

Reykjavík Literary Agency

The **Reykjavík Literary Agency** represents authors and titles in the field of fiction, crime fiction, classics, poetry, non-fiction and children's books from various Icelandic publishers.

RLA is owned by Forlagid, Iceland's largest publishing house, but operates independently. We have something to offer to publishers and production companies world-wide and a great expertise in handling translation rights for our authors, many of whom are amongst the most successful and critically acclaimed writers in Iceland. The Reykjavík Literary Agency sells rights world-wide, directly and through sub-agents.

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SUBSIDIES AND GRANTS

A fund for the promotion of Icelandic literature operates under the auspices of the Icelandic Literature Center and subsidizes translations of literature. See more info here: www.islit.is

1918–1945

Thorbergur Thordarson 6-7
Halldor Laxness 8-12
Halldor Stefansson 13

1945–1970

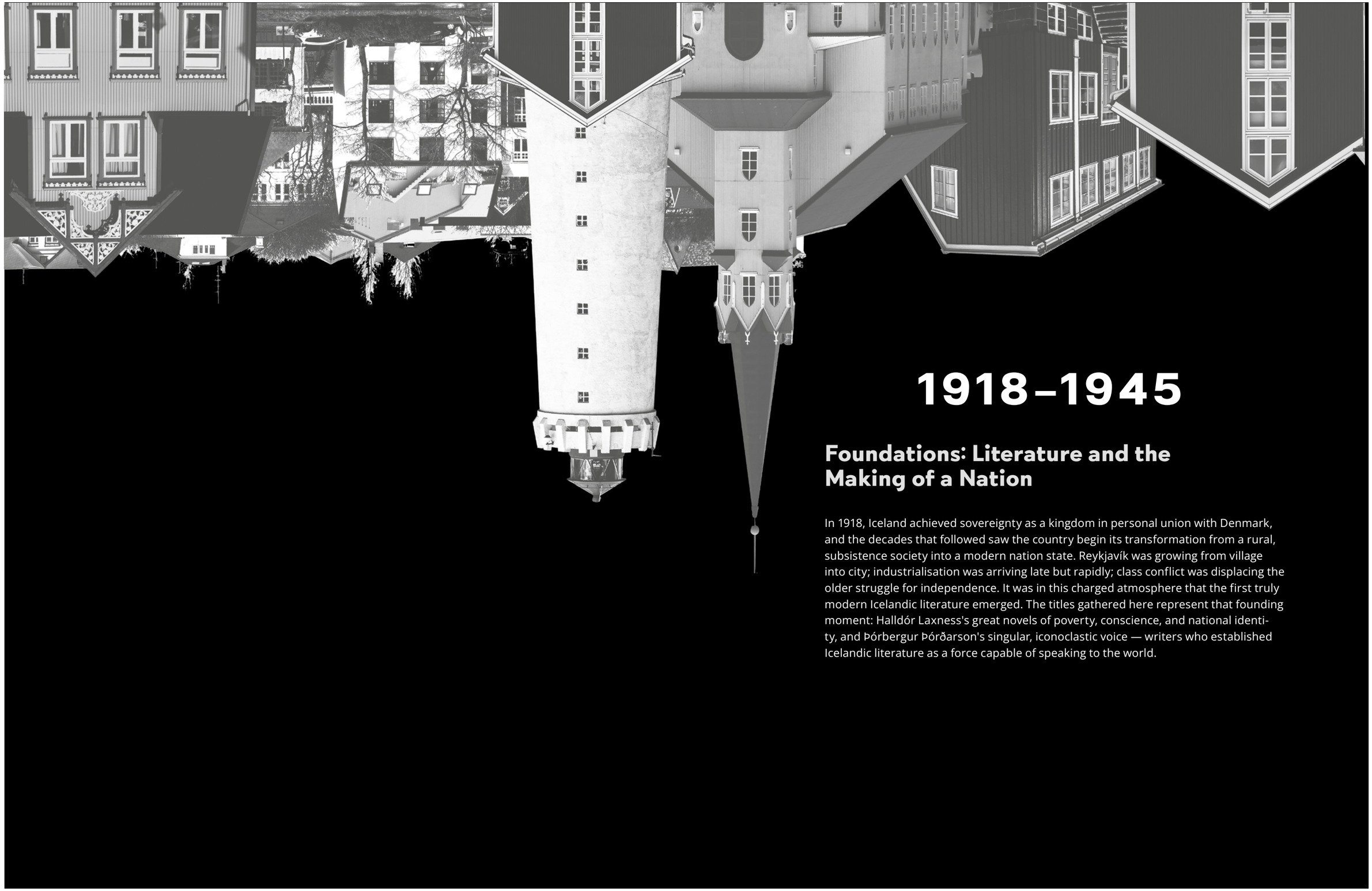
Olafur Johann Sigurdsson 16-17
Halldor Laxness 18-23
Elias Mar 24
Indridi G. Thorsteinsson 25
Thorbergur Thordarson 26
Asta Sigurdardottir 27
Svava Jakobsdottir 28-29
Gudbergur Bergsson 30
Jakobina Sigurdardottir 31

1970–1990

Tryggvi Emilsson 34
Petur Gunnarsson 35
Asa Solveig 36
Jakobina Sigurdardottir 37
Einar Mar Gudmundsson 38
Einar Karason 39
Steinunn Sigurdardottir 40
Thor Vilhjalmsson 41
Svava Jakobsdottir 42
Vigdis Grimsdottir 43-44

1990–2000

Frida A. Sigurdardottir 46
Gudbergur Bergsson 47
Gudmundur Andri Thorsson 48
Olafur Gunnarsson 49
Einar Mar Gudmundsson 50
Steinunn Sigurdardottir 51
Jakobina Sigurdardottir 52
Hallgrimur Helgason 53
Thorarinn Eldjarn 54
Andri Snaer Magnason 55
Arnaldur Indridason 56



1918–1945

Foundations: Literature and the Making of a Nation

In 1918, Iceland achieved sovereignty as a kingdom in personal union with Denmark, and the decades that followed saw the country begin its transformation from a rural, subsistence society into a modern nation state. Reykjavík was growing from village into city; industrialisation was arriving late but rapidly; class conflict was displacing the older struggle for independence. It was in this charged atmosphere that the first truly modern Icelandic literature emerged. The titles gathered here represent that founding moment: Halldór Laxness's great novels of poverty, conscience, and national identity, and Þórbergur Þórðarson's singular, iconoclastic voice — writers who established Icelandic literature as a force capable of speaking to the world.

Thorbergur Thordarson
Letter to Lara

Bréf til Láru, novel, 1924

191 pp

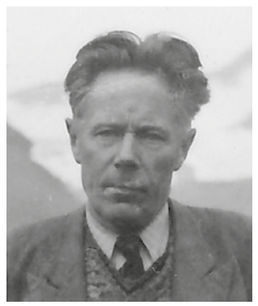
The founding text of Icelandic literary modernism, and the book that made Thorbergur Thordarson famous overnight.

When *Letter to Lara* appeared in 1924, it caused an immediate sensation, making its author famous and notorious overnight. Written as a letter to a friend, the book moves freely between confession, social satire, philosophical digression, and linguistic invention. It is at once a love letter, a polemic, and a self-portrait of a young man at war with the conventions of his time: his poverty, his hunger for ideas, his contempt for bourgeois respectability, and his exhilarating refusal to be anything other than himself.

"The work is widely considered to mark the dawn of modern Icelandic literature ... It captures the sheer agony of the creative process: being pregnant with an idea, having to carry its weight, and finally giving birth to it."
FROM THE INTRODUCTION TO THE 100-YEAR ANNIVERSARY EDITION 2024, SOFFIA AUDUR BIRGISDOTTIR.

"I am not a modernist. I am what people will be like after the next turn of the century."
THORBERGUR THORDARSON, IN AN INTERVIEW IN 1968.

"Thordarson is the most interesting – if eccentric – of all modern Icelandic writers ... he was a superior writer."
MARTIN SEYMOUR-SMITH



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Thorbergur Thordarson (1888–1974) was born in Hali, Sudursveit, one of the most remote farming districts in Iceland, and came to Reykjavik with little formal education and no money. He became one of the greatest stylists in the Icelandic language — celebrated for his wit, his radical politics, and his fiction that challenged every convention of his time. His autobiographical works are considered among the masterpieces of twentieth-century Icelandic prose. He received an honorary doctorate from the University of Iceland in 1974, the year of his death.

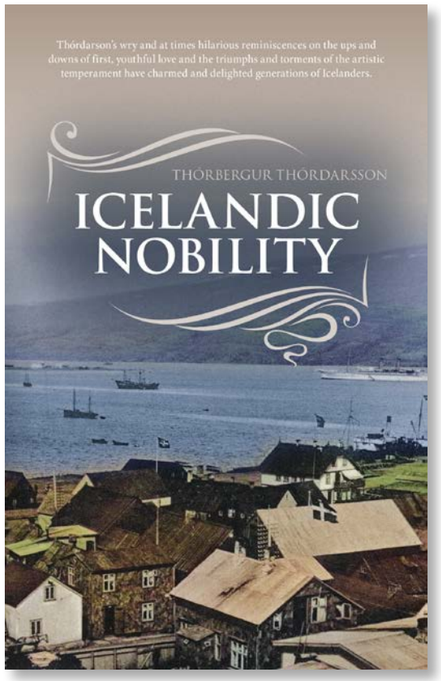
RIGHTS SOLD TO: Brazil (Bec editora)

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Norway (Norske samlaget), Denmark (Schønberg)

Thorbergur Thordarson
Icelandic Nobility

Íslenskur aðall, autofiction, 1938

298 pp

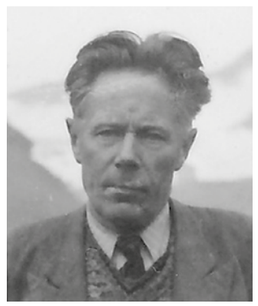


English translation

An ironic self-portrait of a man who refused to accommodate himself to a world he found intellectually and morally wanting.

Icelandic Nobility continues the self-portrait begun in *Letter to Lara*, tracing Thorbergur's years of poverty, intellectual striving, and social nonconformity in early twentieth-century Reykjavik. The title is characteristically ironic: the "nobility" in question is not one of birth or money but of spirit, the defiant inner life of a man who refused to accommodate himself to a world he found intellectually and morally wanting. Rich in comic incident and linguistic invention, and sharpened by the author's mixture of self-deprecation and self-assurance, the book stands as one of the most distinctive works of Icelandic prose from the interwar period.

*"*Icelandic Nobility *is not merely an autobiography, but the portrait of an entire generation."*
JON YNGVI JOHANNSSON, IN *A HISTORY OF ICELANDIC LITERATURE*



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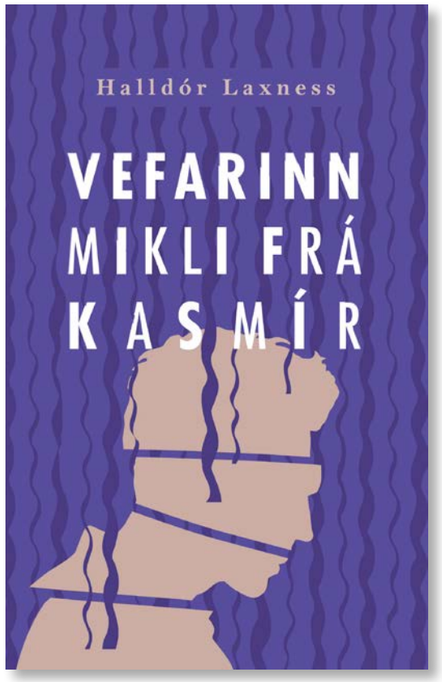
PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Germany (S. Fischer), Norway (Norske samlaget), Denmark (Schønberg)

1918–1945

Halldor Laxness
The Great Weaver from Kashmir

Vefarinn mikli frá Kasmír, novel, 1927
400 pp

English translation



The novel that announced the arrival of Halldor Laxness and established Icelandic literature as a force capable of speaking to the world.

The Great Weaver from Kashmir is the novel that established Laxness as a modernist pioneer in Icelandic literature. Its young protagonist, Steinn Ellidi, moves between Catholicism, Communism, and Nietzschean individualism, restlessly searching for a philosophy equal to the demands of modern life. The novel draws closely on Laxness's own experience: like Steinn, he converted to Catholicism and spent time in a monastery, before ultimately finding his way to socialism and a deep commitment to his fellow human beings. Bold, searching, and unlike anything that had come before it in Icelandic writing, this is the book that announced the arrival of a major literary voice.

"Finally, finally, an imposing work of fiction, which rises like a cliff from the flatness of Icelandic poetry and fiction of recent years!"
KRISTJAN ALBERTSSON, VAKA, 1927

"A rendering of one man's search for spiritual enlightenment becoming confused and complicated by the zealotry and naivete of youth. Its protagonist, Steinn Elliði, is a self-aggrandizing, willfully divisive, and talented young poet who leaves Iceland on an impassioned, though obscure, quest."
LARISSA KYZER, THREE PERCENT, US

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Halldor Laxness (1902–1998) is widely regarded as the greatest Icelandic writer of the twentieth century and the country's only Nobel laureate, receiving the prize in 1955. Born in Reykjavik, he published his first novel at the age of seventeen and went on to write over sixty works across nearly seven decades. His books have been translated into more than forty languages. With each new work he approached his readers from a fresh and unexpected direction, and his writing — sharp, witty, and always deeply sympathetic to ordinary people — has left an indelible mark on Icelandic literature and culture.

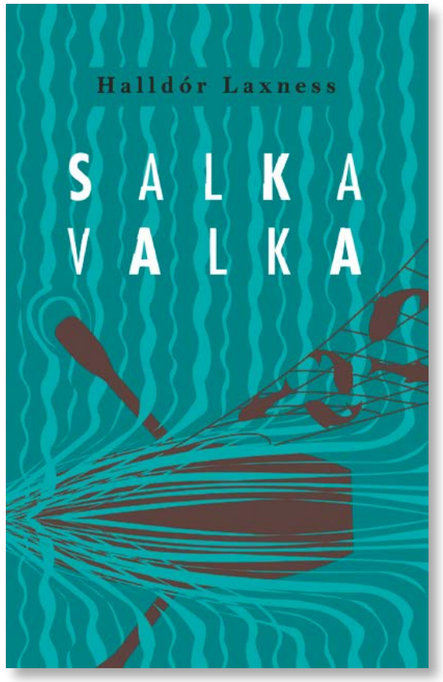
RIGHTS SOLD TO: US (Archipelago), Germany (Steidl)

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Lithuania (UAB Kronta), Denmark (Cicero)

Halldor Laxness
Salka Valka

Salka Valka, novel in two volumes, 1931–1932
500 pp

English translation



A coming-of-age story, a feminist tale, and a lament for Iceland's poor, told through one of the most unforgettable women in twentieth-century fiction.

Salka Valka follows the life of a young woman who grows up in a small Icelandic fishing village in the early twentieth century, navigating poverty, labour conflict, and desire with fierce resilience. One of Laxness's great social novels, it deals with the ordinary Icelandic people's struggle for existence, where right and wrong are rarely opposites and every character, however flawed, is deserving of the reader's sympathy. Salka Valka herself is one of the most memorable figures in Icelandic fiction: stubborn, tender, and endlessly determined to live on her own terms in a world that offers her little space to do so. Salka Valka stands as one of the defining novels of the Nordic social realist tradition.

"The work is replete from cover to cover with the beauty of its perfection."
EVENING STANDARD

"Laxness is a beacon in twentieth-century literature, a writer of splendid originality, wit, and feeling."
ALICE MUNRO

"Incredible! Quarter of a century before Lolita, Halldor Laxness wrote this astonishing book about sexual abuse from the girl's perspective."
HALLGRIMUR HELGASON, AUTHOR

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Halldor Laxness (1902–1998) See page 8.

RIGHTS SOLD TO: Denmark (Gyldendal), UK/ ANZ (Penguin), US (Archipelago), China (Lijang), Portugal (Cavalo de ferro), Germany (Steidl)

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Sweden (Rabén & Sjögren), Turkey (Yordam Kitap Basin ve Yayin Tic Ltd Sti), The Netherlands (De Geus), Italy (Iperborea), Bulgaria (NSOF), Estonia (Eesti Riiklik Kirjastus), Finland (Werner Söderström), France (Gallimard), Faroe Islands (Emil Thomsen), Greece (S. Darema), Norway (Aschehoug), Poland (Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy), Russia (Izdatelstvo inostrannoj literatury), Slovakia (Slovenský spisovatel), Slovenia (Državna založba Slovenije), Argentina (Editorial Sudamericana), Czech Republic (Evropský literární klub)

1918–1945

Halldor Laxness
Independent People

Sjálfstætt fólk, novel in two volumes, 1934–1935

726 pp

English translation

Laxness's masterpiece and one of the great novels of the twentieth century.

Independent People is widely considered Laxness's masterpiece and one of the great novels of the twentieth century. Bjartur of Summerhouses is a sheep farmer in the Icelandic highlands who has spent eighteen years working to own his land free of debt, and whose fierce, almost deranged passion for independence destroys everything around him — his farm, his wives, his children — while he himself remains unyielding. The novel is both a devastating portrait of a man at war with his own nature and a sweeping account of Icelandic rural life, written with a mixture of dark comedy and genuine compassion that makes every character, however broken, fully human. Independent People is the novel most directly responsible for Laxness's Nobel Prize.

"One of the best books of the twentieth century."
THE NEW YORKER

"A masterpiece — the Icelandic Les Misérables*."*
THE GUARDIAN

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Halldor Laxness (1902–1998) See page 8.

RIGHTS SOLD TO: UK/USA (Random House/Vintage), Germany (Steidl), Azerbaijan (Alatoran Literature Magazine), Denmark (Turbine), Slovenia (Beletrina Academic Press), Kazakhstan (Steppe & World), Spain (Trotalibros), Hungary (Észak), India / Hindi (Sampark), India / Bengali (Sampark), Turkey (Iletisim Yayinlari), Portugal (Cavalo de ferro), France (Librairie Arthéme Fayard), Norway (Tiden), Italy (Iperborea), Film rights

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Halldor Laxness
World Light

Heimsljós, novel in four volumes, 1937–1940

624 pp

English translation

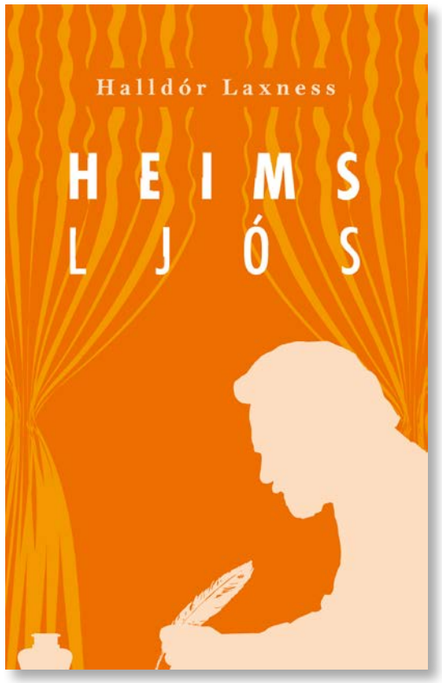
A meditation on art, poverty, and what beauty can mean to those whom the world has given almost nothing.

World Light is the story of Olafur Karason, a sickly farmhand who believes himself destined to be a great poet and whose fragile, radiant inner life is in constant collision with the harshness of the world around him. Across four volumes, Laxness traces his protagonist's journey from childhood suffering to a kind of transcendence, never losing sight of the comedy and pathos in the gap between Olafur's vision of himself and the reality others see. Like the other great social novels of Laxness's 1930s output, *World Light* is concerned with ordinary lives and extraordinary human endurance, and with the question of what art and beauty can mean to those whom the world has given almost nothing.

"One of the 20th century's greatest novels, and arguably the closest modern equivalent to the enthralling complexity of Dostoevsky."
KIRKUS REVIEWS

"The story of the peasant poet Olafur Ljósvíkíngur ... is possibly his greatest work. It is based on the contrast between a miserable environment and the heaven-born dreams of one who is a friend and servant of beauty."
NOBEL PRIZE AWARD CEREMONY SPEECH

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Halldor Laxness (1902–1998) See page 8.



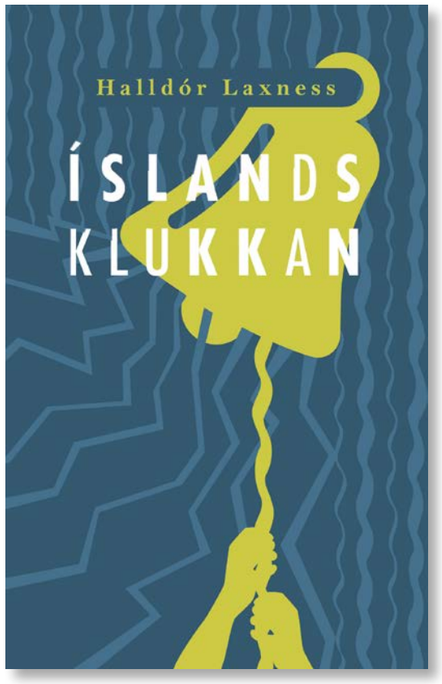
RIGHTS SOLD TO: Germany/Austria/Switzerland (Steidl), UK/USA (Random House/Vintage)

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Denmark (Gyldendal), Finland (Werner Söderström), Franch (Unesco), Greece (Dodoni), The Netherlands (Zuid-Hollandsche Uitgevers Maatschappij), Latvia (Latvijas Valsts Izdevnieciba), Lithuania (Vaga), Norway (Tiden), Poland (Czytelnik), Russia (Progress), Slovenia (Cankarjeva Založba), Spain (Aguilar), Sweden (Rabén & Sjögren), Czech Republic (Státní nakladatelství krásné literatury)

1918–1945

Halldor Laxness
Iceland's Bell

Íslandsklukkan, historical novel trilogy, 1943–1946
484 pp



English translation

Laxness's contribution to shaping Icelandic national consciousness, and one of the most beloved works in the national literary canon.

Set in Iceland in the early eighteenth century, when the country was under Danish rule and its people lived in extreme poverty, *Iceland's Bell* follows the fates of three memorable characters whose lives intersect against the backdrop of Iceland's long struggle for cultural and political survival. Written as Iceland itself was moving towards full independence in 1944, the trilogy is suffused with a quiet but powerful patriotism — not of flags and speeches, but of a people's stubborn attachment to their language, their stories, and their sense of themselves. It is Laxness's contribution to Iceland's campaign for independence, and one of the most beloved works in the national literary canon.

"A magnificent saga of Icelandic history and identity, rich with heroism and tragedy."
TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

"Laxness is a poet who writes at the edge of the pages, a visionary who allows us a plot: He takes a Tolstoyan overview, he weaves in a Waugh-like humor: it is not possible to be unimpressed."
DAILY TELEGRAPH

Halldor Laxness (1902–1998) See page 8.

RIGHTS SOLD TO: UK/USA (Random House/Vintage), Germany (Steidl), Portugal (Cavalo de ferro), Poland (ArtRage), Mondial (Esperanto), Italy (Iperborea)

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Sweden (Atlantis), The Netherlands (De Geus), Estonia (Varrak), Israel (Schocken), Denmark (Gyldendal), Spain/South America (RBA Libros),Bulgaria (Roboread), Turkey (Efil), France (Flammarion), Armenia (Khorhrdayin grogh), Finland (Werner Söderström), Faroe Islands (Ungu Føroyar), Georgia (Lit'erat'ura da khelovneba), Latvia (Liesma), Lithuania (Vaga), Norway (Tiden), Romania (Editură de Stat pentru Literatură şi Artă), Russia (Izd. khudozjestvennoj literatury), Serbia (SNL), Slovakia (Slovenský spisovatel), Slovenia (Cankarjeva založba), Czech Republic (Československy spisovatel), Hungary (Európa könyvkiadó)

Halldor Stefansson
Death on the Third Floor

Dauðinn á þriðju hæð, short stories, 1935
160 pp

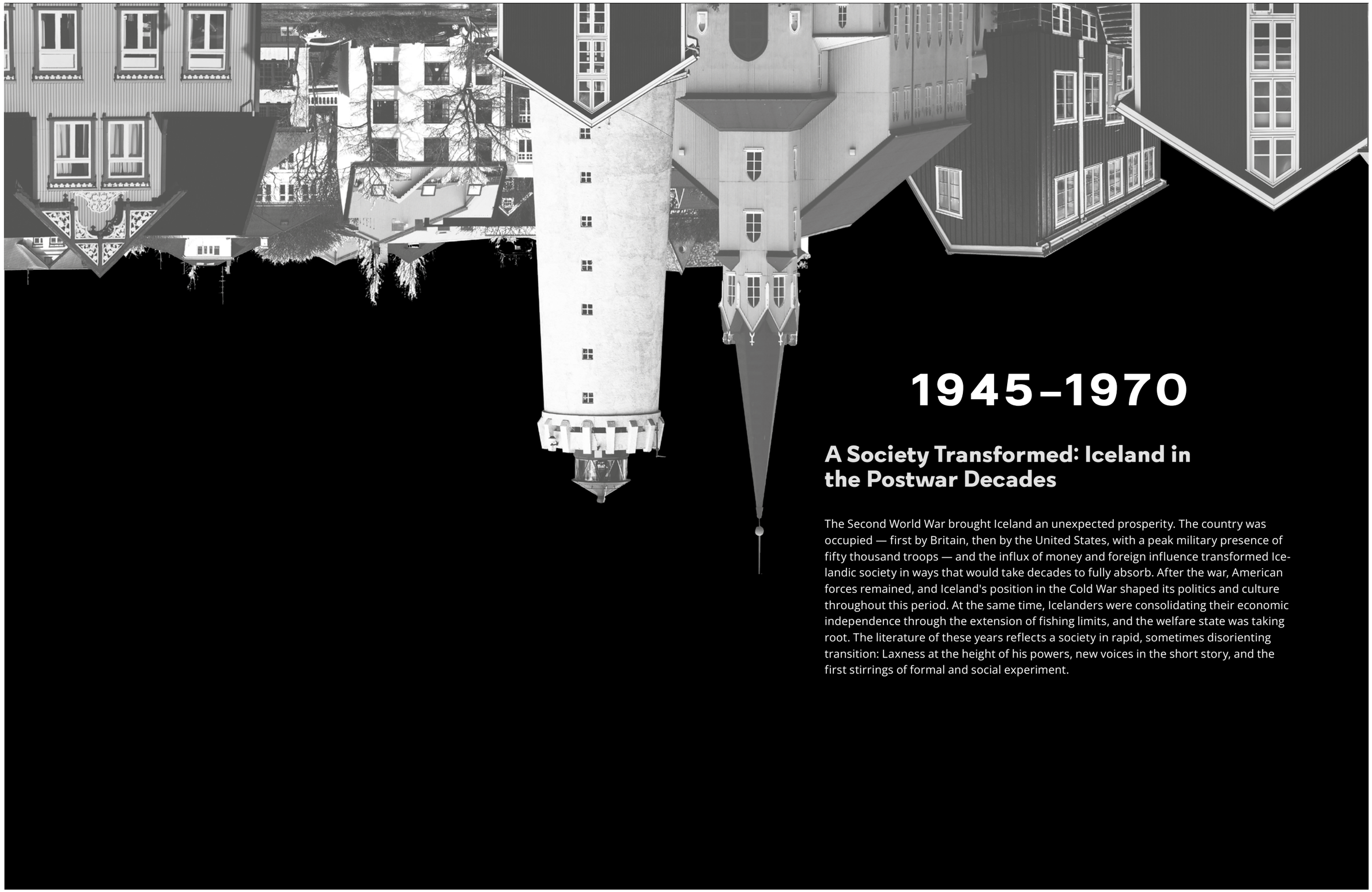
English translation

Short stories of precise social intelligence and dark atmospheric power, from one of the great Icelandic masters of the form.

The title story is among Halldor Stefansson's most celebrated works: a portrait of urban hopelessness, depicting a man who can find no work and gives way to despair. The city at night is rendered with the compressed intensity of an expressionist film, darkness falling over the streets like ink over a manuscript, the weight of other people's lives pressing in from every side. Across the collection, Stefansson deploys a sharp eye for the exercise of power in everyday life: between employers and workers, landlords and tenants, the strong and the powerless. Some stories are direct political satire; others approach the psychological and the uncanny, illuminating a mysterious, sometimes savage undercurrent beneath the surface of ordinary existence. In his later collections, Stefansson moved toward sharper psychological realism, with an increasing focus on the dynamics of conflict between individuals.

"I doubt whether more than a handful of Icelanders, since the anonymous masters who in the thirteenth century fashioned the finest Íslendingaþættir*, have equalled Halldor Stefansson as a writer of short stories. In this exquisitely delicate form - one that must surely be beyond the powers of most Icelandic writers- he achieved feats that won recognition both at home and abroad. Few short stories originally written in Icelandic have travelled as widely as his; the most discerning readers, within Iceland as well as beyond its shores, have borne witness to their respect and admiration for him."*
HALLDOR LAXNESS ON HALLDOR STEFANSSON

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Halldor Stefansson (1892–1979) was born in the East of Iceland and spent much of his working life in Reykjavik, where he became one of the founding members of Mal og menning, Iceland's progressive publishing house. He devoted himself almost entirely to the short story, producing five collections over three decades. His stories range across political satire, expressionist experiment, and the uncanny. He is considered one of the most accomplished short story writers in the Icelandic literary tradition. His stories have appeared in collections in German, Swedish, Danish, Russian, Czech and Chinese.



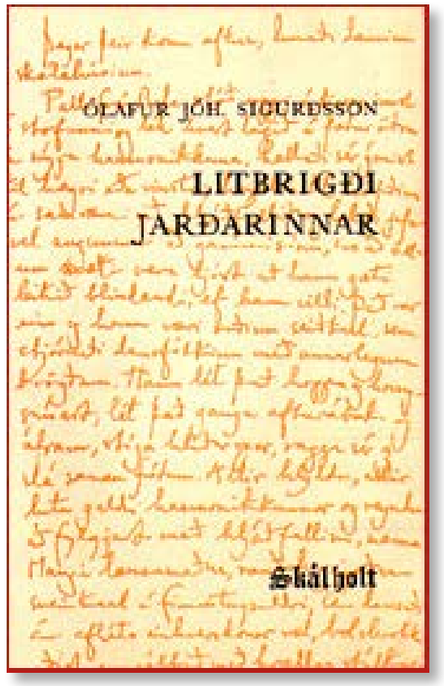
1945–1970

A Society Transformed: Iceland in the Postwar Decades

The Second World War brought Iceland an unexpected prosperity. The country was occupied — first by Britain, then by the United States, with a peak military presence of fifty thousand troops — and the influx of money and foreign influence transformed Icelandic society in ways that would take decades to fully absorb. After the war, American forces remained, and Iceland's position in the Cold War shaped its politics and culture throughout this period. At the same time, Icelanders were consolidating their economic independence through the extension of fishing limits, and the welfare state was taking root. The literature of these years reflects a society in rapid, sometimes disorienting transition: Laxness at the height of his powers, new voices in the short story, and the first stirrings of formal and social experiment.

Olafur Johann Sigurdsson
The Changing Earth

Litbrigði jarðarinnar, novella
1947
113 pp



English translation

A lyrical novella of first love and its loss, set in the Icelandic countryside of the early twentieth century.

A boy from the countryside falls in love for the first time. The object of his affection is Sigrun Maria, radiant and out of reach, and for the span of half a year love transforms everything around him into dream and longing. Then comes the fall, Sigrun Maria turns out to be other than he had hoped, and the sweet pain of disillusionment closes a chapter in his coming of age. There is no irony here, no distancing wit, only the full, unguarded intensity of first love and its loss, rendered with the lyrical precision that distinguishes all of Sigurdsson's best work. The novella ends with its protagonist resolved: he must leave the countryside, where there is nothing. In the city, there is everything, or at least something.

"He was a prolific short story writer, and among his most enduring works are short stories and novellas such as The Changing Earth."
JON YNGVI JOHANNSSON IN ICELANDIC LITERATURE, HISTORY AND CONTEXT

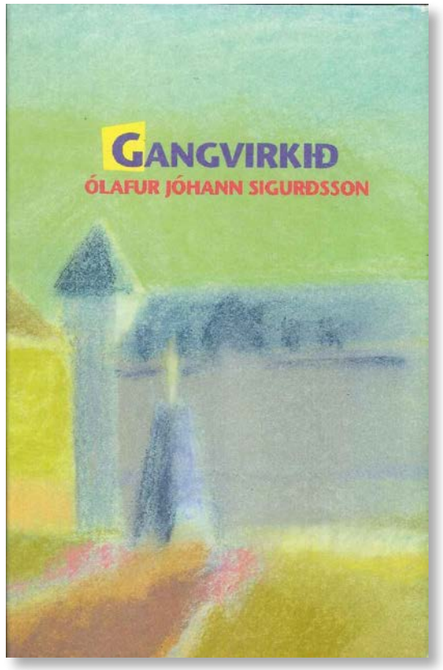
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Olafur Johann Sigurdsson (1918–1988) grew up in rural Iceland and walked to Reykjavik at the age of fifteen, determined to become a writer. Working in the tradition of social realism, he documented the sweeping changes that transformed Icelandic society across the twentieth century, as people left the land and the country rapidly urbanised. His work spans novels, short stories, poetry and children's books. In 1976 he became the first Icelander to receive the Nordic Council's Literature Prize.

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Czech Republic (SNKLU), Norway (Cappelen), US (Louisiana State University Press) Slovakia (Tatran), Russia (Radúga), Lithuania (Vaga), Latvia (Liesma), Germany (Aufbau), Denmark (Birgitte Høvrings Biblioteksforlag)

Olafur Johann Sigurdsson
The Mechanism

Gangvirkið, novel, 1955
317 pp



English translation

The first volume of a trilogy tracing one man's loss of innocence in a society undergoing rapid and disorienting transformation.

Pall Jonsson grows up with his grandmother in a small fishing village. She instils in him the old values: humility, modesty, a firm moral compass, and he carries these with him when he leaves for Reykjavik to study. The contrast between rural and urban life is the beating heart of the novel. Pall arrives in the city determined to live by his grandmother's principles while making his mark in culture and the arts. Instead he drops out of school and becomes a journalist at an entertainment magazine. His fall from grace is completed at the novel's end with the British occupation of Reykjavik, at which point not only Pall but the whole nation has lost its innocence. The mechanism he always felt ticking in his chest, connected to an old clock in his grandmother's village, has fallen silent. A new and ominous era has begun. The trilogy is considered among the defining works of twentieth-century Icelandic fiction.

"One of the most heroic attempts I have witnessed to settle scores with the most dramatic period of Icelandic history in this century … It is perhaps one of the greatest merits of this work as a whole that one can differ on various matters touched upon within it, yet still read it with immense pleasure and stimulation. This can only be said of truly great books."
HEIMIR PALSSON, HELGARPÓSTURINN 1983

"One of the masterpieces of Icelandic fiction."
VESTEINN OLASON, TMM 1983

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Germany (Aufbau), Russia (Radúga)

1945–1970

Halldor Laxness
The Atom Station

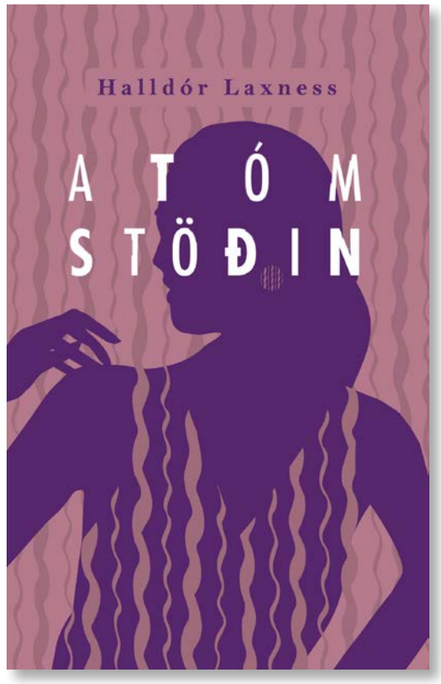
Atómstöðin, novel, 1948
284 pp

English translation

Laxness's sharpest political novel, seen through the clear eyes of a young woman from the countryside.

Ugla, a young woman from the north of Iceland, comes to Reykjavik to work as a housekeeper for a politician and to study the organ. What she finds is a city transformed by the military occupation — foreign soldiers, new money, corruption, and a political class willing to sell the country's independence. Written in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and published the same year Iceland faced pressure to grant the United States a long-term military base, *The Atom Station* is Laxness's sharpest political novel, a biting satire of power and compromise told through the clear eyes of a young woman from the countryside. It is also considered Iceland's first great urban novel.

"The demoralization of the occupation period is described nowhere as dramatically as in Laxness's Atómstöðin."
NOBEL PRIZE COMMITTEE



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Halldor Laxness (1902–1998) is widely regarded as the greatest Icelandic writer of the twentieth century and the country's only Nobel laureate, receiving the prize in 1955. Born in Reykjavik, he published his first novel at the age of seventeen and went on to write over sixty works across nearly seven decades. His books have been translated into more than forty languages. With each new work he approached his readers from a fresh and unexpected direction, and his writing — sharp, witty, and always deeply sympathetic to ordinary people — has left an indelible mark on Icelandic literature and culture.

RIGHTS SOLD TO: UK/USA (Random House/Vintage), Germany (Steidl), Italy (Iperborea), Lebanon (Manshourat A-Jamal), Brazil (Editora Zain)

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Denmark (Cicero), Spain (Cátedra/Altaya), Sweden (Rabén & Sjögren), France (Messidor), Bulgaria (Partizdat), Estonia (Eesti raamat), Finland (Werner Söderström), Georgia (Nakaduli), Israel (Am Oved), The Netherlands (Uitgeverij Libra), Belarus (Mastatskaja literatura), Japan (Shufu no Tomo Sha), China (Writers' Publishing House), Norway (Tiden), Poland (Czytelnik), Brazil (Editôra Opera Mundi), Romania (Editură de Stat Pentru Literatură şi Artă), Russia (Izdatelstvo inostrannoj literatury), Slovakia (Slovenský Spisovatel), Slovenia (Glavni odbor Prešernove družbe), Czech Republic (Státní nakladatelství krásné literatury), Turkey (Toplum Yayinevi), Hungary (Táncsics könyvkiadó)

Halldor Laxness
Wayward Heroes

Gerpla, novel, 1952
472 pp

English translation

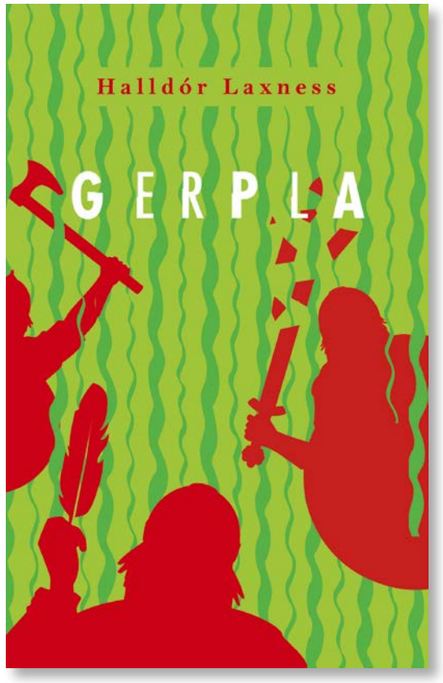
A demolition of the hero-myth, dressed in the language and forms of the Viking sagas.

Set in the Viking Age and rooted in the Old Icelandic *Fóstbræðra saga*, *Wayward Heroes* follows two sworn brothers — Thorgeir Havarsson, a warrior of almost inhuman violence, and his companion, the poet Thormodur — as they pursue a code of heroic conduct to its logical and deadly conclusion. On the surface a retelling of medieval saga material, the novel is in fact a demolition of the hero-myth. Laxness strips the romantic glamour from the Viking ideal to reveal the emptiness underneath. Those who wished could read it as a commentary on the cult of personality in contemporary politics.

"The novel's timeless themes – the egotistical cruelty inherent in so-called heroic ideals, the dangers of violent, unloving masculinity, and the willingness of Church and Establishment to make cynical use of such "wayward heroes", are still worth reiterating... [in] Philip Roughton's accomplished translation."
CAROLYNE LARRINGTON, THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

"Laxness revises and renews the bloody sagas of Icelandic tradition, producing not just a spectacular historical novel but one of coal-dark humor and psychological depth."
PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

Halldor Laxness (1902–1998) See page 18.



RIGHTS SOLD TO: US (Archipelago), The Netherlands (De Geus), Germany (Steidl), Poland (ArtRage)

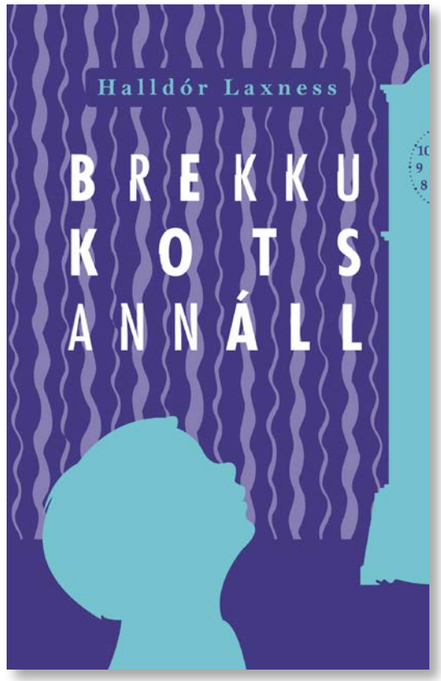
PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Denmark (Cicero), Finland (Werner Söderström), France (Anacharsis), Faroe Islands (Sprotin), Greenland (Det Grønlandske Forlag), Norway (Tiden), Slovakia (Slovenský spisovatel), Sweden (Rabén & Sjögren), Czech Republic (Nakladatelství politické literatury)

1945–1970

Halldor Laxness
The Fish Can Sing

Brekkukotsannáll, novel, 1957

316 pp



English translation

Laxness's tender and quietly devastating hymn to ordinary life and the hidden people who carry the world's real virtues.

Alfgrimur is an orphaned boy raised by his grandparents in a small turf cottage on the outskirts of Reykjavik, in a community of quiet, dignified, ordinary people who ask little of the world and give everything they have. When the celebrated singer Gardar Holm becomes a presence in his life, Alfgrimur begins to understand the gap between fame and reality, between the world the city promises and the one he already has. Written in the aftermath of Laxness receiving the Nobel Prize, *The Fish Can Sing* is his tender and quietly devastating hymn to ordinary life, to the hidden people who carry no banners and make no noise but in whom, he believed, all the real virtues of the world are stored.

"Laxness at his most beguiling — funny, tender, and strangely moving."
THE IRISH TIMES

"This weird and wonderful novel, about the price you pay for 'the one true note', is Laxness at his best: a reminder of the mad hilarity of the Icelandic sensibility. An endearing and unforgettable voice."
NICHOLAS SHAKESPEARE

"Laxness's view of a child's bounded universe has humour and a light touch."
THE GUARDIAN

Halldor Laxness (1902–1998) See page 18.

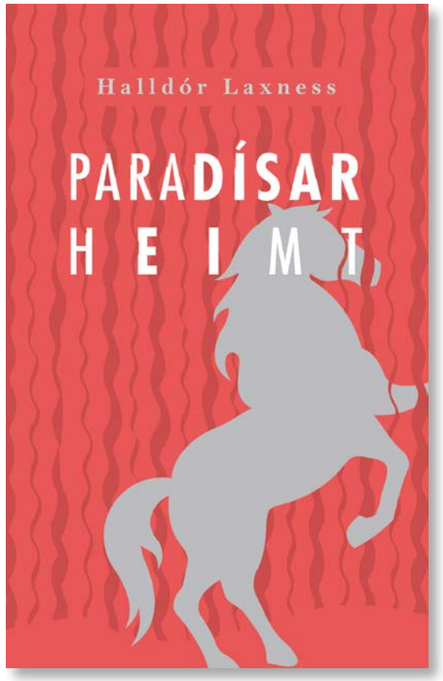
RIGHTS SOLD TO: UK/USA (Random House/Vintage), Germany (Steidl), Italy (Iperborea), Portugal (Cavalo de ferro), India (Kalachuvadu), The Faroe Islands (Sprotin), Spain / South America (Trotalibros), China (Lijiang)

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Norway (Oktober), The Netherlands (De Geus), Lebanon (Arab Scientific Publishers), Macedonia (Mikena doo), Georgia (Bakur Sulakauri), France (Librairie Arthéme Fayard), Greece (Kastaniotis), Bulgaria (Izdatelstvo na Natsionalnija Svet na Otetsjestvenija Front), Denmark (Gyldendal), Finland (Werner Söderström), Greenland (Kalaallit Nunaanni Naqiterisitsisarfik), Israel (Am Oved), Poland (Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy), Sweden (Rabén & Sjögren), Czech Republic (Svoboda), Hungary (Kossuth Könyvkiadó), Russia (Progress)

Halldor Laxness
Paradise Reclaimed

Paradísarheimt, novel, 1960

301 pp



English translation

A fable of faith, disillusionment, and the discovery that the promised paradise was the home you left behind.

Steinar of Hlidar is a generous, poor farmer in nineteenth-century Iceland who impulsively gives his children's beloved white pony to the visiting King of Denmark and sets in motion a chain of events that will carry him to the other side of the world. Following a Mormon missionary he has met by chance, Steinar makes his way to Utah, hoping to build a better life for his family in the Promised Land. By the time the broken family is eventually reunited, Laxness has taken his story through faith, disillusionment, satire, and fable, arriving somewhere that resembles wisdom. As the gljufrasteinn.is museum notes, *Paradise Reclaimed* reflects Laxness's own growing disillusionment with ideology: the promised paradise turns out, in the end, to be the home you left behind.

"Full of an earthy poetry ... a style wonderfully wise and entirely Scandinavian in its combination of magic and reality."
THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

Halldor Laxness (1902–1998) See page 18.

RIGHTS SOLD TO: UK/USA (Random House/Vintage), Germany (Steidl), Italy (Iperborea)

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1945–1970

Halldor Laxness
Under the Glacier

Kristnihald undir jökli, novel, 1968
334 pp

English translation

A bishop's emissary arrives to investigate a rogue pastor beneath Snaefellsjokull glacier, and finds a community that has quietly abandoned reality.

Under the Glacier is Laxness's strangest and most philosophical novel — a work of magical realism and theological comedy set at the foot of Snaefellsjokull glacier. A young bishop's emissary is sent to investigate why the local pastor has stopped conducting church services, and finds himself drawn into a community where ordinary reality has been replaced by something altogether more mysterious.
The novel unfolds as a series of interview transcripts and observations that grow increasingly dreamlike and paradoxical. It is a meditation on faith, Iceland's mythic landscape, and the limits of rational inquiry, suffused with the deadpan humour and spiritual seriousness that characterise Laxness's late work.

"Under the Glacier is hilarious, in a deadpan, northern-edge-of-the-world sort of way."
ANDREW O'HEHIR, SALON

"Whimsical... deliriously funny ... impishly chaotic."
KIRKUS REVIEWS

"Wildly original, morose, uproarious... It is also one of the funniest books ever written."
SUSAN SONTAG

Halldor Laxness (1902–1998) See page 18.

RIGHTS SOLD TO: UK/USA (Random House/Vintage), Germany (Steidl), Italy (Iperborea)

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Hungary (Balassi), Romania (Niculescu), Georgia (Intelekti Publishing), Romania (Editura Arts), Ethiopia (Hohe), Czech Republic (Aurora), The Netherlands (De Geus), Czech Republic (Dybbuk), China (China Radio International Press), Denmark (Gyldendal), Finland (Werner Söderström), France (Actes Sud), Japan (Kowsakusha), Norway (Tiden), Poland (Wydawnictwo Poznańskie), Sweden (Norstedt)

Halldor Laxness
A Parish Chronicle

Innansveitarkronika, novel, 1970
148 pp

English translation

Laxness at his most playful: a tender, satirical ode to his home valley, told in the matter-of-fact voice of the ancient sagas.

Perched on a hillside in the Mosfellsdalur valley, near the farm where Laxness himself grew up, stands Mosfell Church. Centuries ago the Danish crown ordered it demolished to consolidate the parish with a neighbouring one. More than a century passes before the authorities arrange to carry out the decree — and yet today a church still stands on that same hillside. *A Parish Chronicle* tells the story of how it got there, and of the ordinary, stubborn, eccentric people who made it so.

A masterful, playful work that blends memoir, folklore, and satire, the novel adopts the matter-of-fact tone of the Icelandic sagas while quietly subverting their conventions. Laxness himself appears in its pages, almost invisibly. Crammed with humour and pathos, it is an intimate ode to the life of his home valley and a shrewd commentary on how history bends to the quirks of certain individuals.

"It's about sheepherders and a stubborn church that just won't quit. It is, as I'm sure you can already guess, hilarious."
LAUREN HARRIS, THE NEW YORKER

"A Parish Chronicle is a late vein of Laxnessism, as free of his previous ideological entanglements as he could make it. Here, he's as humane as ever, as interested in human folly, but now much less interested in correcting it. It is the work of a writer with nothing to prove, only to tell. It looks from the outside like a modest book. It turns out to be a major book in the grandness of its modesty."
SALVATORE SCIBONA

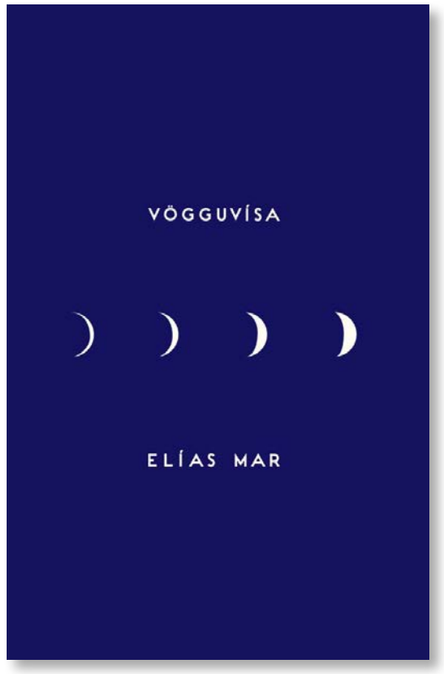
Halldor Laxness (1902–1998) See page 18.

RIGHTS SOLD TO: Germany (Steidl), US & Canada (Archipelago), UK and Commonwealth (Vintage), Portugal (Cavalo de ferro)

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Denmark (Gyldendal), Finland (Werner Söderström), Norway (Cappelen), Sweden (Norstedt)

1945–1970

Elias Mar
Lullaby
Vögguvísa, novel, 1950
148 pp

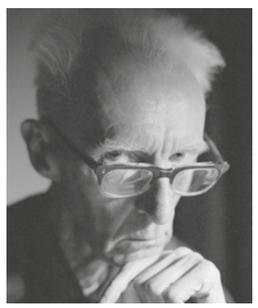


A landmark of Icelandic urban fiction: the first novel to capture the slang, the swagger, and the restless energy of postwar Reykjavik youth.

The story opens on a Wednesday night with a break-in, and closes on a Sunday evening with fifteen-year-old Bambino wallowing in downtown Reykjavik, ruminating on the events of the past few days. Bambino is a city child through and through — his nickname borrowed from a pop song, his world shaped by American films, music, fashion, and slang. He and his friends haunt cafes and bars, play billiards, throw parties, collect pulp magazines, and play boogie-woogie records. The isolated Iceland of the old farming society has vanished; the modern Iceland is here to stay, and these teenagers have no interest in any other kind.

Considered one of the first Reykjavik novels and the first Icelandic novel to deal with postwar youth culture, Lullaby was a sensation on publication. To write it, Elias Mar spent a summer researching the slang of Reykjavik teenagers and compiled a glossary that was published with the 2012 reissue.

"It captures the timeless essence of teenage life—I think we can all see a bit of ourselves in Bambino. ... Yet, it was also celebrated as a critique of the American cultural influences that shaped Icelandic youth."
NATIONAL RADIO



ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Elias Mar (1924–2007) was born and raised in Reykjavik and worked for most of his career as a proofreader for the Icelandic left-wing newspaper Thjodviljinn. One of the first Icelandic writers to set his fiction entirely in the modern city, he published his debut novel in 1944 and went on to write thirteen books across six decades. His novel Lullaby is considered one of the founding texts of the Reykjavik novel, and his work has been recognised as a pioneering contribution to Icelandic urban fiction.

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Germany (Aufbau)

Indridi G. Thorsteinsson
Cab 79
79 af stöðinni, novel, 1955
148 pp

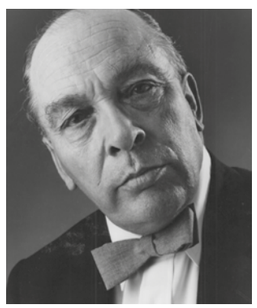
English translation

The novel that opened the way for a new generation of Icelandic writers, and later a landmark film.

A young man from the countryside arrives in Reykjavik to work as a taxi driver and falls into a turbulent relationship with a woman from a wealthy family. The gulf between their worlds leads to tragedy, played out against the backdrop of a nation in rapid and disorienting change: the foreign military presence, the new money, the cars and the modern city rising around people who only a generation earlier had lived by farming and fishing.

Cab 79 is the first volume in the trilogy Thorsteinsson called *Phases in the Life of a Nation*, completed by *Land and Sons* (1963) and *North of War* (1971). Together the three novels trace some of the most sweeping changes in Icelandic history — the Depression, the military occupation, the emergence of a new urban society — and offer, in Thorsteinsson's own words, an X-ray of the emotional lives of two generations. Two of the novels have been adapted into landmark Icelandic films, Cab 79 was directed by Erik Balling. *Cab 79* was also nominated for the German Independent Publishers' Award, Hotlist 2011.

"The Icelandic Hemingway."
NEUE ZÜRCHER ZEITUNG



ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Indridi G. Thorsteinsson (1926–2000) was born on a farm in northern Iceland and worked as a driver before becoming a journalist and newspaper editor. His fiction documents Iceland's rapid transformation from a rural to an urban society in the mid-twentieth century, and his debut novel Cab 79 is widely regarded as the most important Icelandic novel of the postwar period. A prolific writer, he produced novels, short stories, poetry and biographies across five decades. He is also the father of the crime writer Arnaldur Indridason.

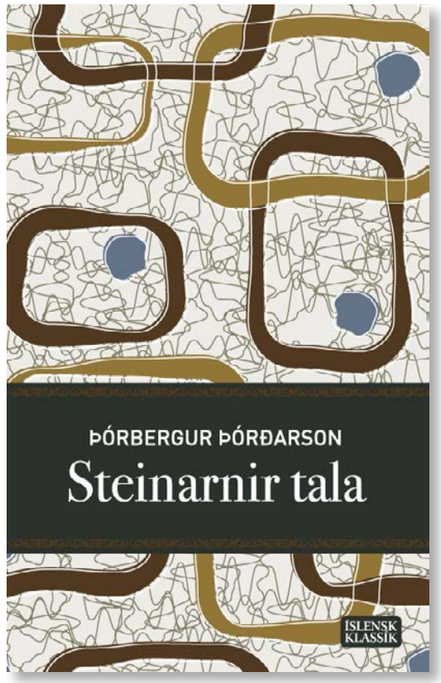
PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Germany (Transit Verlag), UK (Williams & Whiting)

1945–1970

Thorbergur Thordarson
The Stones Speak

Steinarnir tala, novel, 1956
255 pp

English translation

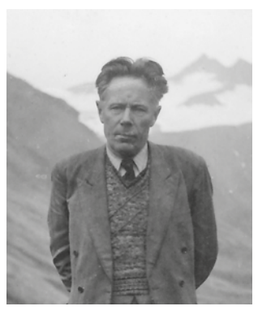


A classic of Icelandic literature, bringing to life the remote farming world of Thorbergur Thordarson's childhood with warmth, poetry, and quiet reverence.

In *The Stones Speak*, Thorbergur turns from the urban world of his earlier autobiographical writing to the remote farming landscape of his childhood in Sudursveit, in the final decades of the nineteenth century. Writing from the perspective of a child discovering the world around him, he brings to life the daily rhythms of farm existence, the relationship between people and land, animals and the forces of nature, and the folk beliefs that shaped how people understood their surroundings. The stones of the title are not just a metaphor: for the young Thorbergur, the landscape is alive, and the rocks and cliffs of Sudursveit are silent witnesses to everything that has passed. *The Stones Speak* is the first in the four-book Sudursveit Chronicles and a vivid testament to a vanished world, elevated to the realm of fiction in the highly original and artistic manner that Thorbergur Thordarson so masterfully commanded.

"Thordarson is the most interesting – if eccentric – of all modern Icelandic writers ... he was a superior writer."
MARTIN SEYMOUR-SMITH

"The Stones Speak *has much in common with Marcel Proust's search for an irretrievable past ... both Thórdarson and Proust are describing a Paradise they have lost."*
PETUR GUNNARSSON, IN ALDARFÖR



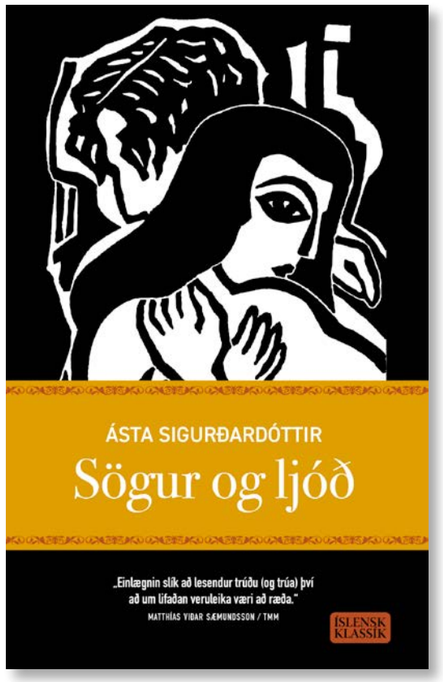
ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Thorbergur Thordarson (1888–1974) was born in Hali, Sudursveit, one of the most remote farming districts in Iceland, and came to Reykjavik with little formal education and no money. He became one of the greatest stylists in the Icelandic language — celebrated for his wit, his radical politics, and his fiction that challenged every convention of his time. His autobiographical works are considered among the masterpieces of twentieth-century Icelandic prose. He received an honorary doctorate from the University of Iceland in 1974, the year of his death.

RIGHTS SOLD TO: Brazil (Bec Editora)

Asta Sigurdardottir
Short Stories and Poems

Sögur og ljóð, short stories and poetry, 1961
230 pp

English translation



A meteor into Icelandic postwar literature, with an impact still felt three generations later.

Asta Sigurdardottir's stories are set among the marginalised figures of mid-century Reykjavik — alcoholics, the homeless, those living outside the boundaries of respectable society — and told with a poetic intensity and formal compression that marks them as unlike anything else in Icelandic literature of the period. Her narrative voice is at once sensuous, hallucinatory, and precise, employing the perspective of a naive young woman to illuminate the violence and disillusionment beneath the surface of a city in rapid transformation. The collection is now regarded as a classic of Icelandic modernism, and her work has been recognised as a major contribution to the Nordic literary canon.

"A luminous literary talent — wrote with sovereign assurance, extreme directness, powerful imagery, and violent intensity. A classic of modern Icelandic literature."
SKYUM-NIELSEN, INFORMATION (DENMARK)

"Her reputation was daring from the very beginning. Her small literary oeuvre is now considered groundbreaking."
ULRICH RUDENAUER, TAGESSPIEGEL

"Asta Sigurdardottir is a ruthless narrator ... a true discovery!"
RAINER MORITZ, DEUTSCHLANDFUNK KULTUR

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Asta Sigurdardottir (1930–1971) was born in rural Snaefellsnes and moved to Reykjavik at the age of fourteen. A visual artist as well as a writer, she was a leading figure among the Atom Poets, Iceland's pioneering modernist literary circle, and her stories challenged the social conventions of postwar Reykjavik with a candour and formal daring that caused both sensation and controversy. She died at the age of forty-one, leaving a small but extraordinary body of work. The writer Sjon has said her stories arrived as a meteor into Icelandic postwar literature, with an impact still felt three generations later.

RIGHTS SOLD TO: Germany (Guggolz Verlag), UK (Nordisk Books), Denmark (Lindhardt & Ringhof), Spain (Eolas Ediciones), France (Sabine Wespieser éditeur), The Netherlands (Cossee), Armenia (Vogi Nairi), Norway (Bonnier Norsk), Italy (Iperborea), Poland (Relacja)

1945–1970

Svava Jakobsdottir
12 Women and Other Short Stories

12 konur, short stories, 1965

English translation

The short fiction of a pioneer of Icelandic modernism, illuminating the lives and constraints of women with wit, precision, and a touch of the uncanny.

Svava Jakobsdottir's debut collection announced an unmistakably original voice in Icelandic fiction. The twelve stories gathered here, one for each woman of the title, depict female lives in mid-century Iceland with a mixture of psychological precision, dark humour, and the fantastic. Women are observed in domestic situations, social rituals, and moments of private crisis, always with a watchful eye for the ways in which convention constrains and distorts.

Svava went on to publish several further short story collections: *A Banquet Under a Stone Wall* (1967), *Give to Each Other* (1982), and *Under a Volcano* (1990). Together they trace the arc of her short fiction from the spare, classical economy of her early work to the more folkloric and near-mythological register of her later pieces, probing the relationship between daily life and the sacred, and drawing out the vulnerability and loneliness of the individual within society. *Twelve Women and Under a Volcano* are published in one volume in English.

"Svava Jakobsdottir's original and compelling stories are simple on the surface but uniquely subtle and powerful in their critical irony, taking the accepted and normal and turning it on its head in unexpected ways. Necessary to understand not only Iceland but the entire 20th century and beyond, not least from a woman's point of view."
KATRIN JAKOBSDOTTIR, AUTHOR AND FORMER PRIME MINISTER OF ICELAND

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Svava Jakobsdottir (1930–2004) was born in Neskaupstadur and educated in Iceland, the United States, and England, graduating from Smith College in 1952 and studying Old Norse literature at Oxford. She worked as a diplomat, journalist, and broadcaster before serving as a member of the Icelandic parliament from 1971 to 1979. One of Iceland's most original and politically engaged writers, she was president of the Icelandic Writers' Association from 1968 to 1971 and won the Henrik Steffens Award in 1997. Her writing is characterised by surreal feminism, formal invention, and sharp social critique.

RIGHTS SOLD TO: USA (Open Letter)

Svava Jakobsdottir
The Lodger

Leigjandinn, novel, 1969
122 pp

English translation

A feminist allegory, a political parable, and a psychological nightmare — one of the most original Icelandic novels of its era.

A woman and her husband are living in a rented flat and building a new house when a stranger arrives uninvited, walks in without knocking, and simply makes himself at home. The husband accepts the situation; the lodger finances the new house and moves in with them. As his presence grows, the boundaries between the three begin to blur in increasingly unsettling ways. *The Lodger* operates simultaneously as feminist allegory, political satire, and psychological nightmare. It has been widely read as a portrait of Iceland's relationship with the American military presence on the island, while its feminist dimensions — the woman's progressive loss of agency in her own home — give it a meaning that extends well beyond any single political reading.

"A classic masterpiece!"
SILJA ADALSTEINSDOTTIR, MORGUNBLADID DAILY

"There is a glorious cruelty to Svava Jakobsdottir's stories, one which finds its peak in this novel."
B.H., GRAPEVINE.IS

"Svava's modernist tale, largely set in a single apartment, captures the claustrophobia of Cold War Iceland which seemed a lot more isolated than it is today. The titular lodger takes it upon himself to protect a middle-aged couple from the outside world. While this was at the time seen as a parable for the American military base, it no less addresses present-day concerns. Its style, combining the grotesquely fantastical with realism, caused a sensation upon publication."
VALUR GUNNARSSON, NATIONALCENTREFORWRITING.ORG.UK

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Svava Jakobsdottir (1930–2004) was born in Neskaupstadur and educated in Iceland, the United States, and England, graduating from Smith College in 1952 and studying Old Norse literature at Oxford. She worked as a diplomat, journalist, and broadcaster before serving as a member of the Icelandic parliament from 1971 to 1979. One of Iceland's most original and politically engaged writers, she was president of the Icelandic Writers' Association from 1968 to 1971 and won the Henrik Steffens Award in 1997. Her writing is characterised by surreal feminism, formal invention, and sharp social critique.

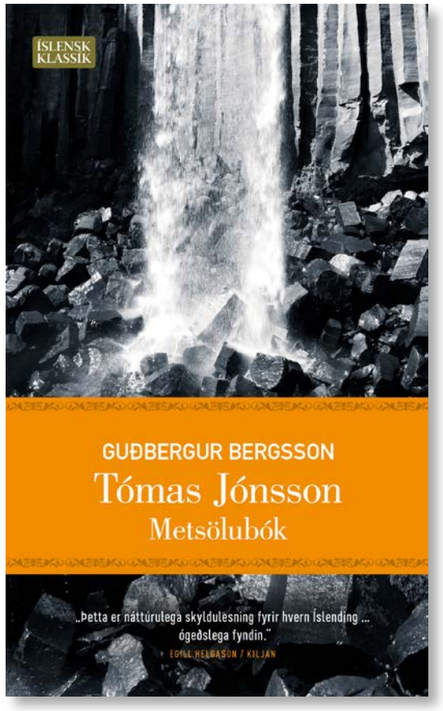
PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Denmark (Multivers), France (Tusitala), Italy (Edizioni ETS)

1945–1970

Gudbergur Bergsson
Tomas Jonsson: A Bestseller

Tómas Jónsson metsölubók, novel, 1966

355 pp



English translation

The most formally radical Icelandic novel of its era, an anarchic torrent of wit, self-mockery, and linguistic invention.

Tomas Jonsson is a retired, cantankerous bank clerk confined to his basement apartment who has decided to write his memoirs — a sure bestseller, he believes, that will also set the record straight on contemporary Icelandic society. What follows is a torrent of rants, digressions, meditations, and satirical asides, told in a voice that shifts between first and third person, mocking the very idea of the memoir while deploying it with anarchic virtuosity. Widely regarded as the most formally radical Icelandic novel of its era and sometimes compared to *Joyce's Ulysses, Tomas Jonsson: A Bestseller* dismantles literary convention with dark wit and enormous energy. It remains one of the defining works of Icelandic literary modernism.

"In his works, Guðbergur Bergsson has forged a path for a new reality within Icelandic literature, enriching it with a whole new tone."
SIGFUS DADASON, TMM 1966

"This is obviously essential reading for every Icelander ... and insanely funny."
KILJAN, NATIONAL TV

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

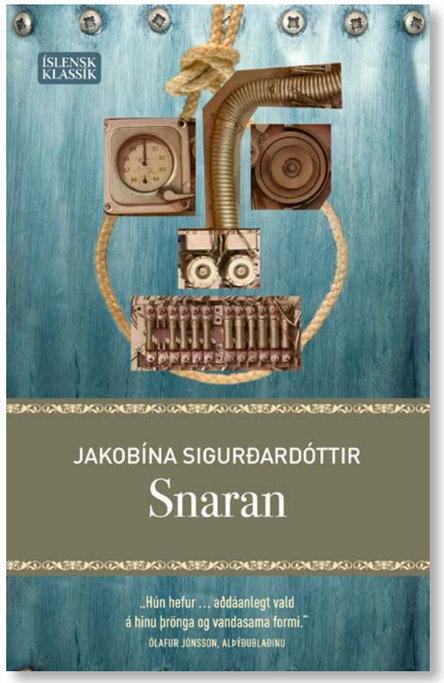
Gudbergur Bergsson (1932–2023) was born in Grindavik and studied in Iceland before graduating in Spanish, literature and art history from the University of Barcelona in 1958. One of Iceland's most prolific and formally adventurous writers, he published over twenty novels alongside short stories, poetry, children's books and autobiography. He was also Iceland's leading translator from Spanish, introducing generations of readers to Latin American and Spanish literature. He won the Icelandic Literary Prize twice and received the Nordic Prize of the Swedish Academy in 2004.

RIGHTS SOLD TO: Denmark (Sisyfos), USA/UK/ANZ (Open Letter), Hungary (POLAR Egyesület)

Jakobina Sigurdardottir
The Noose

Snaran, novel, 1968

120 pp

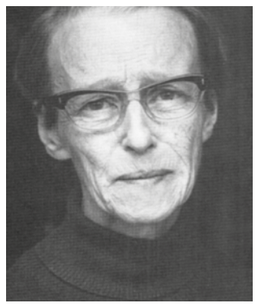


English translation

A darkly prophetic novel of political disillusionment and the moral disintegration of postwar Icelandic society.

The Noose is a darkly prophetic novel set in a future Iceland that has become an enormous factory controlled by North America. The narrator is an ageing worker — a cleaner at the factory — who looks back over the personal and political developments that have brought the country to this point. His reflections become an anatomy of moral disintegration, tracing how the values of Icelandic society were gradually eroded in the postwar decades, leaving behind disillusionment, alienation, and a working class stripped of agency. One of the most formally ambitious Icelandic novels of its era, *The Noose* stands as a sustained act of political imagination, as relevant to its moment as it is to ours.

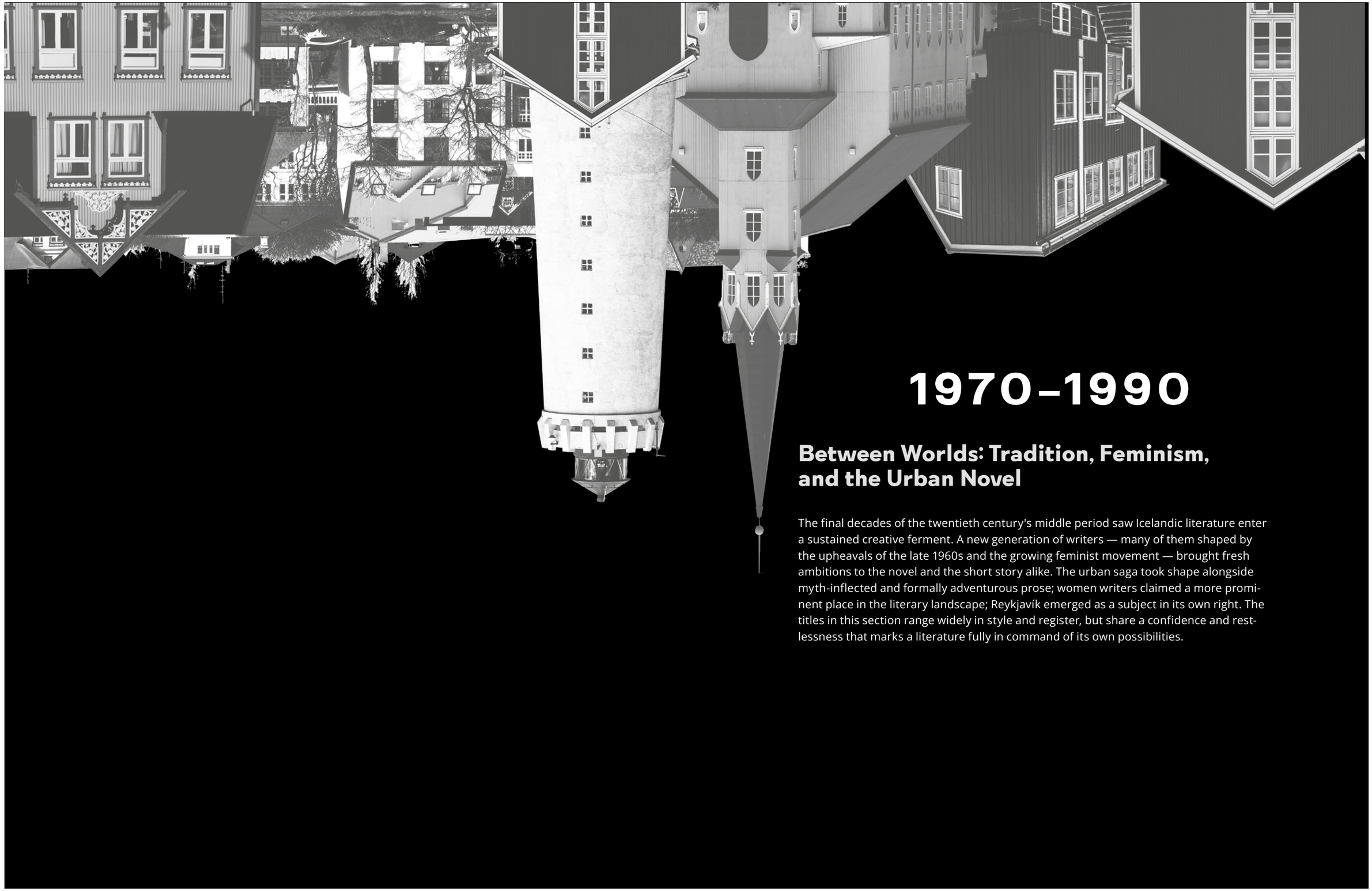
"Jakobina was of course an absolutely incomparable writer; the fact that she wasn't granted her rightful place as one of Iceland's most important 20th century writers, that's very simply because she was a woman on a farm up north ... she wasn't posh enough for the literary pack in Reykjavik."
KILJAN, NATIONAL TV



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jakobina Sigurdardottir (1918–1994) was born and grew up in poor conditions on Hornstrandir, the northernmost point of western Iceland, and spent much of her adult life as a farmer's wife in the north of the country. Writing despite a hard-working life and failing health, she became one of four writers credited with introducing modernism into the Icelandic novel in the 1960s. Her work is rooted in a deep social commitment, and her writing ranges from experimental realism to postmodernist fiction. Her poems have been set to music, including one that was later performed by Bjork.

1945–1970



1970–1990

Between Worlds: Tradition, Feminism, and the Urban Novel

The final decades of the twentieth century's middle period saw Icelandic literature enter a sustained creative ferment. A new generation of writers — many of them shaped by the upheavals of the late 1960s and the growing feminist movement — brought fresh ambitions to the novel and the short story alike. The urban saga took shape alongside myth-inflected and formally adventurous prose; women writers claimed a more prominent place in the literary landscape; Reykjavík emerged as a subject in its own right. The titles in this section range widely in style and register, but share a confidence and restlessness that marks a literature fully in command of its own possibilities.

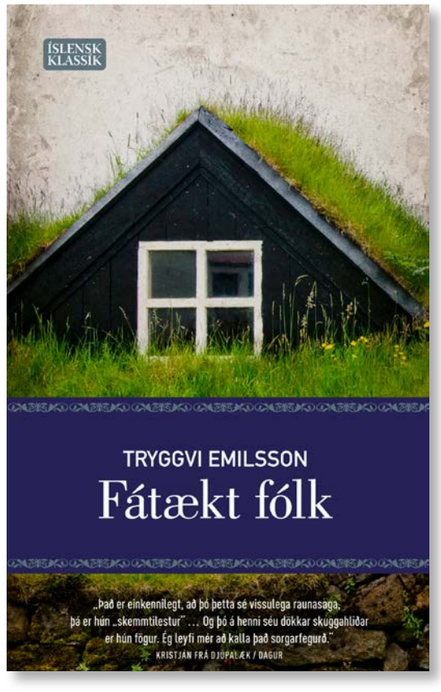
Tryggvi Emilsson
Poor People

Fátækt fólk, autobiography, 1976
378 pp

An extraordinary literary achievement that caused a sensation on publication, praised for its exceptional prose style and the world it brought back to life.

Poor People is the first volume of Tryggvi Emilsson's three-part autobiography, covering his childhood in rural Iceland before the era of social security, when poverty was absolute and offered no safety net. Children were sent into service with strangers; families lost their livelihood over a merchant's debt; a hungry child might be sent walking two days in bad weather to try for credit at a shop. Emilsson writes about this world and about the tenacity, warmth, and resilience of the people who inhabited it, with extraordinary vividness and without bitterness. When it appeared in 1976, *Poor People* caused a sensation, praised for its exceptional prose style, its characterisation, and above all the story it told.

"This book provides truly compelling evidence that the childhoods of Asta Sollilja, (a character in Independent People by Nobel Prize winner Halldor Laxness) and Maxim Gorky are far closer to us in history than we generally realize."
THJODVILJINN DAILY



ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Tryggvi Emilsson (1902–1993) was born in a small farming community above Akureyri and spent his working life as a labourer. He began writing late in life, publishing the first volume of his three-part autobiography in 1976 when he was in his seventies. The trilogy quickly became recognised as an extraordinary literary achievement — an account of working-class life in Iceland across the twentieth century, written with rare linguistic skill, warmth, and moral clarity. The first two volumes were nominated for the Nordic Council's Literature Prize.

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Germany (Aufbau)

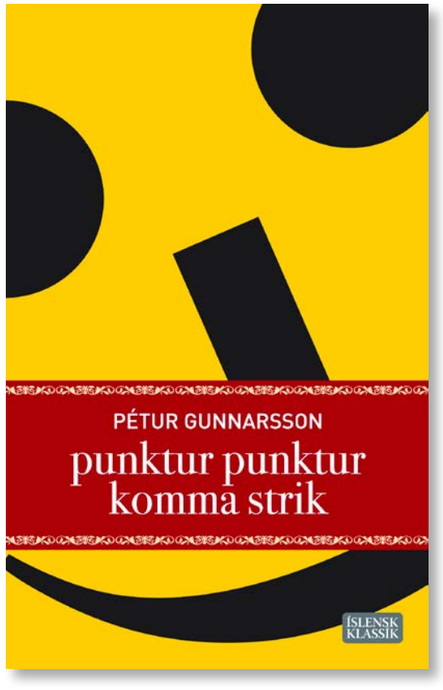
Petur Gunnarsson
Dot Dot Comma Dash

Punktur punktur komma strik, novel, 1976
102 pp

The debut novel that immediately entered the Icelandic literary canon and became the story of a whole generation.

Petur Gunnarsson's debut novel was exceedingly well-received by readers and critics on its publication in 1976, and a year later was added to the reading lists of many Icelandic schools, quickly entering the canon of Icelandic literature. The book introduced Andri Haraldsson to Icelandic readers — a young protagonist coming of age in postwar Iceland, growing up in the city, or "on the gravel," to use the Icelandic term, with urban life as his central experience. With rich imagery and a brilliantly witty style, Gunnarsson shows a profound understanding of modern Icelandic society. Andri's story would eventually span four books; the final volume, *Finale*, was nominated for the Nordic Council's Literature Prize in 1987. A film adaptation also became highly popular in Iceland.

"This little, unpretentious book from Iceland was my biggest surprise of the year. The fascinating and entertaining thing about the novel is not what Petur Gunnarsson says, but how he tells a story. The book is full of spot-on images and similes, and terse sentences that you could hang above your bed ... I have only one complaint about this entertaining and informative tour of Iceland: It's too short!"
ANTJE DEISTLER, WDR2 (GERMAN RADIO STATION)



ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Petur Gunnarsson (b. 1947) is among the most widely acclaimed authors of his generation, writer of popular novels, poetry and essays. He holds a Masters degree in philosophy from the University of Aix-Marseille and is a prolific translator. His debut novel immediately entered the Icelandic literary canon, and the final volume of his Andri tetralogy was nominated for the Nordic Council's Literature Prize in 1987. He has received the Knight's Cross of the Icelandic Order of the Falcon for his writing and contribution to Icelandic literature.

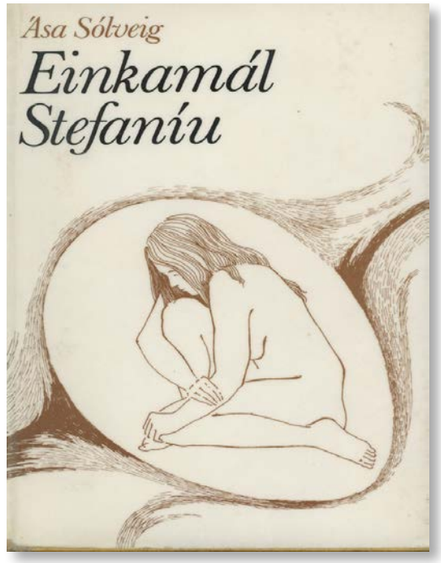
PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Hungary (POLAR Egyesület), Germany (Weidle Verlag)

1970–1990

Asa Solveig
Stefania's Private Matters

Einkamál Stefaníu, novel, 1978
176 pp

Swedish translation



An early feminist novel that provoked a heated debate about the situation of women in Iceland.

Published in 1978 as a group of young women were making their voices heard alongside the feminist movement of the decade, *Stefania's Private Matters* has become one of Iceland's modern classics. Stefania is a young married woman in mid-1970s Reykjavik, intelligent and cheerful, but navigating a life shaped by forces largely beyond her control: high inflation, rapid urban growth, a husband determined to emigrate, and a society in which women's voices go unheard. When a family tragedy forces her to confront the reality of women's lives around her with painful clarity, she finds unexpected reserves of strength and maturity.

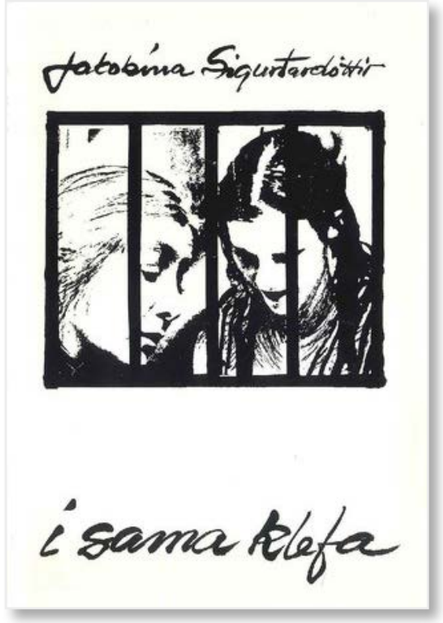
Written with quiet precision and deep social observation, the novel provoked a heated debate about the situation of women in Iceland on publication. It received Dagbladid Daily's Cultural Award in 1978 and was nominated for the Nordic Council's Literature Prize in 1980.

"In Stefania's Private Matters, *sensitive issues are addressed with great delicacy. The book has garnered considerable attention, received positive reviews, and won Dagbladid's literary award. Critics disagree on whether the overall tone of the book is bright or dark—this is open to debate. A bleak picture of society is painted, and there is no grand act of rebellion, yet Stefania is strong and will ultimately prevail in the struggle of life."*
GERDUR STEINTHORSDOTTIR, *JUNE 19 - THE ICELANDIC WOMEN'S RIGHTS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MAGAZINE 1979*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Asa Solveig (1945–2015) was born in Reykjavik and raised by her mother, foster mother, and grandmother. She first gained recognition as a playwright for television when her play addressing racial prejudice in Reykjavik was aired in 1973, and went on to write several other plays for both television and radio. She is best known for her two novels, which attracted considerable attention for their focus on the conditions of women and their confrontation with the myth of the strong, close-knit Icelandic family.

Jakobina Sigurdardottir
In the Same Cell

Í sama klefa, novel, 1981
100 pp

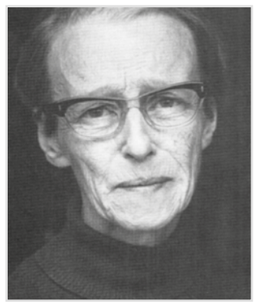


A compact but deeply layered portrait of a woman, a friendship, and what it means to write about other people's lives.

The narrator of *In the Same Cell* is a writer who has received a state grant and is struggling to begin her book when she reads that a woman named Salome has died. The news takes her back to a coastal voyage years earlier, when the two women shared a cabin. Salome was then only in her mid-thirties but already worn and aged beyond her years, and during the journey she told the narrator the story of her life — how a young, spirited woman was gradually ground down by circumstances, hard labour, and the constraints placed on women of her generation.

A compact but deeply layered novel, *In the Same Cell* works simultaneously as a portrait of a woman, a study of female friendship, and a meditation on what it means to write about other people's lives.

"Jakobina was of course an absolutely incomparable writer; the fact that she wasn't granted her rightful place as one of Iceland's most important 20th century writers, that's very simply because she was a woman on a farm up north...she wasn't posh enough for the literary pack in Reykjavik."
KILJAN, NATIONAL TV



ABOUT THE AUTHOR
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RIGHTS SOLD TO: Denmark (Multivers)

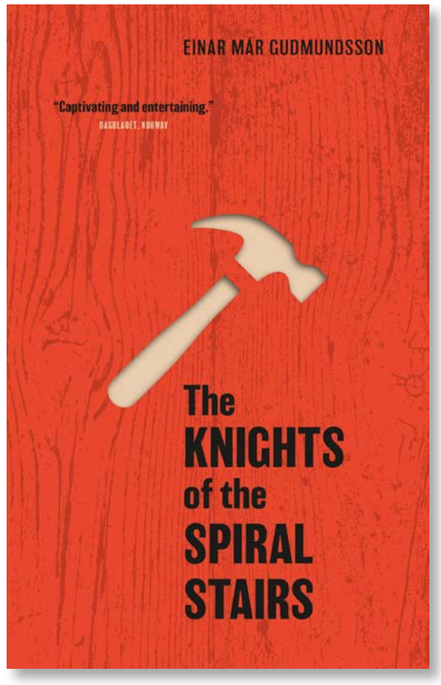
1970–1990

Einar Mar Gudmundsson
The Knights of the Spiral Stairs

Riddarar hringstigans, novel, 1982
199 pp

English translation

A warmly funny, precisely observed novel of childhood in 1970s Reykjavik, and the first volume of a defining trilogy.



Told from the point of view of a six-year-old boy growing up in a suburb of 1970s Reykjavik, *The Knights of the Spiral Stairs* follows young Johann Petursson through the adventures, pranks, and discoveries of childhood in a city still finding its shape. With warmth, humour, and precise observation, Gudmundsson captures the texture of a generation growing up on the edge of modernity — children playing unsupervised on construction sites, families crowded into new apartment blocks, a city expanding faster than anyone quite planned for.

The novel won first prize in a literary competition held by Almenna Bokafelagid publishers on publication. It is the first volume of a trilogy — completed by *Wingbeat on the Rooftops* (1983) and *Epilogue of the Raindrops* (1986) — tracing these characters from childhood into adulthood. The trilogy established Einar Mar as one of the defining voices of his generation.

"Captivating and entertaining."
DAGBLADET, NORWAY

"The most entertaining book of the year."
EXPRESSEN, SWEDEN

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Einar Mar Gudmundsson (b. 1954) is one of the most widely translated Icelandic authors of the postwar period. He received a BA in Comparative Literature and History from the University of Iceland and subsequently worked in the comparative literature department of the University of Copenhagen. His novel Angels of the Universe won the Nordic Council's Literature Prize in 1995 and was adapted into an award-winning film. In 2012 he received the Swedish Academy's Nordic Prize, widely known as the Little Nobel, for his contribution to literature.

RIGHTS SOLD TO: China (China Radio International Press), France (Gaïa)

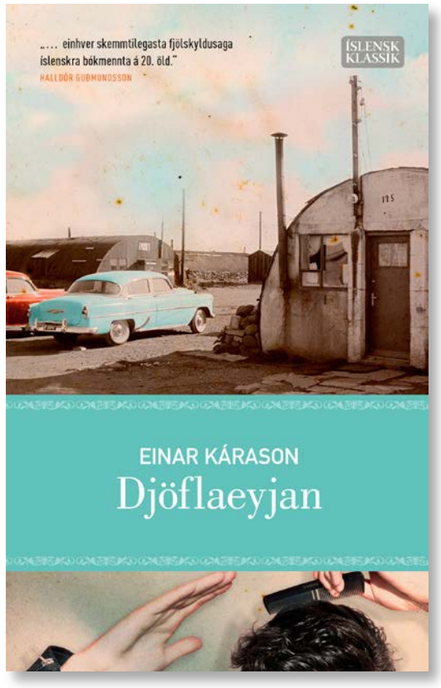
PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Denmark (Borgen), Norway (Cappelen), Sweden (Natur & Kultur), Finland (Like), Germany (Hanser), Lebanon (Arab Scientific Publishers)

Einar Karason
Devil's Island

Þar sem djöflaeyjan rís, novel, 1983
208 pp

English translation

A love letter to the Reykjavik underclass, and one of the great accounts of postwar Icelandic social history.



Set in the Icelandic Camps — the improvised post-war settlements built from American military surplus in Reykjavik, where Iceland's dispossessed and marginalised lived in corrugated iron barracks during the 1950s and 1960s — *Devil's Island* is the opening volume of Karason's three-part epic. Through an enormous cast of vivid, unforgettable characters, Karason recreates this vanished world with the energy and scope of a great nineteenth-century novel. Funny, bawdy, violent, and deeply humane, the trilogy is a love letter to the Reykjavik underclass: the drinkers, dreamers, fighters, and survivors who built a community from next to nothing. It is also one of the great accounts of postwar Icelandic social history. The trilogy is completed by *Isle of Gold* (1986) and *The Promised Land* (1989), and was adapted into a popular stage play and film.

"He is an Icelandic Erskine Caldwell or William Faulkner – Karason is a genial storyteller, and has already won himself a place in the literary history of Iceland and the Nordic countries."
BOKEN MAGAZINE, BO AXELSSON

"A raucous, affectionate, masterful portrait of a vanished Reykjavík."
DV (ICELAND)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Einar Karason (b. 1955) is one of the most popular novelists and scriptwriters of his generation in Iceland, best known for his Devils' Isle trilogy. Several of his novels have been nominated for the Nordic Council's Literature Prize and he has received the Icelandic Literary Prize. He has played a prominent role in Iceland's literary institutions, serving as chairman of the Writers' Union of Iceland from 1988 to 1992 and as a board member of the Reykjavik International Literary Festival.

RIGHTS SOLD TO: Poland (Marpress/e-book: Tower Press)

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Denmark (Gyldendal), Sweden (Bonnier), Finland (Like), Norway (Aschehoug), The Netherlands (De bezige bij), Faroe Islands (Árting), Germany (Eichborn/Die andere Bibliothek/ Paperback rights: Random House/btb), UK (Canongate), Film Rights

1970–1990

Steinunn Sigurdardottir
The Thief of Time
Tímaþjófurinn, novel, 1986
207 pp

English translation

A love story told in prose and verse, and one of the most formally inventive Icelandic novels of its decade.

Alda Ivarsen is a thirty-seven-year-old teacher who has had a succession of love affairs, which she usually controls. When she decides to end her current relationship with a married colleague who is becoming increasingly difficult, she meets a younger man who changes everything. Oscillating between poetry and prose, *The Thief of Time* traces Alda's emotional journey across seven years, from the exhilaration of new love to its long, slow deterioration, charting what time does to a woman's sense of herself and her place in the world. The novel works both as a love story and as a precise study of independence, desire, and ageing. It was adapted into a French feature film directed by Yves Angelo and starring Emmanuelle Beart and Sandrine Bonnaire, and later staged by the National Theatre of Iceland.

"The Thief of Time makes wonderful reading. This is truly literature in all its glory!"
NOUVEAU DIMANCHE

"A unique book by a unique author."
LE MONDE

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Steinunn Sigurdardottir (b. 1950) is one of Iceland's most highly acclaimed novelists and poets, with a writing career spanning more than fifty years. She studied philosophy and psychology at University College Dublin and made her name at the age of nineteen with a debut poetry collection. She has since become one of Iceland's most frequently translated writers, with her works available in almost twenty languages. She has won the Icelandic Literary Prize, the VISA Cultural Prize, and the Icelandic Broadcasting Service Writer's Prize, and has been nominated for the Nordic Council's Literature Prize and the Aristeion Prize.

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Denmark (Rosinante), France (Flammarion), Germany (Rowohlt), Sweden (Wahlström & Widstrand), The Netherlands (Manteau), Azerbaijan (Alatoran Literature Magazine)

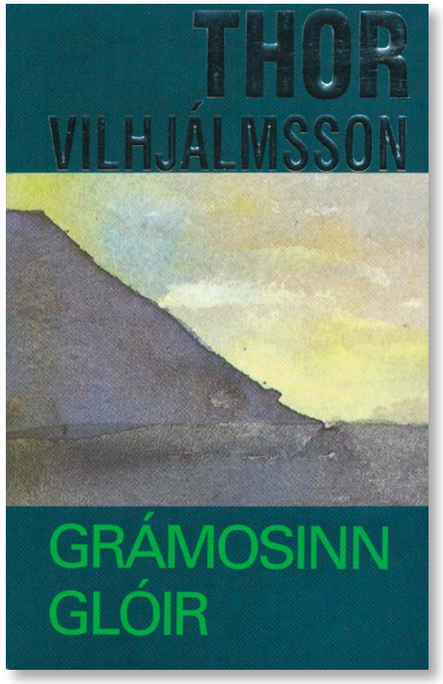
Thor Vilhjalmsson
Justice Undone
Grámosinn glóir, novel, 1986
267 pp

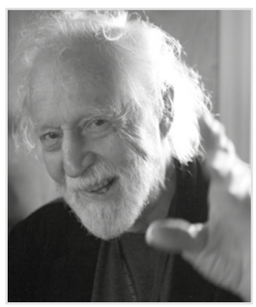
English translation

A Nordic classic: a historical novel of love, crime, and moral complexity that won the Nordic Council's Literature Prize in 1988.

Set in nineteenth-century Iceland, *Justice Undone* is based on a real trial in which two half-siblings were accused of incest and infanticide. At its heart is a story of love and its consequences, played out against the harsh realities of rural Icelandic life and the sweeping landscapes of the interior. The novel pivots on the young magistrate assigned to the case, who has just returned from his studies in Copenhagen full of Enlightenment ideals, and finds himself drawn into a world of hardship, folk belief, and moral complexity that his education has not prepared him for. A narrative of drama, poetry, and landscape, it is a compelling study of obsession and aversion, and is now considered a Nordic classic.

"In a language that unites Icelandic narrative tradition with innovative forms of expression it describes a judge's fateful journey through a magical landscape that reflects in a nuanced way the inner struggle with basic existential questions of guilt and responsibility, poetry and reality."
NORDIC COUNCIL COMMITTEE





ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Thor Vilhjalmsson (1925–2011) is considered the leading innovator in modern Icelandic literature. Born in Edinburgh and educated in Iceland, Britain, and France, he completed his studies at the Sorbonne in Paris and went on to publish around twenty-five books in Icelandic: novels, short stories, poetry, travel writing, and essays. He also translated Malraux, Eco, and Allende into Icelandic. His books have been translated into all the Nordic languages as well as English, French, German, Spanish, and Italian. He received the Nordic Council's Literature Prize in 1988 and the Swedish Academy's Nordic Prize in 1992.

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Denmark (Vindrose), Norway (Gyldendal), Finland (Otava), Sweden (Wiken/Bra böcker), Germany (Kleinheinrich/Paperback rights: Ullstein), France (Actes Sud), Italy (Iperborea), Turkey (Ayalak Adam Kultur), UK (Mare's Nest), Bulgaria (List), Lithuania (Lithuanian Writers' Union Publishers), Spain (Nórdica), Portugal (Cavalo de ferro)

1970–1990

Svava Jakobsdottir
The Saga of Gunnlod

Gunnlaðar saga, novel, 1987
196 pp

English translation

A feminist retelling of Norse mythology, a family drama, and a meditation on cultural memory — widely regarded as Jakobsdottir's masterpiece.

When a young Icelandic woman is arrested in the National Gallery of Denmark for attempting to steal a priceless gold urn, her mother flies from Reykjavik to find out what happened. The authorities suspect drugs, mental instability, or terrorism. But the daughter has a different explanation: she claims she is Gunnlod, the figure from Norse mythology who was seduced by Odin and tricked into surrendering the mead of poetry, and that she is simply recovering her birthright.

As the mother struggles to understand, she finds herself drawn gradually into her daughter's world, and the boundary between the present and the mythological past begins to dissolve. Working simultaneously as a family drama, a feminist retelling of Norse myth, and a meditation on cultural memory and dispossession, *The Saga of Gunnlod* is widely regarded as Jakobsdottir's masterpiece. It was nominated for the Nordic Council's Literature Prize and Jakobsdottir received the Henrik Steffens Prize in 1997.

"Mixing Norse mythology with surreal storytelling, this compelling narrative chronicles the relationship between a mother seeking justice and her seemingly insane daughter. A leading author in Icelandic literature, Jakobsdottir's psychological novel draws readers into the world of suspenseful realism."
WORLD LITERATURE TODAY

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Svava Jakobsdottir (1930–2004) was born in Neskaupstadur and educated in Iceland, the United States, and England, graduating from Smith College in 1952 and studying Old Norse literature at Oxford. She worked as a diplomat, journalist, and broadcaster before serving as a member of the Icelandic parliament from 1971 to 1979. One of Iceland's most original and politically engaged writers, she was president of the Icelandic Writers' Association from 1968 to 1971 and won the Henrik Steffens Award in 1997. Her writing is characterised by surreal feminism, formal invention, and sharp social critique.

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Norway (Cappelen), Sweden (Norstedts), Denmark (Rhodos), Finland (Otava), France (Corti), Lithuania (Tyto Alba), Italy (Giardini), UK/USA (Norvik Press), Germany (Amman/Saga Verlag)

Vigdis Grimsdottir
Cold Light

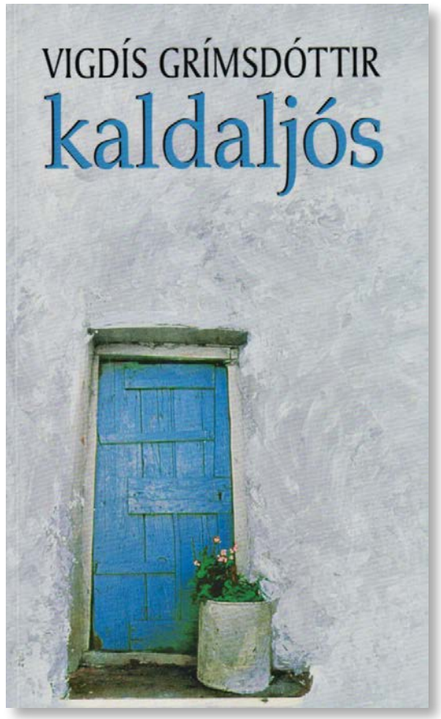
Kaldaljós, novel, 1987
254 pp

English sample translation

The breakthrough novel that established Vigdis Grimsdottir as one of Iceland's most important writers, later adapted into a major Icelandic film.

A love-filled childhood in a remote Icelandic village ends abruptly when catastrophe strikes — a catastrophe the child had foreseen but failed to prevent. Years later, the same child is now a forty-year-old man, living in a self-imposed prison of routine and emotional numbness, unable to confront the unthinkable events of his past. When a new relationship draws him closer to another person than he has allowed himself to be in decades, he finally resolves to examine what happened. Characterised by formal innovation, psychological intensity, and a luminous prose style, *Cold Light* was Grimsdottir's breakthrough novel and is considered one of the defining Icelandic novels of its decade. It was adapted into a major Icelandic motion picture in 2004, which won the Edda Award for Best Film and was submitted as Iceland's entry for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.

*"*Cold Light *is written with incredible sensitivity and a profound respect for nature and all living things. ... Vigdís Grímsdóttir respects her readers enough to make demands of them. She paints vivid pictures and raises striking questions, leaving the interpretation entirely to the reader.* Cold Light *is a powerful book."*
UNNUR ULFARSDOTTIR, *19. JÚNÍ MAGAZINE 1988*



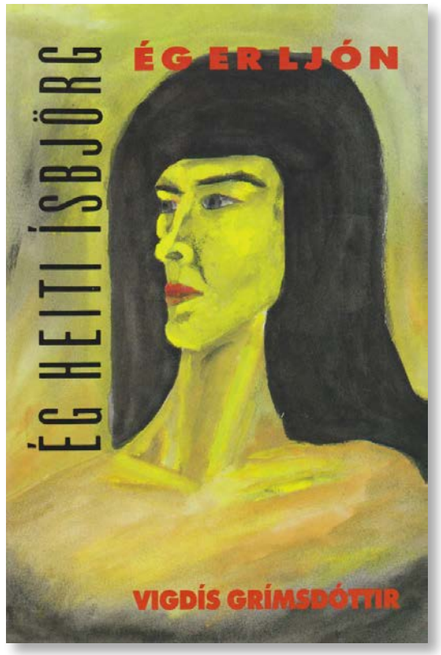
ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Vigdis Grimsdottir (b. 1953) is one of Iceland's most celebrated and widely translated novelists, with a body of work spanning novels, poetry, short stories, and plays. She studied Icelandic literature at the University of Iceland and worked as a teacher before devoting herself full-time to writing in 1990. Her work is characterised by formal innovation, psychological intensity, and a luminous prose style. She received the Icelandic Literary Prize in 1994 and has been nominated for the prize multiple times.

1970–1990

Vigdis Grimsdottir
My Name is Isbjorg, I am a Leo

Ég heiti Ísbjörg, ég er ljón, novel, 1989

282 pp



A gripping and lyrical novel about a young woman's right to exist on her own terms, and who has the right to judge her.

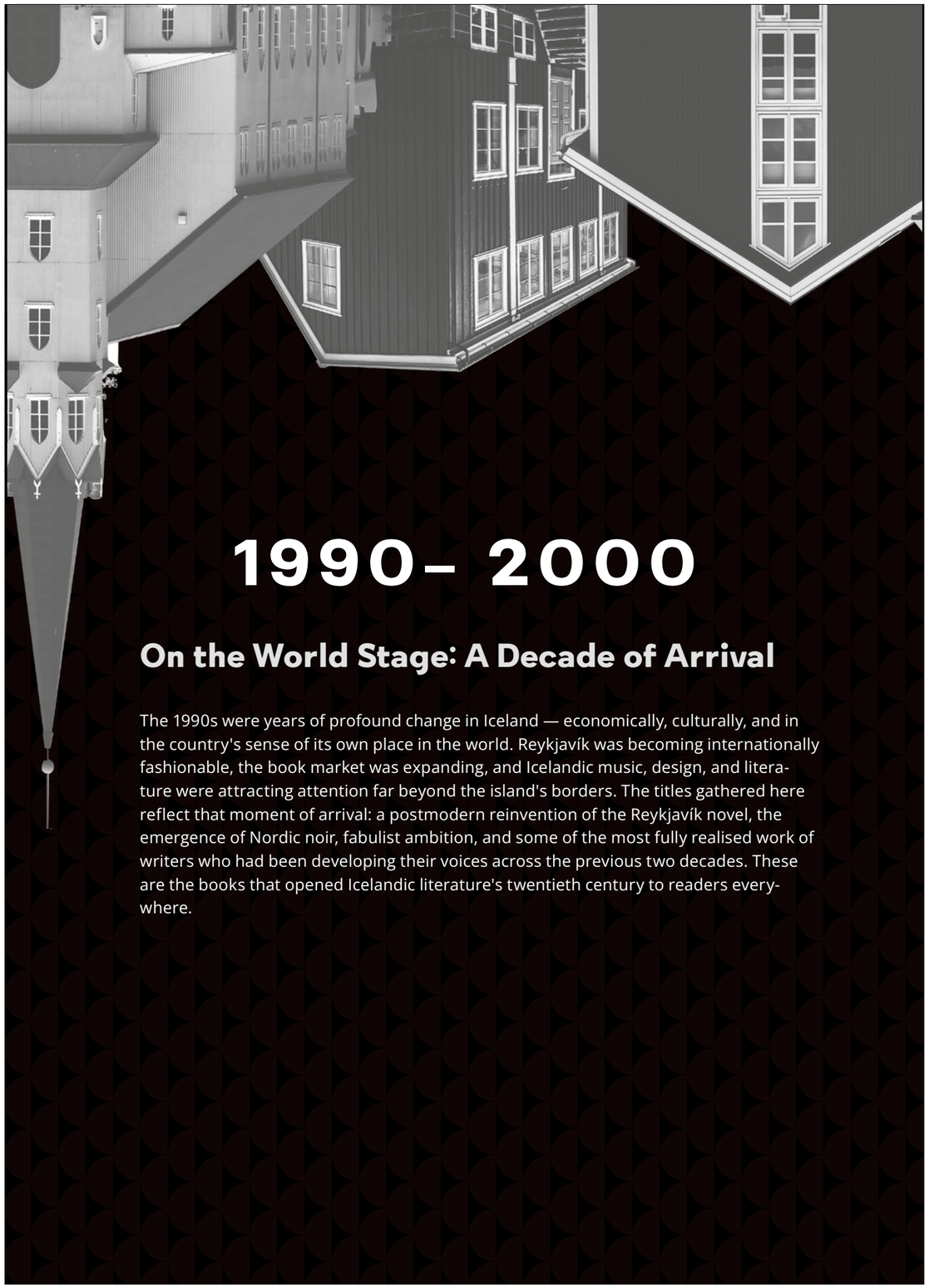
Over the course of twelve hours, a young woman tells her story to a lawyer. She has fallen into misfortune and is awaiting judgment, and as she speaks, the reader comes to understand step by step what forces in her life have shaped her, how she has responded to the world around her, and why her fate has taken the course it has. Love and hatred, guilt and innocence take on deep and unexpected meaning as the layers of her story are gradually revealed.

At once a gripping narrative and a lyrical meditation on the individual's right to exist on her own terms, *My Name is Isbjorg, I am a Leo* leaves the reader with an insistent question: who is Isbjorg, and who has the right to judge her? The novel was adapted for the stage by the National Theatre of Iceland in 1992.

"My Name is Isbjorg, I am a Leo is an extreme novel where the lines between reality and delusion are blurred. Yet, precisely by deploying every stylistic and narrative device at its disposal, the story becomes profoundly true ... It grants readers the chance to inhabit Ísbjörg's life for a time. Some will reject the opportunity because the story is so sinister and its heroine so unbearable—a shattered individual, utterly lost in a labyrinth of emotion. But those who lose themselves, allowing the novel's frantic, seductive style to draw them deep into Ísbjörg's psyche, will never emerge the same."
SILJA ADALSTEINSDOTTIR, TMM 1990

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vigdis Grimsdottir (b. 1953) is one of Iceland's most celebrated and widely translated novelists, with a body of work spanning novels, poetry, short stories, and plays. She studied Icelandic literature at the University of Iceland and worked as a teacher before devoting herself full-time to writing in 1990. Her work is characterised by formal innovation, psychological intensity, and a luminous prose style. She received the Icelandic Literary Prize in 1994 and has been nominated for the prize multiple times.



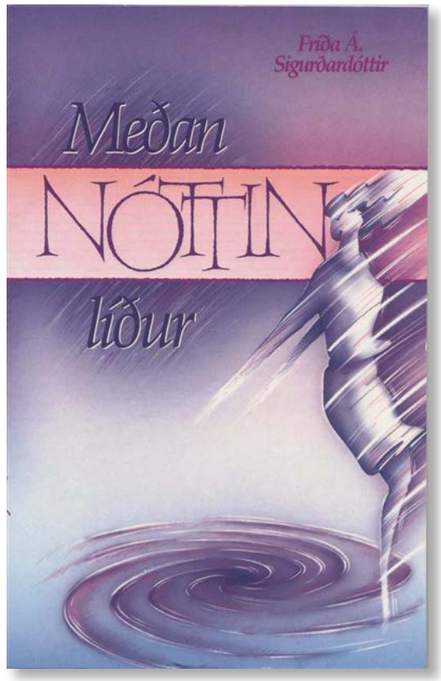
1990– 2000

On the World Stage: A Decade of Arrival

The 1990s were years of profound change in Iceland — economically, culturally, and in the country's sense of its own place in the world. Reykjavík was becoming internationally fashionable, the book market was expanding, and Icelandic music, design, and literature were attracting attention far beyond the island's borders. The titles gathered here reflect that moment of arrival: a postmodern reinvention of the Reykjavík novel, the emergence of Nordic noir, fabulist ambition, and some of the most fully realised work of writers who had been developing their voices across the previous two decades. These are the books that opened Icelandic literature's twentieth century to readers everywhere.

Frida A. Sigurdardottir
Night Watch

Meðan nóttin líður, novel, 1990
193 pp



English translation

At once a bold, innovative, and poetic beauty: a family saga across four generations of women, told in a language all its own.

Nina is a successful businesswoman sitting at her dying mother's bedside through the night. As she keeps watch, her thoughts move between her own life and the lives of four generations of women before her, most of them shaped by the harsh conditions of remote farms in northwest Iceland. Poetic and fragmentary in form, the novel weaves between past and present, between old female roles and the freedoms of modern life, searching for values that might carry across the generations.

On the surface a family saga, *Night Watch* also questions its own genre at every turn. The Nordic Council's adjudicating committee described it as at once a bold, innovative, and poetic beauty — a work that goes back into the past searching for life values with a message for our time. It won the Icelandic Literary Prize in 1990 and the Nordic Council's Literature Prize in 1992.

"The novel is innovative, but retains a poetic beauty ... Frida A. Sigurdardottir describes in a lyrical style our need for history and narratives, and exposes the difficulty of achieving an unequivocal expression of life and art."
NORDIC COUNCIL'S LITERARY PRIZE 1992

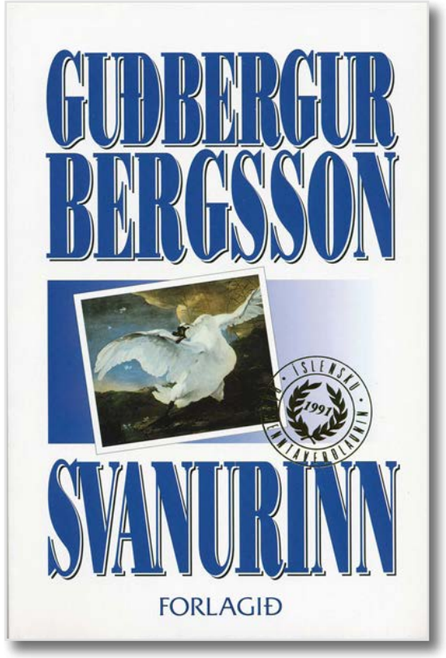
"Beautiful, terrifying and enchanting family saga about six generations of Icelandic women."
BERLINGSKE TIDENDE, DENMARK

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Frida A. Sigurdardottir (1940–2010) was born on the farm Hesteyri in the Westfjords of Iceland, one of the most remote settlements in the country. She worked as a librarian and teacher before devoting herself to writing, debuting in 1980 with a short story collection. She went on to publish novels, short stories, and translations, including Icelandic versions of works by Doris Lessing and Jean M. Auel. Her novel *Night Watch* won both the Icelandic Literary Prize in 1991 and the Nordic Council's Literature Prize in 1992. Her sister was the writer Jakobina Sigurdardottir.

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Czech Republic (Mladá Fronta/Praha), Denmark (Rhodos), Sweden (Rabén/Prisma/Arleskar), Norway (Emilia), Finland (Gummerus), UK (Mare's Nest), Lithuania (Leidykla Vaga), China (China Radio International Press), Germany (Steidl Verlag/Saga Verlag)

Gudbergur Bergsson
The Swan

Svanurinn, novel, 1991
87 pp



English translation

A sparsely sensual, fable-like novel, compared to Garcia Marquez, about a nine-year-old girl's encounter with the freedom and suffering of remote rural life.

A nine-year-old girl raised in a fishing village is sent to work on a remote country farm as punishment for shoplifting. There, in a powerful and unchanging landscape caught between ancient tradition and modern life, she discovers feelings she had not known before: mysterious, terrible, and painful. Drawn to the ecstasy that fright can bring, she forms unexpected bonds with the farm animals, the land, and the people around her, and arrives at an understanding of the world that her life by the sea had not prepared her for.

Sparsely sensual and fable-like in its atmosphere, *The Swan* has been widely compared to the work of Garcia Marquez. It won the Icelandic Literary Prize in 1991, was nominated for the Nordic Council's Literature Prize in 1992, and has been translated into over twenty languages. A film adaptation was released in 2017.

"In this novel you will discover a great European novelist who has, with extraordinary subtlety and in a unique way, captured the existential straits of an adolescent girl."
MILAN KUNDERA

"The Swan *is a novel of exceptional orginality and distinction."*
THE INDEPENDENT

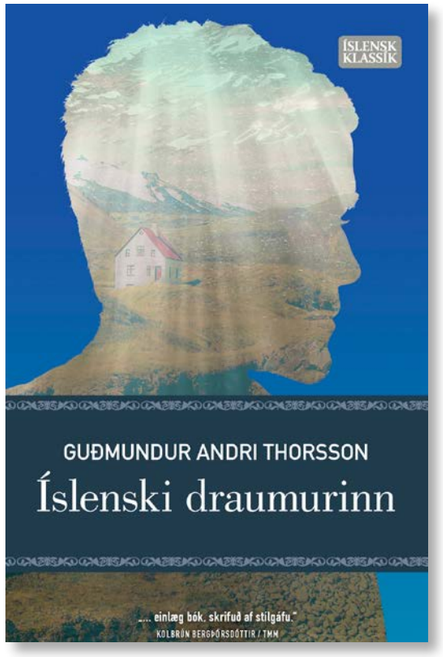
ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Gudbergur Bergsson (1932–2023) was one of Iceland's leading authors and the first writer to win the Icelandic Literary Prize twice. He studied Spanish, literature, and art history at the University of Barcelona, and became Iceland's most prolific translator from Spanish, introducing generations of readers to Latin American and Spanish literature. His own books have been translated into numerous languages. He was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Iceland and received the Nordic Prize of the Swedish Academy in 2004.

RIGHTS SOLD TO: Latvia (Aminori)

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Turkey (Marti Yayinlari), Bulgaria (Hemus), Brazil (Rocco), Czech Republic (Ivo Zelezni/Praha), Denmark (Rhodos), Sweden (Rabén/Prisma/Arleskar), France/Switzerland/Luxembourg/Canada (Gallimard), Germany/Austria/Switzerland (Saga Verlag), Spain/Andorra/South and Central America/USA (Tusquets), UK/Australia/New Zealand/South Africa, USA/Philippines (Mare's Nest), Italy (Il Saggiatore), Finland (Like), The Netherlands/Belgium/ Luxembourg (De Geus), Greece (Ellinika Grammata), Estonia (SA Kultuurilent), Lithuania (Leidykla Vaga), Taiwan (Owl Publishing), World Arab (Sphinx), Ethiopia (Qirtas), Macedonia (Antolog), Film Rights

1990– 2000

Gudmundur Andri Thorsson
The Icelandic Dream
Íslenski draumurinn, novel, 1991
229 pp



A dissection of postwar Icelandic society across three generations, and a portrait of a country in rapid, sometimes painful transformation.

The Icelandic Dream looks at three different periods in Iceland's postwar history — the years of rapid urbanisation after the war, the later decades of growing prosperity, and the anxious present of the early 1990s — tracing the personal consequences of debt, bankruptcy, and the promise of a better life that modern Iceland held out but did not always deliver. On its publication the novel addressed concerns about contemporary Icelandic society that were widely felt but rarely spoken, and garnered considerable attention as a result. It was awarded the DV Cultural Prize for Literature in 1991 and nominated for the Icelandic Literary Prize in the same year.

"The seamless integration of these threads is all the more admirable; the novel is at once vibrant and a tightly woven whole."
ÖRN ÓLAFSSON, DV

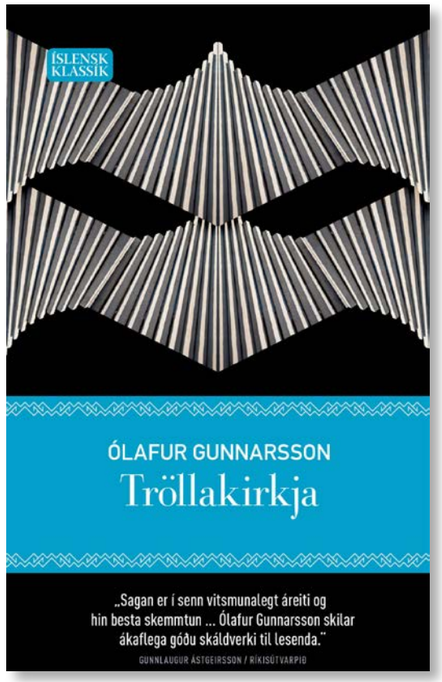
"A grand story is being told here. Within this book, the entire existence of the Icelandic nation in the twentieth century is at stake. And this story is not told merely to entertain; the narrative is inherently analytical, rich with reflections, connections, and insights that touch not only the characters of the novel, but all of us. ... Few Icelandic authors are better suited to describing people and crafting characters. He has compared his own works to musical compositions, but it is tempting to draw a comparison to another art form, namely the visual arts, or more specifically, portraiture. He creates people, sculpting them with words so that they stand vividly alive before the reader's inner eye."
JON YNGVI JOHANNSSON, INTRODUCTION TO THE 2018 EDITION

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Gudmundur Andri Thorsson (b. 1957) is one of Iceland's most respected writers, praised for his superlative style and storytelling. He holds a degree in Icelandic and comparative literature from the University of Iceland and has worked for many years as an editor for Iceland's leading publishers. He has also translated several works of fiction into Icelandic and writes a widely-read column in Iceland's most circulated newspaper. His novel *And the Wind Sees All* was nominated for the Nordic Council's Literature Prize in 2013.

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Finland (Like)

Olafur Gunnarsson
Trolls' Cathedral
Tröllakirkja, novel, 1992
278 pp

English translation



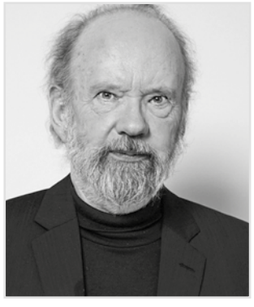
Set against the postwar transformation of Icelandic society, a darkly comic, unsettling study of how a single act of violence can destroy everything around it.

Sigurbjorn is an architect with big dreams. In the spring of 1953, he is busy planning Iceland's first department store. When the structure is finished and the store is about to open, his twelve-year-old son is lured inside by a stranger, beaten, and sexually assaulted.

The novel chronicles how this devastating event acts like a cancer on the lives of those it touches. Sigurbjorn's world disintegrates with gathering speed as he questions his faith, his friendships, and his marriage. Having lost his business, he plummets into the abyss of mental breakdown. Set against the postwar transformation of Icelandic society, *Trolls' Cathedral* is both a dramatic family saga and a grand, unsparing portrait of a society in flux. It was nominated for the Icelandic Literary Prize in 1992 and shortlisted for the IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. It is the first volume of a trilogy completed by *Potter's Field* (1996) and *Winter Journey* (1999).

"A homespun picture of Icelandic life in flux is the result, tradition falling prey to modernity, values in chaos ... the characters emerge with clarity to serve a theme both grand and simple."
MAIL ON SUNDAY

"One reads this novel with intense emotional involvement and a feeling of awe."
SOPHIA WILLEMS, WESTDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG



ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Olafur Gunnarsson (b. 1948) is among Iceland's best storytellers. He made his debut in 1978 and has since written novels, poetry, and children's books. He received the Icelandic Literary Prize for his novel The Axe and the Earth in 2004, and has translated works by Kerouac and Dashiell Hammett into Icelandic. His novel Troll's Cathedral was shortlisted for the IMPAC Dublin Literary Award and adapted for the stage at the National Theatre of Iceland in 1996. From 2013 to 2018 he served as a consultant on the TV series Vikings.

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Germany (Saga Verlag), UK (Mare's Nest), France/Switzerland/Belgium/Luxembourg/ Canada (Gaïa), The Czech Republic (Host), Egypt (Animar)

Einar Mar Gudmundsson
Angels of the Universe
Englar alheimsins, novel, 1993
224 pp

English translation

Devastatingly beautiful and deeply moving, the novel that captivated a generation of readers worldwide.

Pall is born on the day Iceland joins NATO in 1949, and narrates the story of his life from birth to death — and beyond. Out of work and adrift in Reykjavik, tormented by drinking and violent outbursts, he traces the fragmentation of his mind and the years he spent in Kleppur, the city's psychiatric hospital, among a cast of unforgettable fellow patients. Despite the tragedy that pervades every page, the novel ripples with humour: the life at Kleppur, as hopeless as it may be, carries a comic undertone not unlike that of Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Based on the true story of Gudmundsson's brother, who died the year before the book was published, *Angels of the Universe* is a deeply personal novel and a searching account of how Icelandic society treated its most vulnerable people. It won the Nordic Council's Literature Prize in 1995 and was adapted into a celebrated film directed by Fridrik Thor Fridriksson.

"You can often detect in Icelandic fiction the existence of parallel worlds, whose soft machinery lets reality escape in poetic shapes."
JULIAN EVANS, THE GUARDIAN

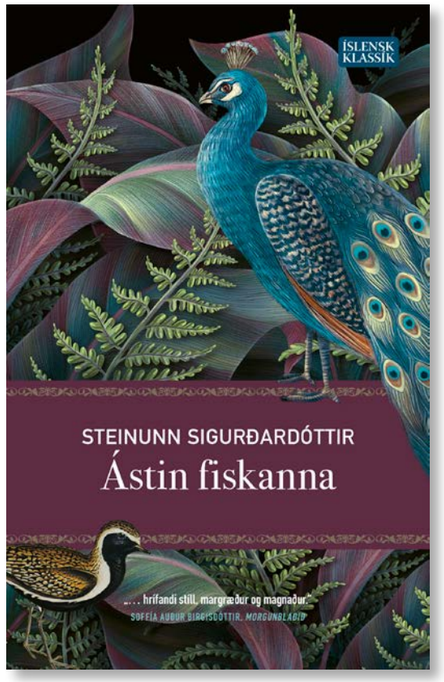
"Guðmundsson steers well clear of bathos, portraying Paul's excruciating mental and spiritual anguish with broad humour and piercing insight."
PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Einar Mar Gudmundsson (b. 1954) is one of the most widely translated Icelandic authors of the postwar period. He received a BA in Comparative Literature and History from the University of Iceland and subsequently worked in the comparative literature department of the University of Copenhagen. His novel Angels of the Universe won the Nordic Council's Literature Prize in 1995 and was adapted into an award-winning film. In 2012 he received the Swedish Academy's Nordic Prize, widely known as the Little Nobel, for his contribution to literature.

RIGHTS SOLD TO: Spain (Nits Blanques, catalan)

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Denmark (Vindrose), Norway (Cappelen), Sweden (Natur & Kultur), Finland (Like), Faroe Islands (Sprotin), Greenland (Atuakkiorfik), Germany/Switzerland/Austria (Hanser/Paperback rights: btb), UK (Mare's Nest), The Netherlands (De bezige bij), Italy (Iperborea), Lithuania (Tyto Alba), France (Flammarion), Portugal (Canguru), USA (St. Martin's Press), Czech Republic (Odeon), Poland (Tower Press), Serbia (Narodna knjiga), Turkey (Acikdeniz Publishing), China (The Commercial Press), Estonia (Imahaa), Macedonia (Bata Press), Bulgaria (Hemus), Hungary (Siraly Kiado), Spain (Rinoceronte Editora, in Galician), Korea (Nangiyala Publishing House), Latvia (Jumava), Slovenia (Temza), Brazil (Hedra), Albania (B-Books), Spain/South America (Ediciones del Nuevo Extremo), Croatia (Hena), Azerbaijan (Alatoran)

Steinunn Sigurdardottir
Like Fish in the Dark
Ástin fiskanna, novel, 1993
107 pp



Razor-sharp, bittersweet, and heartbreaking: a story of lovers destined only to be apart, and of a person letting life slip through her fingers.

Samanta Einarsdottir tells the story of her love affair with Hans Orlygsson, which has been on-again, off-again for three years and will now come to its end. They met by chance in a foreign city, toured a castle together, had drinks, then dinner. They shared one extraordinary day and night — but their relationship remains unchanged. Nothing happens as it happens: the meaning of experience, the novel proposes, lives not in its present moment but only afterwards, in memory.

Razor-sharp, bittersweet, and heartbreaking, *Like Fish in the Dark* is a story of lovers destined only to be apart, of a person letting life slip through her fingers. Written with the irony, melancholy, and lyrical intensity that characterise all of Sigurdardottir's fiction, it is a slender volume of considerable beauty and a memorable read.

"Fish lives without touching each other, and this is a beautiful picture for the story of two lovers who do not find each other ... Steinunn Sigurdardottir brings gentleness and empathy to the souls of her characters, and with the background of the captivating and permanently beautiful Icelandic landscape she leaves the question open as to whether Samantas fate is tragic or not."
WOLFGANG MÜLLER, DIE TAGESZEITUNG, GERMANY

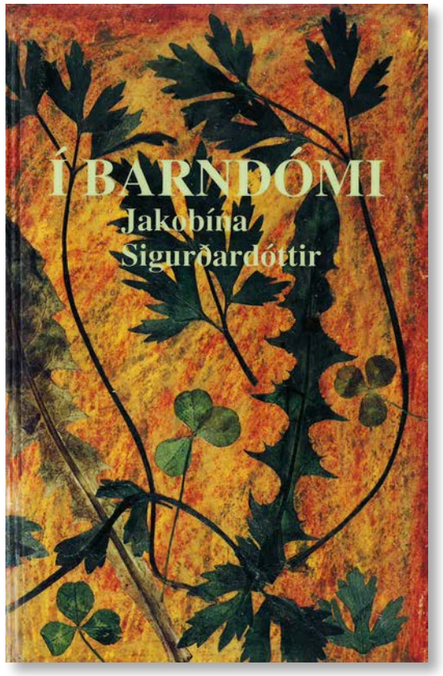
ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Steinunn Sigurdardottir (b. 1950) is one of Iceland's most highly acclaimed novelists and poets, with a writing career spanning more than fifty years. She studied philosophy and psychology at University College Dublin and made her name at the age of nineteen with a debut poetry collection. She has since become one of Iceland's most frequently translated writers, with her works available in almost twenty languages. She has won the Icelandic Literary Prize, the VISA Cultural Prize, and the Icelandic Broadcasting Service Writer's Prize, and has been nominated for the Nordic Council's Literature Prize and the Aristeion Prize.

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Denmark (Rosinante), Germany (Rowohlt), China (International Radio Press), Korea (IRE), Sweden (Vega)

1990– 2000

Jakobina Sigurdardottir
In Childhood

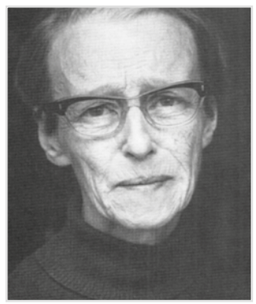
Í barndómi, memoir, 1994
224 pp



Jakobina Sigurdardottir's final work, completed on her deathbed: a farewell to a vanished world and a testament to one of Iceland's most important writers.

In Childhood returns to the landscape of Jakobina Sigurdardottir's origins: Haelavik on Hornstrandir, the remote northwestern peninsula where she was born and grew up, and which was later abandoned entirely. The book is her autobiography of childhood, but it is not a conventional memoir. Rather than moving chronologically through events, it takes the form of a journey: an unnamed old woman revisits her childhood home, observing her family and her younger self as if from a distance, gathering fragments of memory into something more closely resembling a novel than a life story. Poetic and formally distinctive, bearing all the hallmarks of Jakobina's finely tuned sense of form, *In Childhood* is both a farewell to a vanished world and a testament to one of the most important Icelandic writers of the twentieth century.

"Jakobina was of course an absolutely incomparable writer; the fact that she wasn't granted her rightful place as one of Iceland's most important 20th century writers, that's very simply because she was a woman on a farm up north...she wasn't posh enough for the literary pack in Reykjavik."
KILJAN, NATIONAL TV



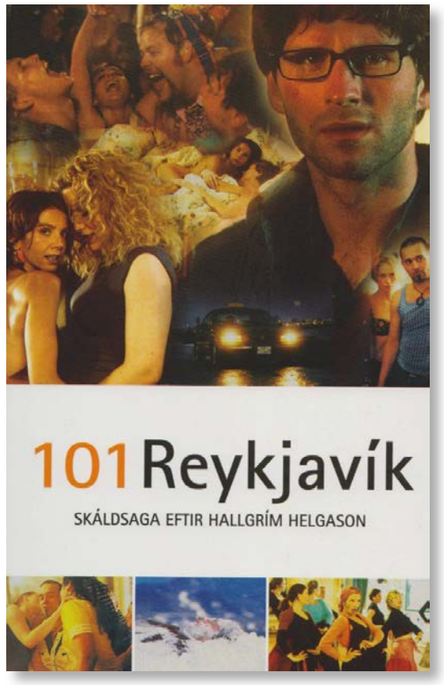
ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Jakobina Sigurdardottir (1918–1994) was born and grew up in poor conditions on Hornstrandir, the northernmost point of western Iceland, and spent much of her adult life as a farmer's wife in the north of the country. Writing despite a hard working life and failing health, she became one of four writers credited with introducing modernism into the Icelandic novel in the 1960s. Her work is rooted in a deep social commitment, and her writing ranges from experimental realism to postmodernist fiction. Her poems have been set to music, including one that was later performed by Bjork.

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Denmark (Multivers)

Hallgrimur Helgason
101 Reykjavik

101 Reykjavík, novel, 1996
383 pp

English translation



The novel that put contemporary Icelandic fiction on the international map: furiously funny, sexually uninhibited, and formally inventive.

Hlynur Bjorn is an unemployed thirty-something who lives with his mother, spends his days on the internet, and his nights at the bars of downtown Reykjavik. He is quick-witted, articulate, and utterly without ambition. His stagnant existence is shaken when his mother's Spanish friend Lolla moves in, and he finds himself entangled in a complicated situation involving three pregnancies and a love triangle he never intended. The title is the postal code of downtown Reykjavik, and the city itself — at the height of its emergence as an international cultural destination — is as much a character as Hlynur himself. Darkly comic, postmodern, and subversive, *101 Reykjavik* captures a precise cultural moment: the mid-1990s rise of Reykjavik as a cool city, the slacker generation, and the gap between Iceland's national myths and its contemporary reality. It was adapted into a successful film in 2000 directed by Baltasar Kormakur.

"Hilariously funny and startlingly original — a blast of cold Icelandic air into European fiction."
THE INDEPENDENT

"... deeply entertaining ... side-splittingly funny. You have to read it ... He has done the best thing possible: found a new way of telling."
THE GUARDIAN

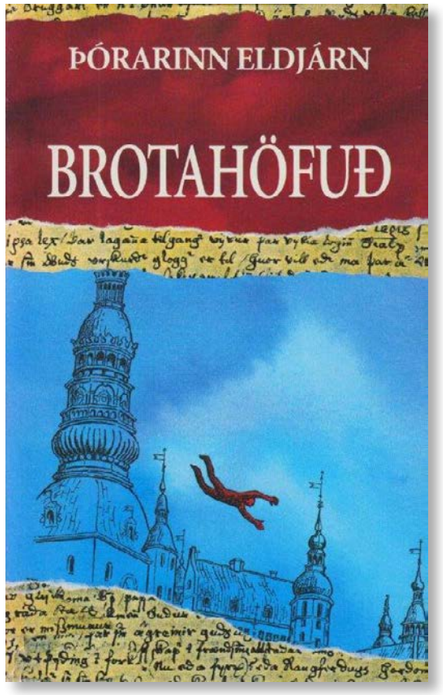
"Bukowski of the north."
LA REPUBLICA

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Hallgrimur Helgason (b. 1959) started out as an artist, showing his work in galleries in New York and Paris, where he lived in the 1980s and 1990s. He made his debut as a novelist in 1990 and gained international attention with his third novel, 101 Reykjavik, which was made into a film and nominated for the Nordic Council's Literature Prize in 1999. He has since received the Icelandic Literary Prize three times and four of his novels have been adapted for the stage. His work has been translated into numerous languages and performed across Europe.

RIGHTS SOLD TO: Poland (ArtRage (updated translation)), Norway (Kagge)

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: Denmark (Rosinante), Finland (Otava), France (Actes Sud), Germany (Klett-Cotta), Hungary (Scolar), Italy (Ugo Guanda), Korea (Dulnyouk Publishing Co), Latvia (Valters & Ropa), Norway (Damm), Poland (Swiat Literacki), Romania (Universla Dalsi Publishers), Russia (Azboka), Spain (RBA), Sweden (Norstedts), The Netherlands (Meulenhoff), UK (Faber & Faber), US (Scribner), Macedonia, Serbia

Thorarinn Eldjarn
The Blue Tower
Brotahöfuð, novel, 1996
252 pp



English translation

A darkly comic historical novel about a scholar who becomes the only prisoner ever to accidentally escape Copenhagen's notorious Blue Tower.

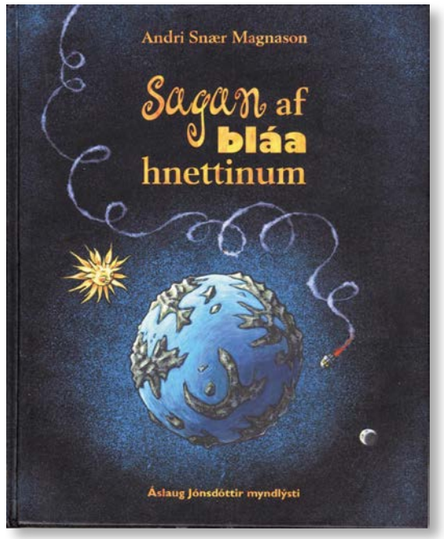
Set in seventeenth-century Iceland and Denmark, *The Blue Tower* follows Gudmundur Andresson, a scholar accused of encouraging immorality and sent to prison in Copenhagen's notorious Blue Tower. What follows is as darkly comic as it is gripping: Andresson becomes probably the only prisoner ever to escape the tower, falling accidentally through the bars of his cell window and landing, to the astonishment of the occupants, in a room below where an aristocratic couple were otherwise engaged. This dramatic entrance drew the king's attention to his case and ultimately led to the charges being dropped. A timeless and universal historical novel, written with Eldjarn's characteristic wit and stylistic precision. It was shortlisted for the European Aristeion Literary Award in 1998, nominated for the Nordic Council's Literature Prize in 1999, and nominated for the IMPAC Dublin Literary Award in 2001.

"Gripping saga ... insistently memorable and intensely real."
PUBLISHER'S WEEKLY

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Thorarinn Eldjarn (b. 1949) is one of Iceland's most admired authors and the recipient of many awards. A superb poet, he has tackled every genre: novels, short story collections, children's books, scripts, and translations. His translations include works by Strindberg, Ibsen, and H.C. Andersen, Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland, and four Shakespeare plays for the National Theatre. He has received the Jónas Hallgrímsson Award, the Gudmundur Bodvarsson Poetry Award, and special recognition from the Swedish Academy for the advancement of Swedish culture.

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN: UK (Mare's Nest), Finland (Like), France (Le Cavalier Bleu), Denmark (Poul Kristensens Forlag), Germany (Conte Verlag)

Andri Snaer Magnason
The Story of the Blue Planet
Sagan af bláa hnettinum, illustrated children's novel, 1999
96 pp



English translation

Deceptively simple and quietly devastating: a parable for our times as much as for children, about what we lose when we prioritise profit over life.

On a blue planet far out in space, there are no adults — only children who play when they want and sleep when they are tired. Then a mysterious man named Jolly Goodday lands on the planet and promises to make their lives a hundred times better. He teaches them how to fly and attends to their every need, bringing them closer to perfection. But when best friends Hulda and Brimir fly too high and discover the true cost of all this improvement on the other side of the planet, they must find a way to save their world. A captivating parable that can be read as a fairytale, an environmental fable, or a meditation on the ethics of happiness, *The Story of the Blue Planet* was the first children's book to receive the Icelandic Literary Prize, in 1999. It has since been published or performed in over thirty-five countries and received the Janusz Korczak Honorary Award and the West Nordic Children's Book Prize.

"A fable of extraordinary beauty and urgency."
ICELANDIC LITERARY PRIZE JURY

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Andri Snaer Magnason (b. 1973) is one of Iceland's most celebrated writers, having won the Icelandic Literary Prize for fiction, children's fiction, and non-fiction. He has written novels, poetry, plays, short stories, and essays, and his work has been published or performed in over thirty countries. He has received numerous international awards, among them the Janusz Korczak Honorary Award, the French Grand Prix de l'Imaginaire, and the Kairos Prize from the Alfred Toepfer Foundation. In 2009 he co-directed the documentary Dreamland, based on his own book. He ran for president of Iceland in 2016.

RIGHTS SOLD TO: UK (Pushkin Press), US (Seven Stories Press), The Netherlands (Uitgeverij Vuurbaak), Denmark (Carlsen), Italy (Iperborea), Ukraine (Crocus), Azerbaijan (Nebula), Greece (Patakis), Turkey (Domingo Yayınevi), China (Beijing Dandelion Children's Book House)

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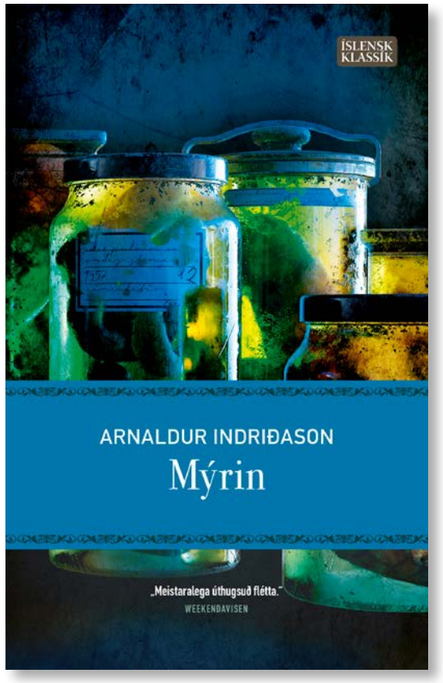
1990– 2000

Arnaldur Indridason

Jar City

Mýrin, crime novel, 2000

280 pp



English translation

The novel that introduced Detective Erlendur to the world and helped establish Nordic noir as a global phenomenon.

An elderly man is found dead in his basement flat in Reykjavik. The murderer has left a cryptic note, and as detectives Erlendur and Sigurdur Oli work to understand it, they are drawn back into truly horrifying secrets from the past. Brilliantly plotted, with convincing characterisation and quietly devastating side-plots, *Jar City* operates at a deeper level than most crime fiction — using a single murder to illuminate the hidden history of a small society where nothing is ever fully buried. It introduced Detective Erlendur to the world and marked the beginning of one of the most successful series in Nordic noir. It won the Glass Key Award in 2002 as the best Nordic crime novel of the year, and has since been recognised as one of the fifty best crime novels of the past fifty years by *The Times*.

*"*Jar City *is classic mystery fiction, both compassionate and thrilling. Indridason is about to become one of the brightest stars in the genre's dark skies."*
JOHN CONNOLLY

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Arnaldur Indridason (b. 1961) has been Iceland's most popular author for decades. He worked as a journalist and film critic before turning to fiction. He has won the CWA Gold Dagger Award for the top crime novel of the year in English, and holds the rare distinction of having won the Nordic Crime Novel Prize two years running. He has received the Order of the Falcon, the highest order of the Republic of Iceland, for his contribution to Icelandic literature. His novels have sold over 20 million copies worldwide, in 45 languages.

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