

## Letters From Iceland

'I go the zoo half because I like looking at the animals and half because I like looking at the people... The pleasure of dappled things, the beauty of adaptation to purpose, the glory of extravagance, classic elegance or romantic nonsense and grotesquerie - all these we get from the Zoo.' In 1938 Louis MacNeice published his second collection of poems with Faber; his 'personal essay' *Modern Poetry* for OUP; and *Zoo*, a prose commission from Michael Joseph to write an impressionistic 'guide' to the London Zoo in Regents Park. Envisioned as a breezy assignment MacNeice's *Zoo* inevitably became a richer endeavour, taking in side-trips to Paris and Belfast. *Zoo* also benefited from illustrations by the painter Nancy Sharp, with whom MacNeice had begun an affair after moving to London in 1936. This Faber Finds edition returns to circulation a delightful rarity by one of the twentieth century's most brilliant poets.

W.G. Collingwood was an artist, author, antiquarian, and notable scholar of Norse history, literature and language. For 12 weeks in 1897, he sailed to Iceland and travelled by pony round the saga-sites of Iceland with his friend Jon Stefansson, and Icelandic scholar. He wrote long, detailed and entertaining letters home to his wife and children about their adventures and experiences while, incredibly, making some 300 sketches and watercolours. This book brings together his letters, drawings, paintings and photos."

Two of the brightest young poets of our day follow in the footsteps of W.H. Auden and Louis MacNeice. Auden and MacNeice's *Letters from Iceland* was more than a brilliant and unconventional travel book; it was one of the great works of the 1930s which defined for its own and later generations the precise nature and feeling of that troubled time. With characteristic boldness, Simon Armitage and Glyn Maxwell, staunch admirers of the two older poets, set off in 1994 to discover what Iceland, with its unique geography and ancient political institutions, might have to say to us now. Their findings, delivered in an appropriate mixture of poetry and prose, reportage and imaginative elaboration, vividly reflect the concerns of our own age, and will instruct and amuse readers in equal measure.

Shares, in prose, verse, and photographs, the impressions of the authors as they journeyed through Iceland

In the epicenter of the world financial crisis, a comedian launched a joke campaign that didn't seem so funny to the country's leading politicians . . . It all started when Jón Gnarr founded the Best Party in 2009 to satirize his country's political system. The financial collapse in Iceland had, after all, precipitated the world-wide meltdown, and fomented widespread protest over the country's leadership. Entering the race for mayor of Reykjavík, Iceland's capital, Gnarr promised to get the dinosaurs from Jurassic Park into downtown parks, free towels at public swimming pools, a "drug-free Parliament by 2020" . . . and he swore he'd break all his campaign promises. But then something strange started

happening: his campaign began to succeed. And in the party's electoral debut, the Best Party emerged as the biggest winner. Gnarr promptly proposed a coalition government, although he ruled out partners who had not seen all five seasons of *The Wire*. And just like that, a man whose previous foreign-relations experience consisted of a radio show (in which he regularly crank-called the White House and police stations in the Bronx to see if they had found his lost wallet) was soon meeting international leaders and being taken seriously as the mayor of a European capital. Here, Gnarr recounts how it all happened and, with admirable candor, describes his vision of a more enlightened politics for the future. The point, he writes, is not to be afraid to get involved—or to take on the system.

Set against Iceland's stark landscape, Hannah Kent brings to vivid life the story of Agnes, who, charged with the brutal murder of her former master, is sent to an isolated farm to await execution. Set against Iceland's stark landscape, Hannah Kent brings to vivid life the story of Agnes, who, charged with the brutal murder of her former master, is sent to an isolated farm to await execution. Horrified at the prospect of housing a convicted murderer, the family at first avoids Agnes. Only Tv=ti, a priest Agnes has mysteriously chosen to be her spiritual guardian, seeks to understand her. But as Agnes's death looms, the farmer's wife and their daughters learn there is another side to the sensational story they've heard. Riveting and rich with lyricism, *Burial Rites* evokes a dramatic existence in a distant time and place, and asks the question, how can one woman hope to endure when her life depends upon the stories told by others?

As an unloved foster child on a farm in rural Iceland, Olaf Karason has only one consolation: the belief that one day he will be a great poet. The indifference and contempt of most of the people around him only reinforces his sense of destiny, for in Iceland poets are as likely to be scorned as they are to be revered. Over the ensuing years, Olaf comes to lead the paradigmatic poet's life of poverty, loneliness, ruinous love affairs and sexual scandal. But he will never attain anything like greatness. As imagined by Nobel Prize winner Halldor Laxness in this magnificently humane novel, what might be cruel farce achieves pathos and genuine exaltation. For as Olaf's ambition drives him onward—and into the orbits of an unstable spiritualist, a shady entrepreneur, and several susceptible women—*World Light* demonstrates how the creative spirit can survive in even the most crushing environment and even the most unpromising human vessel.

Critical essays illuminate the twentieth-century author's thoughts on literature, ideals, and creativity

When *The Orators* was originally published in 1932 it was described by *Poetry Review* as 'something as important as the appearance of Mr Eliot's poems fifteen years ago'. A long poem written in both prose and verse, it was a powerful addition to the canon of modernist poetry.

“Filled with charming illustrations, this delightful book about Iceland's 265 museums is as quirky and mesmerizing as the country's dreamscape itself.” —*Forbes* Mythic creatures, natural wonders, and the mysterious human impulse to collect are on beguiling display in this poetic tribute to the museums of an otherworldly island nation. Iceland is home to only 330,000 people

(roughly the population of Lexington, Kentucky) but more than 265 museums and public collections. They range from the intensely physical, like the Icelandic Phallogical Museum, which collects the penises of every mammal known to exist in Iceland, to the vaporously metaphysical, like the Museum of Icelandic Sorcery and Witchcraft, which poses a particularly Icelandic problem: How to display what can't be seen? In *The Museum of Whales You Will Never See*, A. Kendra Greene is our wise and whimsical guide through this cabinet of curiosities, showing us, in dreamlike anecdotes and more than thirty charming illustrations, how a seemingly random assortment of objects--a stuffed whooper swan, a rubber boot, a shard of obsidian, a chastity belt for rams--can map a people's past and future, their fears and obsessions. "The world is chockablock with untold wonders," she writes, "there for the taking, ready to be uncovered at any moment, if only we keep our eyes open."

"[A] joyously peculiar book." -- *The New York Times* 'Bjarnason's intriguing book might be about a cold place, but it's tailor-made to be read on the beach.' --*New Statesman* The untold story of how one tiny island in the middle of the Atlantic has shaped the world for centuries. The history of Iceland began 1,200 years ago, when a frustrated Viking captain and his useless navigator ran aground in the middle of the North Atlantic. Suddenly, the island was no longer just a layover for the Arctic tern. Instead, it became a nation whose diplomats and musicians, sailors and soldiers, volcanoes and flowers, quietly altered the globe forever. *How Iceland Changed the World* takes readers on a tour of history, showing them how Iceland played a pivotal role in events as diverse as the French Revolution, the Moon Landing, and the foundation of Israel. Again and again, one humble nation has found itself at the frontline of historic events, shaping the world as we know it, *How Iceland Changed the World* paints a lively picture of just how it all happened.

Iceland is an enigmatic island country marked by contradiction: it's a part of Europe, yet separated from it by the Atlantic Ocean; it's seemingly inhospitable, yet home to more than 300,000. *Wasteland with Words* explores these paradoxes to uncover the mystery of Iceland. In *Wasteland with Words* Sigurdur Gylfi Magnússon presents a wide-ranging and detailed analysis of the island's history that examines the evolution and transformation of Icelandic culture while investigating the literary and historical factors that created the rich cultural heritage enjoyed by Icelanders today. Magnússon explains how a nineteenth-century economy based on the industries of fishing and agriculture—one of the poorest in Europe—grew to become a disproportionately large economic power in the late twentieth century, while retaining its strong sense of cultural identity. Bringing the story up to the present, he assesses the recent economic and political collapse of the country and how Iceland has coped. Throughout Magnússon seeks to chart the vast changes in this country's history through the impact and effect on the Icelandic people themselves. Up-to-date and fascinating, *Wasteland with Words* is a comprehensive study of the island's cultural and historical development, from tiny fishing settlements to a global economic power.

Written between August and December 1938, *Autumn Journal* is still considered one of the most valuable and moving testaments of living through the thirties by a young writer. It is a record of the author's emotional and intellectual experience during those months, the trivia of everyday living set against the events of the world outside, the settlement in Munich and slow defeat in Spain.

Sometimes grim, sometimes uproarious, and always captivating, *Iceland's Bell* by Nobel Laureate Halldór Laxness is at once an updating of the traditional Icelandic saga and a caustic social satire. At the close of the 17th century, Iceland is an oppressed Danish colony, suffering under extreme poverty, famine, and plague. A farmer and accused cord-thief named Jon Hreggvidsson makes a bawdy joke about the Danish king and soon after finds himself a fugitive charged with the murder of the king's hangman. In the years that follow, the hapless but resilient rogue Hreggvidsson becomes a pawn entangled in political and personal conflicts playing out on a far grander scale. Chief among these is the star-crossed love affair between Snaefridur, known as "Iceland's Sun," a beautiful, headstrong young noblewoman, and Arnas Arnaeus, the king's antiquarian, an aristocrat whose worldly manner conceals a fierce devotion to his downtrodden countrymen. As their personal struggle plays itself out on an international stage, *Iceland's Bell* creates a Dickensian canvas of heroism and venality, violence and tragedy, charged with narrative enchantment on every page. Auden speaks of the poet and his craft as well as literary figures and their works and observations on life in general. The extraordinary new novel from Nordic Council Literature Prize-winning Auður Ava Ólafsdóttir *Iceland* in the 1960s. Hekla always knew she wanted to be a writer. In a nation of poets, where each household proudly displays leatherbound volumes of the Sagas, and there are more writers per capita than anywhere else in the world, there is only one problem: she is a woman. After packing her few belongings, including James Joyce's *Ulysses* and a Remington typewriter, Hekla heads for Reykjavik with a manuscript buried in her bags. She moves in with her friend Jon, a gay man who longs to work in the theatre, but can only find dangerous, backbreaking work on fishing trawlers. Hekla's opportunities are equally limited: marriage and babies, or her job as a waitress, in which harassment from customers is part of the daily grind. The two friends feel completely out of place in a small and conservative world. And yet that world is changing: JFK is shot and hemlines are rising. In Iceland another volcano erupts and Hekla meets a poet who brings to light harsh realities about her art. Hekla realizes she must escape to find freedom abroad, whatever the cost. *Miss Iceland* is a novel of extraordinary poise and masterful acuity from one of our most celebrated Icelandic writers.

In the summer of 1936, W. H. Auden and Louis MacNeice visited Iceland on commission to write a travel book, but found themselves capturing concerns on a scale that were far more international. 'Though writing in a "holiday" spirit,' commented Auden, 'its authors were all the time conscious of a threatening horizon to their picnic - world-wide unemployment, Hitler growing everyday more powerful and a world-war more inevitable.' The result is the remarkable *Letters from Iceland*, a collaboration in

poetry and prose, reportage and correspondence, published in 1937 with the Spanish Civil War newly in progress, beneath the shadow of looming world war.

When facing a moral dilemma, Isabel Dalhousie--Edinburgh philosopher, amateur detective, and title character of a series of novels by best-selling author Alexander McCall Smith--often refers to the great twentieth-century poet W. H. Auden. This is no accident: McCall Smith has long been fascinated by Auden. Indeed, the novelist, best known for his No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency series, calls the poet not only the greatest literary discovery of his life but also the best of guides on how to live. In this book, McCall Smith has written a charming personal account about what Auden has done for him--and what he just might do for you. Part self-portrait, part literary appreciation, the book tells how McCall Smith first came across the poet's work in the 1970s, while teaching law in Belfast, a violently divided city where Auden's "September 1, 1939," a poem about the outbreak of World War II, strongly resonated. McCall Smith goes on to reveal how his life has related to and been inspired by other Auden poems ever since. For example, he describes how he has found an invaluable reflection on life's transience in "As I Walked Out One Evening," while "The More Loving One" has provided an instructive meditation on unrequited love. McCall Smith shows how Auden can speak to us throughout life, suggesting how, despite difficulties and change, we can celebrate understanding, acceptance, and love for others. An enchanting story about how art can help us live, this book will appeal to McCall Smith's fans and anyone curious about Auden.

A memoir of a family's year living in Reykjavik that "captures the fierce beauty of the Arctic landscape" (Booklist). Sarah Moss had a childhood dream of moving to Iceland, sustained by a wild summer there when she was nineteen. In 2009, she saw an advertisement for a job at the University of Iceland and applied on a whim, despite having two young children and a comfortable life in Kent, England. The resulting adventure was shaped by Iceland's economic collapse, which halved the value of her salary; by the eruption of the volcano Eyjafjallajokull; and by a collection of new friends, including a poet who saw the only bombs fall on Iceland in 1943; a woman who speaks to elves; and a chef who guided Sarah's family around the intricacies of Icelandic cuisine. Moss explored hillsides of boiling mud and volcanic craters and learned to drive like an Icelander on the unsurfaced roads that link remote farms and fishing villages in the far north. She watched the northern lights and the comings and goings of migratory birds, and as the weeks and months went by, she and her family learned new ways to live. Names for the Sea is her compelling and very funny account of living in a country poised on the edge of Europe, where modernization clashes with living folklore. "Beautifully written . . . A stranger in a strange land, Moss grapples with new foods, customs and landscapes that are both oddly familiar and wildly alien in this absorbing memoir." —Financial Times

"Bjarni has long held on to a letter from former lover Helga, with whom he shared an illicit, impassioned love. Her letter invited him to leave his wife and his farm and pursue prosperity in the city, where World War II had brought an influx of American marines and opportunities for work. But he chose not to reply. Years later, as he reflects on a long and simple life among the sheep in the Icelandic hillsides, he finally finds himself ready to explain why"--P. [4] of cover.

This highly amusing and unorthodox travel book resulted from a light-hearted summer journey by the young poets Auden and MacNeice in 1936. Their letters home, in verse and prose, are full of private jokes and irreverent comments about people, politics, literature and ideas. Letters from Iceland is one of the most entertaining books in modern literature; from Auden's 'Letter to Lord Byron' and MacNeice's 'Eclogue', to the mischief and fun of their joint 'Last Will and Testament', the book is impossible to resist - a 1930s classic.

1686, Iceland. A cold, windswept land where they talk of witches and fear strangers . . . 'Gripped me in a cold fist. Beautiful' Sara Collins, author of The Confessions of Frannie Langton 'A perfect, gripping winter read. I loved it' Sophie Mackintosh, author of The Water Cure \_\_\_\_\_ When Rósa is betrothed to Jón Eiríksson, she is sent to a remote village. There she finds a man who refuses to speak of his recently deceased first wife, and villagers who view her with suspicion. Isolated and disturbed by her husband's strange behaviour, her fears deepen. What is making the strange sounds in the attic? Who does the mysterious glass figure she is given represent? And why do the villagers talk of the coming winter darkness in hushed tones? A mysterious and captivating tale of love, fear and superstition, perfect for readers of The Miniaturist, The Silent Companions, and The Bear & The Nightingale. Venture to the wild, beautiful and spellbinding Orkney islands in THE METAL HEART, the compelling new story of freedom and love from Caroline Lea. \_\_\_\_\_ 'ENTHRALLING' Stacey Halls, author of The Familiars & The Foundling 'CRACKLES WITH TENSION. MOVING AND ATMOSPHERIC, I COULDN'T PUT IT DOWN' Laura Purcell, author of The Silent Companions & Bone China 'MEMORABLE AND COMPELLING. A NOVEL ABOUT WHAT HAUNTS US - AND WHAT SHOULD' Sarah Moss, author of Ghost Wall 'EVOCATIVE, COMPELLING, WITH A BRILLIANT TWIST' Daily Express 'AN ICELANDIC JANE EYRE . . . COMPELLING, ATMOSPHERIC' Sunday Times 'INTENSELY WRITTEN AND ATMOSPHERIC, WITH AN UNUSUAL SETTING' Daily Mail 'A CHILLING TALE' Good Housekeeping 'LIKE A GHOST STORY TOLD AROUND A WINTER FIRE' Tim Leach, author of Smile of the Wolf SHORTLISTED FOR THE HISTORICAL WRITERS ASSOCIATION DEBUT AWARD

Spanning eras, continents, and genres, CoDex 1962—twenty years in the making—is Sjón's epic three-part masterpiece. Over the course of four dazzling novels translated into dozens of languages, Sjón has earned a global reputation as one of the world's most interesting writers. But what the world has never been able to read is his great trilogy of novels, known collectively as CoDex 1962—now finally complete. Josef Löwe, the narrator, was born in 1962—the same year, the same moment even, as Sjón. Josef's story, however, stretches back decades in the form of Leo Löwe—a Jewish fugitive during World War II who has an affair with a maid in a German inn; together, they form a baby from a piece of clay. If the first volume is a love story, the second is a crime story: Löwe arrives in Iceland with the clay-baby inside a hatbox, only to

be embroiled in a murder mystery—but by the end of the volume, his clay son has come to life. And in the final volume, set in present-day Reykjavík, Josef's story becomes science fiction as he crosses paths with the outlandish CEO of a biotech company (based closely on reality) who brings the story of genetics and genesis full circle. But the future, according to Sjón, is not so dark as it seems. In CoDex 1962, Sjón has woven ancient and modern material and folklore and cosmic myths into a singular masterpiece—encompassing genre fiction, theology, expressionist film, comic strips, fortune studies, genetics, and, of course, the rich tradition of Icelandic storytelling.

Letters from Iceland Paragon House Publishers

Discussion of the primary worlds of the senses and historical reality, and the secondary worlds of imagination and poetry.

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