

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a great honor to present the lecture given by the 2023 Vigdís Prize's Laureate. It is titled *Hesitation* wherein Anne Carson will concern herself with the experience and the value of this unique condition of consciousness (hesitation) in human beings, in animals, and in works of art.

The 2023 Vigdís Prize's Laureate Lecture inaugurates the University of Iceland's Guttormur J. Guttormsson Lecture Series, a transatlantic enterprise in memory of the poet, avant-garde playwright, and farmer Guttormur J. Guttormsson. A son of Icelandic immigrants in Canada, Jón Guttormsson and Pálína Ketilsdóttir, Guttormur was born in 1878 at the farm Víðivellir, not far from the town Riverton, Manitoba, and passed away in 1966.

I would like to thank Heather Alda Ireland, the granddaughter of Guttormur, the mezzo soprano, and former Honorary Consul General of Iceland for British Columbia and Yukon, for the collaboration in the creation of the lecture series. Together with her late husband, William Ireland, Heather Alda is a most valuable benefactor of the University of Iceland.

Vigdís Finnbogadóttir is no stranger to legacy of Guttormur J. Guttormsson. A former director of the Reykjavík Theatre, one of the founding members of *Gríma*, the first avant-garde theatre group established in Iceland, translator of key plays by French 20th century playwrights, and a founding member of Vonarstræti Theatre, along with her collaborator Sveinn Einarsson, Vigdís has participated in past event, held in honor of Guttormur, both in New Iceland in 1998, and here in Reykjavík in 2014.

Heather Alda also participated in those events, and both her and Vigdís are authors of auxiliary texts in *Ten Plays – Tíu leikrit*, the bilingual edition from 2015 that features the first English translation of Guttormur's plays by Elin Thordarson and Christopher Crocker, and a reprinting of the Reykjavík-based original publication from 1930.

Guttormur, who was born into a transatlantic linguistic, cultural and existential region, became the poet of New Iceland, for good reason. He taught himself to travel in world literature and the history of ideas, and as a playwright, he was a great explorer of modernity's zeitgeist. In tune with the macabre vim of the interwar avant-garde, he captured modernity's radiant melancholy in his *Ten Plays* that are reminiscent of the works of some of the world's better known modern playwrights.

Time will tell if his work continues to be shrouded in a cross-Atlantic enigma. As was the case with other major authors of Icelandic Canadian literature, Guttormur J. Guttormsson only wrote in Icelandic. Different from the others, however, who arrived in Canada during the exodus from Europe in the late 19th and early twentieth centuries, Guttormur was born in Canada. Hence, the far-reaching existential– and intercultural enterprise one encounters in his work.

It is a great honor for the University of Iceland to have Anne Carson, the 2023 Vigdís Prize's Laureate, inaugurate the lecture series. Through her work as a classicist and poet, she has, indeed, harvested the cultural heritage that is embedded in some of the languages of the world, and that within the context of her perception of our zeitgeist.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Anne Carson.