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The Development and Role of the *Fjallkona* (Mountain Woman) in Icelandic National Day Celebrations and Other Contexts[1]

Abstract. In this paper, I will be examining an Icelandic invented tradition that has come to play a central role in Icelandic National Day ceremonies at home and abroad. Part of the movement to "create" Icelandic culture in the late nineteenth century, the figure of the "Mountain Woman" dressed in Icelandic national costume, who nowadays gives a speech every year on the Icelandic National Day (17th June), has her origin in 19th century romantic poetry as an image for Iceland (comparable to England's Brittania and France's Liberté). However, in visual terms, she took shape as an image in the frontispiece of the first English translation of Jón Árnason's *Icelandic Folk Legends*, and as a flag-waving elf-woman in Indriði Einarsson's national drama, *New Year's Eve* (end of the 1860s). As time has gone on, this figure has maintained her role in annual National Day ceremonies, but also gained new aspects. For example, when Vigdís Finnbogadóttir became Iceland's first female president, it is clear that she, directly or indirectly, played on the image.

Keywords: culture, Fjallkona, history, Iceland, mountain woman, national day, nature, theatre.

Ever since 1944, Iceland has celebrated its national day, *Lýðveldisdagurinn* (lit. the Day of the Republic), on 17th June (Árni Björnsson 1996: 148—156; 1995: 34—38). As in other countries, the various events associated with the national day, which is celebrated all around the country, are divided into formal activities and others which are less formal and focus essentially on entertainment and togetherness as the nation (along with thousands of visiting tourists) gathers on the streets to play, listen to music, partake in various cultural activities, buy food and refreshments, and generally "mingle". Nowadays in Reykjavík, the capital of Iceland, the formal activities usually take place in the morning. After all the church bells in the city town have been rung at 9.55, a service takes place in the small

cathedral in the centre of the city. This is followed by a formal ceremony in the Austurvöllur square in front of the Parliament (*Alþingi*) building and cathedral, by the statue of Jón Sigurðsson (1811—1879), the man most associated with Iceland's peaceful struggle for independence from Denmark in the late nineteenth century. Here national songs are sung and/or played (*Yfir voru ættarlandi*;[2] *Ó Guð vors lands*;[3] *Hver á sér fegra föðurland*[4] and *Ég vil elska mitt land*[5]); the President lays a wreath at the foot of the statue; the Prime Minister makes a speech; and a young woman dressed in national costume from the nineteenth century (Sigrún Helgadóttir 2013; Aspelund 2015a) recites a poem.[6] This ceremony is followed by a procession to the old graveyard in the centre of the town, past the near unmarked grave of the designer of the aforementioned national costume, the painter Sigurður Guðmundsson (1833—1874), to the grave of the Jón Sigurðsson. Here another wreath is placed.

National ceremonies of this kind often give the impression of being the natural result of a long tradition. We often forget the degree to which they are deliberately created, for both practical and political purposes, and the degree to which they are deliberately arranged *performances*, not only in terms of setting, but also timing and structure. With regard to national days, Iceland had earlier celebrated 1st December, which was the date when the country ceased to be a colony of Denmark and became an individual monarchy under Danish rule in 1918 (Árni Björnsson 1996: 281—289; 1995: 64—66).[7] 1st December is nonetheless a rather cold and impractical day for a national holiday. Fortunately, Jón Sigurðsson's parents gave birth to him on 17th June, close to midsummer, the time when the old independent Icelandic parliament used to meet in the countryside at Þingvellir, from the ninth century onwards (Árni Björnsson 1996: 148, 160—161; 1995: 41). In 1944, when Iceland gained complete independence from Denmark (as a result of the war), the choice of Jón's birthday for the celebrations of a new national independence day was a natural move. The choice of setting for the formal activities in Austurvöllur, outside the Icelandic parliament, beside Jón Sigurðsson's statue was also natural. This is the Icelandic equivalent of the Red Square, Tiananmen Square, Taksin Square, and Tahrir Square, the place where all other formal and politically-related national gatherings take place, ranging from the opening of Parliament,

to the pot-and-pan, yoghurt-throwing protests against the government after the Icelandic financial crash in 2008, and the annual celebration of the Christmas tree gift from Norway. One also notes the careful choice of nationalistic music (designed to play off nationalist sensibilities).[8] Equally noteworthy is (what tends to be) the deliberate pairing of male politicians, usually dressed in suits and ties, representing power and politics, and speaking in prose; and the female figure who is always dressed in the same historic costume and speaks only in poetry, a figure who represents unchangeable cultural heritage, and ends the formal proceedings in the square.[9]

This paper will concentrate on the "invented tradition" (cf. Hobsbawm 1983) of the female figure in national dress, who is referred to in Iceland as "Fjallkonan,"[10] or "the Mountain Woman," a figure who is deliberately nameless, but since 1947 has tended to be "acted" by an actress, something that is almost certainly not only related to the need to be able to read well, but also, I would argue, to the theatrical background of the figure, a feature that will be explained in more detail below.[11]

Various articles have been written about the development of the *Fjallkona*, many of which stress the rather contrived argument that the choice of a woman to represent the nation was essentially meant to underline a difference to the Danish idea of the "fatherland" (see, for example, Árni Björnsson 2007; Inga Dóra Björnsdóttir 1996; Brydon 1997; Halldór Gíslason n.d.[12]). I would argue that such an argument actually has little to do with the overall idea of the *Fjallkona*, which, while the expression "Fjallkona" certainly first appears in nationalistic Icelandic poetry from the eighteenth century onwards, the poetic image was no innovation, but draws on much older well known and well understood Nordic folklore and belief. The enacted *visual* image, meanwhile, has additional direct associations which link up closely with the earliest Icelandic folktale collections, the creation of a new Icelandic national costume, and the development of Icelandic national theatre. All of these came into being during a short, but highly intense period of national-culture creation in Iceland between 1858 and 1874, and centred around the earlier-noted Sigurður Guðmundsson, the man whose grave is annually walked by—and largely ignored—on Icelandic national days as

formal processions wend their way to the neighbouring grave of Jón Sigurðsson. Sigurður will be discussed in more detail below.

As noted above, there is little question that the name “Fjallkona” as a personification of Iceland, underlining a focus on the *nature* of the island, and not only the untamed mountainous wilderness but also the underlying power of glaciers and volcanoes, goes back to the Romanticism of the early nineteenth century, and most particularly to the poem “Íslandsminni” (A Toast to Iceland), written by the romantic poet Bjarni Thorarensen (1786—1841) when he was living in Denmark (Bjarni Thorarensen 1847: 1—2). Here the woman in question is not only called “fjallkonan”, but also directly referred to as “Ísafold”, a rewording of “Ísland” (the Icelandic name for Iceland).[13] Bjarni was strongly influenced by other key romantic figures such as Henrich Steffens (1773—1845), Adam Oehlenschläger (1779—1850) and Freidrich Schiller (1759—1805) (see further ERNIE 2015), all of whom had encouraged the development of local art and traditions which drew on local folklore and history. As Halldór Gíslason (n.d.), the Icelandic ethnologist, Árni Björnsson (2007), and others have noted, the idea of a female figure representing the nation was already widespread in other countries at this time, not least in figures such as the Greek Athena, the French Marianne, the British Britannia, the German Germania, the Danish Moder Danmark and the Swiss Helvetia.[14] The “idea” of Iceland as a woman had nonetheless been earlier envisioned by another influential Icelandic scholar, Eggert Ólafsson (1726—1768), both for his poem *Ísland* (Iceland)[15] and for a visual image that was meant to accompany another poem called *Ofsjónir við jarðaför Lóvísu drottningar 1752* (Visions at the Funeral of Queen Louisa (Eggert Ólafsson 1832: 107—109)). According to Eggert’s description, the image was supposed to depict a sad-faced woman dressed in rich clothes of the time with the word “Iceland” written above her head, sitting on a rock high up in a valley, close by a river, her head resting on her left hand as she stares up at the sky, watched by some nearby cattle. Perhaps Bjarni Thorarensen was deliberately drawing on this image in his poem. Nonetheless, as Árni notes (Árni Björnsson 2007), after Bjarni’s time, several other poets started using the expression “fjallkona” as a poetic name for Iceland, including Sigurður Breiðfjörð (1798—1846), Jón Thoroddsen (1819—1868), Jónas Hallgrímsson (1807—1845) and Gunnlaugur

Oddsson (1786—1835), the latter two of whom had started referring to the *Fjallkona* as wearing old coifed headwear like that drawn on by Sigurður Guðmundsson when he later designed a new national costume for women.[16]

Less commonly referred to is the likelihood that all of these men were also drawing on a much older image drawn from Old Norse poetry and the Icelandic sagas which had roots in a pre-Christian Nordic belief in powerful female spirits who protected both individuals and families, in other words, the so-called *dísir* and *valkyrjur* (also referred to as *fylgjur* or *hamingjur*[17] (Gunnell 2005; Murphy 2013)). Such beings, commonly depicted in early texts as wearing armour and even riding horses (sometimes across the sky), are regularly found in early Icelandic literature and were clearly widely known by the Icelanders. The beliefs in the *dísir* as family protectors appears most clearly in a short story called *Þiðranda þáttr ok Þórhalls* in which they take a human sacrifice (Óscar Halldórsson et al. 1987: 2254—2255; translated in Viðar Hreinsson et al. 1997: II, 460—461). One might also consider possible connections with the female *jötunn* figures like Jörð (lit. earth); and Gerðr (lit. field); and the goddesses Freyja and Gefjun, both connected with fertility in Old Norse mythology.

The first extant *visual* image of the *Fjallkona* as an image of Iceland, underlining the intertwining of the feminine, the natural, the national and the cultural, all of which are still reflected in her role on the Icelandic national day, appeared, interestingly enough, in the frontispiece of a folkloric work designed for foreign audiences called *Icelandic Legends* (Jón Árnason 1864—1866: II, frontispiece) in 1866. This work was the second volume of Eiríkur Magnússon and George E.J. Powell's English translation of stories taken from Jón Árnason's central key Icelandic folktale collection *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og æfintýri* (Jón Árnason 1862—1864). The cover engraving and its water colour original were made by the German illustrator of children's books, J.B. Zwecker (1814—1876), on the basis of a description given to him by Powell.[18] The fact that the image appears in a book of folktales reflects the ideas underlined by Jón Árnason, Magnús Grímsson and Jón Sigurðsson that the folk tales can be seen as "the poetic creation of the nation" ("skáldskapur þjóðarinnar": Jón Árnason

and Magnús Grímsson 1852: 3[19]) and indeed can be regarded as representing the "uncorrupted opinion of the nation" ("sú rétta óspillta skoðun þjóðarinnar": Jón Sigurðsson 1860: 196; see further Gunnell 2010 and 2012). There is little question that the image draws on the aforementioned ideas of the protecting goddess of ancient times, since she is equipped with a Viking sword and dressed in Viking-age costume. Also prominent are the manuscripts and what are probably supposed to be runic figures (relating to the sagas and eddic poems?) washing up on shore around her feet, and what appears to be one of the god Óðinn's ravens sitting on her shoulder (probably the raven known as Muninn, or 'Memory'). The fiery crown worn by the figure might reflect the northern lights, although the fact that she sits on a basalt throne also reminds us of the volcanic activity that typifies Iceland. The moon, stars and the blue colours found on the water-colour version of the image,[20] meanwhile, are reminiscent of images of the Virgin Mary. It was only a few years before the same image found itself used in another deliberately nationalistic context in Iceland when it was developed by the poet and artist Benedikt Gröndal (1826—1907) for the main commemorative poster for Iceland's millennium celebrations in 1874.[21]

Many scholars have noted the fact that the idea of the *Fjallkona* appearing in person in Iceland has its origins in an annual competition held in the Icelandic emigrant settlement in Winnipeg, Canada, in 1924 (Árni Björnsson 2007; Brydon 1997). While this is strictly true, as I have argued elsewhere (Gunnell 2012: 317—323), one must also bear in mind the sturdy cultural bridge that existed between Winnipeg and the earlier-noted group of romantic nationalists that had not only produced the folk tales, the national museum, the national costume, but also the national anthem, the first national dramas, and the image of the woman in the front of the book of translated Icelandic legends. Under discussion here is a cultural, and apparently secret society in Reykjavík which operated between 1861 and 1874, and called itself *Leikfélag Andans* (the Theatre/Athletic[22] Society of the Soul), later *Kveldfélagið* (the Evening Society) (Lárus Sigurbjörnsson 1954: 55—93). One of the central figures of this society was the earlier-noted artist, Sigurður Guðmundsson (see, for example, Karl Aspelund 2015b; 2011; and Gunnell 2012). An impoverished, formally uneducated but well-read and highly influential thinker and idealist

who was referred to as *Siggi séni* (Siggi the genius) by his friends, Sigurður had spent nine years (1849—1858) in the thriving cultural centre of Copenhagen. He dreamt of an independent Iceland, but realised that no nation could imagine standing alongside other nations if it could not demonstrate that it had its own culture. His fellow society-members included the earlier-mentioned folktale collector and librarian, Jón Árnason; the translator Eiríkur Magnússon; the later national poet and playwright Matthías Jochumsson; and the author Jón Ólafsson (1850—1916), who later settled in Winnipeg and became the editor of the influential paper, *Lögberg*.[23] All of these men understood the key importance of producing unifying images which connected the past and the present. They also realised the potential that the theatre had for communicating these images and these ideas to the population in a living visual form. For Sigurður, local folk tales had the potential to "give poetic fiction clearer direction, and to encourage people to act,"[24] and were natural topics for new national dramas, just as they had been natural material for Shakespeare. Sigurður writes elsewhere that from the stage, it is possible to "educate the whole nation in literature, singing, and music, and show audiences how people lived at different times, both mentally and visibly, and thus strengthen our nationality more than by any other means..."[25]

It was such ideas that led to the appearance of a new play called *Nýársnóttin* (1872) (New Year's Eve) written by one of Sigurður's followers, the young Icelandic playwright Indriði Einarsson (1885—1939) (Indriði Einarsson 1872; 1907). Drawing deeply on the Icelandic folklore reflected in Jón Árnason's collection of folk legends, this work was originally performed in Reykjavik, in December 1871, and came to be shown regularly not only in Iceland but also the Icelandic settlements in North America over the years that followed (albeit in slightly differing versions).[26] For obvious reasons, as a deliberately "national drama" of the kind Sigurður envisioned, it also came to be the first play to be performed at Iceland's new National Theatre (*Þjóðleikhúsið*) when it eventually opened in Reykjavík in 1950.

The direct connection between this play and the later image of the *Fjallkona* can be seen immediately in a central figure of the play,

the powerful supernatural *álfkona* (lit. elf-woman) Áslaug who literally lives within the mountains of Iceland. Áslaug's key role is that of defending a pair of young lovers against the plans of a melodramatically evil merchant who has strong connections to Danish culture and the old Danish trading monopoly; and against an old *álfur* king (who rules the elven kingdom, and brings the ruling Danish crown directly to mind).[27] *Nýársnóttin* makes several references which point to the idea that close links exist between the *álfar* and the land itself, the singing *álfar* themselves pointing out that they have inhabited the land ever since Iceland first arose from the sea, in other words, long before the first settlers arrived (Indriði Einarsson 1872: 40—42). Considering the poetry later spoken by the *Fjallkona* on the modern national day, it is also worth noting that the *álfar* of the original play are shown to make use of the ancient Icelandic poetic forms that had roots in pagan times, thereby stressing their connection not only to the land, but also ancient Icelandic culture and the early pre-Christian Nordic religion (Indriði Einarsson 1872: 33—35).[28] This idea is also reflected in the way the *álfar* stress they have direct associations with the ancient pagan gods of the early Icelandic settlers, Þórr, Óðinn and Freyja, even though Áslaug herself is shown to be Christian (Indriði Einarsson 1872: 25, 32—44).

Áslaug's nationalistic characteristics, which were more implied rather than stated in the first version of the play from 1872, came to be amplified to the full in the re-written version of the play from 1907, where she appeared in the final scene holding an Icelandic flag (see photographs from Árni Björnsson 1996: 154; Eggert Þórr Bernharðsson and Þórunn Valdimarsdóttir 1997: 48, 99; Sveinn Einarsson 1996: 363—364, 389). In this version of the play, it is also stated that a revolution has taken place in the *álfur* world against the now directly-stated monarchy of the old *álfur* king, who is also shown to have close connections with the Scandinavian mainland (Indriði Einarsson 1907: 171). Particularly striking is the fact that Áslaug, in all versions of the play (see references to images above), seems to wear a version of the formal national costume earlier designed by Sigurður Guðmundsson for the women of the new Icelandic nation, his belief being that the national costume of a nation, with its roots in traditions of the past, was, like the folk tales, a field of nationality ("ein grein af þjóðerninu") which reflected the nation's

way of thinking ("hugsunarhættir") and could be viewed as a visual badge of honour ("heiðursmerki") which linked the woman of the present to the saga foremothers of the past (Sigurður Guðmundsson 1857: 2).[29] Such ideas are directly reflected in Áslaug's final words in this later version of the play, when she states that *"we* álfar *are the imagination of the nation / and have always lived in this country / ... we* álfar *are the hidden soul and life of the rocks and hills, / which the people create."*[30] Here, in one moment, folk tale blends with national costume and national drama in the shape of a single feminine image. There is little question to my mind that Áslaug was meant to be a living stage-manifestation of the *Fjallkona* (even though that name is never directly used for her), in spite of the fact that the stage- and costume-designer Sigurður Guðmundsson originally dressed her in landscape green rather than the later national blue (Indriði Einarsson 1872: 103).

Further support for the growing popularity of the figure of the supernatural *Fjallkona*, her image as a representation of the close link between nature, history and culture, and her close connection with the theatrical world can be seen found in another play from the same period that is rarely referred to nowadays (see, however, Wawn 2007: 414—419), a play which Indriði may even have himself drawn on for his revised 1907 version of *Nýársnóttin*. Written in 1901 by the schoolteacher Halldór Bríem (1852—1929), *Ingimundur gamli* (Ingimundur the Old) was first performed in 1902. Set at the time of the Icelandic settlement in the tenth century, and based on *Vatnsdæla saga* (the Saga of the People of Vatnsdalur), the play includes three appearances of a very similar figure to Áslaug that is not mentioned the original saga, but is shown to be directly linked to the ancient pagan beliefs of female protecting spirits noted above. Speaking the prologue at the start of the play, dressed in white, lit brightly, and surrounded by a background of mountains and rocks that are meant to be associated with her, the figure is referred to as "verndargyðja Vatnsdals" (the protecting goddess of the Vatnsdalur valley). It might be noted that each occasion that she appears she speaks only in an Old Icelandic poetic metre (*fornyrðislag*). At the start, she describes the beauty of the land that she alone ruled for centuries until the first settlers came, bringing both culture and trouble with them (Halldór Bríem 1901: 1—2). The spirit reappears at the time

of the death of the main hero, now with a black cloak drawn over her white dress (Halldór Bríem 1901: 37—38); and once again at the very end of the play, when, greeted with trumpets, lit up and surrounded by "ljósálfar" (light *álfar*), and once again clad in white, she makes the final speech of the play, stressing how now, after the tragic events of the play, the land can return to peace under her protection (Halldór Bríem 1901: 61—63).

As noted above, there is no question that the figure of Áslaug had appeared on stage as a personification of the land in the Icelandic settlement of Winnipeg long before the first *Fjallkona* appeared there under that name in 1925.[31] There is thus good reason to assume that a clear line exists between all of the figures noted above (poetic and enacted), which eventually merge into the form of the national-costumed *Fjallkona* that made her first national-day performance in Reykjavík in 1947, and continues to appear annually, still acted by an actress (thereby underlining her long term connections with the theatre), and still speaking in poetry (just as her predecessors did in the plays noted above).[32]

As with those of her predecessors, the words spoken by the *Fjallkona* in front of the Parliament building in Reykjavík tend deliberately to connect land, nature, and culture, and the past with the present, the poems she recites usually being new works specially written for the occasion by nationally recognised poets.[33] An interesting break with tradition nonetheless occurred in 2009, the year following Iceland's traumatic financial crash, when instead of presenting a new work, the *Fjallkona* suddenly reverted to the elegiac poetry of one of Iceland's national cultural saints from the early nineteenth century, Jónas Hallgrímsson (1807—1845). She spoke of ridicule, loss and the need for continuing hope:

> *"No one knows that the white island / Has had days when the beautiful / Sphere of freedom on mountains and passes / Threw bright sparkling rays; / No one knows that we in / Ancient centuries created cold catastrophe, / Lost our fame, enchained our hopes / So that our fatherland became a laughing stock."*[34]

Arguably the worried *Fjallkona* could also be said to have manifested herself on another more international stage earlier that same year

as part of one of the key events of the modern European ritual year, now taking the shape of Iceland's representative at Eurovision in Moscow. Here the debt-struck Icelandic nation nervously watched as Jóhanna Guðrún Jónsdóttir clad in a long blue dress, against blue lighting, stars and clouds, asked the entire world whether it was all over, and whether her nation had "thrown it all away".[35]

The *Fjallkona* as a figure in Iceland clearly is not limited to the national day. She can be drawn on in various ways, and can appear at different times of the year, not only times of national celebration or times of need. Arguably, she manifests herself every time Icelandic women put on one of Sigurður Guðmundsson's national costumes, thereby turning each of themselves into a symbol of the nation, and uniting themselves with the past, as Sigurður had intended. Perhaps the most interesting example of this was the way in which Iceland's first female president (1980—1996), Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, deliberately played on the image of the *Fjallkona*, something she had a special right to do not only as an independent single woman representing the nation, but also on the basis of her earlier role as head of the city theatre. Arguably this blend of cultural and national head, seen not only in Vigdís' occasional use of national costume, but also in the way she regularly deliberately made use of national imagery in her speeches,[36] helped give Vigdís as a person an enduring element of the supernatural and the symbolic which no other Icelandic president has yet attained.

Equally interesting is the fact that Iceland's first female Prime Minister (2009—2013), Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir never made use of the costume to the best of my knowledge, perhaps because, as a politician,[37] taking on the role of the *Fjallkona* might have been somewhat risky, and even presumptuous.[38] As noted at the start, the *Fjallkona* as a central figure in Icelandic national ritual is clearly meant to represent a *different* side of Icelandic nation to the political which, standing nearby in the ritual performative space, has tended to be male, dressed up in suits and ties, and is naturally closely bound up with the economic and the present.

Bearing in mind the poetic speeches given by the Icelandic "Mountain Woman" over time, it is interesting to note how quickly she got over

the apparent nervous breakdown and insecurity she experienced in 2009 when she desperately reached back into the distant cultural past for textual support. A year later, in 2010, she was clearly back to her earlier form, with a newly-created confident national poem about culture, nature and links to the past, and she has maintained this stance annually ever since. Arguably what this reflected was a realisation that whatever damage the Icelandic politicians and bankers had done to the Icelandic image in the present, the *Fjallkona*, as a representative of culture, history and nature, clad in a national costume that refers back to Viking tradition, could stand firm. One might indeed argue that the continuing appearance of the *Fjallkona* in front of the Icelandic Parliament on the Icelandic national day had become for people a reassuring sign of hope for the future of the Iceland, something that the politicians standing beside her have had more difficulty in offering the nation. While she may be invented, and may be old fashioned, the nationally dressed *Fjallkona* is, at least, seen as being trustworthy and enduring, as the best of traditions usually are. She has no reason to apologise.

Notes

1. Part of this article appeared in a slightly different form and in a different context in Gunnell 2012. All translations from Icelandic are by the author. I would also like to express my enduring thanks to Karl Aspelund for reading over a draft of the article, for giving a number of very useful comments, for pointing out a number of important references that had escaped my attention, and not least for helping me find the coloured image of the *Fjallkona*. Thanks are also due to Olga Holownia and Emily Lyle for their careful proofreading.

2. Text by Steingrímur Thorsteinsson (1831—1913).

3. Text by Matthías Jochumsson (1835—1920).

4. Text by Hulda (1881—1946); composed to commemorate independence in 1944.

5. Text by Jón Trausti (1873—1918).

6. Programme for 17th of June 2016 celebrations in Reykjavík. Available at http://17juni.is/english (last accessed on December 3, 2016).

7. Since 1874, when Iceland received its own constitution, August 1st had been used for various national celebrations (Árni Björnsson 1996: 209—214; 1995: 50—51).

8. Both Steingrímur Thorsteinsson and Matthías Jochumsson are viewed as "national poets." *Ó Guð vors lands* was written for the millennium celebrations of

Iceland's settlement in 1874; while *Hver á sér fegra föðurland* was one of two poems that won a competition related to Iceland's gaining of independence in 1944. *Ég vil elska mitt land* was dedicated to the members of the Icelandic parliament in 1901.

9. Exceptions to this general rule were the presence of Vigdís Finnbogadóttir as President between 1980 and 1996; and Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir as Prime Minister of a left-wing coalition government in 2009—2013 (following the financial crash). During these periods, women were clearly at the forefront of the formal national celebrations on Austurvöllur.

10. Note that in the following the form "Fjallkona"/"fjallkona" will be used when referring to a name used or a quote (capitals only being used when reference is made to the recognised national *Fjallkona*). Otherwise, the form will be given in italics (the *Fjallkona*). The form with the article (*Fjallkonan*/"Fjallkonan") is only used when that is part of a quote, in which case the English article is dropped.

11. For a list of names of those acting the *Fjallkona*, see Fjallkonan. Available at http://17juni.is/fjallkonan (last accessed on December 3, 2016). See also Klemenz Jónsson 1994.

12. It is worth noting that when the artist Elizabeth Jericho Baumann (1819—1881) painted a national image of Denmark in 1851, she too chose a female image ("Moder Danmark"): see Elisabeth Jerichau Baumann. Available at https://da.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elisabeth_Jerichau_Baumann (last accessed on December 3, 2016). At the same time, Icelandic national poets also used the idea of Iceland as a fatherland ("föðurland"), something clearly apparent in the national songs sung or played on the national day: see above. Note that Halldór Gíslason's article "Fjallkonan: Myndbirting hennar og rætur" used to be on his web site which was last accessed in 2008, http://www.dorigislason.com/aglite/filevault/fjallkonanmyndbirting.pdf but is unfortunately no longer available.

13. See further Halink 2014 with regard to the idea that one reason for stressing the mountain aspect was to underline the physical difference between Iceland and Denmark.

14. The idea of using the poetic image of a human figure to symbolise the nation was praised by Herder (von Herder 2004: 119—120) (written 1796).

15. See Eggert Ólafsson 1832: 9—29, see especially pp. 9 and 26—27. On the influence of this image on other poets of the time, see further: Fjallkona Eggerts og fjölnismenn. Available at http://jonashallgrimsson.is/index.php?page=fjallkona-eggerts-og-fjoelnismenn (last accessed on December 3, 2016).

16. The poetic image of the "Fjallkona" sitting beside "Saga" (History) on a throne and calling her sons to battle was also used by the Icelanders in Copenhagen in their "Kveðja Íslendinga í Höfn til Konugsfulltrúa og Alþingismanna, vorið 1849" (Greetings from the Icelanders in Copenhagen to the Royal Representatives and Members of Parliament, spring 1849): see *Norðurfari* 1849: 170—171.

17. The word *hamingja* (sing.) directly represents fortune or luck.

18. For the suggestion that the Powell originally designed the image for Zwecker, see Drawings and Water Colours / WD456. Iceland. Available at http://museum.aber.ac.uk/object/WD456 (last accessed on December 3, 2016). See, however, Árni Björnsson 2007 and Árni Björnsson and Halldór Jónsson 1984, where Eiríkur is credited as designing the image. Here one can also see a letter written by Eiríkur to Jón Sigurðsson on 11th April 1866 in which Eiríkur comments on the symbolism of the image (the runestaves representing the nation's literature and history, the ocean representing time and history). With regard to the choice of Zwecker as an artist, it might be noted that Zwecker had earlier illustrated a translation of some works by Hans Christian Andersen. It is particularly interesting to compare this image with the image of "Die Sagen" drawn by the German artist Wilhelm von Kaulbach (1805—1874) for the 1865 edition of the Grimm's *Deutsche Sagen*, which depicts another woman in a very similar pose (sitting on a Stone Age grave, with birds about her head, a stave in her hand, and archaeological artefacts at her feet): see Grimm 1865 (frontispiece). The fact that both Kaulbach and Zwecker were educated in Dusseldorf; that Zwecker made an engraving of a drawing of "Alexis und Dora" by von Kaulbach (see The British Museum. Collection online. Alexis und Dora. Available at http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1646197&partId=1 (last accessed on December 3, 2016); and that both images refer to collections of folk tales (the original Icelandic collection having been dedicated to Jacob Grimm) suggests that this was no coincidence. Indeed as noted above, the two figures (Saga and the *Fjallkona*) were placed together in a poem in 1849.

19. This expression was also used with regard to the national costume by Sigurður Guðmundsson at a meeting of the so-called *Kveldfélag* society (see below). See Sigurður Guðmundsson málari og menningarsköpun á Íslandi 1857—1874. Available at https://sigurdurmalari.hi.is/ (last accessed December 3, 2016) (Þjóðminjasafn (National Museum) MS Lbs 486_4to, 091r).

20. Drawings and Water Colours / WD456. Iceland. Available at http://museum.aber.ac.uk/object/WD456 (last accessed on December 3, 2016).

21. For black and white and coloured versions of Benedikt Gröndal's image, see Stock Photo—Benedikt Gröndal's millennial card 1874. Available at http://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-benedikt-grndals-millennial-card-1874-54940042.html (last accessed on December 3, 2016); and Gallerí Fold. Verk nr.36—Benedikt Gröndal (1826—1907). Available at http://www.myndlist.is/auction/WebAuctionItems.aspx?ItemID=4024 (last accessed on December 3, 2016). See also Fjallkonan. 1907. Ágúst 9. Available at http://timarit.is/view_page_init.jsp?issId=150340 (last accessed on December 3, 2016) for the image as it began to be used on the Reykjavík newspaper *Fjallkonan* in 1899.

22. The word *leikur* (lit. play) in Icelandic can refer to both theatre and sports.

23. See further the new Icelandic website on the activities of this group. Available at https://sigurdurmalari.hi.is/ (last accessed on December 3, 2016).

24. *"að gefa skáldskapnum fullkomnari stefnu og eins til að spana men (sic) til að leika"* (Lárus Sigurbjörnsson 1954: 31; Gunnell 2012: 311).

25. *"menta þjóðina í skáldskap, söng, músík, sína mönnum alla helstu þjóðsiði á öllum öldum, bæði andlega og útvortis, og stirkja með því þjóðernið vort meira…"* (Lárus Sigurbjörnsson 1954: 30; Gunnell 2012: 312).

26. According to Sveinn Einarsson (1991: 344), *Nýársnóttin* was first shown in the Icelandic settlement of Winnipeg in the 1880s.

27. As is stressed in Gunnell 2012, the idea of an "elven" kingdom is otherwise comparatively alien to Icelandic folklore.

28. Note the *ljóðaháttr* verse forms here, and the direct references to the poem *Darraðarljóð* contained in the Icelandic family saga, *Njáls saga* ("sópum og sópum" [brush, brush], cf. "vindum vindum" [wind, wind] in the saga).

29. See also Sigurður's poem "Faldafestir" from 1859 in Sigurður Guðmundsson and Guðrún Gísladóttir 1878: 15—23, in which the symbolic connections between the costume and the landscape are underlined. Similar ideas are reflected in a manuscript on the national costume written by Sigurður (Þjóðminjasafn MS SG:05:8 Um þjóðbúninga).

30. "Vjer álfar erum ímyndanir fólksins / og höfum ávalt lifað hjer á landi / … Álfar eru hin leynda sál og líf í kletti og hólum/ sem fólkið skapar" (Indriði Einarsson 1907: 181—182).

31. As Sveinn Einarsson (1996: 299) notes, Halldór Briem's play was also described in a Winnipeg journal when it first appeared in print. See also 1890. Fyrstu leiksýningar Íslendinga í Vesturheimi. Available at http://www.leikminjasafn.is/greinar/1890/ (last accessed on December 3, 2016).

32. Interestingly enough, the first official Icelandic appearance of the *Fjallkona* "as" the *Fjallkona* was in 1939, when she appeared alongside a Miss America and a Miss Canada at a "Western Icelander" day held at Þingvellir in Iceland (the idea having been directly borrowed from Winnipeg by the politician Jónas Jónsson frá Hriflu): see Árni Björnsson 2007 and *Fálkinn* 1939.

33. Fjallkonan. Available at http://17juni.is/fjallkonan (last accessed on December 3, 2016).

34. *"Veit þá engi að eyjan hvíta / átt hefir daga, þá er fagur / frelsisröðull á fjöll og hálsa / fagurleiftrandi geislum steypti; / veit þá engi að oss fyrir löngu / aldir stofnuðu bölið kalda, / frægðinni sviptu, framann heftu, / svo föðurláð vort er orðið að háði"*. Fjallkona 2009. Available at http://eldri.reykjavik.is/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-4516/7744_view-4654/ (last accessed on December 3, 2016); see also Jónas Hallgrímsson 1945: 57—58. The following verse stresses the continuing existence of hope, as long as people continue to trust in God: *"Veit þá engi að eyjan hvíta/ á sér enn vor, ef fólkið þorir/ guði að treysta…."*

35. About Yohanna. Available at http://www.eurovision.tv/page/history/year/participant-profile/?song=24716 (last accessed on December 3, 2016).

36. Vigdís Finnbogadóttir. Available at http://english.forseti.is/FormerPresidents/VigdisFinnbogadottir/ (last accessed on December 3, 2016).

37. In Iceland, the role of the President is seen as being more cultural and symbolic than political.

38. Karl Aspelund also points out in the private communication noted earlier (2nd September 2015) that one should also consider the fact that the coifed national costume has many class connotations, and that Jóhanna's grandmother, Jóhanna Egilsdóttir, "was a very active anti-capitalist and advocate for workers' rights and known for wearing *peysuföt*, like many of the early twentieth century women who fought for workers and women" (*peysuföt* being a more common form of "national" dress. Jóhanna may thus have personally disliked the idea of wearing the coifed costume.

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