

## The Liquid Island

*The sea is rolling – one,  
The sea is rolling – two,  
The sea is rolling – three.  
Sea shape, freeze! Sea shape, move!  
(A Russian game)*

We are cold in the congealed, browned off scapes of spaceless flatlands, in smeared out cities, in the bowels of the mounted sea bottom. So cold, that in order to feel the beat of life we have to move and alter all the time. We talk on the phone overtaking the speed of sound; we take transatlantic flights competing with the Earth's rotation. We change the climate, citizenships and lovers; we modify our haircuts, bodies and children – and suffer from fear and dullness.

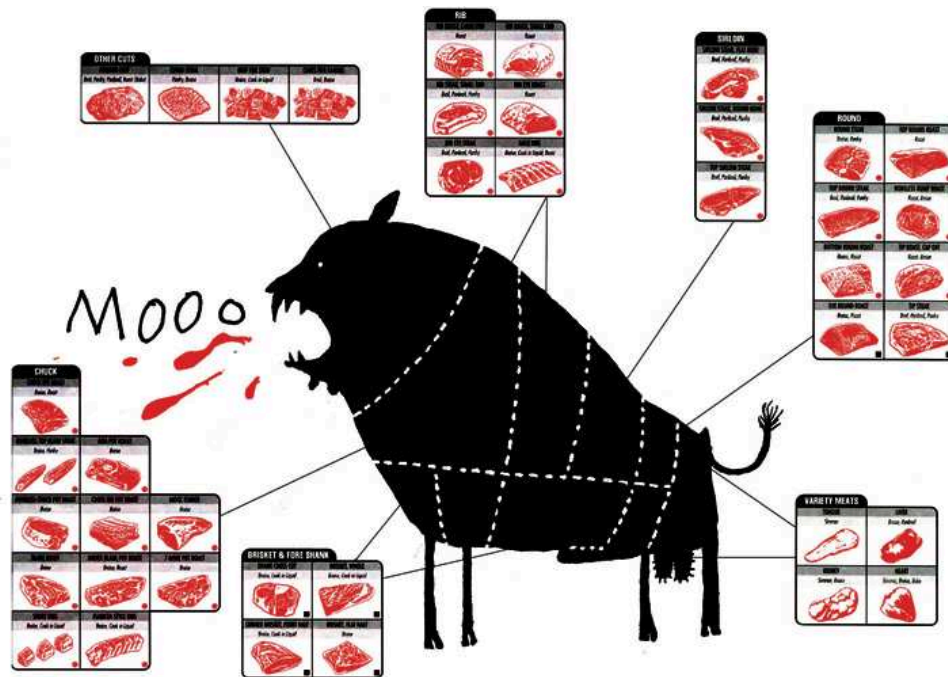
In captivity of the continental barathrums we, like polar bears, go berserk, degenerate and start fearing water. Instead of the seal of life we enjoy a teddy substitute of the Internet. But, same as polar bears, we are lured by our natural habitat – a thin girdle between politically divided land and the global ocean that thrashes towards us through chains of enchained rivers, waterlogged basements and dripping roofs.

Here, along the liquid coast of the ocean, everything is flowing at the same speed as our blood: rolling waves, causeways of waterfalls and rainbows at the elements' edges, sunny spotlights on the slopes of hills, climbing clouds and fog. The ocean reworks both the reflection and the reflected giving us the freedom not to change anything ourselves – and to fear no changes. Washed alive again, stars, triangles, circles, and other sea shapes recuperate and mosaic new pictures of being and consciousness.

The watersheds divide cultures where we stop adjusting reality to ourselves or adjusting ourselves to reality and start sponging the firewater of life. The fetters of dehydration dissolve in the bays of the Greenland Sea, in laving lava fields, in the craters of Hekla and Krafla. Everything changes, but does not change its essence on the liquid, hot island in the very south of the Arctic Ocean.

It rises from the clefts on the shelves of Europe and America, from the coasts of the Lake Baikal, on the Tibetan Plateau, in optical illusions of Sahara, in the light of the liquid star of Venus-Freyja. I can see this island from the windows of a Moscow apartment, from an aircraft ladder in the Charles de Gaulle airport, in the congress-hall of a Kuwaiti hotel. I know that Johannesburg's skyscrapers, black soils of the Russian steppes, Indian jungles and Appalachian ridges also can be liquid, and I warm them with the breath of Iceland.

I wash my face with Drangajökull's ice, I bathe in the columnar faceted basalt of Spákonufellshöfði, I raise the glass of black volcanic sand. Skál! 🇮🇸



## More Monsters and Mythical Beings:

*Porgeirsboli is a Real Evil Piece of Work*

***"We've got this database of monsters and creatures in our past. A lot of their stories are fascinating, it's a shame that they're not used more in modern culture," remarked comic artist Hugleikur Dagsson in an interview this summer. This prompted the Grapevine to draft Dagsson to illustrate a series of articles on these monsters of yore. For the sixth instalment in the series, Dagsson chose to illustrate "Iceland's most vicious ghost", the über-scary ghost-bull PORGEIRSBOLI.***

Porgeirsboli is an unholy construct, an abomination in the face of God and nature. Bred of hate and jealousy, Porgeirsboli did its maker's evil bidings for as long as he lived, remaining loyal to

his clan long after he passed. Or that's how the story goes.

Most sources say the ghost-bull was created in the mid-1800s by a fellow named Porgeir Stefánsson (others cite him as "Jónsson"), who found himself in a state of satanic frustration when a would-be flame rejected his advances. Not one to easily accept defeat (nor very tactful, apparently), Porgeir decided the best way of dealing with rejection was to manifest an evil spirit to haunt the object of his affection.

Some sources claim Porgeir created his beast by flaying a calf so that it dragged its hide by its tail before adding to the mix elements of dog, man, cat, mouse, bird, air and two sea creatures – thus allowing the evil entity to reach wide and far, taking the form of all these beings. Others say he made the beast by placing a dog's leg inside a flayed calf's head and reciting evil poetry over them. Either way, once Porgeirsboli was manifest it immediately started haunting the unfortunate woman who'd turned down its creator, eventually

driving her to an early grave.

After that accomplishment, Porgeirsboli reportedly followed his maker, ensuring that no one who pissed him off got a good night's sleep. He soon grew infamous; tales of frightful Porgeirsboli encounters are legion in Icelandic folklore. Some say the bull followed its makers' family for generations, causing an unholy chaos when it saw fit, whether it was looking after his keepers' best interests or not.

The bull's presence was often sensed late at night in the countryside, when his dark, devastating moos would rumble the earth. Those who've seen him and lived to describe it have reported him appearing as a dog, a cat, and a string of fog, although most see a skeleton-bull dragging his bloody loose skin behind him on its tail. Some say Porgeirsboli is still grazing somewhere in the Icelandic countryside, so steer clear of any stray cattle you may encounter on hikes and camping trips, especially if they give out a demonic, dark, earth-rumbling moo sound. 🇮🇸

## Training For a Cagefight

It is raining and cold on this soggy Tuesday, but when entering the Martial Arts school, Mjöllnir, at Mýrargata, it is hot! Thirty men and women are doing pull-ups, lifting weights or boxing sandbags. All you hear is some pumping jams and sporadic pained groaning. Tuesday's course is 'Combat Conditioning.' "These are hard classes but they are very functional" says Arnar Freyr Vigfússon, one of the founders of Mjöllnir. "You get explosiveness, endurance and power. Useful attributes for every martial art."

At the school by Reykjavík's harbour, a wide variety of courses are offered: Brazilian jiu jitsu, kickboxing and wrestling (and their cagefight-combination 'mixed martial arts' aka MMA), and also fitness programs like the aforementioned combat conditioning. Mjöllnir members do hold all the courses. "We rent the facilities to other groups as well, like a Capoeira group, which is a traditional Brazilian fight dance or a Kettlebell-training group," Arnar states.

It all began with a seminar held by Matt Thornton, the president of 'Straight Blast Gym International', an American MMA association. Arnar and his colleagues, all disciples of traditional martial arts for years, took part and were disappointed at first. "We had to see that all our techniques didn't work in a real fight." They decided to form a school for functional instead of fantasy-based martial arts with their hierarchies and rituals. "In our training, your abilities and hard training count, not titles. Also, we always discuss which techniques worked and which didn't after class."

James Davis, from Portland, Oregon, tells a similar story: "As a kid, I took Judo. When I wanted to rise to the next level, my sensei gave me a piece of paper with Japanese words I had to learn and proper belt tying techniques. Even as a kid, I asked myself what this had to do with Judo?" Though Davis continued training, he practiced wrestling and boxing as well and joined the Straight Blast Gym in 2004, where he became an instructor. This brought him to Iceland in August. "The guys from Mjöllnir came to Portland for six months for training. We became friends and ever since then I wanted to come to Iceland." Davis is currently the assistant teacher for the next three months until his visa ends. Once that happens though he will return soon. "Everyone is so nice here. And the students are very eager to learn, which makes coaching a lot of fun." 🇮🇸

