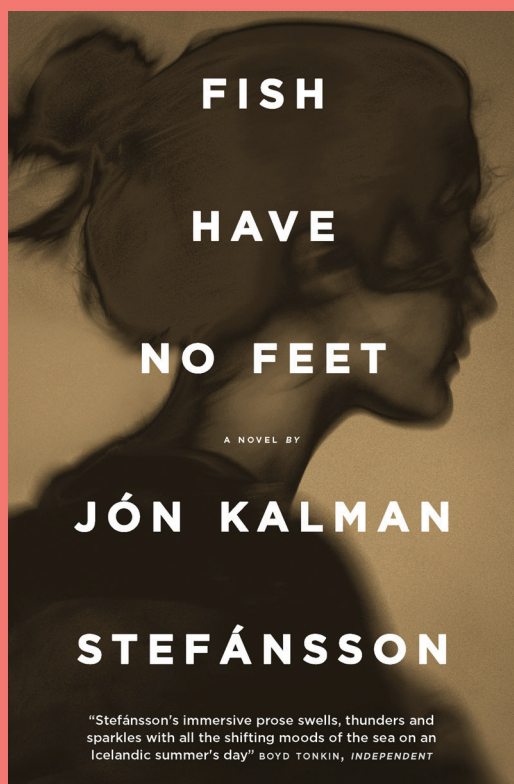




Reader's Guide



Other novels by Jón Kalman Stefánsson
The Sorrow of Angels (2012)
Heaven and Hell (2016)

Fish Have No Feet Jón Kalman Stefánsson

Translated by Philip Roughton

MacLehose Press

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About the author

Jón Kalman Stefánsson was born in Reykjavík in 1963. He is the 2011 winner of the P.O. Enquist Award and his novels have been nominated three times for the Nordic Council Prize for Literature. His novel *Summer Light, and then Comes the Night* received the Icelandic Prize for Literature. Spellbound Productions are making a film of his trilogy of novels, *Heaven and Hell*, *The Sorrow of Angels* and *The Heart of Man*. He lives in Iceland.

About the translator

Philip Roughton is a scholar of Old Norse and medieval literature and an award-winning translator of modern Icelandic literature, having translated works by numerous Icelandic writers, including the Nobel prize-winning author Halldór Laxness. His translation of *The Islander: A Biography of Halldór Laxness* by Halldór Guðmundsson was published by MacLehose Press in 2008. Born in the US in 1965, he now lives in Iceland.

About the book

Keflavik: a town that has been called the darkest place in Iceland, surrounded by black lava fields, hemmed in by a sea that may not be fished. Its livelihood depends entirely on a U.S. military base, a conduit for American influences that shaped Icelandic culture and ethics from the 1950s to the dawn of the new millennium.

It is to Keflavik that Ari – a writer and publisher – returns from Copenhagen at the behest of his dying father, two years after walking out on his wife and children. He is beset by memories of his youth, spent or misspent listening to Pink Floyd and the Beatles, fraternising with American servicemen – who are regarded by the locals with a mixture of admiration and contempt – and discovering girls. There is one girl in particular he could never forget – her fate has stayed with him all his life.

Discussion points

Fish Have No Feet is a novel about a rapidly changing environment, but one with strong traditions. What are the influencers of change, and in what light does the author portray them?

Three generations are portrayed in the novel in a kind of triptych, and sometimes in stark contrast. Which did you most enjoy reading about, and why?

'Humanity is ephemeral, our lives birds' song, seagulls' cries, then silence' – Stefánsson's novels are full of such statements, which hint at the presence of a higher power. Does one have to be religious to appreciate them?

Jón Kalman Stefánsson is a poet as well as a novelist. To what extent do the landscape and themes lend themselves to poetry?

Did *Fish Have No Feet* make you want to visit Iceland?

Themed reading

Halldor Laxness *Independent People*
P. O. Enquist *The Parable Book*
Auður Ava Ólafsdóttir *Butterflies in November*
Muse Sjon *The Whispering*
Heðin Brú *The Old Man and his Sons*
Per Petterson *I Curse the River of Time*