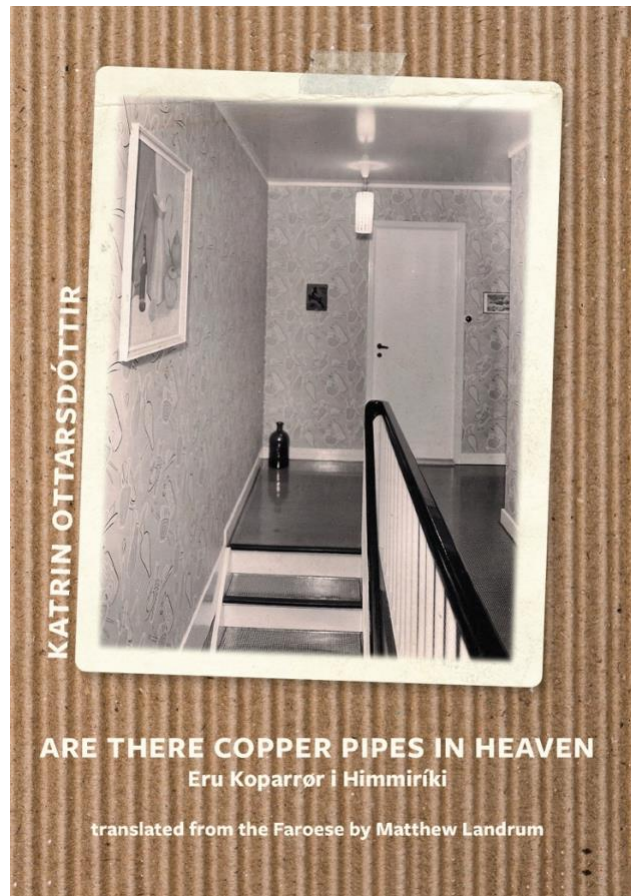


Are there Copper Pipes in Heaven

**NTM Premiere: New Poems by Katrin Ottarsdóttir
Translated from the Faroese by Matthew Landrum**



Continuing our tradition of publishing women in translation, we're excited to present a selection of **new Faroese poetry** translated by the accomplished poet and translator **Matthew Landrum** with **Sámal Soll**. Acclaimed Faroese filmmaker **Katrin Ottarsdóttir's** first collection, *Are there Copper Pipes in Heaven* ([Operating System/Unsilenced Texts](#), 2020) is a family portrait of abuse, addiction, and mental illness. This autobiographical work is the first book of confessional poetry in Faroese literature. It is the first complete book of poetry translated from Faroese and published in English—and we're happy to feature Ottarsdóttir's poignant poetry in premiere at NTM.

We'd love to hear from you! Let us know how you like our picks and what other works you'd like to see us publish. Follow us on Twitter [@TranslateMonth](#), tag us [@TranslateMonth](#) and share using [#TranslationMonth](#), join our mailing list, submit a translation month event, or like our [Facebook](#) page.

—*Claudia Serea and Loren Kleinman*

THE DEAD

do not fear the dead before you die

they are only dead

you are only living

maybe it is written in secret annals

the book of the dead who look forward to your arrival

you

only you

everyone that you touched along the way through the unforgettable drama

that became your own

verily it is written

all those who carry a grudge against you

the ones you didn't want to dance with

the ones whose feet you somehow stepped on with your truculent steel heels

mostly accidentally

sometimes on purpose

maybe they are just waiting for a chance to tell you

what a fucker you are

how fucking useless you've always been

maybe they're only waiting to taste sweet revenge

and make eternity intolerable for you

you were always so peculiar

so fucking within yourself
reserved like the plague itself
never needing anyone else

verily it is written in invisible books
that all the dead are there
the sense of them is all-consuming
when you step across that threshold of thresholds
many of them will not be kind
particularly mothers and fathers who stand ready with familiar accusations
you know by heart

but this time there's no way out
you can't just run away
get the hell out of here
like a migrating bird with one-way ticket to nowhere

there await accusations and anger
eternal anger
and denial
for you
just for you

CHEESE RINDS

someone is throwing cheese rinds to the dog beneath the kitchen window

red wax with yellow cheese residue

in green grass

a glossy picture with all the wrong colors

but the child gets there first

the quiet child

the one nobody knows how to handle

not even the dog

who didn't get any cheese rinds that day

because the child is like a no-one

and no-ones make adults and dogs uneasy

makes them forget

that solitary children

may also be happy children

for a very short while

while the child in the lush green grass

picks bits of yellow cheese off red wax rinds

feeling pleasure thrum through their small body

the adults only see the dog who gets nothing

ARE THERE COPPER PIPES IN HEAVEN

do they still use copper pipes

or are they banned because she used them

to terrorize him

anyone can learn to use copper pipes to terrorize someone

beg god for a two-story house

a man who locks himself in the basement

looking for fugitive rest in a narrow room

right beneath the kitchen

don't forget the copper pipes

the man doesn't dare count the darkened hours

because the banished sun will surprise him again

and you must always be ill-tempered and insomniac

when the fight is finished and you've once again

beat him back into himself

or have attacked him with a knife

and he wounded in body and soul has gone to sleep in the basement

turn on all the faucets

let the water creak its dizzying angel song through golden copper pipes

and don't forget to flush all the toilets at the same time

so that the heavenly demon will gurgle in the cisterns

unceasingly

the kitchen is the grand finale
let the faucet sharpen its glass-shard spear on the steel sink
please don't turn it up too much
let the water stream spine-snappingly sharp
so it becomes unbearable
unavoidable
just over the head of the man
who is still fumbling for a pitiless sleep

the chair's restless metal feet are waiting too
drag them across the floor
teeth-grindingly against the linoleum
again and again
and again
all night

do it all night long
you're up to the task

the stage is set
your heavenly stage
it's all down to you now
you and the countless yards of thin copper pipe
inside the walls
and beneath the floorboards of the house
to set the balance
make the water sing just the right

ominous tune

so lovely

so endlessly sad to the ears

his ears

as he lies awake staring at the ceiling

just below you and the kitchen

his big dry eyes

unable to ask

why

as they sink into a stiffened resin flux on the wooden ceiling

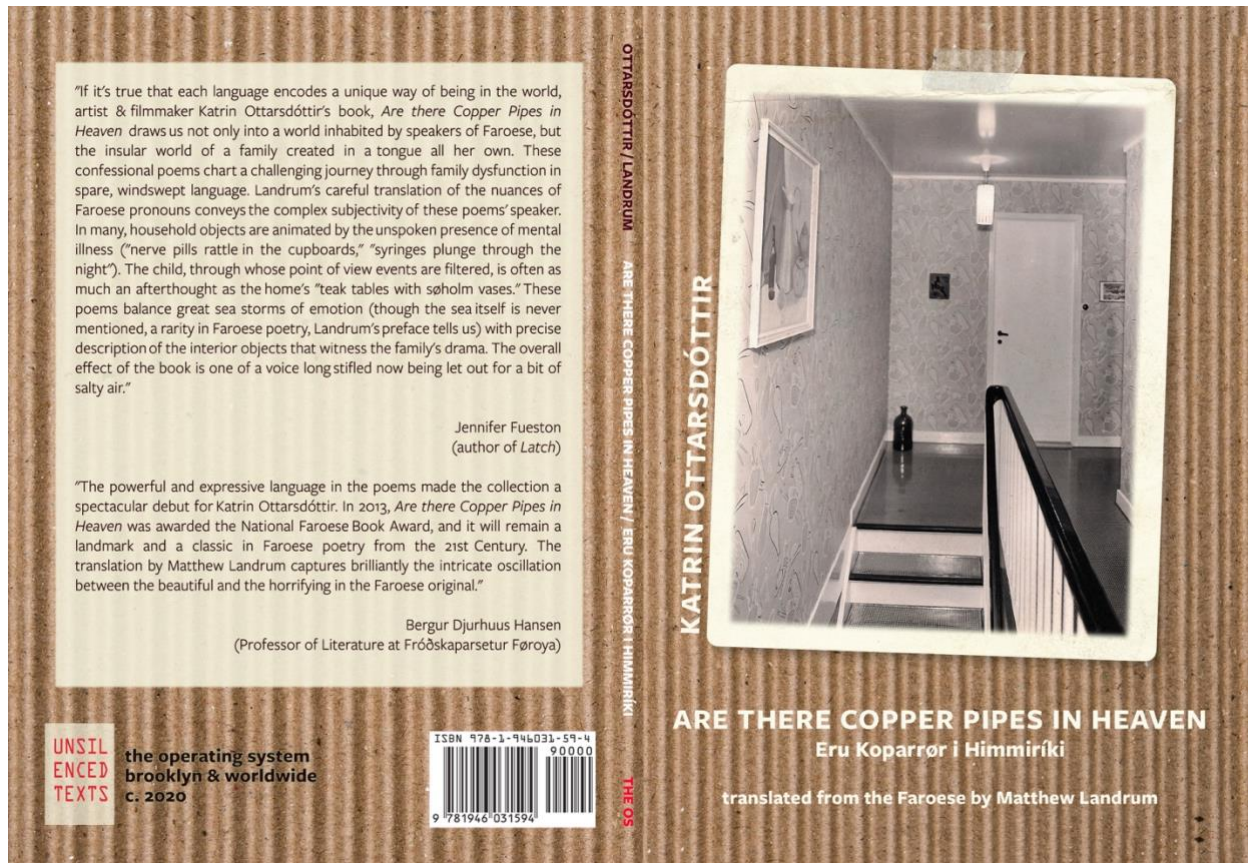
and he forgets any thought of the child

who is lying alone in between the copper pipes

singing to themselves so they will remember

everything

About the book



Acclaimed Faroese filmmaker **Katrin Ottarsdóttir's** first collection, *Are there Copper Pipes in Heaven* ([Operating System/Unsilenced Texts](#), 2020) is a family portrait of abuse, addiction, and mental illness. This autobiographical work is the first book of confessional poetry in Faroese literature. It is the first complete book of poetry translated from Faroese and published in English.



About the author

Katrin Ottarsdóttir is a pioneer in Faroese filmmaking and has made several feature films, documentaries, shorts etc., e.g. the award winning feature films *Atlantic Rhapsody* (1989), *Bye Bye Blue Bird* (1999), and *LUDO* (2014). Born 1957 in Tórshavn, Faroe Islands, she studied film directing at the National Danish Film School. She debuted as a writer in 2012 with the poetry collection *Are There Copper Pipes In Heaven* (awarded the Faroese Literature Award 2013). In 2015 she published the poetry collection *Mass For A Film*, and in 2016 a collection of short stories, *After Before*.

About the translators



Matthew Landrum is the author of *Berlin Poems* (A Midsummer Night's Press). His translations from Faroese have recently appeared in *Asymptote Journal*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Image*, and *Modern Poetry in Translation*. He lives in Detroit.



Sámal Soll is a Faroese writer and translator. His short story collection *Glasbúrið* was published in 2015. He has an MA degree in English Language and Literature from Aalborg University in Denmark and has just completed a degree in Faroese Language at the Faroese University in the Faroe Islands. He is currently working on a translation of Ernest Hemingway's *In Our Time*. You can read more about his work at www.samalsoll.wordpress.com.