In 1998, Minnesota writer and teacher Bill Holm bought himself a house called Brimnes in Hvalfjörður, a small vil-
lage a half-hour’s drive from the town of Sauðárkrókur in northern Iceland. He began to spend his summer vacations there, playing the piano, writing, watch-
ing the mountains on the other side of Snaefellsnes, entertaining visitors and getting to know his neighbours and his own Icelandic roots (which were actually in Vopnafjörður). Bill Holm died at the age of sixty-five in February 2009, leaving this book behind as a record of his connection with Iceland.

In Hvalfjörður, Bill Holm summered here, so his Iceland is a bright, magical place full of creativity and celebration. He speaks about beauti-
ful things: horses, folktales, birdswatching, writers, poets, musicians, and friends. He knows that Iceland will be strange and es-
tate to many who visit, so he blends in with some of the beginning stuff that we’ll all find funny: for instance, the boke, a book而成 by name, first special tilb, is how the moon astronaut trained here, how homestore is better than you think, and how great it is that there are no mos-
quitos in Iceland.

The first and the sweetest of a country is typical of ethnic literature in America. Indian-Americans wrote beautifully about teeto and nibilla. Scottish-Ameri-
cans shared up the shorthand-haggie industry. Native readers of this talk, but must understand that this kind of talk is what makes Diaspora members feel like they belong to some place by a visit.

Holm saw untapped value in small communities, whose neighborhoods fascinated and comforted him. His 1996 book The Heart of Be Jailed Anywhere on Earth argues that one can lead a full and satisfying life in Minnesota, Minne-
sota (population 1500), its hometown. Windows of Brimnes is an ode to the way of life in Hvalfjörður and Skagafjörður. Holm has a little appetite for Reykjavík, which he regrets, “is now a real city.”

Just when the reader is ready to dismiss Holm as hopelessly in the grip of what Jim Rice has called the iodine-is- wonderful discourse, comes the book’s last essay, “Tug.” In it, Holm recognizes that he has presented an image of Iceland distilled in “whipped cream and jam.” Writing well before the bank collapse, he proposes that Icelanders “adorned, informed, and humourous” is also mixed with “vulgar, aim-
siness, and greed.” He especially criticiz-
es aluminium processing and the dam at Kálfshamarskirkja, which he says amounts to the deflowering of the Icelandic landscape.

Regardless of one’s stance towards smokers and dams, this is a welcome recognition that life in Iceland is not just a midsummer idyll. There is also an Icel-
land where trust is raised in bonds, not fished from lakes and streams; few people write, and fewer still, farm; and daily life is like elsewhere, building on the local and moral and uncertainty and disparity. So far, Icelandic fiction writers such as Arnaldur Indriðason and Hallgrímur Helgason have explored this Iceland better than any foreign observers.

Key to Holm’s loss of Iceland is that Iceland was his refuge from the distur-
bances of the American national soul. Holm was a freethinking Christian rather than the kind of Christian that a roller-baller rather than a dissenter, an observer rather than a warmaker, and someone who ques-
tions what he was told to believe. He felt that in Iceland, society shared his values, or at least, more than in America.

Iceland is, in truth, a delectable and contentious land where public discourse is not always the blood of the anonymous. A recurring theme is whether Iceland should become more like the United States or more like Europe – in areas as diverse as health care finance, national defence, In-
ternet commerce, eating habits, city plann-
ing, gender politics, and alcohol sales. I think Holm was probably kindness-
less about the attention he received in Iceland, and nevertheless decided against making Win-
dows of Brimnes a book about the country in all moods and months of the year.

Indeed, I suspect that there are a lot of women who will like Holm’s sweeter, creamier tale, and that Windows of Brimmes will age well. It’s already not in paperback. I had a good time reading it, and I can say it’s one of the better Icelandic books on the market – a concise and read-
able introduction to the place. Holm is the new North Atlantic.

- BY IAN WATSON

Born in Minnesota in 1943, Bill Holm taught writing at Southeastern Minnesota State University for ten years and has written several books of poems and essays, including Ecotourism, Is-
lands, The Heart Can Be Filled with Songbirds on Earth, Playing the Black Piano, and the in-

In 2007, Milkweed Editions published a gen-
eral first-edition hardcover book, Windows of Brimnes. This 196-page book is divided into three sections. The first two are essays about Iceland

- HILDUR KNUTSSON

This is the story of Paul. He was born in 1949, on the day that the Beatles’ Paul McCartney made his first public ap-
tearance. The band’s first hit, “Love Me Do,” was released the next day in Britain and Europe. Paul’s relationship with his father was strained from a young age. Paul’s father was a strict and unapproachable father who was always absent from home.

Paul started playing the piano at a young age and was quickly discovered by local musicians. He was invited to join a local band, The Tony Gods, and they soon became popular in their hometown. Paul’s writing skills were quickly noticed by local writers, and he was soon invited to contribute to their works.

Paul’s debut book, The Windows of Brimnes, was published in Iceland in 2007. The book was a succès de scandale and was quickly translated into several languages.

Paul’s writing is often compared to the works of Icelandic writers such as Arnaldur Indriðason and Hallgrímur Helgason, who are known for their dark and brooding style.

Paul’s works often explore themes such as family, love, and loss. His writing style is often described as poetic and introspective.

The book has received critical acclaim and has been translated into several languages. It has been published in English, German, French, and Spanish, among others.

Paul’s success has allowed him to travel the world and continue his work as a writer. He is currently working on his latest book, which is set to be published in 2023.