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Review of *Hawk Flies Above: Journey to the Heart of the Sandhills* By Lisa Dale Norton

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Hawk Flies Above: Journey to the Heart of the Sandhills. By Lisa Dale Norton. New York: Picador, 1996. xv + 219 pp. \$22.00 cloth, \$12.00 paper.

"I realize that I am being seduced by memories," Lisa Dale Norton informs us, "that the task at hand has slipped behind the mirage of the past. . . . This place is lined with my stories. It has the power of home, and any tale I can tell is woven with knowledge I carry from a childhood spent exploring sandy prairie."

There are moments of loss in our lives when an unexpected song on the radio replays haunting fragments of our past. There are moments of joy when the scent of melting snow in spring rises like black earth freshly plowed, conjuring the magic of family and a time of innocence. There are moments in our lives full of such contradiction that sights, smells, and sounds interweave memories so intensely magical, so profoundly sorrowful, that only in their sorting and naming can we reclaim what we love. These are the best moments of *Hawk Flies Above*, Lisa Dale Norton's journey to the heart of the Nebraska Sandhills—part exploration of the ecology, part exploration of the soul. It is her story; yet reading it, I, too, became "seduced by memories," our stories intermingling in my mind.

I came to this book for purely academic reasons: to write a book review, just as Norton's own task began with her research for a master's paper. We each had a reasonable, rational purpose to come to words on a page. But as we immersed ourselves in stories of growing up

on the land, those tasks became harder to accomplish. For *Hawk Flies Above* is a journey of the heart; of emotion and intuition; of facing the stories of the past, both painful and joyful; and of finding a voice for those stories. It is also a story of conflict and resolution, as rational purpose fades into the background and needs of the soul take over—intuitively—for these stories must be spoken for the healing of the past to take place in the life of one woman, and for the healing of the land for future generations.

In this spirit I came to identify with Lisa Dale Norton's journey into the land, her struggles to name the contradictions of its existence, and her reliance on the intuitive power of telling stories that rise from the heart.

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