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Review of *The Snow Geese: A Story of Home* By William Hennes

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The Snow Geese: A Story of Home. By William Fiennes. New York: Random House, 2002. x + 253 pp. Map, references. \$24.95 cloth, \$12.95 paper..

William Fiennes is an Englishman who was struck by a serious illness in his twenty-fifth year. Following multiple surgeries, he required several months of convalescence, most of it occurring at his parents' home, from his earliest memories the stable touch point to his life. The remainder of this true story is built around themes of home, nostalgia for familiar surroundings, homesickness, and the quest that many organisms have to go home at critical junctures of their lives. The subtitle is more descriptive of the fascinating narrative that follows than is *The Snow Geese*.

During his extended recovery period Fiennes rediscovered a story about a snow goose that, by an accident of migration, ended up on the wrong side of the Atlantic Ocean. The story of that bird's annual departure in the spring from England and return in the fall triggered him to undertake an adventure on which he followed wild lesser snow geese for the full length of their spring migration from Texas to Canada's eastern Arctic—which he views as their home because they nest and raise their families there.

The journey starts in Eagle Lake, Texas, followed by extended stops at Sand Lake, South Dakota, the Portage Plains of southern Manitoba, Churchill, Manitoba, and finally Baffin Island in the Northwest Territories. His care in preparing for the trip is illustrated nicely by his accurate interpretation of many literature references on snow goose biology. For the specialist, no new insights about the geese are revealed. His descriptions of what the birds do, however, along with his appreciation of the unusual characters he meets and his unexpected and detailed observations of ordinary things, their form, and their utility, all combine to hold the reader in wonder of where his next flawless transition will lead. Most readers living along the route of the geese will recognize a lot in what he describes and be

fascinated by his views of the people, places, and things he touches.

This was a personal quest that Fiennes shares openly. Constantly drawn back to the people and places that surrounded him in his youth, he remains inextricably bound to those experiences. This reader sometimes felt like an intruder, learning about personal details that left a sense of lingering shadows preventing Fiennes from achieving his quest to reach and understand—home.

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