



# The Extraordinary Work of Ordinary Writing: Annie Ray's Diary

*Jennifer Sinor*

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Exciting and beautifully crafted, *The Extraordinary Work of Ordinary Writing* provides an entirely new way of viewing “ordinary writing,” the everyday writing we typically ignore or dismiss. It takes as its center the diary of Jennifer Sinor's great-great-great-aunt Annie Ray, a woman who homesteaded in the Dakotas in the late nineteenth century. Diaries such as this have long been ignored by scholars, who prefer instead to focus on diaries with literary features. Reading diaries through this lens gives privileged status to those that are coherently crafted and ignores the very diaries that define the form through their relentless inscription of dailiness.

Annie Ray's diary is not literary. By considering her ordinary writing as a site of complex and strategic negotiations among the writer, the form of writing, and dominant cultural scripts, Sinor makes visible the extraordinary work of the ordinary writer and the sophistication of these texts. In providing a way to read diaries outside the limits and conventions of literature, she challenges our approaches to other texts as well. Furthermore, because ordinary writing is not crafted for aesthetic reception (in contrast to autobiography proper, memoirs, and literary diaries), it is a productive site for investigating how both writing and culture get made every day.

The book is truly original in its form: nontraditional, storied, creative. Sinor, an accomplished creative writer, includes her own memories as extended metaphors in partnership with critical texts along with excerpts from her aunt's diary. *The Extraordinary Work of Ordinary Writing* will be a fascinating text for students of creative writing as well as of women's studies and diaries.

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