Bookshelf: Sky Songs

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Jennifer Sinor's Essays on Loving a Broken World

By: Kennedy Parker, CHaSS Communications Journalist

Professor of English and chair of USU's Creative Writing undergraduate emphasis, Jennifer Sinor, published a collection of essays in October 2020 called *Sky Songs*. The essays discuss the process and experience of loving a broken world. University of Nebraska Press, the publisher of "Sky Songs," wrote, "In these essays Sinor takes us through the mountains, deserts, and rivers of the West and along with her travels to India. Whether rooted in the dailiness of raising children or practicing yoga, Sinor searches for the places where grace resides."

In her own words, Sinor describes *Sky Songs* as a "collection of essays that moves from the external landscapes that surround us, to the internal landscapes of the heart. They center on the American West and what it means to raise children in the West. They also move between personal experience and various kinds of research."

Sinor did not intend to format *Sky Songs* as a collection of essays until late in the game. She began writing a singular essay about the conception of her son and the death of her uncle as the two events happened at the same time. As she continued writing, a series of essays began to form in chronological order of the experiences linked with her children getting older. The essays follow her children from when they were little to when they traveled to India together for the first time and they end with her son going to school at Logan High as a freshman.

"You know I wrote *Ordinary Trauma* and that is about my childhood and it actually ends with the birth [of my sons].

And so this one sort of picks up where *Ordinary Trauma* leaves off. It's not a linear memoir but it sort of moves chronologically and follows them growing up," said Sinor.

Sinor said that when others read *Sky Songs,* "One thing that I hope they will come to understand is that life is complicated. So a lot of the essays really wrestle with complicated things...what it means to live in the state of Utah, what it means to want to raise children and be a good parent but knowing that there are a lot of ways you are going to fall short, and ultimately what I would want people to be drawn to is the language itself which I've been really careful with my lines and I really hope that I create a lot of beautiful language. It matters a lot to me. I really hope they will be inspired by that. I also hope that they will also follow the arch which says that ultimately the world around us is imperfect but we ourselves are entirely perfect. We just have to recognize that,"

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