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From the Book and New Media Review Editor's Desk

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Book Reviews

From the Book and New Media Review Editor's Desk

Jessica Shumake, Editor

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There is much work to celebrate in this issue and there is much to learn about reinvigorating, sustaining, and uplifting one another at a moment when so much feels uncertain due to COVID-19. One highlight from my semester of social distancing includes sharing “pandemic readings” with fellow writing teachers in the writing program where I teach at the University of Notre Dame. My colleagues and I recorded ourselves reading selections from books, excerpts from novels, song lyrics, and poems. We shared words and passages we love to entertain one another, to offer commentary, and try to connect as we sat stuck in our home offices day after day. As I reflect on the practice of offering a motley assortment of pandemic readings within a community of writing teachers and fellow writers, I acknowledge that our creative output is the fruit of the privilege we all have of to social distance in our homes while warehouse workers, delivery drivers, transportation workers, grocery store employees, janitors, firefighters, medical providers, and many others do not have this choice.

The authors whose work is featured in this issue are keenly attentive to the inequalities that pervade our lives. The work assembled here seeks new ways to acknowledge and respond to inequality, injustice, non-reciprocal relations, and human frailty. Rosanne Carlo’s review of *Surrender: A Feminist Rhetoric and Ethics in Love and Illness* speaks to the fact that none of us “know how long we will be healthy.” Sherita V. Roundtree and Michael Shirzadian’s keyword essay describes how their volunteer experience, at the Karl Road Branch of the Columbus Metropolitan Library’s Homework Help Center, sheds light on “broader racial structures that position Black and Brown” elementary schoolers as distrustful of the goodwill of police, at an institutional level, due to betrayal and chronic racial disparities in policing. As Roundtree and Shirzadian show us through their engagement with meme-making as a method of meaning-making in community literacy spaces, “the libraries in Columbus are designated as third spaces or spaces where students spend the greatest amount of their time between school and home.”

In another example of community-engaged work, Anita Voorhees’ review of *Changing the Subject* thoughtfully examines the seemingly intractable divide between LGBTQ and evangelical Christian communities. Voorhees’ review aims to locate methods to bridge ideological divides and build empathy across difference through conversations that evince “respectful and mutual discourse.” Charisse S. Iglesias’ review of *Rewriting Partnerships* examines the tensions inherent in attempts to establish reciprocal community partnerships in and beyond the academy. Iglesias’ review is situated in the context of her own partnerships that involve high school and college

students, which challenge the university's epistemological authority "in hopes of making those partnerships more equitable, inclusive, and representative of both university *and* community needs and voices."

The voices assembled in this issue speak variously and multiply to their investment in the field of community writing. These writers' words—much like my own writing program colleagues' pandemic readings—have nourished me in a time of social distancing and have stoked my hope that our shared vision for equitable partnerships, mutuality, and reciprocity will be even stronger when we reemerge in the aftermath of so much illness, loss, and death.