

From the Book and New Media Review Editor's Desk

Jessica Shumake, Editor

University of Notre Dame

Stephen M. North laments that few others in rhetoric and composition share his sense of urgency regarding the genre of the book review and opines that book reviews, at their apogee, are “the occasion for vital, visible, memorable exchanges: the print equivalent, say, of the salon and/or the street corner, current and accessible” (349). Beyond being informative and evaluative, North states that reviews “give new voices a chance to be heard” (352). Further, North articulates that the book review is an uncertain genre because the writer’s audience is invisible in the sense that when reviewers write almost always *no one writes back*. In my capacity as an editor, I have, on occasion, heard back from authors who praise a reviewer’s careful reading, kindness, or thoroughness. I have also fielded legitimate grievances over misspelled names in an edited collection, which even my scrupulous attention to detail missed and which required an erratum. Overall, North’s observation that there is a lack of public authorial commentary on book reviews holds true. Furthermore, North sees the purpose of book reviews as an open question: are reviewers helping readers understand *how* to read a book or helping them *decide* whether or not to read it at all?

My purpose, in this issue, is to invite readers to find thought-provoking books to read. The six reviews assembled here span and traverse the following capacious domains: building literacy initiatives that center oral conversations and community needs; finding pleasure in shared family reading activities with young children; transnational feminist theory and activism; critical pedagogy, liberal arts education, and literacy learning in prison classrooms; queer rhetorical counter-literacy practices; and feminist historiography and literacy sponsorship. There is much reading delight to be had here and I hope these reviews open up possibilities for new thought to practitioners, students, activists, and scholars alike working in any area of community writing.

Works Cited

North, Stephen M. “On Book Reviews in Rhetoric and Composition.” *Rhetoric Review* 10.2 (1992): 348–363.