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BOOK REVIEW EDITORS

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BOOK REVIEW GUIDELINES: FICTION & NONFICTION

The primary function of *Colorado Review*'s book reviews is to bring attention to works that might not otherwise be noticed by the mainstream press. To that end, we're interested in reviews of books from **small, independent publishers and university presses** and books from **new and emerging writers**. We accept previously unpublished reviews of **short story collections, novels, and literary nonfiction** that, generally, have come out within the last year. We do not review work that has been self-published. All book reviews are featured on our website (though not in the print journal): <https://coloradoreview.colostate.edu/book-reviews/>. Reviewers are compensated with a one-year subscription to *Colorado Review*.

While there is certainly a space for negative book reviews, *Colorado Review* is not that space. If the book we've sent you is something you don't like—something about which you absolutely can't find anything positive to say—then please let us know. We'd be happy to send you a new book to review. This is not to say you should refrain from offering criticism, but simply that **we wish to recommend the books we choose for review**.

Genuine critical integrity requires profound generosity; **thinking about a book is a form of thankfulness for it**. A successful book review knows when thinking and thanking are a single gesture, the review a form of deliberation in the deepest sense, bending the freedom of the reviewer's mind to the necessity embedded in the book. It is humble and necessary work, one that furthers the gifted economy that for centuries has nourished literature by adding to and participating in the larger literary community.

The review should not only **treat the book's content critically**, but also give **a good sense of what the book is about**. While you should avoid spoilers, it's important to convey thematic elements and general plot—in short, offer a well-crafted **blend of summary and analysis**.

Please note that when we say we're looking for **book reviews**, we mean just that—**not scholarly criticism**. If you're unfamiliar with the distinction, please look to such publications as *Rain Taxi*, *Bookforum*, or the review section of *The New York Times* to get an idea of what we're looking for. The review should provide a sense of what the book is about and should be accessible to any reader of literature. If your review is rife with academic jargon, it's probably not what we're looking for.

Please don't send us a review of your friend's/colleague's/professor's/student's book. While you may have met the author at a conference or are perhaps even an acquaintance, **you should not have a relationship with the author** that will compromise your ability to praise and/or criticize the work objectively.

In summary, some guiding principles for *Colorado Review*'s book reviews:

- An effort to see the vision of a book across its entirety—**holistic**
- An effort to work on behalf of the book—**generous**
- An effort to ensure the review is accessible to other readers (and to this end, we encourage writing in the first person)—**accessible**

Traditional Book Reviews

FORMATTING AND OTHER MISCELLANY

- Aim for 750 to 1,000 words in your review.
- Please use Times New Roman, 12 point.
- We follow *The Chicago Manual of Style*.
- At the top of your review, please include the following publication information, formatted as follows:

Cloud Study, by Susan Jones-Carlson
Table Press, 2026
reviewed by Fiona Edwards

- Please triple check any quotations.
- The body of your review should be double spaced, but longer extracts (block quotations) should be set off using Word's "increase indent" function (that is, please don't indent them with tabs or spaces) and single spaced.
- Please submit your review through Submittable (no fee) and provide your current mailing address, phone number, e-mail, and a bio note.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- What can you assume about the audience and their knowledge? What will the reader need to know in order to understand what the book is about and who the author is?
- How does the book add to the larger conversation? That is, how might you put it in context of either the author's other work or the genre in which the author is writing?
- What additional information might you refer to (e.g., other critics, writers, the reader's knowledge of a literary movement) to help further illuminate the work?
- Why are you writing about this particular book and no other? What's unique about it?
- What possible problems (e.g., overdone tropes and topics) might the reader encounter that you can either dismiss or acknowledge for them, keeping in mind that we are ultimately recommending all of our reviewed books?

EXAMPLES OF BOOK REVIEWS

- Fiction: <https://coloradoreview.colostate.edu/reviews/woodworm/>
- Nonfiction: <https://coloradoreview.colostate.edu/reviews/foreign-fruit-a-personal-history-of-the-orange/>

"Book Notes" Book Reviews

This short-form, template-based review offers an opportunity for reviewers to say what they found interesting, surprising, challenging, and moving in a briefer format. The goal is to re-create the immediacy and intimacy of reading a good book and wanting to share it with someone nearby. This form is also intended to make book reviewing more sustainable for reviewers, editors, and presses. Our hope is that the compressed form allows more people to review books and more books to be reviewed. In doing so, we are able to highlight the work of more presses and authors than the longer, critically inflected review allows.

BOOK NOTES TEMPLATE

Include the following questions, along with answers, in your submission. When given options, please answer the question that best fits with the book you read. As always, try to avoid spoilers that might inhibit a reader's enjoyment.

1. What happens in this book? (NOTE: If reviewing a collection, offer an overview of the stories/essays involved, as you would when providing a summary in a traditional review.)
2. What are this book's themes/overarching metaphors and motifs?
3. *Choose one (depending on whether this is a novel, memoir, or a collection):* Which elements stand out in particular? Which stories/essays stand out and why?
4. *Choose one:* What scenes or moments lingered? Which lines did you particularly love? Which character(s) are you still thinking about, and why?
5. *Choose one:* How do stylistic choices inform or shape the narrative? How does the narrative interact with the form? What propels the narrative forward?
6. What is this book in conversation with?
7. *Choose one:* What questions does this book provoke? Where did this book take you?
8. Who would I give this book to?

FORMAT AND OTHER MISCELLANY

- Book Notes reviews answer eight questions, with some variance to account for genre.
- 800 words or fewer.
- We follow *The Chicago Manual of Style*.
- Please use Times New Roman, 12 point.
- You can use bullet points or paragraph form for your responses. We may alter the formatting style of your response based on WordPress's constraints.
- For "What lines lingered?" you do not need to cite the page from which the lines come.
- Please submit your review through Submittable (no fee) and provide your current mailing address, e-mail, and bio note.