

significant sharing by groups of women or help pastors and teachers see the relationship of culture, faith, and mothering in new ways. Certainly this volume nudges Mennonite mothers and daughters to consider more deeply the fraught-with-dangers-and-possibilities nature of this strong and vulnerable relationship.

*Gayle Gerber Koontz*, Professor of Theology and Ethics, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana

Robert Zacharias. *Rewriting the Break Event: Mennonites and Migration in Canadian Literature*. Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press, 2013.

[T]hese texts are worth gathering together not because they succeed in repeating a shared past but precisely because they fail to do so. Their departures from their predecessors make it possible to talk of different texts (i.e., of *rewritings* rather than simply *replications*) and reveal the competing motives animating their reorganizations of the history that they simultaneously reflect and construct. Each retelling, each strain of the larger narrative, affirms the importance of the Mennonites' dispersal while rewriting it in significant ways. (Page 25, emphasis original)

Combining literary criticism and diaspora studies, Robert Zacharias's ambitious book looks at four Canadian Mennonite novels as "*rewritings*" of the Mennonite "break event," or conscious attempts to re-narrate the formative and traumatic Mennonite escape from Russia to Canada in the 1920s. Strikingly, as Zacharias indicates, this event has overflowed direct experiential, geographic, and generational links to become *the* determinative experience shaping Mennonite identity ("a process of imagining a community")—as well as marking "the 'birth' of Mennonite literature in Canada" (5, 11, 14). Yet, as the opening quotation suggests, the author's examination of the differences between four widely-read re-narrations interrogates the very notion of a monolithic Russian Mennonite migration experience.

Zacharias begins by comprehensively introducing the context(s) and framing the terms and concepts of his project, followed by a chapter detailing the history of and relationship between Mennonite identity and Mennonite literature. He then turns to his typology of the four novels. Al Reimer's *My Harp is Turned to Mourning* [1985] exemplifies what Zacharias terms the "theo-pedagogical narrative," depicting the recovery of Anabaptist humility before God (*Gelassenheit*) as the difficult lesson of the Russian migration experience (81-82, 85-87). Arnold Dyck's *Lost in the Steppe* [English version, 1974] reflects the "ethnic narrative" through idealizing and in a sense "*archiving*" copious details of the lost Mennonite Commonwealth in Russia, thereby painting Mennonites as a distinct, superior Germanic ethnic community (100, 124, emphasis original).

Sandra Birdsell's *The Russländer* [2001] uses a subjective, individual "trauma narrative" to question the appropriation of such experiences to serve communal attempts to determine a cohesive Mennonite history and identity (131-32). Rudy Wiebe's "polyphonic" novel, *The Blue Mountains of China* [1970], presents a "meta-narrative," tracing Mennonite migrations within Russia/Ukraine and to Canada, Paraguay, and elsewhere, thereby problematizing tendencies to reduce the Mennonite experience to a simple exodus from Russia to Canada, as in the other three novels examined (154-55, 158-59).

Zacharias's treatment of the four narrative types displays both breadth and depth, and his introductory and concluding material is equally interesting. His thoroughly interdisciplinary approach combines not only literary criticism and diaspora studies, but history, philosophy, psychology, and theology. Noting the near-exclusive focus on ethnicity (and absence of theology) within Mennonite literary criticism, he helpfully traces its rise within the context of Canadian multicultural or "minoritized literature"—a context in which "religious difference has been consistently misrecognized as representing an ethnic distinctiveness" (72, 37). His mention of Mennonite origins in the 16th-century Reformation (48) and his exploration of *Gelassenheit* in Reimer's novel (71 ff.) are commendable steps toward remedying a significant gap in Mennonite literary criticism, even as they strain the boundaries of his typology. The latter leads him, for instance, to gloss over the theology within Wiebe's novel (73, 175-76), which

arguably exemplifies the evolution of a distinctly Mennonite peace theology from *Gelassenheit*/nonresistance to more contemporary forms of active nonviolent resistance/peacemaking.

Another of Zacharias's key contributions to various Mennonite communities and academic disciplines is his nuanced complication of central aspects of Mennonite identity, including the self-designation "Russian Mennonite," which sidelines "Kanadier" Mennonites (and their literature!) and the 80 percent of Mennonites who remained in Russia, to say nothing of the non-European majority of Mennonites (38-39, 66, 49); questions of Mennonite complicity in the colonial oppression of Ukrainians and Aboriginal Canadians, Paraguayans, and others, whose lands they have occupied or continue to occupy (66, 68-69, 55); and the unacknowledged privileges of Mennonite "whiteness, education, and wealth" which, along with religion, problematize the place of Mennonite literature and criticism within multicultural Canadian literature, since "not all elsewheres are equal" (44-45, 183-84).

Zacharias mentions that Mennonite literary authors have become the most influential creator/critics of Canadian Mennonite identity. His thorough, unflinching volume proves that the insights of literary critics are likewise indispensable. I hope it will garner the attention it deserves from all corners of the Mennonite world.

*Susanne Guenther Loewen*, Doctoral Candidate, Emmanuel College, Toronto School of Theology, Toronto, Ontario

Alain Epp Weaver. *Mapping Exile and Return: Palestinian Dispossession and a Political Theology for a Shared Future*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014.

Alain Epp Weaver has woven a remarkable theological treatise that forms the foundation for a vision of the future in which peoples of diverse cultures can find common ground for living together in peace and in common space. Using as his focus the tragic irony of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, he has constructed a theological scheme applicable to similar situations of