Cynthia R. Wallace, *The Literary Afterlives of Simone Weil: Feminism, Justice, and the Challenge of Religion*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2024.

The figure of philosopher and activist Simone Weil has inspired fascination in the English-speaking world since the translation of her texts became available in the early 1960s. Weil is someone about whom, it seems, no one is indifferent, including myself. As Cynthia R. Wallace notes early in her study of how literary writers have engaged with Weil's writings, there are multiple shapes of regard to Weil's thinking and writing, and to her brief and often sensationally recounted life. Wallace delves deeply into the feminist principles not only of Weil's pursuits, but also of how the feminist writers who grant Weil her "afterlives" in conversation and in argument do not ignore Weil's ideas of affliction, but also do not reduce that belief to a feminized self-sacrifice. Feminist readings of Weil, or indeed any reading of Weil's legacy as someone more than a deluded woman with a relationship to attention, social justice, and a criticism of patriarchal violence, continue to spark arguments (and tempers) in real time.

Wallace's book, with its careful attention to how Adrienne Rich's poems and essays, Mary Gordon's novels, and Annie Dillard's nonfiction all conduct intricate conversation with Weil's ideas, is more than welcome: a corrective to those who sanctify Weil or rudely dismiss and denigrate her. Having positioned Weil as a profound influence in the literary inquiries of three popular and intellectual American writers, Wallace completes her book with a chapter on a largely Canadian list of poets who have addressed Weil in their works: Sarah Klassen, Maggie Helwig, and Lorri Neilsen Glenn among them.

One of the ongoing issues of Weil's reception as a thinker is what Wallace calls "the challenge of religion" in the book's subtitle: that is, the problems of thinking with Weil's spiritual terms in a secular age. Wallace holds her critical magnifying glass up to this belief. In focusing on how "distaste or discomfort regarding religion…helps explain Weil's divided reception," Wallace's point of inquiry coalesces around the spiritual and the political in Weil's thought, including how each writer emphasizes, ignores, or balances the two (15).

To do so is no small task, and this book's intellectual liveliness is a boon to all who are fascinated by Weil's writings. Wallace organizes her examina-

tion of feminist engagement through four Weilian terms: force, attention, affliction (or hunger), and decreation. Then deftly, with care and curiosity, Wallace unpacks the shape and dynamic of the "literary afterlives" offered by each writer. Wallace emphasizes Adrienne Rich's decades-long conversation with Weil through poetry and essays, energized by Weil's critique of force and her ethics of attention, and mystified (and often frustrated) by Weil's seemingly self-sacrificial Christianity. Wallace notes that while Rich openly wrestles with her Weilian angel, Annie Dillard is more circumspect, acknowledging the influence of Weil's thought via the quality and energy of attention that lends Dillard's nature writing such a spiritual aspect, but folding her influence into a cadre of spiritual thinkers upon which Dillard builds. Mary Gordon's fiction is lauded for exploring Catholic women's lives throughout the historical and political entanglements of the church in twentieth-century politics. In these fictive works, Wallace focuses on affliction, spiritual and physical hunger, and "the space of unknowing" (168). (I have a reviewer's confession: of all the authors Wallace addresses in this book, I am least familiar with Gordon. But Wallace's analysis is compelling enough for me to want to read Gordon's tantalizing novella, *Simone Weil in New York*, in which a fictionalized former student of "Mlle Weil" re-encounters her in New York and must grapple with the deep contradictions of her teacher's legacy.) Weil, who by all accounts loved teaching, whether to a classroom of French schoolgirls, in conversation with friends, or by regaling the factory workers with whom she toiled with spiritual philosophy, seems a good choice for an account of pedagogy as politics.

The poets' chapter, in which Wallace unpacks six poetic sequences (some book-length), smartly refuses the saintly persona with which Weil has been saddled, and instead focuses on how such long-form poetry as a genre and a philosophy in and of itself "embraces imperfection, ambiguity, and paradox" (176): decreation as Weil form.

In addition to Wallace's command of these several forms of literary afterlives, she also provides a comprehensive discussion of other feminist authors who have been influenced by Weil, and muses thoughtfully on the impact of Weil on writers of color, including NourbeSe Philip, Cornel West, Michelle Cliff, and Sigrid Nunez. Wallace is clear that more study in this area is needed, thinking of Weil's impact beyond white

writers, and I have to agree. (I can add that Esi Edugyan includes a Simone Weil cameo in her Giller-winning 2011 novel *Half-Blood Blues*.)

Near the end of her study, Wallace includes a long quotation from Terry Tempest Williams on Weil as inspiration, someone who spent her life "paying attention to patterns, signs, and synchronicity in the desert to help us find our way" (233). I can't help but think about the aphorism by the German Romantic poet Novalis, that "philosophy is really homesickness: the urge to be at home everywhere." Whether this tracks Weil's urge or that of her readers who wish to make of her our home in the desert, Wallace's approachable and accountable study is a must-read for our homesick feminist selves.

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Troy Osborne. *Radicals and Reformers: A Survey of Global Anabaptist History.* Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2024.

At first glance, this new history has a familiar sense to it. For one, it echoes the very outline of C. J. Dyck's classic, *An Introduction to Mennonite History*, which it will certainly replace as the go-to text. It begins with a genealogy of late medieval reformers, moves to the Protestants, and gives a nod to Anabaptism's birth in Zurich on January 21, 1525. It follows the spread of Anabaptism to the north (Augsburg, Strasbourg, Muenster), finds Menno Simons, and outlines the "solidification" (128) of the Mennonite church in western Europe. It follows the diaspora into the Russian Empire and North America and catalogues the borrowings from other denominations along the way. Then, like later of Dyck's editions, Osborne introduces the modern missionary movement and branches out, with a chapter for each continent of the growing global community—Asia, Africa, South America—before coming back to the West and considering how a diversity of Anabaptists "put their faith into action" today (327). It even has a ring of classical church history to it, citing prominent male leaders throughout, outlining the denominational contours of the global fellowship, and referencing central theological tenets,