

Church communities will find this an especially helpful resource for congregational book studies or larger church network studies as we envision church as a movement, a place to experiment with the kind of change that requires a coming together in community, emerging step by step.

*Tending Tomorrow* offers a message of hope that refuses to deny reality or downplay the crises we face, but gives us a way through these crises together. Rather than an express lane, this winding path through a rewilded wood creates the kind of world that invites us to bring our children along to welcome the future not with fear and despair, but as a gift of hope for their tomorrows.

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Daniel Shank Cruz. *Ethics for Apocalyptic Times: Theapoetics, Autotheory, and Mennonite Literature*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 2024.

In *Ethics for Apocalyptic Times: Theapoetics, Autotheory, and Mennonite Literature*, Daniel Shank Cruz blends together recent life writing with a sustained look at the problems and possibilities of Mennonite literature. Emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, the book employs literary analysis, anecdote, and autotheory to argue for literature as “an essential ethical resource for all of us, secular and religious, as we navigate these terrible times” (3). With wide-ranging explorations of literary form—from readings of poetry and science fiction to personal reflections on haiku and tarot—*Ethics for Apocalyptic Times* is a unique and compelling survey of Mennonite writing that takes seriously the authorial voice, particularly when it comes from the margins.

As a queer, decolonial study, Cruz’s second monograph builds on their contributions to the field of Mennonite literary criticism in *Queering Mennonite Literature: Archives, Activism, and the Search for Community*, a needed intervention that highlights the link between queer theory and Mennonite literature, paying close attention to the many ways in which these discourses overlap. *Ethics for Apocalyptic Times* continues this ap-

proach, locating Mennonite concerns in places such as Miriam Toews's largely overlooked debut, *Summer of My Amazing Luck*, Sarah Stambaugh's out-of-print novel, *I Hear the Reaper's Song*, and Sofia Samatar's short story collection, *Tender*. Less expected, and all the more intriguing, is Cruz's treatment of Samuel R. Delaney's queer science fiction, recasting it as a secular form of Anabaptist ethics. Two additional chapters return repeatedly to the work of Jeff Gundy to propose an understanding of Mennonite poetry and speculative fiction as "theapoetic" endeavors.

In their introduction, Cruz acknowledges that, while they are not a theologian, they have been invited to provide commentary within theological forums, leading them to revisit their fraught relationship with institutional Mennonitism. Their strategy is to read Mennonite literature "theapoetically" and "to show that theapoetic Mennonite literature's power comes from its healthy transgression of the world's valorization of institutional Mennonitism's overly zealous policing of its boundaries" (4). Using Molly Remer's definition, Cruz understands theapoetics as a feminist viewpoint, dispensing with the patriarchal overtones of *theopoetics* that acknowledges "lived experiences as legitimate sources of direct, or divine, revelation" (10). For them, this method corresponds with Anabaptism's emphasis on low church ecclesiology and with an ethics rooted in everyday experience.

From this theoretical position, Cruz proceeds to blend their ethical concerns with their library, organizing and emphasizing particular texts as exemplary. Throughout the book, they also foreground their experiences as a queer Mennonite of color, drawing out personal connections to the texts they discuss. While this autotheoretical approach at times enriches Cruz's readings and increases the stakes of their project, the connections can seem tenuous—as when a meaningful passage from a book they are reading happens to appear on the page whose number corresponds with their birthday. For Cruz, however, the inclusion of such details emphasizes "self-attention [as] a necessary act of love in the racist society that . . . I inhabit" and demonstrates a theapoetic hermeneutic "because the Divine sometimes manifests itself to me through them" (32–33).

In its radically inclusive relation to the cosmos, theapoetics provides as much of Cruz's ethical orientation as Mennonite literature, where the author's preferred texts represent alternatives to an oppressive and divisive

status quo. Unfortunately, the ethics in question are largely left underdeveloped. For instance, on the same page that Cruz says that Di Brandt's poetry "reminds us that spiritual experiences are only meaningful if they lead to ethical actions," they follow Anita Hooley Yoder to argue that "Even if we just read poetry for its aesthetic beauty, it makes us more humane" (56). Logical inconsistency aside, both comments trade analysis for truism. Literary criticism is arguably more interested in the question of *how* than *what*. Despite moving passages of self-reflection, Cruz largely bypasses the question of how Mennonite literature develops an ethics based in reading, instead leaving the reader with affirmations of what they loosely categorize as Anabaptist. Such texts "urge," "remind," and "teach" a set of ethical positions but rarely do these texts interrogate them.

Writing this review within days of the 2024 US election, I find myself returning to the Mennonite rejection of worldly power for solace. My understanding of that rejection, like Cruz's, is somewhat different from that of my spiritual ancestors. Theirs was not a progressive, world-building political coalition but a mostly quietist departure, supported by an ethical and theological system that I would no doubt bristle under. Finding continuity and discontinuity between their rejection of the world and my own is as much a work of imagination as it is a response to a world that abolishes boundaries as quickly as it imposes them. This dis/continuity is one reason why Mennonite literature matters to me.

The reading list Cruz has assembled in *Ethics for Apocalyptic Times*, including their robust collection of endnotes, is an excellent starting point for this reflective work. I, too, believe that Anabaptism can have value for those outside the tradition, particularly in its affirmations of community, social justice, and non-violence—affirmations that are in no way unique to Mennonites. Mennonite literature, as Cruz describes it, may well be a resource for our troubled times, but does it provide solutions? That all depends on how one reads it.

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