

recognize the dispossession within. From Paul to Augustine to Freud there is an acknowledgement that we are not even sovereign over ourselves. Such acts require faith.

This is a book the church should be reading. At times the language skews academic, but it is very accessible given the concepts and thinkers it engages. Above all, *Theology for the End of the World* lays down the challenge to be honest about our God, ourselves, and our world: a world regularly revealing its suffering, a world made worse by our fear of the worst, a world perhaps worth ending.

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Hildi Froese Tiessen, *On Mennonite/s Writing: Selected Essays*. Ed. Robert Zacharias. Winnipeg, MN: CMU Press, 2023.

Remarkably, this new collection of Hildi Tiessen's essays is the first book of her own writing to be published, despite her long and distinguished career as critic, editor, and tireless promoter of "Mennonite/s Writing," a phrase Tiessen coined for the landmark conference celebrating this then-nascent literature at (what was then) Conrad Grebel College in 1990. Tiessen's legendary generosity and crucial role in the flourishing of what is now a widely recognized and ever-expanding body of Mennonite literature in Canada and the U.S. has been widely recognized. Yet it has taken half a century for Tiessen to be convinced to publish a selection of her ground-breaking critical essays. Ably edited (and introduced) by fellow critic Robert Zacharias, himself among the best of the next generation of Canadian Mennonite critics, *On Mennonite/s Writing* is well worth the long wait.<sup>2</sup>

The essays gathered here, as Zacharias notes, reflect the growth of both creative writing by and about Mennonites and scholarly attention to that work, beginning with Rudy Wiebe's *Peace Shall Destroy Many* (1962), gener-

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2 A disclaimer: Tiessen and I have been fellow travelers, conversation partners, and friends since even before that 1990 conference. My own work (both critical and creative) is given generous attention in some of her essays, and her critical work and organization of readings and conferences have been personally and professionally important to me. This review will not be objective, but I do hope it is fair.

ally regarded as the ur-text of modern Mennonite writing. Arranged chronologically from a graduate school essay on Rudy Wiebe's early novels to a wide-ranging, reflective afterword written for this volume, the pieces form something of a history of Mennonite/s writing over the last half century, especially in Canada. They trace the evolution of both creative and critical writing by and about Mennonites from a few major texts and authors to fields so broad and deep that they defy, or at least resist, neat categories and generalizations. Tiessen's essays also display major developments in her own critical approaches and categories; always searching for relevant criticism and theoretical frameworks, she brings a series of increasingly sophisticated resources to bear on both individual texts and broader questions about the field.

Some of these essays have become iconic, especially those offering broad overviews of the field at particular moments—many delivered at one of the nine “Mennonite/s Writing” conferences that began with the 1990 gathering at Grebel (a tenth is planned for Canadian Mennonite University in summer 2025). The essays grapple repeatedly with key questions of identity and audience: what makes a text, or an author, or a reader “Mennonite”? Tiessen insists from the start on relatively broad definitions, and resists church membership or faith statements as boundary markers; early on she craftily defines Mennonite art and literature as “work produced by individuals who were nurtured within a Mennonite community, who—especially during their formative years—had access to the inside of the *Gemeinschaft*” (40). A second qualifier, often noted, is recognition from both within and outside the Mennonite community; lists of authors, texts, and the awards and plaudits they have received frequently anchor the essays, although Tiessen also pays sustained, welcome attention to lesser-known authors like Ephraim Weber and Dallas Wiebe.

Among Tiessen's strongest, most consistent themes is that Mennonite literature should *matter* to Mennonites. “Critical Thought and Mennonite Literature” notes that her Grebel colleague Jim Reimer once “unselfconsciously” called his new Mennonite theology course “Contemporary Mennonite Thought,” “as if to claim all serious Mennonite thinking for theology alone” (127). In fact, Tiessen argues, “the texture of our communal and personal existence as Mennonites and Canadians is nowhere more evocatively (and sometimes, also, provocatively) registered than in the published work of the creative writers our communities have produced” (135).

Tiessen worries, however, that this role for Mennonite writing in Canada—in effect, helping Mennonites understand their own experience—may

be vanishing as that writing becomes less focused on the traumatic dislocations of civil war, anarchy, immigration, and settlement. She returns repeatedly to a 1990 remark by critic Clara Thomas that “the work of Margaret Laurence was able to identify her to herself as the works of Rudy Wiebe were not” (197). Early on, Tiessen argues that Wiebe’s work (among others) *does* “identify her to herself” in a way that Laurence’s does not. But by 2013, as Canadian Mennonite literature becomes both more diverse and more “mainstream,” she worries that this “universal” status will result in Mennonite texts that will be “in effect no longer recognizable as a ‘Mennonite’ text,” and that only a trace might remain “to identify the Mennonite reader to herself” (199).

It is surely true, as Tiessen notes in her rich concluding essay, that over the half-century these essays trace, Mennonite literature has grown from something “remarkably definable and limited” to something much larger, more diverse, and more amorphous. But if the great wave of this literature has evolved into something less easily defined or even named, Tiessen notes, we can still celebrate “the simple fact that Mennonites are writing—about any number of things and for a world-wide audience” (278).

Tiessen modestly attributes her own place in all this to merely being in the right place at the right time, but as any number of writers, critics, and readers who have benefited from her long engagement with Mennonite/s writing will attest, she deserves a great deal of credit for helping to bring this writing into prominence, encouraging writers and critics, and guiding the critical discourse with her clear-headed, deeply researched, rigorous, unfailingly generous critical essays. This book is essential reading for anyone interested in what Mennonite/s writing has been and what it may become.

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Lauren Friesen and Dennis R. Koehn, eds. *Anabaptist ReMix: Varieties of Cultural Engagement in North America*. New York: Peter Lang, 2022.

How are Mennonites today influenced by the Anabaptist tradition? Editors Lauren Friesen and Dennis R. Koehn cast a wide net as they seek to explore how people within or coming out of Anabaptist contexts engage culture in North America. The editors claim the diversity and pluralism of the perspec-