his lack of patience, excommunicated himself, and pleaded for reconciliation. If the Amish are sometimes embarrassed by the story of their founder, as the authors of *The Amish* note, it might be because the most prominent accounts of the Amish division are typically written by Mennonites who tend to view and interpret the controversial division through their identification with the Reistians.

Although there is attention to history, the overwhelming bulk of the book is devoted to a thick description of Amish practices, explaining the role of each practice within the larger ensemble of Amish communal realities, and evaluating the social meanings of these practices within the changing 21st century North American cultural milieu, a context the authors, following Zygmant Bauman, call "liquid modernity." By contrast with "solid modernity," which was characterized by stable systems and technologies rooted in industrial manufacturing, "liquid modernity" is organized around the unstable and rapidly changing realities of the digital information society. Perhaps this analysis of "liquid modernity" presents the most striking contrast with *Amish Society*, which can be read as evaluating the Amish struggle with "solid modernity." While *Amish Society* framed Amish resistance to modernity as a stubborn adherence to tradition and a founding charter, *The Amish* tells a story of Amish innovation and improvisation adapting communal convictions and practices to constantly morphing technological and symbolic forms.

The Amish is a sophisticated yet accessible picture of the many forms of contemporary Amish life, a picture that includes both the attractions of deeply rooted community relationships and the troubling shadows cast in a closely-knit patriarchal tribe, such as poorly addressed sexual abuse and a sometimes-dysfunctional youth culture. The nuance, accuracy, thoroughness, and respect attending this beautifully presented work of collaborative scholarship ensure that *The Amish* will define the field of Amish studies for some time to come.

Gerald J. Mast
Bluffton University

Janneken Smucker, *Amish Quilts: Crafting an American Icon*. Young Center Books in Anabaptist and Pietist Studies. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013. Pp. xvi + 288. Hardcover, $34.95.

Perhaps no craft product is as iconic of the Amish as quilts, and yet, as Janneken Smucker points out in *Amish Quilts: Crafting an American*

Icon, few thought of quilts as "Amish" before the 1970s. How did "quilts" and "Amish" become linked? How did they come to represent simplicity, authenticity, and tradition? Perhaps most intriguingly, how did Amish quilts go from being the mundane bed coverings of a rural religious people long scoffed at for their backward ways to works of art worthy of exhibition beside modern masters? These are the questions that Smucker sets out to answer. At the same time, she attempts to define the perhaps undefinable: what is an Amish quilt?

Loosely chronological in organization, *Amish Quilts* opens with a brief introduction to Amish life and to perceptions of the Amish in the late 1960s, when mainstream Americans were just beginning to admire the Amish and to identify Amish quilts as markers of a simple, traditional lifestyle. Yet as Smucker points out in the first chapter, "Made in America," mainstream perceptions of Amish quilts are as imagined as mainstream constructions of the Amish and Amishness. Quilting, she suggests, was never a craft of poor rural women salvaging bits of cloth; instead it was very much a product of the industrial age, spurred on by the industrialization of cloth manufacturing, the invention of the sewing machine, and the growing availability of commercial quilt patterns. Moreover, Smucker notes, quilting was not rooted in Amish culture and brought to North America by early Amish immigrants; rather, Lancaster County Amish women probably learned to quilt from their more worldly neighbors. Yet, as the dominant society came to view quilting as an old-fashioned art, Amish women embraced it, for it distinguished them from their non-Amish counterparts. Describing the westward spread of quilting among Amish groups, Smucker notes how, among the most conservative groups, quilters began to incorporate notions of simplicity and plainness in their choice of patterns. Quilts thus began to reflect group identity.

In chapters two through five ("Amish quilts, Amish values," "Off of beds and onto walls," "Folk art and women's work," "The fashion for quilts,"), Smucker continues to explore how quilts reflect cultural values. She notes that in the early part of the 20th century the Amish found quilting a way to link generations and families, and design preferences emerged within families and settlements as quilters adapted patterns from the non-Amish world and altered them to conform to church standards. Yet, by the second half of the 20th century, Smucker asserts, quilts were being made for benefit auctions and other fundraising, and Amish quilters, influenced both by the availability of new fabrics and colors and by non-Amish interest in what the Amish themselves saw as "old style quilts," changed quilting styles and sold family heirlooms.

Quilts came to carry values assigned not by the Amish themselves but by outsiders fascinated by the quilts and the Amish who produced them. Art collectors "discovered" Amish quilts, finding in the

geometric quilt patterns and strange color combinations links to artworks such as those produced by Mark Rothko and Andy Warhol. At the same time, feminist folklorists, celebrating women's work in a particular cultural context, criticized "modern male curators" who considered them art because they bore "a superficial resemblance to the work of contemporary formalist artists" (93). The notion of modern art produced by a culture eschewing modernity broadened the appeal of Amish quilts, which began to find their way into interior design. As Smucker argues, an Amish quilt could attest to both the owner's sense of tradition and authenticity and his appreciation of art.

Carrying multiple messages, Amish quilts became valuable commodities. In Chapters six through nine ("From rags to riches," "Amish intermediaries," "A good Amish quilt folded like money," "Designed to sell"), Smucker shows how the hunt for old quilts brought collectors into contact with the Amish themselves. At first the Amish took whatever price collectors offered. Later, as the competition for quilts became fiercer, dealers who had access to Amish homes (known as "pickers") and who sold to other dealers, raced to identify local quilts, even stealing them outright when families were at church. Quilts, valued for their "authenticity," were valuable even without legitimate provenance; the label, "Amish," was enough to make them desirable. Ironically, Amish quilts increased in value the further they were removed from an Amish context.

Amish dealers also sensed economic opportunity, some even taking quilts directly to big city dealers. The Amish in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, had more access to the New York City market, and so quilts from Lancaster began to have a particular cachet. Smucker suggests that, while outsiders had established the value of Amish quilts and privileged those with the greatest resemblance to modern art, now geographic proximity to the market place began to define "real" Amish quilts as those from eastern Pennsylvania.

In the next three chapters ("Homespun efficiency," "The Amish brand," and "Outsourcing authenticity"), Smucker explores the spectacular growth of quilt businesses and the threats of too much success. She describes how local Amish and non-Amish entrepreneurs outsourced the making of quilts to a network of women who took responsibility for different aspects of quilt production: cutting, piecing, and quilting. Yet even as quilt making became a piecework process, some dealers highlighted the "Amishness" of their enterprise with kerosene lanterns and quilting demonstrations. Land's End offered a series of limited edition quilts as products of a pre-industrial way of life, obscuring the complex design, production, and marketing process; non-Amish women dressed in Amish clothes appeared in the catalog. To meet consumer desire for quilts, quilt businesses even began to

draw on seamstresses in the immigrant Hmong communities, who had their own tradition of needlework. At the same time, large corporations turned to overseas factories to mass produce quilts with Amish patterns. Ultimately, as markets flooded with outsourced quilts and factory-made lookalikes, consumers came to question the authenticity of so-called Amish quilts. When the Smithsonian Institution marketed a line of factory-made reproductions, Americans felt betrayed.

In the end, Smucker writes, "individuals have used various criteria to bestow Amish quilts with value" (225). Ultimately, she concludes, "the criteria all translated into monetary value, the kind of value that seemed to matter most" (225). The most successful entrepreneurs owned the most important collections, and, by convincing museums of the importance of their own collections, established the standards that made them valuable. Ironically, as Smucker notes, the kinds of quilts produced for use in today's Amish homes may never hang in museums as authentically Amish quilts.

Those seeking a scholarly study of Amish quilts may find that this work raises more questions than it answers. *Amish Quilts* focuses on the heyday of quilt collecting, with relatively little exploration of either contemporary quilting in an Amish context or the Amish quilt market of the 21st century. Moreover, perhaps because, as Smucker points out, outsiders and market forces have helped to define "Amish quilts," most of her discussion focuses on quilting and quilt shops in Lancaster County, the quilt source most accessible to East Coast collectors and the New York City art world. As a result, this book, like the quilt market itself, reveals little of the diversity of the Amish world. Moreover, despite her exploration of outsourcing and her consideration of how much an Amish woman must contribute to the creation of a quilt for it to be called "Amish," Smucker does not question the extent to which the *context* of production matters. Is a quilt produced piecemeal by different Amish women who may not know each other and who live in diverse regions and church-communities "Amish" in the same way as one made by a single Amish quilter or members of a single Amish community working together? Are there differences resulting from the context of production that have been ignored in the commercialization of quilts? What does the relationship between the dealers and the Amish women who do piecework for them reveal about the relationships between different Amish communities? Further, what role do Amish quilts play in the Amish world, and do they play the same role in the most conservative communities that they do in the most progressive. Has the commodification of quilting affected all Amish quilters in the same way? In the end, Smucker's own answer to "what makes an Amish quilt?" begs the question, for her notion that it is "a quilt used and loved in a contemporary Amish

home" (230), says nothing about the maker, the context of production, its design, or its use.

Nevertheless, as a history of the Amish quilt as an art object and a study of the commercialism of products imbued with Amishness, this work is invaluable. Smucker's exploration of how non-Amish collectors have been able to define and impose value on Amish products and how dealers, Amish and non-Amish, have appropriated the appeal of "Amishness" while trading on stereotypes sheds much light on how mainstream society constructs the identity of minority ethnic groups.

Karen M. Johnson-Weiner
SUNY Potsdam

Esther Epp-Tiessen, *Mennonite Central Committee in Canada: A History*. Winnipeg: CMU Press, 2013. Pp. 328, softcover.

The history of any national organization is always a challenge to write, especially one with several constituencies. Esther Epp-Tiessen has written an important book in Canadian Mennonite studies bringing to light the history of the Mennonite Central Committee in Canada (MCC Canada) from its creation in 1963 to the near present. The flagship organization of Canadian Mennonites, alongside the longer running Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) founded in the United States in the 1920s, MCC Canada is not only significant for its service work in Canada and around the world, but also for its inter-Mennonite roots. Epp-Tiessen has taken a long view of MCC Canada and begins a generation before its official start, surveying the "gestation" period from the 1920s onward. In this thoroughly researched account is a work that brings significant contextualization to modern Canadian Mennonite service culture.

Epp-Tiessen grounded her book in archival sources, personal interviews and a broad scholarship, resulting in a spirited, informative, and well-presented study. After a personal reflection where she describes her social location and indebtedness to several interpretive perspectives, including, post-colonial theory and "settler mentality," she explains that she brings "deep love" and "sharp critique" of the organization to her study. Moreover, she acknowledges "specific biases" as her life experience is primarily with Ontario and Manitoba and Mennonite Church Canada. (9-10) Epp-Tiessen further locates her study within the field of non-profit institutional history and thus adopts an organizational and interpretive grid for her book that follows time