

shout, my body says groan, my body says
grunt—grunt louder than Rafael Nadal!

The last section, “Complications,” returns to the relationship of the first section, tracing its uncomfortable end. The rueful epigraph to this section, from Alphonse Daudet, resonates through the whole book, and surely applies to multiple sorts of pain: “Pain is always new to those who suffer, but loses its originality for those around them.”

The great challenge of writing about pain, of course, is precisely this problem: how to convey its particularity, and the strength required to meet it with dignity? I recall a reading from my grad school days when a fellow poet, also a grad student, read a long and tedious poem about *their pain*, which they explained had meaning and shape and all sorts of other characteristics. Daudet’s warning held in that case: the details as rendered were indeed painful, but not in the way they hoped; I, at least, was intrigued at first, but soon merely bored.

How does Enns manage to avoid this trap, as I believe he does? His resources include refusal of self-pity, a mordant humour, and a matter-of-fact skill at rendering both physical and emotional trauma in quick, sure-handed strokes. The long final poem, “Reading Mary Oliver,” displays all these resources, as it incorporates several lines from her well-known “Wild Geese.” Oliver’s poem acknowledges the poet’s own despair, but ultimately insists that each of us has a “place in the family of things.” While Enns never arrives at such—arguably sentimental—assurance, he does achieve a clear-eyed realism: “My last winter. I’m not waiting anymore. You are not coming back.” These lines, like all of *Love & Surgery*, are written with the candour and bravery of a man who has made it through a great deal, and learned to make a music of his own pain.

Jeff Gundy
Bluffton University

Nikki Reimer, *My Heart is a Rose Manhattan*.
Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2019. Pp. 112. Softcover,
\$16.95.

Nikki Reimer’s third full-length collection of poems, *My Heart is a Rose Manhattan*, is a delight. Its five sections of varying lengths reside primarily within the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry tradition, although the final section, which takes up forty percent of the

book, is more traditionally lyric while maintaining the wordplay that characterizes the rest of the collection.

The book uses its title to help itself cohere as a whole. “Rose Manhattan” appears in twelve poems, often without capital letters. But it almost never signifies the cocktail that it usually names. Instead, sometimes the first word refers to a flower, sometimes the second word refers to a city, sometimes one is the other (29), sometimes the phrase is a placeholder like the mathematical x , as in its replacement of “fuck” (8). Oftentimes it is a nonsensical referent that plays off of Gertrude Stein’s phrase “a rose is a rose is a rose,” as in the title of the first section, “A Rose is a Rose is a Rose Manhattan” (1), or the book’s second-to-last poem, in which “a rose manhattan?” morphs throughout the poem into “arise manhattan?” into “a rise manhattan?” into “depose manhattan?” into “deep pose manhattan?” into “cheap buys manhattan?” (95), just as the repetition in Stein’s phrase reminds us of how when we keep repeating a word or phrase it begins to sound meaningless. The question marks after each phrase highlight this lack of referentiality.

Because $L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E$ poetry interrogates linguistic meaning, it is difficult to paraphrase. However, a partial list of the collection’s other, often playful, $L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E$ elements include stanzas given as mathematical equations (16, 19–20); wordplay with near rhymes, such as “MUSTER” and “MUSTARD” (24) and “is it spring yet / is it sprinkling yet” (26); visual figures and experiments with typography (15, 18, 30, 61); and seemingly nonsensical alliteration in the first six poems of the third section (33–38).

My Heart is a Rose Manhattan also resides in the Mennonite and feminist traditions, which is an exciting combination with its $L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E$ elements. Only one poem explicitly mentions Mennonites, with the speaker having left the church for membership within “my people / the Fake Mennonites / alcoholics / anxious shitty little heathens” (75). However, the grandmother in one of the lyric poems, “Our sorrow is normative,” is identifiably Mennonite to those of us who know how to look because of her immaculate housekeeping (63–64). The book’s third poem, which is untitled, seems like it has been plucked from Di Brandt’s ecofeminist collection *Now You Care* because of its preference “for the prairies” over the city, and its call for “no more poisons” (5).

As the collection moves along, this subtle feminism becomes more explicit and is tied to recent events. The first poem claims the “work” is “apolitical!” because it focuses on the speaker’s “grief,” but then immediately cites the queer proto-feminist Stein, bringing to mind the adage that the personal is political (3). At the beginning

of the book's "Notes on the Text," Reimer writes "This book writes through trauma and its aftermath" (97). This is part of its activist nature. The last section especially documents a public grief about violence against women. Several poems are about rape, most notably "Trigger warning" (77–81), which is written as a play, and is about the Steven Galloway controversy. Galloway was fired by the University of British Columbia in 2016 for alleged sexual assault and then defended by a number of Canadian writers, which led to a response from many writers from marginalized communities calling Canadian literature a "dumpster fire." Two other poems reference this conflict, with the speaker "trying to divorce ourselves from #canlit" in one (84), and the speaker being "tired" of the "canlit dumpster fire" and "of coming up with synonyms for the phrase 'dumpster fire'" in another (90).

It is difficult to maintain a consistent level of energy across a hundred pages of poetry, and the collection's fourth section sags a bit in comparison to the other four, diluting the book's force. L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry's investigation of language is important, but consuming too much at once makes such work feel gimmicky. Switching the placement of the fourth and fifth sections might have alleviated this problem.

My choice to focus on situating *My Heart is a Rose Manhattan* in a particular poetic tradition shows a bias toward academics like myself who might be interested in where Reimer's work fits. As I do so I feel like I am epitomizing why creative writers stereotypically hate literary critics: I immediately began dissecting the book as I read it, even though I did so out of love. I think that this response reveals a strength of the book, though. It got a reaction out of me, I wanted to play with it like a new toy (yes, literary criticism at its best is a form of play), I couldn't help but want to dig into it deeply. L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry is a theoretical endeavor, so it is easy to go into professor mode when encountering it. The collection also acknowledges theory, however, in part by expressing an uneasiness about where it wants to be vis-à-vis the boundary between theory and poetry, or whatever one wants to name as theory's opposite. For instance, "killjoy" asserts "subvert the literary industrial complex," and asks "am i still writing more theory, less poetry?," questioning L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry and academic literary work in general (30). (Reimer's frequent use of "i" is another way her work reminds me of Brandt's). "Our sorrow is normative," by contrast, admits "i do want so badly to have critically approved credentials" (65), but the playful nature of the entire collection makes it impossible to know whether we should take such a statement seriously or not.

Wherever *My Heart is a Rose Manhattan* fits in critical discourse, it is a stellar book. You should read it.

Daniel Shank Cruz
Utica College

Cameron Dueck, *Menno Moto: A Journey Across the Americas in Search of My Mennonite Identity*. Windsor: Biblioasis, 2020. Pp. 328. Softcover, \$22.95

Menno Moto: A Journey Across the Americas in Search of My Mennonite Identity is Cameron Dueck's memoir about his experiences travelling by motorcycle to Central and South America and his engagement with several Mennonite communities there. From the beginning, Dueck characterizes this as an "epic journey" (2), and just as many other memoirs borrow from established literary structures, there is something of Joseph Campbell's heroic myth at work here, complete with crossing from the familiar to the unfamiliar and encountering various obstacles and diversions along the way. Campbell saw the hero's journey as a metaphor for confronting one's own demons and achieving greater self-awareness and peace with the world. Likewise, Dueck tells us that he is going on this trip "to find out who I was" (2) and in doing so spends some time confronting the often-silenced demons of his culture. Dueck, a journalist and author who has spent a good part of his career travelling the world and currently lives in Hong Kong, suggests that his lifestyle may have "erased the last vestiges of my Mennonite culture" (4). Thus, he presents his visits to Mexico, Belize, Bolivia, and Paraguay as a way to "learn more about Mennonite culture" (2) and find out whether or not he is a "true Mennonite" (264).

Scholars who have called into question the notion of a "true Mennonite" identity might balk at this essentializing project, which includes extended discussions of "Mennonite traits" (166) and his exclusion of Swiss Mennonites from what he considers to be "*my* Mennonites" (166) because of their differences—an exclusion he makes with some degree of self-criticism. However, the memoir mostly challenges cultural stereotypes, particularly the stereotypical beliefs that Dueck sees some Mennonites holding about themselves. While in Mexico, for example, he witnesses a dispute between local Mennonites and the Barzonistas who object to Mennonite farmers' hoarding of water. Observing the Mennonites' reactions, Dueck says, "This was just the latest chapter in the often-repeated narrative . . . We work so hard, we bring virtue and honesty to these