

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

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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

places, but still we are rejected” (44). Dueck’s perspective, though, is that the Mennonites there *were* “buying up land, farming it intensively, and sucking up all available water supplies, refusing assimilation and fostering a righteous superiority over their neighbours” (64–65). In this case, he suggests, reinforcing common beliefs about the Mennonites’ intrinsically hard-working and honest nature functions to distort reality and has negative consequences. Elsewhere, Dueck seems to agree with the opinion of Mennonites like Tina, in Belize, who believes that the isolated Mennonites would realize “everyone is human and that there is not such a big difference” (111), if only they would look beyond their community.

Dueck also explores some very difficult issues in his memoir, including the horrifying and notorious tragedy that took place in Bolivia in 2005, when “a group of Mennonite men had used a spray-based animal tranquilizer to incapacitate families in their homes at night, and then raped the women and children” (185). Stories like this, Dueck notes, suggest the devastating consequences of the isolation that is often celebrated in Mennonite master narratives of remaining outside of “the world.” Dueck is not the first Mennonite author to tackle these events. Most notably, Miriam Toews’s book *Woman Talking* dramatized the incident. Given that Dueck’s book is non-fiction, it is not surprising that his account is more journalistic, as he goes back and forth between the parties involved, including the men who were charged and jailed, to try and grasp what happened. This section of the book will be of interest to many Mennonite readers on its own, but it is also presented as to Dueck’s own journey of self-discovery. While he concludes that “there [is] no clear Mennonite identity” (277), he nevertheless sees the importance of the cultural label of “Mennonite,” comparing it to the identity one might share with a family, with members that one loves, and others, like the criminals in Bolivia, that they despise.

Even though *Menno Moto* is about a personal journey, a large portion is devoted to documenting the stories of the people he meets along the way, as well as the history of the regions he visits and of the culture as a whole. This is a great strength of the book, as Dueck does an excellent job at colourfully portraying the people and places that he visits, often with a great deal of nuanced empathy. As a memoir, Dueck’s book recalls other Mennonite life writing that tend to foreground the community over the self, such as Rudy Wiebe’s *Of This Earth* and Connie Braun’s *The Steppes are the Colour of Sepia*. It is fitting, then, that most of the lovely black and white pictures of the trip that appear in the book exclude the author. Julia Spicher Kasdorf has taken an appropriately critical look at the inevitably exclusionary way that Mennonite texts (especially autobiographical

ones) often attempt to define the Mennonites for their presumably outsider audience, and one could conceivably read Dueck's frequent historicizing of the Mennonites here in the same way. However, Dueck's wealth of historical information not only helps the general reader understand the course of events that led to the international dispersion of the community, but also demonstrates just how difficult it is to provide an authoritative definition of the wide-ranging and complex group of Mennonites he visits.

*Menno Moto* is a fascinating memoir that engages in a unique way with contemporary concerns about identity and culture, and should appeal both to scholars of Mennonite literature and life writing, as well as those concerned with current trends in the popular discourse on national and cultural identities.

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Carla Funk, *Every Little Scrap and Wonder: A Small-Town Childhood*. Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2019. Pp. 240. Hardcover, \$29.95.

It doesn't take long to notice that a poet wrote this memoir. With its "seasonal" sections, its evocative chapter titles, and its creative and nuanced writing style, Carla Funk's poetic talent radiates throughout this book. Funk's narrative comprises twenty-six chapters, each a short story in itself. Taken together, these stories make a childhood out of significant "scraps," with various threads spilling over from one piece to the next. Within the first few pages I noticed the phrases "litter-strewn fields" and "dust and dry weeds" (16) scattered across the pages, but then so were the phrases "breezy pleasure" and "air of luxury" (18). But soon I realized that more abundant than either dreary feeling or exultant whoop were the phrases "I was inside a story" and "the sound of the scissors slicing through the cloth was the beginning of something new" (18). This is not a sad book; it is a series of stories in which Funk situates herself and invites the reader to learn, along with her, to "honour the fragments, all those broken pieces," and "see them find a true design, fitting to the pattern of a bigger story" (246).

That a chronological linearity is not the intention is evident early on. After a brief historical explanation regarding her parents' families' migrations to Vanderhoof, BC (mother from Oregon and father from Saskatchewan), the story moves seamlessly from one memory to the next without concern for specific times and dates. In an