

soil Mennonite farmers in Manitoba inherited from their pioneer ancestors (58); and somewhat more extensively in the essay on demarcating lines, where she reviews Mennonite history in Manitoba to support her love of order and symmetry (167–69). Up to this point, Braun has mentioned Indigenous people just once, fleetingly, in the essay on water (59), so it's perhaps not surprising that while Indigenous and Métis people make a second appearance here, in the context of Manitoba history, they vanish again after three short sentences (165). Braun seems well-pleased with her endeavours by book's end (197–98), but some of her readers may wish she'd learned weightier lessons from the work of remembering her childhood.

Kathleen Venema
University of Winnipeg

Magdalene Redekop, *Making Believe: Questions About Mennonites and Art*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2020. Pp. 380. Softcover, \$27.95

The appearance of *Making Believe: Questions About Mennonites and Art* by Magdalene Redekop is a major publishing event. In this wide-ranging study, Redekop puts her productive and playful mind on full display. She is erudite and eclectic. She brings images, sounds, and texts—Mennonite and non-Mennonite—into conversation with each other. She gathers insights from artists and critics addressing Mennonites and art, and adds her own stimulating and entertaining analyses. Her starting point is literature, but she also investigates music (including Glenn Gould's *The Quiet in the Land*) and visual art (including work by Gathie Falk and Wanda Koop). She is especially effective, even dazzling, when she pursues case studies. But when she theorizes some of her broader thought patterns in this sprawling volume, she sometimes gives way to repetition or clutter.

Redekop anchors her work ethnically. She does this by focusing on a Canadian Mennonite subgroup known as *Kanadier* and on their 1980s/90s art. The forbears of contemporary *Kanadier* artists such as Patrick Friesen and Di Brandt, Armin Wiebe and Miriam Toews immigrated from Russia/Ukraine to rural Manitoba during the 1870s. (A sponsor of Redekop's book, notably, is the Plett Historical Research Foundation, a supporter of studies of *Kanadier* culture.) Redekop, a *Kanadier* herself as she makes clear, is fixated on the idea that another subgroup, *Russländer*—who came from Russia/Ukraine to Ontario and the prairie provinces during the 1920s—looks down on *Kanadier*, or once did so in Manitoba. She touches

only glancingly on interactions between Russländer and their generous hosts in Ontario, Swiss Mennonites. In Manitoba, she observes, Russländer manifested class traits and material ambitions that carried a cultural currency not evident in Kanadier society, and she is troubled by Kanadier critic/novelist Al Reimer's insistence on the central importance for all Mennonites of a Russländer myth, with its extremes of tragic drama. As prescription for art-making Reimer certainly produced a too-rigid imperative. In the process of rejecting Reimer's claim, however, Redekop prescribes a similarly reductive myth for the Kanadier subgroup. Her pursuit of what she calls a Mennonite accent—which she adopts as a relatively static, essentialist marker of identity in works of art—risks alienating artist and critic alike. Her drive to identify individual artists according to subgroup inevitably leads to error or confusion.

Redekop's forceful treatment of the Brunk Revivals team of American Swiss Mennonites seems both arbitrary and severe. In my view, she adopts the 1957 Brunk campaign as a convenient—if monological—trope that she projects as a defining source for the emergence of the Kanadier writers who became active during the 1980s/90s. But Brunk—a guest of Mennonites in Manitoba—was but one of myriad such influences on those Mennonites who fiercely rejected certain religious pressures in that time and place. And Russländer, too, were vulnerable in the hands of travelling evangelists. David Waltner-Toews, for example, explores in his fiction a young Winnipeg Russländer, “saved many times” by the age of fourteen, having responded to (among others) “George Brunk's pleading in a huge, grassy-floored circus tent.” Indeed, Waltner-Toews's Russländer escape route from revivalism might very well have been as complicated as Patrick Friesen's Kanadier route, to which Redekop draws attention in her brilliant analysis of his “pa poems.” And surely religious milieus of families and churches—never mind the impact of public schools or the move into the city—also played a role in excess of the Brunks' during those postwar years of social change. For my own Russländer family in Kitchener-Waterloo, for example, encounters with Brunk campaigns were part of the religious landscape, more entertaining than terrifying. Question: in the wake of Brunk campaigns in midwestern American locales where Russian Mennonite immigrants of the 1870s abounded, did an artistic flowering—parallel to the one Redekop projects for Kanadier in Manitoba—follow?

Redekop's binary model posits a dichotomy that gives Kanadier a pastoral idyll—and Russländer a tragic 1910s/20s moment followed by a 1930s admiration for German nationalism. That comparison has limits, not least in matters of scale. Moreover, postwar

Russländer writers did not experience the glories and devastations of the 1910s/20s directly. And Redekop's aligning Russländer with German nationalism ignores efforts during the 1950s/60s—including Rudy Wiebe's in *Peace Shall Destroy Many*—to discredit such fantasies. Yet in this vein, Redekop achieves particular success in her reading of Paul Hiebert's *Sarah Binks*, arguing that Hiebert, a Kanadier, satirized what she insists are the lineaments of Russländer nationalistic culture. Novelist and poet Dallas Wiebe, a descendant of 1870s American Mennonites, in a letter to Rudy Wiebe, describes *Sarah Binks* as a "hoot." Redekop, however, successfully proposes for Hiebert's idiosyncratic novel a central location in a Canadian Mennonite canon.

Redekop's classifications of subgroups depend too often on representation through stereotypes. Further, her aligning Kanadier culture with pastoral metaphors does not pay sufficient attention to long-established inscriptions in Canadian iconography—most pronounced during the 1920s—linking the pastoral to the Swiss Mennonites who immigrated to the Waterloo region around 1800. Of course Russländer, too, subscribed to a pastoral myth, one born in the momentum of modern life in Russia and re-imagined for modern life in Canada. Artist Woldemar Neufeld's sense of prospect when he arrived in Ontario in 1924 was typical. Later, when Neufeld and two of his Russländer artist-friends sketched oils in Manitoba in the 1930s, they were exploring Canada as a land of beauty and opportunity.

Personal memoir deeply informs Redekop's approach. Systematic criticism and comparative art histories give way, time and again, to serendipity and musings, from personal experience to imaginary rooms overflowing with art. Her preoccupation with irony and comedy and satire extends to her interest in artists (and critics!) as tricksters at play. Her insistence on revealing her biases reminds us that self-disclosure can—like her masks, her clowns clowning—conceal while it reveals. The Low German world that suffuses her recollections of a prelapsarian Rudnerweider Kirchengemeinde era of her early years seduces her with the allure of nostalgia, about which she remains conflicted—an allure echoed in her parallel nostalgic embrace of the Toronto of her later years. But it is this richly textured Toronto world that has provided Redekop with the optimal distance to produce her bold "questions" on Mennonites and art.

Paul Tiessen
Wilfrid Laurier University