produced detailed water-coloured landscapes of south Ukraine as well as photographing family members and the Chortitza Mennonite Church. Even after his exile to the Gulag, Jacob continued to send his family paintings and sketches based on his memories of home and his new surroundings at the camp.

Toews's retelling of Jacob's story fits into a tradition within Mennonite historiography of producing microhistories featuring translated letters. Like other Mennonite letter collections from the Gulag, the writings of Jacob Sudermann reveal the familial connections that survived the arrest and deportation of loved ones. Toews's book adds a valuable contribution to this literature.

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David Moon, *The American Steppes: The Unexpected Russian Roots of Great Plains Agriculture, 1870s–1930s*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. 432. Hardcover, $137.95.

The thesis of this book lies in the single word "unexpected" in its subtitle. David Moon is a leading environmental historian from the University of York in the United Kingdom and he brings his expertise in Russian agricultural history, most recently apparent in his *The Plough that Broke the Steppe*, across the ocean to the United States. His argument is simply that the scientific community in Russia was far further advanced and sophisticated than a casual understanding of the development of agronomy might suggest and that it was much more instrumental in shaping the United States Department of Agriculture's policies than a US-centric perspective of the world would indicate. Indeed, the concept "transnational" (even though he refers to the simple word "transfer") aptly applies to this agricultural history, an indication that much of it is still packaged in decidedly nation-centric perspectives. Here is a double surprise: first, a corpus of Russian experts, most notably the famous Vasilii Dokuchaev, produced a sophisticated understanding of soil science, one which cast soil as linked to its parent materials in the various zones underneath the top soil, and then shaped over millennia by other factors of climate, organic material, precipitation, sunlight, etc.; second, that the US, despite its intersecting axis of rising temperatures from north to south and decreased precipitation rates from east to west, making it different from Russia with its more

singular east-west variant, in fact could learn a great deal from the Russians, especially with reference to soil classification and the science of shelterbelt planting on open prairie.

But within these surprises is another, the importance of the Mennonite settlers of the 1870s. The legend of their importation of Turkey Red wheat is resurrected. Moon argues that it was much more than a piece of historical trivia touted a generation after the Mennonites arrived in Kansas and Nebraska. Perhaps the story crescendoed in the 1942 erection of a monument at Newton, Kansas, one that turned Bernhard Warkentin into the wheat king of the United States, and the Mennonites as the genius of that wheat industry. Certainly, the story of Anna Barkman, the daughter of a Krimmer Mennonite Brethren farmer who painstakingly "spent a week choosing 259,862 grains" (130) of plump wheat seeds before embarking for America seems hagiographical. But the accounts of dozens of Mennonites each taking a bushel or two of pedigree wheat seeds they had built up during the 1860s wheat bonanza in New Russia have merit. Moon has undertaken exhaustive research in both North American and Russian archives, and concludes that it is difficult to definitively prove the features of this story, with the most direct evidence of the usage "of Russian varieties of wheat" (152) occurring among the Kleine Gemeinde settlers in Jefferson County, Nebraska. He does find a great deal of evidence of Warkentin's importance in linking Russia and US wheat breeding programs, including correspondence in which US agronomists visited the Molotschna colony in the 1880s at his behest. And there is similar evidence of Russian officials aware of the Mennonite contribution in the US.

Then, there are the surprises within the surprise. For US Mennonite readers there is a sharply worded condemnation of how settler societies, such as the Mennonite community in Kansas, indirectly participated in the genocide of indigenous inhabitants, with Moon contrasting the US idea of Manifest Destiny with the Nazi idea of *Lebensraum*, and citing "evidence to support the idea that the Nazi policy drew on American actions in the West" (44), another example of a transnational cultural "transfer." For Canadian readers, we learn of a large delegation of Soviet agronomists, led by US hosts, who, following the Second International Congress of Soil Sciences in 1927, travelled across the Canadian prairies in 1930 to examine the soils of western Canada, and then turned south at Winnipeg, and presumably passed by or through the West Reserve in Manitoba. Moon has read widely and, although Mennonite readers will identify works that were not consulted, there is a wide range of references to Mennonite historians: from Ben Goossen and Aileen Friesen's work on Mennonite-Nazi collaboration to Susie Fisher's argument

on planting "seeds from the steppes" in the West Reserve, from works of standard-bearer historians like Cornelius Krahn to that of lay historians like Delbert Plett, and from one GAMEO article to another. For Mennonite scholars more broadly, old legends are given scientific grounding: consider the lore of the Molotschna colony's tree planting schemes under the supervision of Johann Cornies, already historicized by John Staples's environmental history of the Mennonite colonies, but here given scientific depth, provided with multilayered explanation for the forestation of the steppes and prairies. Tree planting apparently was more than a way to counter wind erosion but nothing less than a tool for altering climate, increasing precipitation, and introducing a rural aesthetic.

Beyond the surprises in this book, the work is a masterpiece. There is the intrigue, as Moon cleverly, and relentlessly, weaves the theme of myopic American scientists shaken by innovative Russian counterparts. And Moon's research program is impressive, taking him over wide regions in two vast countries. The range of scientific analysis behind well-known Mennonite stories is equally impressive. And at every turn Moon also clearly and lucidly tells a story of science without losing the layperson in agronomical jargon. The scientists and wheat producers in this book are flesh and blood humans, given to a range of emotion, including jealousies, paranoia, and pride. Another "transfer" in this book is one between science and the humanities. Environmental history at its best brings out the dialectic between nature and culture. *The American Steppes* meets this bar.

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Ben Nobbs-Thiessen, *Landscape of Migration: Mobility and Environmental Change on Bolivia's Tropical Frontier, 1952 to the Present*. Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2020. Pp. 342. Softcover, $37.50 USD.

Landscape of Migration compares three groups of people who migrated to eastern Bolivia's tropical and semitropical lowlands: internal migrants from western Bolivia, Okinawans from what was at that time a US protectorate, and Mennonites from Mexico, accompanied by smaller numbers of Mennonites from Paraguay and Canada. In brief, these groups were pushed by the desire to improve their own economic situations and were pulled by the Bolivian