him to sleep in the dog kennel she has purchased. When the child is fast asleep in the kennel, Nightbitch can roam the yard and surrounding woods, chasing down and snapping the necks of unsuspecting rabbits. Throughout the novel, Yoder builds tension between the protagonist's increasingly reckless and joyous nighttime adventures and her husband's dawning awareness of her transformation. A critical moment arrives when the husband demands an explanation for an overnight disappearance, and the protagonist does not back down or apologize. Instead, she faces him directly and boldly claims her new animal identity, even when in human mother form. "She was Nightbitch," Yoder writes, "and she was fucking amazing." I will let readers enjoy the novel's startling resolution on their own, but will say that it is a credit to Yoder that she has found not only a wildly entertaining vehicle for exploring the joys and rage of modern motherhood, but also a possible means of escape from a trap that many readers will recognize as their own.

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Carla Funk, *Mennonite Valley Girl.* Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2021. Pp. 280. Hardcover, $32.95.

As I read *Mennonite Valley Girl* by Carla Funk, I was vividly reminded of her lyrical writing style, her particularly effective use of metaphor, and her ability to conflate love with honesty as she describes people close to her. I say "reminded" because I read her first memoir, *every little scrap and wonder,* a few years ago, and was impressed then with the ease with which the stories emanated from the pages. Surely it is unusual for any writer to pen two memoirs, much less one as young as Funk, and that within two years of each other; however, as the first one focuses on her childhood and this one explores her teenage years, the two books taken together can be understood as telling the story of a single life.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, themes similar to those in her earlier book emerge in this one: gendered roles, small town life, religion, and her Mennonite roots. But these themes take on new meaning as Funk now describes a different stage of her life. There are also new themes explored in this memoir. Body image and the yearning to fit in, for example, appropriately infuse a number of the chapters, as Funk artfully depicts adolescence with its awkward and hormonally charged properties.

And just as Funk's home town of Vanderhoof featured prominently in her first memoir, it is one of the main characters in this story, too. But her interpretation of it has changed. Now its rootedness, its inviolate familiarity, its refusal to become anything other than what it is—what before gave her security—are what now make Funk's desire to leave so necessary: "Nothing ever really happened in our part of the world," she writes. "Never . . . would I marry a man from Vanderhoof. . . . Never this small town. Instead of the gravel shoulder of this potholed asphalt road, I'd take the freeway." The longing to get away, to leave this place with its small-town attitudes and limited opportunities, permeates every chapter in this book.

This book does not offer a story with a chronological narrative, recalling exact events from an objective perspective, and thankfully so. Into each of her individual narratives, Funk inserts a throwback, an earlier insight, something that seems almost tangential but gradually becomes so much part of the story that by the chapter's end its import to the original account becomes clear. In "Hippocampus," for example, Funk and her brother's enterprising ways of convincing their mother to allow them to switch from their private Mennonite school to a public school provide the chapter's framework. Within this frame she offers the reader the story of her father and mother as young people: "When my father reached eighth grade, he left school, like all Mennonite boys he knew." "Once, she'd been my age, the hemline of her dress falling well below her knee"; in time her mother "laid her future plans aside" and signed her "savings . . . over to her husband." Funk uses the story of her parents' younger experiences to legitimize her own desire to move out of the Mennonite education system. This kind of internal musing, where past and present stories blend into each other, integrating the tangible with the intangible, happens frequently, and provides her account with a sense of meaning and depth.

Gendered roles, of course, have been a significant influence in Funk's life. Her father is a logger and a smoker and a drinker; he will suddenly suggest the family take a vacation and then, of course, they do. Her mother gives up her dream of nursing to marry and then care for her children; she peels an endless number of potatoes and bakes bread regularly. The problematic gender roles Funk recalls are the typical ones that any Mennonite, or even any other girl living in a rural area in North America in the 1960s and 1970s, would experience. But Funk's constant desire to love her father and her seeming inability to do so achingly pervade this narrative. In one such passage, for example, she describes a tense exchange and follows it with a gut-wrenching reflection: "I picked up my stack of

textbooks and loose-leaf and left the dining room table. 'What? You're gonna leave now 'cause I'm here?' he'd say, and I'd reply with silence and absence, weapons meant to hurt him but ones that would only end up carving out an absence in my own heart, cheating me out of love." Her earlier memoir describes an intense desire to be a part of her father's world; in this one, she both yearns for it but also seemingly insists on leaving it. Describing her just-after-graduation forestry job, she writes: "my mind flashed to my dad and the thought that if he saw me like this—standing in a world he understood—perhaps he'd understand me, too, his daughter who chose to be anywhere but near him." As the memoir concludes, the lack of resolution regarding her relationship with her father only adds to the poignancy.

Fans of Funk are already familiar with her poetic writing style, and new readers will quickly come to appreciate it. She describes puberty, for instance, as "the body . . . mov[ing] . . . through phases, through the moistness of glands and hidden bits, . . . a cinching of skin over bones, and the bones growing at odd angles, rearranging themselves from within." And she describes her inheritance of Mennonite women in terms that poetically recall Virginia Woolf's message to women in *A Room of One's Own* ("we think back through our mothers"): "In Great-Grandma Sue glowed the egg of me. Down through the generations . . . a row of nesting dolls, their shapes soft-hipped and squat from centuries of pulling weeds and bearing children." Funk's longing to escape was clearly embedded within centuries-old expectations of women, and her ability to convey that desire so powerfully through imaginative and poetic language strengthens the resonance of her story and creates a pleasurable reading experience.

Mennonite Valley Girl can be appreciated for its fine writing and insightful critiques, but it is first and foremost a compelling story. Ultimately, it is Funk's acknowledgement that she "was hungry for controversy, drama, and suspense, a narrative with more excitement that what I believed my small town could hold" that resulted in this candid, easily accessible account of her adolescent and teenage years in a small town, of which we, the readers, are the happy beneficiaries.

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