Generally the risks Samatar takes are more than justified, however, both by the intrinsic interest of her subject matter and by her canny reflections along the way. If she resists "monoculture" and totalizing narratives, her complex, admittedly self-contradictory "magpie disposition" accumulates a good many stories well worth hearing. Moreover, Samatar argues that this very untidiness is to be celebrated, suggesting that the messiness of the contemporary Mennonite church is its strength: "the patchwork of people brought together in such different ways, by birth and faith and thirst, to build a house of effort and care" (292).

Just as the Epp travellers never reached their "final destination," Samatar comes to accept her own lack of full closure: "And what a joy it is to know you don't know. . . . To me it means simply that there is always more, that the story is never over. And this, too, is paradise" (297). This recognition of plenitude resonates with her reminders that North American Mennonites are increasingly outnumbered by Mennonites from the developing world. Books like *The White Mosque* may remind such folk of just how many more stories and voices deserve to be heard.

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David Bergen, *Out of Mind: A Novel*. Fredericton: Goose Lane, 2021. Pp. 195. Softcover, $22.95.

David Bergen's latest novel is a small, handsome volume, just the kind of thing its protagonist, Lucille Black, might have tucked into her bag to read on the plane en route to visit her daughter in Thailand and to attend a wedding in France. But its relatively short length belies the depth and breadth of its complex interior.

All is not what it seems in *Out of Mind*. Bergen's deft prose harnesses the power of the unsaid, as even the title suggests with its implicit *Out of Sight*. Or perhaps a pronoun is implied, as in *Out of Her Mind*. Either reading captures the paradoxical tension that pulls this novel along: Lucille, a psychiatrist, is unable to travel away from "the fabric of her mind" (48), as it is described one sleepless night at a hotel in Thailand, where she has come to rescue her youngest daughter Libby from a commune and a relationship with Shane, its charismatic leader.

This central narrative thread, along with the anticipated wedding in France of Baptiste, Lucille's former almost-lover, are superbly compelling. Yet Bergen has woven layer upon vivid layer below and

among these threads to create a psychological tapestry. The reader learns about Lucille's youngest sibling, Will, for instance, "the happiest person Lucille had ever known" (53) and "the best kind of son" (54), who spends time with their aging mother for free meals; about Lucille's psychologically significant trip to climb Mount Kilimanjaro with her father when she was sixteen; and about her ex-husband Morris's much-lauded memoir, described as Morris having "held onto his shit (sort of) for a long time and then, in one glorious squat, sprayed it everywhere" (81). Any one of these threads might be followed into its own novel, and in fact Bergen's *The Matter with Morris* (2010) does follow Morris's story. But Bergen exercises restraint, giving each layer enough to realize Lucille's journey without overwhelming it, including the knot at this novel's core—the friendly-fire death of Lucille and Morris's son, Martin, in Afghanistan, a grief Lucille thinks about "always and always" (28).

That Martin joined the army "against every idea he had been raised with" (29) and that Morris is a pacifist and Lucille "a mother who believed that talking, not violence, was the way to understanding" (29) are clues to an underlying Mennonite sensibility. Likewise, Morris and his family demonstrate a familiarity with scripture. There's even a brief mention of Lucille's mother's trips to visit family in Steinbach. But these are subtle hints. Unlike the characters in the conservative Anabaptist community that is the setting of the title short story in Bergen's collection *Here the Dark* (2020), Morris and Lucille's family could be any family living in the secular twenty-first century.

But look again.

Bergen's effective and consistent use of the third-person limited omniscient point of view takes the reader deeply into the complexity of Lucille's mind. Here one can see that Lucille has "good Mennonite woman" tendencies that sometimes show up as the ironic underside to her developed persona. She drives an Audi, lives independently from her family, and has always made more money than Morris, yet works behind the scenes as a servant to her deteriorating mother, keeping track of her false teeth and doing all the grunt work while her siblings do nothing. Recalling Will's comment that she "must get so tired" (55), Lucille inwardly laments, "But if she wasn't her, then who would be her? How would anything get done?" (55). As an open-minded and tolerant psychiatrist mother, she texts Libby about Shane, "It sounds like you really like him" (19), ostensibly affirming Libby's choice. Yet she almost rigidly controls her daughter, determined to rush in and pull her away. In Thailand at the compound when Lucille first meets Libby, the narrative reads like an order: "Lucille said that they would go for breakfast now" (58).

Lucille places her hope in male saviours, an interesting reversal to a motif of Bergen's in earlier works—where, as observed by Ervin Beck in his *JMS* review of *Here the Dark*, good women are portrayed as saviours to lost men. Bergen renders a wonderful allusion to the New Testament in a Thailand boat scene where Lucille is enamoured by Cees, a muscular hero who shelters Libby in his arms, unfazed in an overcrowded boat tossed by the waves of a death-scale storm. With structural ingenuity, Bergen sets up a trinity of male saviours that plays a significant role in Lucille's choices, culminating in the book's tender and ironically redemptive ending.

Bergen provides a wealth of details to savour, like the old women doing tai chi near a noodle stand in the opening, or the breath clouds of Baptiste and his new-found girlfriend seen through the window as Lucille drives by in the winter cold. As in Bergen's other work, dialogue is particularly effective, especially the absence of quotation marks that allows the reader to move in and out of Lucille's mind, to spoken word to action and back to mind again, this lack of parameters almost acting as a foil to her hiding, limiting behaviours. There's a seamlessness too in the time transitions, the way Bergen meshes for example Lucille and Baptiste's past-habitual with key flashbacks that reveal the essence of their relationship. There are laugh-out-loud moments like at the end of Lucille's interview with Shane, when she refuses to lose dignity "sorting her feet out" (78) in front of him, so the lace of her Greek sandal trails after her out the door.

Out of Mind is a tour de force. It's hard to detect a weakness, except perhaps near the end when Lucille conveniently chances on an extra credit card in a time of crisis. But there's always another side; turn this moment over in your mind and the flaw turns out to be exactly the thing a woman like Lucille would pull from her pocket.

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Dora Dueck, *Return Stroke: Essays and Memoir*. Winnipeg, CMU Press, 2022. Pp. 228. Softcover, $20.

In the essay "Burial grounds" in *Return Stroke: Essays and Memoirs*, Dora Dueck comments that while "reading the biography of P.K. Page [she] noticed that [Page] ordered half her ashes to her late husband's Ontario burial spot and half to the sea off Victoria" (69). Dueck's reference to Page and to Sandra Djwa's biography, *Journey with No Maps: A Life of P.K. Page* (2012), is no surprise.