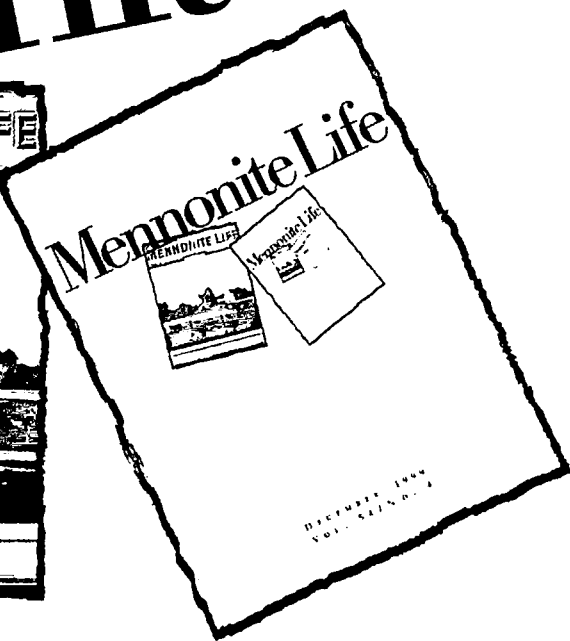
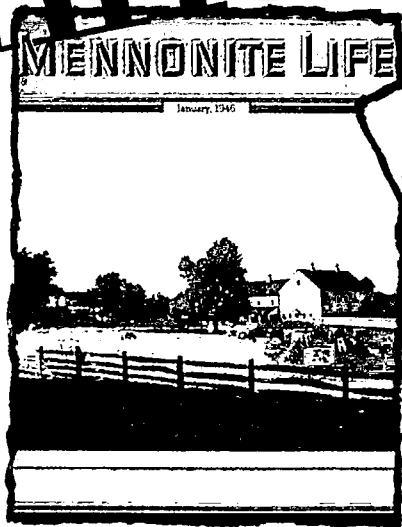
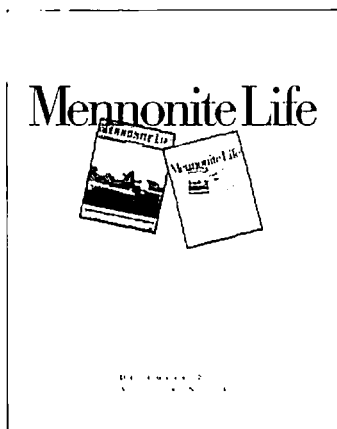


# Mennonite Life



DECEMBER 1999  
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## In *this* issue



This is the last print number of *Mennonite Life*. We have

published continuously since the first issue in January 1946. Now we are "On the Threshold of a New Era" as Robert Kreider titles his commentary which begins this issue. In March 2000, *Mennonite Life* will issue its first online edition at our website  
<[http://www.bethelks.edu/mennonitelife/](http://www.bethelks.edu/mennonitelifelife/)>.

As we have often done in December issues, this last issue is an arts edition. A theme that runs through several of the pieces here is artistic collaboration. Jeff Gundy "collaborates" with the historical figure of Harold S. Bender and with Bender's biographer Albert Keim, in reflection on the story of Bender. Writer Laura Weaver collaborates with visual artist Matt Busby in comments drawn from a joint exhibition earlier this year in Evansville, Indiana.

Also included is poetry from five poets, several of whom are appearing in *Mennonite Life* for the first time. We want to especially note the poem by the late Warren Kliever, whose work often appeared in *Mennonite Life* in years past. One last writing of his now graces our pages.

An essay by Shirley Kurtz commenting on themes of evolution

and religion will have special resonance for Kansas readers.

On a different Kansas theme are a set of screen monotypes by Bethel College art professor Gail Lutsch, inspired by central Kansas scenes.

We conclude as usual with several book reviews.

We look forward to your continued readership in March 2000.

Photo credits: p. 10, Mennonite Library and Archives; p. 18, 21, Laura Weaver; p. 31, 32, 33, 34, Gail Lutsch

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*Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken;  
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle  
eyes  
He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men  
Look'd at each other with a wild  
surmise—  
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.*

On first looking into Chapman's  
Homer, John Keats

## On the Threshold of a New Era

R o b e r t K r e i d e r

**F**ifty three years ago in January 1946 Editor Cornelius Krahn published the first issue of *Mennonite Life*. In print technology he was closer to the 1450s of Johannes Gutenberg than to the anticipated March 2000 first issue of the electronic *Mennonite Life*.

The information revolution has come to academia. We are enveloped by a revolution in how knowledge is being transmitted, generated, packaged, processed. The information revolution replaces the industrial revolution. Libraries, research centers, universities and personal computers are tied together by invisible world-wide nerve fibers of information and communication. We feel awed "like some watcher of the skies when a new planet swims into his ken."

One computer scientist has commented that to sample the Internet "is like trying to sip water from a fire hose." We are intimidated by a glut of information. Our inability to cope with this electronic flood heightens stress and causes feelings of guilt. We lament, "We can't keep up."

For the peace-minded scholar, one encounters a swords-into-plowshares irony in the story of the cold war origins of the Internet as a way to link military command centers, defense industries and universities so that communications would not be severed in case of nuclear attack. In the 1970s it leaped beyond its restricted cold war linkage into an integrated broadly available information super highway. (Dennis A. Trinkle, et al, *The History Highway, A Guide to Internet Resources*, Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1997)

In its birth more than 50 years ago, *Mennonite Life* was envisioned by Editor Krahn as an open-ended adventure: "to make a contribution to a greater and more abundant realization of 'Mennonite life' as it should be." In 1996, surveying 50 years of publication (all of 197 issues), Wynn Goering observed that in its publishing journey *Mennonite Life* has revealed a unique personality, "a set of passions and habits of mind that have characterized it from its inception:" immodest (a peculiar mixture of humility and hubris), aggressive, prescient, inclusive, intellectually demanding, passionate. (Wynn M. Goering, "My heart leaps up': *Mennonite Life* at 50," March/June 1996). If these have seen the periodical's attributes, there is no reason to anticipate that an electronic format will result in a personality change.

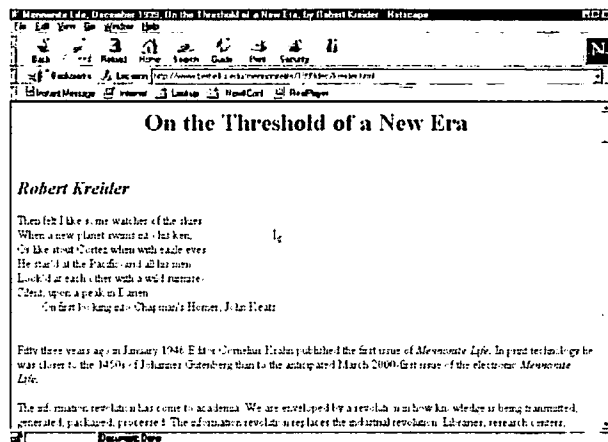
Given this background, the forthcoming transition to an electronic *Mennonite Life* seems clearly natural, predetermined, an Abrahamic journey into unexplored

terrain. And yet, a transition to a brave new world is clouded with anxiety. Will the screen displace the page? Can one still underline sentences and make notations in the margins of a book or manuscript? Will books be published that one can read in bed? Can one still give a book as a gift to a friend? Can one still rummage in a bookstore as well as surf the Internet? We are touched with sadness as we realize that we no longer can save on a shelf back issues of *Mennonite Life* as we also save *National Geographic*. We fear losing these satisfying tactile sensations.

As an anxious novice in the cloisters of the Internet, I propose to reflect tentatively on three topics related to the meaning of this electronic revolution for Mennonite studies: first, the opportunities of a new life for *Mennonite Life*; second, new and expanded possibilities for Mennonite studies; and third, concerns as we venture more boldly into the rapidly expanding world of electronic information technology. These reflections invite response: revision, addition, subtraction, critique.

### A New Life for *Mennonite Life*

This experiment in an electronic *Mennonite Life* promises opportunity to expand the printed page. Technology is available for linking printed text to audio sounds and visual materials in color. An electronic publication may save in editorial time; yet to be determined will be the hidden costs. It should reach an expanded readership, particularly the young and those beyond the academic community. One hopes that with Network accessibility, the burgeoning field of Mennonite studies will bond more closely with studies of other religious groups. It should draw younger scholars who are computer literate and comfortably adept in tapping the widely diverse potentialities of the Internet. In the 53 years of *Mennonite Life* publication the number of scholars in Anabaptist/Mennonite studies has more than quadrupled; needed are arenas where they may share their findings. It should facilitate dialogue among scholars and between author and readers.



It has the potential of nurturing a heightened sense of community among those engaged and interested in Mennonite studies.

The new *Mennonite Life* promises to become more personalized. Each reader will choose articles to print and save. Thus, each will have a selectively customized version. One sympathizes, however, for those who do not have Internet access and drop from the list of subscribers and readers.

I envision *Mennonite Life* continuing to publish the quality articles, book reviews, literary works, annual bibliography it has been doing and with such new possibilities as the following:

1. Works of art, poetry, drama and music in which text is accompanied with the hypertext of, commentary, visuals—color photographs, graphics, drawings, paintings, films—plus the spoken voice, choral or instrumental music, sound effects. One can envision a walk-through commentary on a gallery or museum exhibit. One might see and hear a poet reading his or her poetry or a keynote speaker at a conference. A dramatist could reflect on themes from a drama, this commentary supplemented by cuttings from the drama. Imagine the possibilities of a presentation on Anabaptist hymnology, accompanied by visuals and an Amish ensemble singing from the *Ausbund*. Internet resources are rich in possibilities for diversifying the presentation of studies in the arts and humanities.

2. Dialogical presentations in which a team of scholars are engaged. An editor could circulate by E-mail a jury-approved manuscript to several scholars, who would agree to write brief responses of comments and questions, these to be incorporated with the author's response in the edited on-line release. Such a format could capture the feel of a conference presentation, but with the added benefit of multiple texts to examine.

3. An electronic bulletin board where the scholar poses a question on which assistance is solicited. The writer may report a topic of study in progress and invite counsel on sources or questions to be pursued. A hypothesis may be outlined with a request that it be tested critically. Such a section would need to be editorially monitored to insure serious studied inquiry. It would not be a casual chat page.

4. Reporting by museums and libraries of significant new acquisitions of books and collections, with annotations on the source, subject matter and possible relevance of the materials.

5. Reporting of Anabaptist and Mennonite studies in progress, together with a brief autobiographical sketch of the scholar. In this way new persons would be introduced and welcomed into the scholarly community.

6. The presentation of selected documents from collections that have been scanned and are now available online. The sight of such documents can trigger interest in a student to investigate and delve more thoroughly into the full collection.

7. With the Mennonite Library and Archive's well-organized and extensive photo collection, the new *Mennonite Life* could feature with each issue a group of captioned photographs. Similarly readers could be introduced to etching and painting collections, not only from the MLA but from other libraries and archives.

8. A section summarizing current studies and publications by other religious groups that may be relevant to Mennonite/Anabaptist studies. As Mennonite studies achieve a large and professionally mature corpus, it becomes increasingly urgent that this activity be linked to the wider academic community. Mennonite

studies will be enriched by greater awareness and attentiveness to what scholars in other religious traditions are finding and producing.

9. It is conceivable that an electronic *Mennonite Life* could be made available translated into other languages: Spanish, German, French.

Some of the above suggestions may be dubious, but, perhaps worthy of testing. New possibilities will emerge of which no one has yet thought. Allow the imagination to roam freely and a variety of additional ideas for an enriched electronic *Mennonite Life* will come forth.

### **New and expanded possibilities for Mennonite studies in an electronic age**

As the new information technology opens a wide range of possibilities for Mennonite studies, one's thoughts extend to programming beyond an online *Mennonite Life*. As one evaluates the feasibility and urgency of various options, each must be weighed against criteria of cost, energy and time. The range of possibilities exceed the resources of any one study center. Collaboration is essential. Now is the time for the several Canadian and U.S. Anabaptist/Mennonite study centers to confer on how tasks may be distributed, perhaps some projects being jointly administered and jointly funded. Such cooperation is facilitated by the ease of E-mail and Internet communication.

That which excites my interest most among possibilities in the new information technology are the openings to communicate with scholars in a global community. Those in the non-Western world are more oral than we typewriter-addicted, letter-writing, printed-page people. E-mail messages arrive from and depart in moments to scholar friends in Beijing, Nairobi, Durban, Paris. The E-mail network promises to open our eyes to perspectives that can correct the myopia of us North Americans. The global history project of the Mennonite World Conference, coordinated by John A. Lapp, reflects these expanded horizons of scholarship.

Consider the following suggestions as additional possibilities for expanded use of the new technology:

1. Linkages to other Anabaptist-related research web sites.
2. Publication of document collections, rare and out-of-print books, back issues of not-readily-obtainable publications. The technology for this is available with high fidelity, rapid scanners.
3. A "Volume VI" to the *Mennonite Encyclopedia* with the addition of new entries and updating of existing articles. An encyclopedia needs revision and supplementation the moment it is published. An online updating of this indispensable resource is urgent, but one that involves substantial costs.
4. A sequel to the 1943 Warkentin-Gingerich *Who's Who Among the Mennonites*.
5. Corrected, updated editions of out-of-print reference works such as the *Anabaptist-Mennonite Time Line*.
6. A master chronology of Anabaptist-Mennonite events.
7. Registers of the collections of each of the Mennonite archives.
8. Registers of the photograph collections of each of the archives.
9. A master list of the obituaries from each of the Mennonite study centers.
10. A master list of reviews of Anabaptist and Mennonite books as have appeared in various publications.
11. A master list of art collections held by Mennonite institutions.
12. A master list of oral history collections.
13. A web site for the sale and purchase of out-of-print books
14. With Internet technology widely available, Mennonite colleges and seminaries can provide web site classrooms for students in distant places.

The new computer and network technology provides the means to enhance areas of Mennonite study that require a broad base of data gathering. Genealogy and family history, which have been viewed as peripheral to scholarly historical work, can provide significant data for studies such as profiles of the Mennonite diaspora. What has happened to the dispersion of the progeny of Mennonite immigrants? Intriguing patterns could

be derived from collated data of church affiliation, geographical dispersion, vocation, education, age and cause of death, supplemented by oral history gathering as to Mennonite identity. More complete genealogical data gathering could yield significant material for health studies.

Study conferences and colloquiums are increasing at an exponential rate. For most scholars the cost to attend such events at a distance precludes more than one or two a year. E-mail and conference-telephone technology can broaden the base of participation. A person who presents a paper can distribute by E-mail a manuscript to a select group who cannot attend but whose insights are needed. The E-mail responses could be duplicated for sharing with the audience following the presentation. Such procedures could enhance the sense of a community of scholarship. Ways should be tested to encourage a continuing scholarly engagement following a conference. Perhaps a requirement of conference attendance might be the filing of an E-mail response on new ideas gleaned and questions lingering from the conference experience—these responses edited and distributed.

### Concerns as we employ the new information technology

A computer consultant has offered the cautionary counsel that one should not be the first to introduce the new technology, nor the last. This is not the time to discard the book, the newspaper, the periodical. Nor is it the time to close book stores and stop printing presses. Screen and printed page probably will continue to play complementary roles.

The ease of E-mail communication offers room for vices. In dashing off an E-mail message one can readily slip into careless habits: ragged syntax, misspelling, hasty and ill-formulated thoughts. Without face-to-face deterrents to bad behavior, one can whip out intemperate, hurtful comments that injure relationships. Let there be an E-mail etiquette.

I ask myself what Anabaptist-Mennonite concerns inform our approach to this exploding,

intimidating electronic world of the computer, E-mail and Internet. As God's children we are called to pursue truth, to broaden understanding, to deepen wisdom. New tools are to be used to pursue and disseminate knowledge. Truth makes free. But let us embrace the new technology with a constant concern for community. Eyes glued to a personal computer screen is a highly individualistic enterprise. Days spent with face to the screen and back to family and colleagues is less than the good life. How can we use the new to bring us together? How can we enrich our appreciation for each other? What can liberate us from self-centeredness and loneliness? How can it open conversation and cultivate friendship with those beyond our circle? Let us be sensitive to the limitations of the new technology—its present inability to observe a facial expression, the shrug of a shoulder, the lowering of the eyes, an impatient shifting in the chair, the lilt or edge of the voice, all the nuances of presence.. As heirs of an Anabaptist affirmation of community, we dare not lose a commitment to the living, three-dimensional presence. When do we say "No" to the new?

When new electronic communities emerge, are existing communities of scholarship weakened? A friend highly knowledgeable in information technology observes, "One potential downside is that as like-minded people are drawn together, we may begin to lose the diversity inherent in more heterogeneous communities, like the communities we live in."

Some Mennonites have tended to be cautious in accepting new technology: the telephone, automobile, radio, films, television. This stance has distressed those eager for innovation but in

retrospect this often may have been prudent. Our Amish cousins epitomize technological wariness, as may be observed in their gingerly weighing of the issue of permitting the use of cellular telephones (Howard Rheingold, "Look Who's Talking," *Wired*, January 1999, pp. 128- 131). Let there be additional cautions: a concern that keyboarding not draw scholars from field research; a warning that powerful new technologies are often accompanied with hidden costs, agendas and fallout; that more and faster may not be better—more facts, more documents, more network conferences. With an increase in research productivity, will quality increase or decrease? Given new and soon obsolescent software, let us be alert to the problems and risks of storing, preserving and retrieving material. With frequent changes in software, irreplaceable documents are in danger of being lost. To play it safe, must the archivist file backup hard copies of each document?

These issues may call for another conference. Gather together the directors of all Mennonite libraries, archives and study centers. Gather together the editors of the *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, *The Journal of Mennonite Studies*, *The Conrad Grebel Review*, *Mennonite Life*, and more to outline ways of using the new Internet resources to lift Mennonite studies to new levels of competence and relevance.

This is an exhilarating time for Anabaptist/Mennonite studies. It is like the explorer standing on the peak of Darien who "felt like some watcher of the skies when a new planet swims into his ken." Also be warned. Lurking in the jungles of information technology are dangers for present day Balboas.



*The following is a speech with original poem Jeff Gundy presented to the Mennonite Historical Society last May in response to Al Keim's biography of Harold Bender. Gundy's essay is used here as an example of artistic collaboration—the biographer with historical subject, the poet with biographer, and most importantly for this creative arts issue, most suggestive for Mennonite life, the poet Gundy in collaboration with the revelations of his own inner life, and the poet Gundy's laying bare for the reader his own "coming to" image, specifically, the image of the black coat. Gundy re-writes Harold Bender, not biographically, but figuratively, as the Man in the Black Coat when perceived by the turn-of-the-new-century mature Mennonite artist grieving "the black father [who] agreed to be the chosen one" among Mennonites.*

**F**irst, I would like to say

thanks for the invitation to speak with such an august group.

And thanks to Al Keim for writing a fine, readable, balanced, insightful biography of a man who is clearly at the center of Mennonite history in the middle of this century.

I would also like to thank Harold Bender, without whom this organization, and many of the other major Mennonite institutions of the end of this century, would surely not exist in the same form.

I want to take as given all the important and lasting things that Harold Bender accomplished—things I don't need to rehearse for this group. Because we are mainly familiar with Bender's accomplishments, I want in this brief time to do something that may be less gracious and grateful than perhaps it should. I want to talk about the Harold Bender who troubles me, the one with whom I do not feel much harmony. I will talk boldly because my time is brief, though I am plentifully aware of all that I am leaving out. We can negotiate later if you like.

I've envisioned how to start this many times. I thought about Ezra Pound's poem, "A Pact," which he wrote to Walt Whitman:

*A Pact*

*I make a pact with you, Walt Whitman—  
I have detested you long enough.  
I come to you as a grown child  
Who has had a pig-headed father;  
I am old enough now to make friends.*

## Black Coats, Pig-Headed Fathers, and Growing Souls: Some Reflections on the Figure of Harold Bender

Jeff Gundy



*It was you that broke the new wood  
Now is a time for carving.  
We have one sap and one root—  
Let there be commerce between us.*

I would like to be friends with Harold Bender. I'm not sure, though, whether he would want to be friends with me. And there's the rub, I think, especially for those of us Mennonite intellectuals who aspire to what we clumsily call "creative" work.

Let me offer a few selective quotes from Al Keim's biography to illustrate the sides of Bender that trouble me. Again, let me say that

these are obviously not the whole story, but I do believe they represent a significant part of his story.

#1: *The Man Without a Private Life*. "This is the biography of a public man. Despite his huge written record, Harold Bender revealed almost nothing about his private life.... Seldom are we invited to observe or share his innermost joys, hopes, and fears." (14)

Helen Alderfer's review of this book in *Christian Living* made a similar point: "This book has been valuable for me who knew Harold Bender personally but did not know him, for he divulged little of his private life."

#2: *The Man Who Will Make His Way*. "Harold had a pragmatic view of how to operate in the Mennonite milieu. As he explained to his friend Hartzler, 'A man can't let petty things stand in the way and compromise his whole future position and usefulness.... If a man starts out by being a rebel in our church, he usually ends up on the dump.'" (77)

#3: *The Defender of the Borders*. Bender in the *Goshen College Record*: "Not everyone has the moral right to criticize. Who has the right? Only he who is a living part of the organism which he criticizes. Only he who has and keeps his life in the Church, who suffers with her, and whose spiritual fellowship with the Church is unbroken." (206)

I have to pause and say that this strikes me as brilliant, in a political sense. It's brilliant because it seems common-sensical—why should we allow our enemies to define our problems for us? And yet if we accept this view, we risk defining *all* real critique right out of

existence—because we will surely be tempted to conclude that *anyone* so bold as to criticize “the Church” on anything important *must* be no longer in “spiritual fellowship.” Notice also the metaphor for church here: a single “organism” with “living parts” and, by implication, dead or former parts as well, although how those parts become that way is not examined. Am I being paranoid to expect that such a church will be especially closed to critique from those that it has driven away?

#4: The Teacher in Hiding:

“Students complained that Bender missed too many classes and that he frequently came to class unprepared. Since he too often ran out of time, his classes tended to skim the surface and sometimes failed to help students fathom the depths of the issues they ought to have been addressing.... Bender was not a poor teacher: what his students deplored was his failure to give them the best of which he was capable....

“Yet even faculty overload was not the main reason for the lack of rigor. More important was the desire and need to be cautious and noncontroversial. For twenty years Bender had embraced conventional theological understandings.... Bender had an almost compulsive need to present himself and the seminary as safe and orthodox.” (342-3)

I don’t think this kind of teaching happens very often at any Mennonite college any more; I certainly hope not. And surely these comments do not represent Bender’s entire career as a teacher. But I suspect that the felt need to present ourselves as “safe and orthodox” has not altogether vanished, and I

cannot help but worry about what important matters may be skimmed or avoided because of that need.

#1A: The Man Without a Private Life, part 2. On Bender’s letter to Melvin and Verna Gingrich when his daughter Nancy was ill, Keim writes: “The almost ritualistic quality of his words, while deeply felt, exhibit Bender’s near inability to express himself in profoundly personal terms. He could not find the words to convey his anxiety and fear. Thus he turned to conventional religious language.” (380)

This division between the public and the personal is really what troubles me most, and what I think should trouble anyone who believes that real learning, real teaching, and real Christianity all have a good deal to do with the inner life. Those of us who—despite several hundred years of prohibitions and skepticism—have been drawn to interior and aesthetic modes of experience and expression can hardly help feeling like interlopers in Bender’s world, frivolous time-wasters if not worse. And those pursuits can hardly help but take us outside the borders that Bender feared to trespass.

Would Bender spend a whole afternoon fussing with the words of a single poem, as I have? Surely he wouldn’t take the time to learn to play the guitar, much less play a few sad, worldly love songs on it over and over as I’ve been known to do. Would he read Rilke and Kafka, those heterodox misfits, even if they did write in German? What about all the rest—Freud, Marx, Darwin, much less Derrida and Lacan and Foucault and Kristeva—who are decidedly outside the borders of the orthodox, the cautious, the non-controversial?

**This division between the public and the personal is really what troubles me most, and what I think should trouble anyone who believes that real learning, real teaching, and real Christianity all have a good deal to do with the inner life.**

Would he  
listen seriously to  
Alice Walker and  
Toni Morrison,  
Julia Kasdorf and  
Di Brandt, Lee  
Snyder and  
Shirley Showalter?

Would Bender pay serious attention to any of the other writers and thinkers I can't imagine going without? Would he listen seriously to Alice Walker and Toni Morrison, Julia Kasdorf and Di Brandt, Lee Snyder and Shirley Showalter?

Personally, I must say that at least since I learned to read my inner life has been far more diverse, colorful and interesting than my outer one. Much of what I have encountered there is decidedly unorthodox and controversial, even dangerous, and partly *because* it's interior, it's also difficult to regulate. But I am convinced that it's in that realm of slow, difficult, unregulated encounter with the biggest, toughest, strongest, strangest, most beautiful and dangerous productions of the human spirit that anything meaningful I may have managed to learn and say and do myself has its birth. If I keep some space in my life for those sorts of encounters, and for playing guitar, and for walking out in God's world, then poems come to me. If I get caught up in doing things with people, they don't.

Quite by accident today I stumbled on a quote from Kurt Vonnegut that almost stopped my breath. "The primary benefit of practicing any art, whether well or badly," he writes, "is that it enables one's soul to grow." I have not had time to think through all of what this might mean, but I thought at once of the parable of the talents, and that indeed this might be what God expects of us: to grow our souls, to bring them back bigger than they were.

We can hardly do that without the arts, and I would argue that we can hardly do it within a narrow set

of prohibitions and prescriptions. I have spent much of my life as a teacher and writer crossing borders that Bender seems to have been willing to keep closed, and I can't imagine going back inside. I can imagine letting the most conservative elements of the Mennonite church define who is and isn't a part of the group or what should and shouldn't be part of the discussion, but I pray that it doesn't happen.

So—yes, Bender is scary to me when he represents such things. But I want to say something else about him too, something that may be slightly more generous. In a recent essay, Julia Kasdorf writes acutely about Bender and Marilyn Monroe as public figures, and about the costs to Norma Jean Baker of becoming Marilyn Monroe, the woman in the famous photo, the object of so much desire. Julia only touches on a gesture most of you know, that of Harold Bender, early in his Goshen career, rather unwillingly putting on that famous plain coat to reassure the Eastern conservatives of his orthodoxy.

Surely in doing so Bender also accepted a public persona—one rather different than Marilyn's, of course, but also one with a quite rigidly and narrowly defined set of expectations. Bender, it seems clear, sacrificed his inner life and changed his outward appearance for the sake of public accomplishment. He seems to have done so more or less consciously and willingly, and if he was not perfectly selfless, surely he was largely driven by a real desire to be of service. More than one person who knew him has suggested that he was a closet liberal who accepted the plain coat and the task of placating the conservatives as

the cost of keeping Goshen College open. I mean here not to criticize him as much as to reflect on what those choices cost him. I can't help but wonder what would have changed had he refused to put that black coat on, had he refused to let the most conservative elements of his constituency play so large a role in defining the context of his thought and work, even when he resisted or opposed those elements as much as he thought he dared. Would Goshen have been closed down long ago, or taken over by the fundamentalists and made in their image? Or might it have thrived on the energy of a less cautious and more radical pursuit of the true Anabaptist Vision?

I have no answer for these questions. But when I arrived at Goshen from the Illinois provinces in 1970 in a haze of anxious bravado, Bender was still a rather active ghost. And what I have come to call the Man in the Black Coat of narrow, dogmatic, authoritarian Mennonite orthodoxy was an even more constant presence. This figure was not Bender himself, of course, nor any actual human being, but a weird amalgam of mostly shadowy figures—wealthy constituents, board members, pastors, even students—who seemed to hold some equally obscure power, so that everything we did had to be either made acceptable to him or carefully hidden away.

I'm grateful to those who did their best to placate the Man in the Black Coat, so that the self-styled rebels like me could cause trouble and bend the rules and try out ideas that we knew would horrify him. I'm even more grateful to those—teachers, administrators,

students—who did everything they could to resist the Man in the Black Coat and his grip on our minds, our bodies, and our souls.

But I mourn that thirty years later we still seem stuck in these old contentions, one way or another. I mourn for my own complicity and timidity in sometimes knuckling under to the darkness and fear that black coat represents. I mourn also for my own mean-spirited difficulty in recognizing the grace and truth that dwells there also. On the one hand, I want to say, as Thoreau did, that if I were to repent of anything it would be my good behavior. On the other, I have long been bound into a community where I accept my accountability to the group and have learned to try, over and over, to cherish the gifts and the views of people from all over the spectrum. Sometimes that's easy; it's most difficult, of course, when the desire for open and respectful conversation is not reciprocal.

Can we have commerce now with our pig-headed fathers, as grown men and women? It's almost easier, isn't it, if they're dead, their pigheadedness completed, and those of us still here able to judge and sort out their faults and their virtues as we will? What sort of conversations can we have with those who have already drawn a line that excludes us? Recently I visited a new web site created by a group calling for the creation of a "New Fundamentalist Evangelical Mennonite Church." "The current trend of liberal theologians, homosexuality, pro-abortion and other social sins are signs of spiritual death," I read there, and I didn't know whether to weep first for the grammar or for the

**What sort  
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line that  
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Reality and truth are often dangerous, but illusion and ignorance are even more so.

enormous gulf I felt between whoever wrote those words and me.

If I had time I would argue that this point of view is at least as “worldly,” in drawing on dangerous and corrupt sources, as one that draws on Blake, Whitman, Dickinson and Rilke, all of them steeped in long and rigorous spiritual and aesthetic disciplines. I would argue that these people, whoever they are, have already done what Bender said deprived people of the right to critique: broken willingly from the traditional Anabaptist spiritual fellowship that I know and love. I know they would not agree, and I have no desire to set them apart. But neither do I desire to let them set me apart. What would Bender do? I wish I knew.

How *does* any tiny group such as we are define ourselves and maintain the fellowship? Must the price of that maintenance be conformity, mediocrity, and submission to self-styled authorities whose fervor and conviction are intensified by the narrow channels they run through? Do we define ourselves by drawing firm borders and enforcing them, by establishing a vital center and allowing people to set up camp as near or far from it as they choose, or in some third way we haven’t yet been able to imagine?

As we muddle on with all of this, we will need God’s help. But we know God through human beings, and surely we will also need all the human resources we can muster. Let me claim one last time that this is, paradoxically, where the inner life might yield fruits in helping us reckon with and comprehend our human and

spiritual realities more deeply. If the truth is the truth, should it be left unspoken? Should a group of old men—or any group—be allowed to set whole areas of the world off limits? Bender’s life, I must say, seems to answer “Yes,” and here I at least must part ways with him. “Be it life or death,” Thoreau wrote, “we crave only reality.” Reality and truth are often dangerous, but illusion and ignorance are even more so. And so I think we owe it to each other, and to Harold Bender, to grow our souls, to practice our arts, to speak out truths as boldly as they come to us.

Di Brandt, a Mennonite poet from Manitoba, came to Bluffton last fall, and we had some talk about her journey. She has gone, as some of you know, from a very closed childhood in a Mennonite village to a very public rebellion against almost everything Mennonite to a point where, she said, she’s tired of being known as “angry” and has even begun thinking of herself as Mennonite again. She’s walked a difficult path, and done it with a level of courage and insight that I respect greatly. When she was gone I found myself writing some poems that reflect on my own Mennonite experience, perhaps more directly than most I’ve written, and I’ll close this with one of them. Some of you will know who I’m talking about here. It’s not Harold Bender.

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## **The Black Father**

Not my real father still known as Whitey for his hair  
for his open grin for his way of rubbing his head between  
his work-thick hands when tired or embarrassed  
but the father with secrets the black-haired father

the big smart father who learned to fly  
who journeyed west & came home sad & triumphant  
& filled with mysteries the black father agreed  
to be the chosen one and he learned to speak in two voices

one used the old words few and strong the bible the vision  
the stern & narrow way the other voice he kept  
in his dark suit in an inside pocket held between chest  
& arm too tight to slip out I guessed we guessed

at what wild secrets that voice knew we argued & proposed  
but the suit stayed on the arm stayed down  
the first voice kept talking it talked well  
it had stories dramatic & perplexing

the last refugees pushed off the plane  
the engines roaring to lift the groaning exiles  
above the trees the father trembling at the stick  
& we hushed & trembled & pondered what did that mean

while the father slipped away to answer one more  
hard narrow letter about what some young fool  
said on a weary Tuesday what some young body  
did Saturday night on the gym floor

the black father didn't have it easy he gave  
a lot up he learned to choose his moments  
& his fights & kept whole reams of careful argument  
in his secret drawer for centuries

well years anyway in my last year the black father  
had the class over & I stood near him & tried to say  
that he had taught me something I was twenty  
& from the country & I faltered & for a second

he seemed ready to speak but then just looked  
down & turned away it was not his fault  
I was shy & young bold only at the wrong moments  
& maybe he was shy too but oh black father

I want to know what it was you almost said  
what that inside pocket held & why you turned away

## Four Figures in a Street-Dance

Warren Kliever

Eight dancers in the center  
bow and greet,  
twirl and whoop,  
meet their partners  
and do-si-do,  
watching each other  
raise jubilation  
from the dumb pavement,

II  
surrounded by forty people  
who stand and watch,  
grin and chuckle,  
clap and shuffle  
around a roiling center—  
(or is their swaying circle  
another dance,  
a slow counterpoint?);

III  
between their nudging shoulders  
a Mennonite girl,  
starched prayer bonnet  
primly bobby-pinned,  
straining upward tiptoed,  
one yearning ankle thrust back  
for balance,  
to peer into the heart of  
the shameful.

IV  
Two eyes in the darkness  
peek into the circle of light,  
pausing to take note.  
His lips mouth  
the images:

The girl is an outsider  
looking in at revelers.

The girl is an insider  
sneaking a look at  
transgressors.

The girl is a dancer  
alone in the third circle.

V  
The dancers cheer  
the music's cadence.  
The forty watchers  
applaud.  
The two eyes return  
to the darkness.  
The girl,  
up in air,  
balanced on one foot,  
waits.



**Writer's statement:** *In my personal-experience writing I explore the dual and even multiple identities with which I have always lived. I trace their origin to my birth into a family and community characterized by a profound sense of polarity: conservative Mennonites vs. the dominant society (the "world"). Taught that we should be in the world but not of the world, we always knew that there were at least two ways to be. That awareness developed into a way of life for me: not only an energizing doubt of both Mennonitism and the "world" but also flexibility in shifting from one identify to another. Laura Weaver*

**Artist's statement:** *I believe that as individual persons, we are both divided and unified. Within myself are different selves: A self that fears and a self that loves, a self that laughs and a self that is filled with sadness, a self that gets hurt and a self that is invincible, a self that manipulates and a self that is honest, a self that eats everything in sight and a self that eats healthy and exercises, a self that sits and a self that dances, a mindful self and an ignorant self, a giving self and a selfish self. There are different selves for different situations, different selves for different environments, different selves for different cliques, groups, communities, families, and geography.*

*For me, the self or individual is a microcosm of community. Therefore, I believe that as community or groups of individuals, we also experience states of division and wholeness. For community to last and exist we have to be able to be both divided and unified at the same time. We, as a body of people, are much like the human body which is divided into many incredible, different parts. Together, these different or divided parts become even more amazing.*

*When I create a self portrait, I am not only exploring myself. I'm exploring my different selves or personas. I'm also exploring community. I hope to capture truths in myself that others can identify with. It's an abstract way for me to ask the viewer, "Hey man, have you ever felt this way or have you experienced anything like this before?" Often the answer is a "No." Other times a connection is made. I find that there is truth in both kinds of answers. I find common ground with the viewer as well as differences. It is part of the process of being an artist and the process of being in community. Matt Busby*

W

hen I was 26 years old and working on an M.A. at the University of Pennsylvania, I wore a Mennonite cap over my long hair held in a bun. Assuming that I was nunlike and prudish, Dr. Maurice Johnson, professor of Eighteenth-Century British Literature, deliberately assigned me Matthew Lewis' novel, *The Monk*, containing scenes of rape and incest, for an oral report and a paper. However, having read sexual material wherever I could find it, including searching for the Susanna and the Elders story in the Apocrypha in the big family Bible, I didn't even realize that Dr. Johnson had singled me out. I fearlessly and matter-of-factly gave my oral report dealing with the sexual content and wrote my paper. Twenty years later Dr. Johnson sent me a handwritten note on a University of Pennsylvania letterhead, "I'm a little ashamed to

## Divided Together: Written and Visual Explorations of the Self

text by

Laura Weaver

drawings by

Matt Busby



## Laura's Piece

say that I must have assigned *The Monk* for you to work on in order to shock you—but I suspect you didn't shock very easily" (12 Dec. 1977). Dr. Johnson apparently discovered what a male graduate student recognized without testing me. I was delighted when the student, seeing beyond my nunlike appearance, observed to our classmates, "Don't let her fool you; she could be a little hellion if she wanted to."

That experience of a divided self (whether actual or perceived by others) and other configurations of multiple selves (some but not all related to my movement away from

a conservative Mennonite background) propelled me to Matt Busby's self-portrait drawings. I immediately resonated with the figures; I saw parallels to my personal experience essays and my collections of photographs, some of which I have used as illustrations for the self-portraits I have written.

I decided to buy "Laura's Piece," a drawing which depicts several heads and two sets of eyes; the shared eye changes when paired with a different eye. Because I often feel that I am looking out of several sets of eyes and that others are viewing me with differing sets of

eyes, I was attracted to all the faces and eyes in this piece.

("Laura's Piece" reminds me of an experience I had several years ago. Mother, my sister Dorcas, and I had a studio portrait taken. Looking out of my worldly eyes, I had chosen a dress that seemed appropriate. Only later, as I looked at the portrait through their eyes, did I realize that my neckline was much lower than those of Mother and Dorcas, who still wear conservative Mennonite clothing. A few years later when we three had another photograph taken, I looked out of plain Mennonite eyes and chose a dress with a higher neckline.)

Hanging in my living room, this drawing seems to have arrived at its home—to lodge there with my divided-self personal-experience essays and the photographs of my various selves, showing conservative Mennonite and non-conservative clothing and hairstyles.

Busby's drawing seems to fit in my house just as I have always felt at home with divided and multiple identities: I once taught a course in Divided-Self Literature, I did my dissertation on the divided-self theme in novelist and playwright David Storey's works, I worked as a research assistant for Dr. Thomas J. O'Donnell, who was writing a book on T. E. Lawrence's divided self, and I have written essays on my own and others' experience of living on a hyphen. To me, the experience of multiple identities is positive. It is a stimulus to finding out what will emerge next; it is a way to "live the questions" (Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*).

The experience of self-division or bipolarities began in my childhood. In a one-room public school at New Holland, PA, my sister Dorcas and I, like other conservative Mennonite children, were dressed in plain clothing. The other Mennonite children spoke German, but my sister and I spoke English, as did the worldly children. Our clothing identified us with one group; our language identified us with the other. I recognize those two selves—plain and worldly—when I look at Busby's drawings of two figures. Sometimes my childhood plain and worldly selves in that New Holland classroom oppose each other; sometimes

they are equal, co-existing comfortably. At other times they are joined, as in "Yin and Yang: Tale of the Bipolar Bear," the drawing in which the figures share an arm. Perhaps my sister Dorcas and I created a new identity for ourselves beyond the hyphenation of plain-worldly.

Another childhood memory: I, plain Mennonite Laura, in a plain dress (with a sewn-in belt, long sleeves, no collar, no decoration), braids with no ribbons, black stockings and shoes, went to visit my cousins Blanche and Miriam, whose Mennonite mother had married a Lutheran.

**"Busby's drawing seems to fit in my house just as I have always felt at home with divided and multiple identities."**

During those weekends I was allowed to wear my cousins' fancy clothing. I fondly remember having white ribbons on my braids, wearing a pink dress with a white ribbon hanging down from the yoke, and wearing white socks and shoes. Mennonite Laura became Lutheran Laura for the weekend. That fanciness led me to create an imaginary Laura with curly hair, white blouse, blue skirt, white shoes and socks. And sometimes in the privacy of my bedroom, I would unbraid my hair, fold the ends under the rest, and fasten it with a barrette so it would look short. Those plain and fancy selves seemed opposing, as in "Unseen," in which one figure turns away from the other. The fancy self was only temporary.

Another type of bipolarity: my image of the dependable good student vs. my need to be seen as mischievous as the others. Busby's drawings showing one pained or sad figure and one happy or peaceful one remind me that I took pleasure in occasional rebellions. Already stigmatized by the label "good dependable student," I rebelled minimally when I moved to another school for eighth grade. In our one-room school, in which the desk lids were hinged, students would raise the lids ostensibly to remove items while they talked

and laughed in the back row. After I dared to participate, the teacher Mr. Brubaker observed, "When Laura came here, she was a good girl. Now you've changed her." I felt triumphant in this moment of escape from good dependable Laura.

In high school good dependable Laura persisted. Although I had fun with friends, I was primarily a serious student and hard worker—not only at school but also outside of school. Because my father left us when I was a child and didn't support us financially, my sister and I, from the time we were 12 years old, worked part-time doing housework and office work.

That experience of an absent father in grade school and high school is another memory recalled by one of Busby's drawings. In "Unseen" an

**"I no longer am that self. However, I do not  
reject that self, I still claim it and even  
affirm it."**

absent figure is in the background. It was originally there, Busby said, but then covered up (not erased). For me, the absent figure is my father, and the two figures represent my reactions to him. I was sad, angry, hurt about the deprivation caused by his lack of presence. Nevertheless, I tried to focus on positive things: not only his delight in his past schoolwork and his encouragement of mine but also the pride that Mother, my sister Dorcas, and I shared at having survived without his help.

By the time I graduated from high school, the yearbook description of me read: "You can always depend on Laura to do her share, and more, of work [in extracurriculars], and to have her lessons prepared, too. Although always busy, Laura has a cheery smile for everyone. We know she will be as successful in life as she has been at Manor." In the list of "Ideal Senior Characteristics," mine was dependability; other students were listed for their smiles, personalities, teeth, and dimples (*The Trumpeter*, Manor-Millersville High School yearbook, 1949). Student autographs in my yearbook were

often inscribed, "to the brain of our class."

The only exception to my good student, hard worker image during this period consisted, ironically, of an experience with a male Mennonite employer. When he ran his hand over my clothed breasts and pulled my hand up to his crotch, I saw the potential for being considered something other than a hard worker. However, like my fancy clothes self, my sensual self emerged only briefly.

During high school and college I went to song services and prayer meetings, taught a Sunday School class, taught summer Bible School, and gave talks at the Sunday evening Young People's Christian Association meetings. However, during my return to graduate school to work on a Ph.D. and as a college teacher (in my late 30s and early 40s), I rebelled against my conservative heritage. The exhilaration of my self-exploration during this period is conveyed in Busby's "Vision Dance: My Own Private Baseball Card," depicting a body caught in motion: confidence, sexual energy, and a sense of dancing. As Busby explained to me, the eye in the hand suggests "a vision brought into reality." That is what happened as I changed my appearance and I learned to play. I wore lipstick, had my hair cut, and wore jewelry and livelier clothing. I danced for the first time. During this same period, I hosted dancing parties at my apartment. After one party, a colleague, offended by the liveliness, the interracial composition of the group, and my need to find a new identity, wrote these lines to me:

"Laura-Weaver-desperate weaver ...  
Of new coats.  
Whole closets of new color" (Tom Sullenberger)

Despite my changes in clothing and lifestyle, my plain self was not discarded. Busby's drawing, "338.4," helps me to realize that. "338.4" (which, according to Busby, refers to weight) depicts an idealized, heroic muscular figure of a large body. This confident figure, leaning forward, has large hands that could be used in talking, embracing, grabbing, or moving in a dance. The presence of confidence and absence of criticism for a large body



## The Funky Buzz: Carnival of Imaginary Butterflies

remind me of my attitude toward my past plain dress and behavior. I no longer am that self. However, I do not reject that self, I still claim it and even affirm it. I continually remind people that I was plain; I show them photos, and I write about the experience of plainness. I'm even proud of that self—a self that emphasized not decoration but genuineness.

Today some of the old bipolarities exist, just as new ones have developed. An unassertive-assertive contrast is reflected in "Dark Night of the Soul." In that drawing, a small figure in the foreground is

highlighted, enveloped by larger figures. That small figure is my past unassertive self that usually deferred to others. The larger figures are my more assertive, risk-taking selves. The smaller figure might be trapped by the other selves that reject the past unassertive self and try to crush her. Or the more assertive selves might protect the unassertive one, thus declaring that she was O.K. and nothing to be ashamed of.

Another present bipolarity arises out of gender and age categories. I see in Busby's drawings of opposing selves a depiction of the contrasts

between my perceptions and society's expectations. Although I have had little experience in childcare or cooking, I am sometimes perceived as a baby-sitting grandmother or a cook for a large family. One day before Thanksgiving several years ago, a clerk at Wesselman's grocery store said to me, "Well, I guess you're going to be cooking a big turkey tomorrow." And sometimes if I use profane or bawdy language, someone will exclaim, "Oh, Laura, that's so out of character!" Unfortunately, expectations of plainness have now been replaced by those of gender and age.

The specific nature of my bipolarities may have changed through the years, but the paradoxical frustration and exhilaration of living with multiple identities remains constant. The ability to manage several selves is presented magnificently in Busby's drawing, "The Conversation: A Juggling Act." This figure, involved in a conversation with the viewer, is, according to Busby, tossing pebbles or balls as if juggling. In a conversation I juggle several selves, depending on the other participant and the topic. In communicating

with my conservative Mennonite relatives in Pennsylvania, liberal Mennonites in Champaign-Urbana, University of Evansville teachers, or a small e-mail group, I adopt several selves. These performances are hard work but also an exciting game. Although my childhood and teenage years were deficient in play, adulthood has brought me the beneficent ability to play, one form of which is juggling my words. Whether I say, "God bless you," swear, or use bawdy language, I choose an appropriate image: Devout Menno Laura or Liberal/Pagan Menno Laura. I might also be just Laura—but not likely.

Self-division sometimes entailed suffering, recalled as Busby points out the stigmata on the hand in the upper right corner of "The Funky Buzz: Carnival of Imaginary Butterflies." My plain/fancy identities evoked misunderstanding, ridicule, and even censure from both worlds, each of which expects consistency. But eventually my bipolarities and multiple identities became life-enhancing. Rather than being oppressive, multiple selves engender a joyful strategy for living. Now, life is a dance with many partners!

*Leonard Nolt is a writer and photographer who grew up in southeastern Pennsylvania. He writes book reviews for the Provident Bookfinder. His photos have been published in Idaho Wildlife, Gospel Herald, Frontier Times, and other publications. He and his wife Karen have four daughters. He lives in Boise, Idaho.*

**The Spotted Stone**  
(A prose poem)

On the edge of a small grove of juniper trees at the northern boundary of the Great Basin you will find the Spotted Stone. About the size of the one that sealed the tomb, it stands vertical, like a sentinel guarding the grove. The Spotted Stone is the color of granite with fine veins that shine in the moonlight like lines of cold unblinking fire. The spots are large, white, and number half a dozen. They stare like glaucomic eyes toward the cumulus clouds congealing on the horizon.

The raven has traveled far and is fatigued, but his spirit rises when he spies the stone. Silently he drops toward it, brakes with spread wings and wedge-shaped tail, and alights on its solid berm. Pausing a minute, he surveys the convoluted terrain, then dips his heavy bill deep into the largest spot on the stone. Suddenly, with renewed energy, the ebony bird accelerates upward, vanishing into the cloud cover. A drop of blood, the size of a cherry clings to the tip of his lower mandible.

**Menno Simons Hears a Sound  
Under His Window**

and lifts his head, listening.  
From a distance comes  
the moan of a midnight hound.  
Cold moonlight illuminates the  
cobblestones on the barren street.

Quietly he lies down again,  
relaxing as he listens.  
A cold shiver tickles his spine,  
priming his skin into gooseflesh.

Closing his eyes, he curls his  
body under the coarse blanket, and  
remembers the warm robes the  
priests wear.

**“The Spotted  
Stone”  
and  
“Menno Simons  
Hears a Sound  
Under His  
Window”**

*Leonard Nolt*

## “The Lot”

Charles  
Brackbill

*Charles Brackbill of Mountainside, New Jersey, is a longtime Presbyterian minister and media consultant, now “indulging an old interest”—writing poetry. His poems “are remembrances of my experience as a young boy at the Frazer Mennonite Church, Frazer, Pennsylvania, from about 1927 to 1940, when I went away to college.”*

### THE LOT

The three brothers sat stiffly, unaccustomed to the front pew, each staring stone-faced at the Bishop, as if in fear of giving some inadvertent signal that God would misinterpret as wanting the lot to fall on himself. It was not a matter for want.

This was a transforming moment in my ten-year-old mind. I understood that this was God’s doing, and none other; that the Bishop, an imposing figure in his plain coat, stiff white shirt buttoned to the neck, represented him.

His prayer, intimate in the manner of David thanking or complaining, was to the effect that the Almighty would now do his part by causing the Bishop’s hand to draw the right slip of paper from the Bible. (This is the succinct version.)

I sat up straight because one of these men was my father. I could not fathom how my life would change if he became a Mennonite minister, on the spot. Would he then get home before dark, which he never did from his automobile shop?

A deep silence settled over the congregation. And then it was done. God had chosen. Dad would remain the dedicated layman, and go on teaching his Bible class for years. I glanced across the aisle to see mother with tears in her eyes.

Even then I wondered if my name would ever be in a Bible, and if so could I make the cut? And if not, would that be the end of my “calling?” Or, say the old man dropped the book from his shaking hands, and the paper fell out, would that be the sure sign God had spoken in the negative?

Then join Dad in the automobile trade, there to minister to “Perce” our one black and only employee? Or bear witness to the Duco salesman, or the harried customer waiting for our custom slip covers? Surely God would bless that ordination.

But now with university and seminary, and the grueling exams of the gatekeepers successfully behind, I kneel in this Gothic gem, with ten hands on my head, pronounced duly Called and welcomed to the Christian ministry Presbyterian style.

In this fulfilling moment, I can see again the little frame church and the three brothers, and the awesome pause, awaiting God’s decision, and the anointing of the right one, and the unchosen accepting, and living out lives of faith in field and shop.



*Lucia Dick is a Southern California writer who lives in Claremont and teaches at Citrus College in Glendora. She writes poetry, essays and short fiction. Her poems have appeared in a variety of literary magazines and journals.*

## “Thrift”

L u c i a D i c k

### THRIFT

The house I keep lists, slightly to the north.  
I keep it strict and straightened 'til it rings  
And weigh each mote of dust for all its worth.

Even minutest specks amount to gain  
When sunlight turns them into shafts of gold.  
The winnowed chaff yields over a peck of grain.

These stores build up against the wintry hour  
When storms increase and light begins to wane.  
And then the snow, that finely driven flour

Amounts to loaves that hide the stubble field  
While in my oven rise the other loaves  
Within whose crusts abundant wealth is sealed.

Let me yet bring the friends around my board.  
Whom years have blown like leaves across the snow.  
As bread is broken, cups of wine are poured.

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Biographical note: *In addition to her articles in Mennonite periodicals, Shirley Kurtz has authored children's books, The Boy and the Quilt, Applesauce, and Birthday Chickens (published by Good Books) and the memoir, Growing Up Plain (Good Books). She lives near Keyser, West Virginia.*

## An Apple Tree, or Mango

Shirley Kurtz

**B**ack when my husband was taking his physics, botany, biochemistry, microbiology, mammalogy, genetics, and physiology courses at Penn State, I managed to remain clueless about science. I could maybe spell some of the terminology and knew what mammals were and perhaps amphibians and reptiles, and geology had to do with rocks, but I never thought in terms of *phylum, organism, species*. I was aware at one point that he was trapping shrews of all things and storing them in our freezer for a class requirement. Perhaps it seems odd that a wife could be so ignorant about her husband's studies; on the other hand, the husband buried in his work wasn't thinking about *Hamlet and Macbeth, Spoon River Anthology, Our Town*—the kind of material I loved and was teaching to high schoolers (for some reason I avoided grammar and composition). So in a way it was tit-for-tat.

Then after Paulson began teaching junior-highers at a

Mennonite school near Mount Joy, not only dispensing all his facts about atoms and molecules and protozoans and DNA but also brewing chemicals atop Bunsen burners and taking the students to a nearby farm pond to scoop out slimy creatures, or to the farm breeders' cooperative at Lancaster to see the bulls used for artificial insemination (another place they went, calf embryos were being surgically implanted in cows—it wasn't just the birds and bees they were talking about in school), I had only half an ear tuned. Oh, his stories were funny. Crawling through Mummau's cave with students he'd nearly gotten stuck in a tight passageway and panicked, he told me afterwards, but I was more worried about how to get the mud off his pants.

Busy with our children at home and predisposed to more literary matters, words in and of themselves, I had them feasting on the lore of the ages (well, maybe this is stretching it): *Harry and the Terrible Whatzit, Mike Mulligan's Steam Shovel, Blueberries for Sal, The Biggest Bear, Paddle-to-the-Sea, In the Night Kitchen*—whatever treasures I could find at the public library and cart home. Although a good story didn't have to be outright true, I wasn't overly fond of Mother Goose; maybe the rhymes were too nonsensical. And I crafted my own tales when I could, in snatched moments. The stuff in Paulson's books, though, anything science related, held no interest for me. Any of his commentary on mutation, photosynthesis, symbiosis, homeostasis, or whatever went in my one ear and out the other.

Disinclined toward nature, by nature, I wasn't paying attention; I wasn't really listening.

As Paulson later explained, he usually skipped the chapter on evolution in the seventh grade textbook because there wasn't time for everything, but occasionally in morning devotions with those students he held forth on the subject.

Of course, I wasn't sitting in on this.

*"We have the accounts in Genesis," said the teacher,—propped against the blackboard, he slowly twirled his chalk. "Michael, please don't lean back like that in your chair. You all know the stories. 'And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light.' Then firmament, and dry land and seas, vegetation, the heavenly bodies, fish and birds, creeping crawling things and legged beasts, people—and it was very good."*

*"Those creation stories," the teacher continued, pacing now and restless, "were a kind of poetry passing down from generation to generation; they satisfied the curiosity of primitive peoples. Today, though, scientists aren't content with a few verses in Genesis." His arms commenced to flap, and Stacey and Marcella in the front seats closest to his desk exchanged wary looks. "They study all the little bits of natural evidence and develop theories based on the evidence. Scientists are saying now that long ago there was a Big Bang, and afterwards chaos, and then the clumping of planets and stars."*

*"But it was just hazy light, in the beginning," the teacher explained. "Please, Michael—your chair. The sunshine was diffused by all the swirling matter coming together in clumps. Gradually land separated from*

*atmosphere on our planet and life emerged—first sea life and then land forms of life."*

*"And this is what I find so intriguing." Here the teacher came to a abrupt halt, but his arms were flapping wildly. "If you compare evolutionary theory and the Biblical stories, you'll notice some interesting parallels. The fossil records and the scriptures indicate a similar sequence in development. Light, and then sun, moon and stars. Water creatures first, and then land creatures. It's almost as if modern science is corroborating those ancient accounts!"*

*The teacher's chalk suddenly escaped his clutch and sailed across the room.*

*"We really don't know how God created the universe, but maybe we're cracking the riddle."*

No, I wasn't there myself, hanging onto his every word.

I don't know exactly when—early in his eleventh year at the Mennonite school Paulson first mentioned his plans for a presentation at an upcoming PTA. But I was suddenly attentive. "Oh, no!" I exclaimed. "You'll get yourself in trouble."

"Nah," Paulson argued. "I'm not worried. I've already checked with the principal. It'll be okay. I'll be speaking to just the parents of the seventh graders, in my classroom." Two or three mothers in the past few years had approached him with concerns—their children had come home talking about evolution—and he'd sat down and explained things and they'd seemed mollified, so he was thinking he could prevent further trouble with this presentation. He honestly believed if

**...he usually skipped the chapter on evolution in the seventh grade textbook because there wasn't time for everything...**

...the other possibility—our having descended from outright animals or those hunched, loping, slanty-headed monsters in books—was deeply unsettling.

he distributed his charts and pointed out the various analogies and people *understood* . . .

So of course afterwards I blamed him.

What an uproar, with upset patrons telephoning school board members now to complain (*the teaching of evolution in a Christian school, buzz, buzz*) and the school board scheduling special sessions and grilling Paulson. "This is The Inquisition," I hissed privately. "We won't quibble about a literal six-day creation," board members said. "And animals and plants evolving—that's no big deal. But man was definitely created special, in the image of God." "Why, yes," agreed Paulson. "But we don't know all the details. The Bible isn't a science text." How I smarted at the gossip and suspicions and accusations—and he'd started all this! He'd brought up the subject!

From somewhere or other, maybe an anthology up on our bookshelf, I found a poem for the children to learn:

If Wisdom's ways you wisely seek,  
Five things observe with care:  
Of whom you speak,  
To whom you speak,  
And how, and when, and where.

Perhaps my literary instincts were running amok, for I also put the children to memorizing scriptures: "Happy are you when people hate you, reject you..." Paulson maintained that people had every right to act according to their convictions and to protect their children from error, and indeed he had a point, but long after he was

formally dismissed from his job and we moved to West Virginia I raged.

One thing, though, I didn't much care to admit. Like all those good folks we'd left behind in Pennsylvania, I'd grown up on those Genesis accounts—*garden, snake, fig leaves*, the images were deeply embedded in my soul—and while it hardly seemed likely, anymore, that God actually knelt along a river and patted out a mud man and then gave him mouth-to-mouth resuscitation or whatever to start him breathing, the other possibility—our having descended from outright animals or those hunched, loping, slanty-headed monsters in books—was deeply unsettling. "Day" meaning "age" in the beginning verses—this made sense enough. But those hideous Cro-Magnons!

However, I couldn't believe I'd married a heretic.

Well, it was much too complex and involved to worry about. I'd have to focus on other things. I'd just think up some more stories.

*Her husband taught in a public school now, but the woman still barely glanced at the piles of notebooks and tests he hauled home to grade. Any mention of protoplasm, black holes, ecosystems, energy, matter, and so on, she heard only dimly, preoccupied as she was with her reading and story writing and agonizing revisions. One evening at the supper table he told about an experiment in class: A kid named Jason—he'd changed first into old clothes—had jumped into a fifty-gallon drum half full of water,—the point was to measure his volume. Other students had drawn the high-water mark with him submerged, and then after Jason had*

climbed out they'd poured in jugful after jugful of water, keeping track of how many jugs it took to bring the water level up to the mark. Jason's volume had been 40 gallons, or else it was 80. Well, she could see how her husband was a good teacher. But the woman herself remained woefully ignorant despite his best efforts; the time he tried valiantly to explain the difference between weight and mass she went all limp inside and hopeless—it was just too complicated.

Clearly, she'd always be unscientific beyond description.

"Todd!" she'd screech on school mornings (only the youngest child was still at home and even he understood about mass and other weighty scientific terms), "You'll be late for your bus!" Soon the house was entirely silent,—she could mull and stew in peace. Seventy-three a.m. was too early for her to be actually attacking a manuscript—she was still too foggy—so first she'd finish her Bible reading, plus maybe that piece in *Newsweek* she'd gotten only halfway through last night. And then if she did a little dusting next, something active to get her blood running and her brain in gear, she could soon be plotting and weaving and contriving all the juicy little details.

One morning in late winter, with the fog dissipating some, already, because she'd gotten her dusting out of the way first for a change, she pored over the beginning chapters in *Genesis*. Perhaps the steady coursing of red sea through vein was firing the imagination, for she could almost hear the ancient storyteller's chanting:

And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day... And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day... And there was evening,

and there was morning—the third day... And God saw that it was good.

The tribal elder reciting would have been bony and gnarled, she decided, and as he rocked on his haunches his voice rose and fell in singsong tones:

When the Lord God made the earth and the heavens—and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up—the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

"Gabuudhie gabuudhie, ayeeeeeee," the listeners circling close chorused in agreement (for some reason the whole scene popped up African in her head instead of Mesopotamian, with everybody's necks encased tightly in beads and their bellies circled by clanking coins strung on lengths of frayed rope).

Each line in its turn served as metaphor for truth beyond comprehension; the storyteller coming to this next part lowered his voice and his audience hushed:

Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Funny, how as a child she'd pictured these as real trees bearing, oh, say, apples or pears; she hadn't known about kiwi, papayas, mangoes. She'd thought Eve had handed Adam a literal

**Funny, how**  
as a child she'd  
pictured these as  
real trees bearing,  
oh, say, apples or  
pears; she hadn't  
known about kiwi,  
papayas, mangoes.

piece of fruit with seeds in it, off a tree called knowledge—

Oh, my word!

In the absolute silence of her house, the woman nearly gasped.

She didn't bring up the matter till after supper, though. Todd had wolfed his dessert and left the kitchen, but her husband was only now unhooking his feet from the rungs of his chair. She turned toward him eagerly. "That one tree in the Garden of Eden, you know? The knowledge of good and evil? Was this maybe the acquiring of intellect? Cro-Magnon or—"

"Crow who? Oh. Cro-Magnon."

Her husband blinked several times and studied her gravely.

"That never ever occurred to me," he said finally.

"'How Cro-Magnon Got His Brain.' You know, like 'How the Elephant Got His Trunk.' You read that one to Todd—

you said you wanted to do the reading for a change. 'In the High and Far-Off times the Elephant, O Best Beloved, had no trunk. He had only a blackish, bulgy nose, as big as a boot, that he could wriggle about from side to side,—but he couldn't pick up things with it...'"

"'Led go! You are hurtig be!'" her husband mused, remembering. "Todd begged me to read it again. And then he wondered how far up noseholes go."

Her husband was going on now about sphenoidal sinuses and sphenoidal recesses and nasopalatine nerves, textbook stuff he still retained from that physiology course at Penn State, but the woman only smiled. As she pushed back her chair and collected a few dirty plates to carry to the sink, she was already tuning out. She couldn't wait to get back to that story she'd worked on all day, soon as the fog lifted tomorrow morning.

---

*Gail Lutsch is professor of art at Bethel College. These screen monotypes were inspired at various locations in central Kansas.*



Thistles -  
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*G a i l L u t s c h*



**Water's Edge -  
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*G a i l L u t s c h*





Vegetation -  
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*Gail Lutsch*

# Botanical Garden #1

*Gail Lutsch*



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*Lysianne Unruh is a 1991 graduate of Bethel College who now lives in Mt. Horeb, Wisconsin. She has been the library director for the Mt. Horeb Public Library since 1994. She joined the Prairie Writers' Group, an informal gathering of supportive women writers, and now writes poetry late at night or very early in the morning. This poem was published in the Prairie Writers' chapbook Comma before Dark, Spring 1999 (Mt. Horeb, WI: Prairie Writers Press, 1999).*

### THE ISLAND CAVE

Our family photos often contain just the two of us,  
 one leaning into the other, an arm casually encircling,  
 effectively defining space,  
 just as a camera lens crops unnecessary clutter.

Each fragment of time slides side-by-side into album sleeves.  
 Stellar moments, a tropical paradise  
 glimpsed from a travel guide.  
 I would visit that island more often,  
 where you and I reside, suspended in sun.

Instead,  
 we find ourselves confined  
 too long in undocumented space.  
 Far from the camera eye,  
 where the world crowds in,  
 work nips at our heels.  
 Our relationship slinks away  
 to a dark, timeless cavern where complaints hang  
 sharp and pointed as stalactites  
 and as deadly,  
 should they come crashing down.

## “The Island Cave”

*L y s i a n n e U n r u h*

*G. C. Waldrep lives in an Amish community in Yanceyville, North Carolina, and seeks to maintain his reputation for cooking.*

## “Weather Report: 15 December”

G . C . W a l d r e p

### Weather Report: 15 December

The Polish poets are the poets of cold,  
and the Russians, and the Hungarians,  
those who experienced the cannibal dance  
directly, as a chill in the flesh:  
furnaces without coal, broken water heaters,  
clogged ducts in apartments stacked  
like stale bread at the edge of chipped plates.  
No one in this country writes about cold  
in the same way. Is it because we’ve been  
warm for so long now we don’t remember?  
Hayden Carruth looks out through thick glass  
in winter and has his friend snap  
the photograph. They put it on the cover  
of his new book, the one that contains  
his essay on Emily Dickinson, how the image  
of fire can hold a poem together, or,  
just as plausibly, that of darkness.  
We can’t know, at this late date.  
In 1933 and 1934, in Gadsden, young trees—  
maples, mostly—grew thick as a man’s  
wrist from the slag heaps of what had been  
Republic Steel, and when the snow came  
(more often than one might have thought,  
in Alabama) it weighed down the young  
trunks and branches with its wet mass,  
bending that new life, bark and pith,  
xylem and phloem alike resisting the wind’s  
edge. Those who could climbed the fences  
and took toothpick splinters for fuel.  
It was always cold in Gadsden, in late  
1933 and ‘34, just as it was always cold  
in Moscow, in Budapest, in Lvov. Snow  
makes it easier to track the unrighteous,  
as with any prey. Tonight, the first

sleet of December is falling outside, the sky  
black as the bottom of a burn-out pan.  
I set my thermostat at fifty-five, enough  
to keep the pipes from freezing.  
From Gadsden, I hear the mill is down again.  
I ask my friend what he'll do.  
"Stay home," he tells me, pausing long enough  
to let the static make a space between us  
on the line—"Stay home, and bundle up."  
I put the telephone back in its sharp  
cradle. Outside the sleet continues.  
*In the same way, there is a great  
unsolved love in our lives.* I sleep, and try  
to dream warm dreams: Belize, Trinidad,  
bright islands in winter's sea, the places  
in the world that never freeze.

## Book Reviews

John D. Thiesen. *Mennonite & Nazi? Attitudes Among Mennonite Colonists in Latin America, 1933-1945*. Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press, 1999. Pp. 329. (\$25.00—paperback) ISBN 0-0693462-5-1

The title of the book is somewhat provocative—probably intentionally—but the subtitle makes the content quite clear: “Attitudes Among Mennonite Colonists in Latin America.”

The three countries in consideration are Mexico, Brazil and Paraguay. Mexico is quite uneventful and covers eight pages including three photos. Brazil has more: twenty-five pages and five illustrative photos. In the context of the book, this section is informative but without notable consequences, since the Nazi movement faded away in the first years of World War II.

The bulk of the book deals with Nazi attitudes among the Mennonites in Paraguay, more specifically Fernheim, covering 172 pages with fifteen representative pictures. Added to these are a total of fifty-two pages of very extensive and informative notes. The bibliography covers twenty-two pages. It is a small encyclopedia on the Nazi topic and is basic and very helpful to any future researcher. It lists sources such as the United States National Archives, Washington, D.C., which Thiesen used extensively.

To my knowledge, the Thiesen book is the first one on this subject published in English. It covers the Nazi movement comprehensively. (Among the Mennonites in Fernheim and to a lesser degree in Friesland the term “*völkisch*” is preferred to “Nazi,” and more to the point.) Thiesen has spent more than ten years on this study, beginning with a masters thesis on the same topic. The sources available are very complete.

Quite a bit of reflection and research on this topic had already been done by Postma, G. Ratzlaff and Peter P. Klassen. (The Postma study caught the spirit of the time especially in the *völkische* movement, since it was written right after the events had taken place and feelings had not yet subsided.) So Thiesen had an enormous amount of material to work through and he has done so thoroughly. The English reader now has a book that very comprehensively covers this dramatic and sensitive period quite difficult for anybody to understand in its conflicting religious, cultural and emotional context.

The Fernheim Colony was founded in 1930 by Russian Mennonite refugees with the help of MCC and the German government. All would have rather gone to Canada. In Paraguay they started anew under enormously difficult and desperate conditions. Many doubted if they ever would be able to survive in this isolated wilderness. Survival depended upon help from outside. When Hitler, a staunch anti-Communist, started a new Germany and his government demonstrated great interest in Germans abroad, Mennonites in Fernheim (about two thousand) got very excited about new prospects in the future. The events must be interpreted against this traumatic background. These are highly sensitive and emotional developments of the Mennonites in Fernheim from 1933-1945 but probably most exciting for outsiders to read.

Thiesen’s description of the Mennonites in Paraguay starts with “youthful activism.” Chapter four tells how the “*völkische* movement in Fernheim had sprung up seemingly full-blown in 1933” (104). It describes the youth activities which were essentially directed toward promoting German (*völkisch*) and

Christian attitudes. The two were identical in the words of Julius Legiehn, one of the most respected leaders in Fernheim: "To live as German means to live holy and pure, ... [It means]: purity, righteousness, truthfulness, holy respect for humans, holy fear for God. For this Germanness we must strive, this we must cultivate" (91). Or in the words of Fritz Kliewer, the most influential and controversial leader of the time: "Loyalty to God stands in close relationship with loyalty to ancestral ethnicity [*angestammten Volkstum*]. Race and ethnicity belong to the divine order of creation..." (103). To be a good Christian meant to be a good German and vice-versa. With hardly any dissenting voices, this was the main stream of the Fernheimer thinking and Thiesen exposes it correctly.

Chapter five explains the difficult economic situation of the Mennonites in the Chaco, the emigration of one-third of the Mennonites to eastern Paraguay where they founded Friesland Colony, and the first dissenting voices among the *völkische* movement. Thiesen points accurately to the fact that the division did not occur on the basis of Germanism but on the basis of a fundamentally important Mennonite principle, pacifism (*Wehrlosigkeit*), which was in serious danger of being abandoned. One of the most influential dissenting voices was Nikolai Siemens, editor of the *Menno-Blatt*. He stated: "If we continue to profess pacifism in word and deed, still we hold fast to *Deutschtum*, in which we were planted not by man but by our Creator" (131).

Under the title "Renewed Determination" (chapter six) the book deals with the growing dissenting voices and movements on the one hand and, on the other, a renewed determination to

strengthen *Deutschtum* and prepare for a return to Germany. Even better, the Mennonites might return to the Ukraine should Hitler win the war. Most Mennonites in Fernheim in fact believed that Hitler was God's chosen instrument against Communism. The chapter also points to a much stronger position of the MCC and its workers against the *völkisch* movement. MCC leaders supported the opposition group—"the more pious one." Thiesen asserts, "John R. Schmidt openly supported the anti-*völkisch* group" (150).

"The End of The *Völkisch* Movement" is the chapter on the most traumatic events of the Fernheim Mennonites, which they earnestly wish never would have happened. Even today it arouses deep feelings among many participants and is handled with much care in order to avoid opening old and profound wounds, although today a number of people are very open to discussing the topic, especially the younger ones. Thiesen has dramatized this very sad episode in all its details using, for the first time, once secret materials and letters which resulted from postal censorship of the U.S. Embassy in Paraguay now at the National Archives at Washington D.C. These materials are not necessarily the most reliable ones, but confirm what actually was already known—U.S. interference in Mennonite colony affairs.

The book as a whole has been well written and documented. There are few factual errors, visible only to an insider. Considering the fact that Thiesen has not been in the field himself, he has done an extremely good job. However, interpretation of facts and documents will differ depending on the motivating attitudes behind the investigation. This shall be respected. However, sensing the sensitivity of the topic

and looking at it from a Paraguayan point of view, one wonders if the author should not have been more careful in the use of certain words and expressions—just out of respect to his Mennonite brothers and sisters in Paraguay. A few examples will illustrate:

The cover photograph is a picture showing elementary school children doing sports. The explanation to it reads: "The *Kämpfende Jugend* ("fighting youth") became a leading vehicle for Nazi ideas in the Fernheim Colony in Paraguay. The cover photo is of Mennonite children at an allschool festival, Fernheim Colony, Paraguay, 1935." All persons in Paraguay reading the statement and looking at the picture find it confusing and misleading. The introductory chapter starts: "One is either a German or a Christian. You cannot be both.—Adolf Hitler." The chapter on Brazil states: "Out of the crooked timber of humanity no straight thing can ever be cut. Immanuel Kant." Do these quotes apply to the Mennonites? Thiesen uses expressions like "violent call to arms" (91), "violently confrontational article" (96). Was it really like that? Such comparisons and statements will hurt the feelings of an inside reader.

In the concluding paragraph of his book, the author states: "The Latin American Mennonites' encounter with National Socialism left a lasting legacy of bitterness, especially in Paraguay. This book will probably do nothing to diminish that legacy" (226). This attitude in writing a book I consider very unfortunate.

Perhaps we should next research and write a book on the reconciling forces that also were present in this traumatic episode and its aftermath. Would this not be in accordance with Mennonite principles? Or maybe a peace conference on the topic with

the participation of all parties involved. This should definitely contribute to healing wounds and changing attitudes among the different parties.

Gerhard Ratzlaff  
Paraguay

Muriel T. Stackley, *Oracle of the Heart: Selected Poems*. Ill. Lynette Schroeder Wiebe. Newton, KS: Wordsworth, 1998. Pp. 67. (\$9.95 paperback) ISBN 0-945530-19-6

Janice Waltner Sevilla, *Through a Lens Oblique: Selected Poems*. Newton, KS: Wordsworth, 1999. Pp. 79. ISBN 0-945530-21-8

These books share the feature of representing the poets' collections over time and thus, offer variety and diverse poetic experiments as each poet finds her place in the world with the use of poetic expression and voice.

Muriel T. Stackley was editor of *The Mennonite* for six years and is now pastor of the Bergthal Mennonite Church near Pawnee Rock, KS. *Oracle of the Heart* is well-named; at its root the word "oracle" is related to "mouth," thus, the "mouth of the heart." Muriel Stackley's poems are soulful commentaries on life, full of heart and empathy, divided into sections covering diverse subjects—loving, parenting, grieving, worshiping, protesting. There is in the poems great attention to the natural world, its beauty and lessons, which lends to them a certain delicacy. Additionally, there is the worshipful quality of litany in many of them, as they become litanies of observance, moments made sacred by language, for example, "Storm": *I chanced to see my window framed around a sky/where monsoon clouds hung low and taut like heads of tympanies....* Muriel Stackley is not afraid of rhyme and



uses it effectively to enhance the sense of sacred litany.

Everywhere in this book is the glow of memory and longing for the recapture of sacred moments of life. "Silent light," an ode to lamplighting, takes apart that action's grace: "*There is the soft trickle of aromatic kerosene into the lamp bowl, . . . There is the tiny metallic voice of the fixture holding the wick, carefully turned into place.*"

I found especially strong the section titled "Grieving." The "grieving" chronicled here is mostly for human infliction of pain and desecration and implicates the authorial voice:

*Unlike those who crucify  
or lynch or shoot and leave to die,  
my sin is that of standing by.  
("Monologue for any Friday")*

And later, in "Nebraska Spring, 1982,"

*Here is my sackclothed song. What is  
my last task?*

In this section breakthroughs are hard, as in a poem to Jane, who is dying:

*There is that in yielding that bears  
freedom.  
There is that in relinquishment that  
bears acquisition.  
But in your death, Jane, I will see no  
earthly reason.*

## 2.

Janice Waltner Sevilla uses poetry to save herself from despair. After a career as a media specialist, she became disabled by multiple sclerosis and returned to Kansas for nursing home care, young among her hallmates there. She turned to poetry, often short poems which she had to hold in mind until she could (with difficulty) get the image down

on paper. Thus, she describes her view of the world in the title poem as "late learned, hard earned."

There is a pithy quality to Janice Sevilla's poems, a matter-of-factness that sometimes jolts. In "The Cartoon Cat" the poet describes herself as a cat in a panic of need for self-preservation:

*. . . Claws unsheathed,  
she slides down the rock face,  
looking for a purchase—  
a rock ledge, a tree limb,  
ANYTHING—to break the  
fall. But there is nothing—*

A similar jolt is found in the opening lines of "Reunion":

*The family ties were strong  
—somewhere between a love knot  
and a stranglehold.*

For me, most poignant is the middle section, "Jottings from a Journal" in which Janice Sevilla faces most directly her illness and current circumstance. "I sing a dirge for aspects/newly lost,/and those long in their tombs,/already mossed,/but fond remembered . . . I live now with residuals." The reliance upon the past and memory is most flatly stated in a poem called "Nursing home videos" in which residents are described as isolates who prefer to play their private videos on the screens in their heads, memories of their lives as they once were, to communicating with those around them.

For Janice Waltner Sevilla, loss, naturally, is the theme, and she includes not just physical loss such as she has suffered, but the many losses that are natural to ongoing life. There are moments of acceptance and beauty, as in "Drama at Dusk":

*Grotesqueries of shadows dance their  
parts*

*on splintered floorboards, sagging  
railing,  
under the porch proscenium. Mulberry  
trees, urged on by breezes, murmur  
soft appreciations: "bravo, bravo."  
Denouement, and the final act is played.*

*Night rings the curtain down.*

*Raylene Hinz-Penner  
Bethel College*

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