Given the strength of the collection as a whole, I found it a bit disappointing to see Brandt's *Selected* move toward its conclusion with several sonnets and other work that felt oddly out of place. "Let me not to the extreme beauty of Winnipeg," reads one awkwardly comedic poem, "Winters admit the weeniest of arguments! / Winter is not winter where it melting finds" (193). Compare these jesting lines to the ones that conclude "So close, so far away," which comes immediately before it: "The great mix up, mash up, giveaway, take-away, getting and / losing. Life in the earthly dimension. Harsh. Torn. Mortal. Full / of holes. Broken promises. Streaked with light" (190). When these kinds of poems appear side by side, the reading experience is awkward and peculiar, with the comic poems appearing less significant and assured—less authentic, even—in their sharp contrast to the gravity and power of her more serious efforts.

The poems in which Brandt's past and present collide, leaving her speakers to ponder what that collision means for the future for both herself and her community, have always been her best work. As a whole, *The Shortest Dance on Earth* is a fitting retrospective on a major poet's career, a welcome reminder of Brandt's remarkable talent, and a wonderful collection of questions everyone should, from time to time, be asking.

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Bianca Lakoseljac, ed., *Rudy Wiebe: Essays on His Works*. Toronto: Guernica Editions, 2023. Pp. 376. Softcover, $25.

Bianca Lakoseljac's edited collection brings together writers and critics who have engaged with Rudy Wiebe's writing since his first novel, *Peace Shall Destroy Many* (1962). In the span of over sixty years, Wiebe has published ten novels, several books of non-fiction, numerous short stories, and shorter pieces of non-fiction, and he is often celebrated as the most prominent Mennonite literary voice in North America and beyond. I once interviewed Wiebe, however, and remember how he rejected the idea of a single voice representing an entire community: "I'm a Mennonite from generations back, but . . . I'm not *the* Mennonite voice, right?"[1] Wiebe is right: the Mennonite (or any other) literary tradition does not and should not

[1] Janne Korkka, "Where Is the Text Coming From? An Interview with Rudy Wiebe," *World Literature Written in English* 38, no. 1 (1999): 74

revolve around one voice. Yet it is clear that in the 1960s and 1970s Wiebe initiated both a surge of new Mennonite writing, and, with writers like Robert Kroetsch and Aritha van Herk, a surge of new Western Canadian writing. Mennonite and Western Canadian writing have become prolific traditions within the broader landscape of Canadian literature, and this collection effectively shows how Wiebe's oeuvre continues to shape all three in fundamental ways.

The collection brings together critical perspectives and personal experiences of Wiebe as a writer, public figure, mentor, and friend. The contributors range from prominent Mennonite literary scholars Paul Tiessen and Hildi Froese Tiessen to Western Canadian writers and critics Miriam Toews, Scot Morison, Katherine Govier, Aritha van Herk, and George Melnyk, and to other literary figures who provide insight into Wiebe's broad impact. Most pieces in the volume have been published before, but there are several original essays as well, in addition to Lakoseljac's own new interviews with both Wiebe (2022) and van Herk (2020).

After the editor's introduction, the collection opens with a testimony to Wiebe's lighter side: a delightful cartoon drawn by lifelong friend Margaret Atwood. The cartoon shows Atwood trying to teach Wiebe to dance, a project in which the initially grumpy-looking Wiebe gets the last laugh. Wiebe's reputation as a writer of "challenging prose" that demands a great deal from the reader is a recurring theme through the volume, as is his impact as a teacher and literary mentor who is demanding (van Herk, 156) and even intimidating (Morison, 172), but also unwaveringly dedicated and supportive when he sees signs of a passion for writing. Miriam Toews, for example, shows how the controversy over Wiebe's first novel haunts her own experience as a Mennonite writer in the essay "Peace Shall Destroy Many" (2016). Toews writes about a book tour she took with Wiebe in Germany in 2008, where she came face to face with a Mennonite reader who called her novel *A Complicated Kindness* "filthy" and "sacrilegious" (35). Toews writes how Wiebe stood up to the audience and told them how her novel advocated necessary change in Mennonite culture and "was holding us accountable as Mennonites to our humanity" (35).

The most prominent threads in the volume keep returning to Wiebe's extensive body of writings on Mennonites and the First Nations, and illustrate how they have been met with both great enthusiasm and severe criticism. Several texts bring up the complicated impact of Wiebe's 1974 novel *The Temptations of Big Bear*. Writer Myrna Kostash partly revises her 1974 review of the novel in ways that illuminate how the terminology she originally used regarding Indigenous peoples is no longer acceptable. Lakoseljac includes her

own essay on *The Temptations of Big Bear*, originally written in 1997 and now updated for this volume, which shows that fifty years after publication, Wiebe's novel continues to inspire critical response. Wiebe speaks of his views on writing Indigenous stories in an interview with Cook (199–201), and finds similarities between the negative response from some Mennonite readers to his first novel and the 1980s debate on appropriation of voice, which questioned the justification of a white writer telling Indigenous stories. The most important reactions to such questions, as Wiebe acknowledges in the interview, are the various ways in which Indigenous peoples tell their own stories (199). Unfortunately, the volume does not include direct critical responses from Indigenous readers and writers to Wiebe's writing, an addition which would have further increased its value. Lakoseljac does, however, include comments from Yvonne Johnson, the Cree chief Big Bear's descendant and co-author with Wiebe of *Stolen Life: The Journey of a Cree Woman* (1998), who says collaboration with Wiebe enabled her to "face a painful past and to embrace [her ancestral] legacy" (11).

Such recollections reflect the most prominent achievement of this volume: voices from a variety of cultural and historical frameworks are brought together to shed light on the lasting impact of Wiebe's writings, and on the various ways in which reading across the perceived boundary between his "Mennonite" and "Indigenous" stories may open new ways to understand the other. Wiebe's writing invokes the monumental challenge of how to represent not only the other human being, but also the uniqueness of the place and space where their stories linger. Aritha van Herk goes back to the first advice Wiebe gave to his writing students and their ties to Western place—"Write what you know" (154)—and Wiebe himself talks about how this realization has always guided him to keep telling stories from the Canadian West and North (Wiebe in Cook, 186). The voices in this volume suggest his greatest achievement is telling stories that keep looking for new ways to know, stories that might undo the power of words that once silenced so many spaces and selves in Canada and beyond.

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