

Miriam Toews's *Women Talking*
A Call For Artistic Prophethood

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Abstract

Prophets typically speak from the margins. They tend not to be welcomed by the establishment. Such is the case with Canadian Mennonite novelist Miriam Toews. In her most recent novel, *Women Talking*, Toews produces a dark story of Mennonite women on a Bolivian colony who were brutally raped by fellow members of the community. The novel, based upon true events, gives a fictive but powerful voice to women not yet able to speak to power and violence. The story details the decision before these women; should they stay in the colony or should they leave? Do they submit to power or move on? Through this Mennonite story, Toews sparks a prophetic impulse for a discussion among Pentecostals. Her voice will enliven current and future artists to speak boldly about violence against women and other forms of injustice.

Keywords

Pentecostalism – Mennonites – Literature – Gender – Violence

Introduction

Contemporary Mennonites seldom spark global news. Since they remain small in number, media often consider Mennonites (and their Anabaptist siblings) “small potatoes” compared to the larger “newsworthy” Christian traditions. The last Anabaptist story to create global traction may have been the horrific West Nickel Mines’ school attack in 2006 that resulted in the deaths of five young girls (along with the perpetrator) and five non-fatal injuries. Media – and their audiences - struggled to understand Amish forgiveness, and Amish care for the

perpetrator's family as witness to a vibrant and counter-cultural faith. Today, many observers familiar with Anabaptist martyrology locate the exemplary forgiveness of the community at West Nickel Mines alongside narratives from the astounding history of persecution against Anabaptists.¹ However, in this essay, I explore the horrifying atrocities perpetrated by Mennonite insiders and a very different response. As my guidebook, I use the most recent novel of the award-winning Canadian writer Miriam Toews. I believe her book *Women Talking* offers a sobering anti-testimony, perhaps a counter-testimony, to the award-winning *Amish Grace* (a recounting of the Amish response to the events above).² In *Women Talking*, the complicated Toews, an ex-Mennonite from Steinbach, Manitoba, continues to shake the Canadian public (and beyond). Not least among her readers, I believe that Toews issues a call for Mennonites, Pentecostals, and Christians everywhere, to address violence against women.

In her novel, Toews creates a fictional account of Mennonite women sexually abused by men in their colony.³ She bases her account on real events between 2005-2009. In 2011, a Bolivian court sentenced eight men from the Manitoba Colony in Bolivia for “ghost raping.” Nine men, ages 19-43, and members of the colony, would routinely spray

¹See Thielem J. von Bracht, *The Bloody Theatre, or Martyrs' Mirror, of the Defenceless Christians: Who Suffered and Were Put to Death for the Testimony of Jesus, Their Savior, from the Time of Christ until the Year A.D. 1660* (Lampeter Square, Lancaster Co., PA: David Miller, 1837). See the full text at <http://www.homecomers.org/mirror/index.htm>.

² Miriam Toews, *Women Talking* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2018). This work furthers a prolific career and includes numerous award-winning works. See *Summer of My Amazing Luck* (1996); *A Boy of Good Breeding* (1998); *Swing Low: A Life* (2000); *A Complicated Kindness* (2004); *The Flying Troutmans* (2008); *Irma Voth* (2011); and *All My Puny Sorrows* (2014). In contrast to *Women Talking*, see *Amish Grace* by Donald B. Kraybill, Steven M. Nolt, and David Weaver-Zercher (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007).

³ Bolivia is home to some 60,000 Mennonites spread among roughly eighty Mennonite colonies. They generally share Dutch and German roots to the sixteenth century. Many have migrated through Canada, United States, and Mexico, often due to government imposed education standards. Bolivian colonies generally follow conservative/ultra-conservative Anabaptist practices perhaps best described as a combination of Old Order Mennonites and Amish. They are welcomed for their agrarian skills in exchange for autonomy over education, property and governance, military exemption, internal conflict resolution, and community welfare. Such colonies – often demonstrate the best and worst – attempts to assume societal withdrawal and preservation of their centuries old traditions.

entire homes with a substance concocted by a neighbouring Mennonite veterinarian to anesthetize cattle.⁴ In so doing, these men would sedate not only their unsuspecting female victims but also assure that the entire household would be unable to offer external witness against the monstrosities. Over the course of five years, these men raped at least 130 girls and women from ages 3 to 65, married and single, residents and visitors, disabled and abled. Victims would awake to a common horror that included torn pyjamas, blood and semen splatter, bruised bodies, excruciating headaches, frayed rope used to bind their wrists or ankles, and often paralyzed by no memory of the evening's event.⁵

In this essay, I begin with a rather detailed recounting of the novel. Her imaginary story is important for she gives voices to women otherwise unable to testify to their experience. Toews chooses not to rehearse the horrific events but instead creates a response crafted by an imagined community of victimized women.⁶ Following my synopsis, I turn to Toews's impact. Ironically, as Toews gains growing status on

⁴ One of the men escaped and remains at large (at the time of publication).

⁵ For general information on the Mennonite colonies in Bolivia and further details on the case, see the following storylines: First, stories that include the photography of Jordi Busque: Laurence Butet-Roch, "Step Back in Time with the Mennonites of Bolivia" *National Geographic* (February 27, 2018) <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/photography/proof/2018/february/mennonites-bolivia-busque/>; Matt Fidler, "The Mennonites of Bolivia – in Pictures" *The Guardian* (Wednesday, September 14, 2014); <https://www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2014/sep/10/the-mennonites-of-bolivia-in-pictures>; and Jean Friedman-Rodovsky, "A Verdict in Bolivia's Shocking Case of the Mennonite Rapes," *Time* (Wednesday, Aug. 17, 2011) <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2087711,00.html>;

For Canadian media coverage, follow the four part series by Will Braun, "Modern Ghosts of a Horse-Drawn Scandal, Part 1," *Canadian Mennonite* 22.19 (October 3, 2018) <https://canadianmennonite.org/stories/modern-ghosts-horse-drawn-scandal-part-1>.

⁶ Note the difference between the real events at West Nickel Mines and the Manitoba colony. The authors of *Amish Grace* gain access to real interviews and they employ their expertise on Amish history, theology, and practice. But Toews, no slouch on Mennonite history and theology, lacks the real "testimonies" from the women of the Molotschna colony. Instead, she weaves a narrative, a fiction filled with truths, a prophetic counter-testimony. See further the review by Valerie Weaver-Zercher, "Miriam Toews Imagines her way into an insular community grappling with sexual assault," *Christian Century* (April 25, 2019) <https://www.christiancentury.org/review/books/miriam-toews-imagines-her-way-insular-community-grappling-sexual-assault>.

the larger Canadian literary landscape, I believe her voice warrants greater recognition in the church. I suggest further that the latter has not happened because Toews has assumed the role of a “prophet not welcome in her own town.” Where she has been “shunned” by fellow Mennonites, I call the church of her youth to listen. But Toews and her dystopian *Women Talking* must be heard not only in the heart of southern Manitoba’s Mennonite belt. Where she has been ignored or disregarded among Christians elsewhere, I urge these churches to awaken to her voice. Finally, I ponder the question, “what has Miriam Toews to say to Canadian Pentecostals?” I propose that Toews ought to inspire prophetic imagination. She serves notice of violence against women not only through her content but thorough her craft. She embodies Pentecostal passion for vocational prophethood. If indeed we believe in the potential of the prophethood of all believers and the many tongues of Pentecost, Toews proves exemplary as an artist, a writer, and a prophet not behind a pulpit!

Women Talking!

August Epp serves as Toews’s first-person narrator, and he is by no means a flat storyteller. Epp embodies a complex personal history; his parents (and he) had been excommunicated when he was a young teen. They eventually landed and struggled in England, and after the disappearance of his father (presumably abandonment) and the death of his mother, Epp returns to his native Molotschna Colony. Since he had learned English in England, he gains reentry as an adult member of the colony and assumes the role of the colony’s schoolteacher (8-9, 12-13). As “narrator,” he has been commissioned to take minutes of the women talking about their response to sexual violence, not unlike the real events described above. His minutes are an on-the-fly English translation from Plautdietsch or Low German (a hodgepodge of German, Dutch, Pomeranian, and Frisian, the spoken but unwritten language of the colonists).

Epp begins with some personal and contextual notes written the evening before a two-day event. Eight women across three generations call for a hasty meeting after the men of the colony depart to the nearby city to post bail for and return the charged attackers ahead of a trial. As a self-policing community of some 2500 members, Bishop Peters thought to keep the accused “locked in a shed,” but decides to call in the

police when a woman (Salome) attacks one of the men with a scythe and another man is hanged by fellow colonists (5). Peters feels it necessary to protect the men, but the women do not fail to catch the irony of the bishop's move (21). Epp prepares to take minutes for the colony's women as they must weigh three options in response to their frightening situation: 1) Do Nothing; 2) Stay and Fight; and 3) Leave (the women refuse to describe their plan as an attempt to flee, run, or escape). Following this introduction, Epp records the two-day deliberations. These two chapters constitute the bulk of the book; the first (110 pages) records minutes of the women talking on June 6 and the second (58 pages) on June 7, 2009. Following the daily minutes, Epp writes two 10-page reflections on the evenings after both meetings. I mention the number of pages to establish Toews's goal that Epp gives voice primarily to women talking.⁷

The women meet on June 6 in the hayloft of a man with mental disabilities, who is oblivious to the colony's chaos. All survivors of abuse, they come from two families: the Loewens – Greta, her daughters Mariche and Mejal, and Autje, Mejal's daughter; and the Friesens – Agata, her daughters Ona and Salome, and Nietje, now in the care of Aunt Salome.

The women commence day one with foot washing. By the time of their gathering, conversations ahead of their meeting lead most of them to decide that the option to “stay and do nothing” receives little traction. The women move quickly to create a list of pros and cons for option 2, staying and fighting. Pros include:

We won't have to leave.

We won't have to pack.

We won't have to figure out where we're going or experience the uncertainty of not knowing where we are going. (We don't have a map of any place) (52-53).

The women lament that they not only have no map, but they have never left the colony, and they cannot read. Though other pros include “we

⁷ Having said this, Epp is no mere scribe. Though he generally refrains from speaking during the two day event, and tries not to share his inclinations, this is an impossibility. His worldview is reflected through his note-taking, translation from Plaut-dietsch to English, and occasional unspoken commentary.

won't have to leave the people we love," Greta opines that loved ones would join them. The cons include:

We won't be forgiven [by members of the community].

We don't know how to fight. (Salome [mentioned above] interrupts: I know how to fight... [remember her attempt to murder an abuser led Peters to call in the police])

We don't want to fight.

There is the risk that conditions will be worse after fighting (54).

The women deliberate concerning implications should they stay. They would create a manifesto to ensure their safety and freedom from further attacks. Ona preaches that stipulations must include collective decision-making by men and women; women must be allowed to think, and girls must be taught to read and write. The schoolhouse will display a map, and "a new religion, extrapolated from the old but focused on love, will be created by the women of Molotschna" (56). Agata speaks honestly that such a situation would make their commitment to pacifism tricky; to stay locates the women on a collision course for violence by and against them. "We will be inviting harm... in a state of war. We would turn Molotschna into a battlefield" (104). To the contrary, Mariche quips that courageous peacemaking would set an example for their children and model the sanctity of marriage, obedience, and love (107). Of course, Mariche's comment cuts to the heart of biblical interpretation, namely the demands and limitations of Ephesians 5 (see below).

Over the course of two days, the discussion moves toward the pros and cons of leaving the colony. Pros include:

We will be gone.

We [and our children]⁸ will be safe.

We will not be asked to forgive the men, because we will not be here to hear the question (59).

We want to keep our faith.

We want to think (120).⁹

⁸ See also pgs 120, 153.

⁹ At one point, Ona suggests another option, namely, "We could ask the men to leave" (113). The women break out in laughter when Greta remarks "isn't it interesting..."

Greta argues further that leaving will create down-the-road potential for forgiveness. Their leaving would not be an act of cowardice, abandonment, disobedience, or rebellion... [nor because they had been] excommunicated or exiled... it would be a supreme act of faith" (110). And on the matter of safety, Salome speaks with boldness and honesty on the current status of the women: "We know that we are bruised and infected and pregnant and terrified and insane and some of us are dead. We know that we must protect our children. We know that if these attacks continue our faith will be threatened because we will become angry, murderous, and unforgiving" (119).

In their discussion of cons to option #3, the women lament that they have no map, they don't know where to go, and they don't even know their current location. However, to the contrary, the ever-aggressive Salome shouts, "None... There are no Cons of Leaving" (63). Not least among their concerns should they leave, the women must decide on options for men and older boys. Should certain men be allowed to join them? Only if they sign the manifesto? Should men be left behind? Or should they be able to join the women once a new community has been formed? (70).

When the women reconvene the following day, Agata recalls the previous days' deliberations and calls for the question: "Is it accurate to say that we have all, more or less, decided to leave?" (151). After a cautious "yes," they decide that boys under fifteen (not yet baptized into the church) will leave with the women (162). The women do not resolve the possibility that men and boys willing to sign the manifesto might join a new community (164).

Toews concludes the novel with Epp's final report and reflections of the women's decision. Note: spoiler alert. The women choose to leave on Thursday evening June 7. Epp had secured a map from a neighbouring colony. He reports that the women must concoct a plan to avert a near disaster after two girls leak the news to teenage boys. The young girls lure two teenage boys on a "date," only to have the women anesthetize the boys, and leave them unconscious long enough

that the one and only request the women would make of the men would be to leave? (116). Needless to say, Ona's comment is short-lived; it is not an option.

for the women to get a solid start. The women have at least ten buggies and ten teams. Finally, Epp laments the loss of friends, particularly Ona. He reflects upon his return to Molotschna as a personal pursuit of peace and purpose, yet he assists women on a reverse journey for the same reasons. And in shocking twist, Epp reveals what may have been the primary reason for the excommunication of his parents: “as I approached the brink of adulthood, I bore a remarkable resemblance to Peters, and I had become a symbol in the colony, or at least to Peters, of shame and violence and unacknowledged sin and of the failure of the Mennonite experiment” (213). Was Epp’s readmittance into the colony the bishop’s last attempt to make peace? As for the minutes, the women give Epp no instructions. Since they cannot read them, perhaps the minutes simply give them voice, or their deliberations may one day find their way to men in the colony, or “there was no point to the minutes” (215).

Do the women succeed? Toews ends the tale but offers no guarantee of their subsequent safety or their attempt to construct a transformed community. Though the women seek a new life, their journey will be wrought with risk. Toews’s ending necessarily remains inconclusive; honesty remains critical as readers must reflect upon any attempt by victims to “flee” the harsh realities of violence.

An Unwelcome Prophet

With my turn to Toews’s influence, I do not suggest that her content ventures into uncharted territory. Since she writes with a Mennonite worldview, her non-Mennonite readers will undoubtedly gain insight to an unfamiliar worldview. In terms of her message, Toews joins a chorus of other voices that speak to power, and to oppressive, incompetent, and unsympathetic leadership, particularly in faith communities. She calls the church to accountability. She calls the church to a higher standard for biblical interpretation. In so doing, I want to highlight specific examples of Toews’s storytelling not simply for ultra-conservative Mennonite colonies, but also for many Christian contexts far removed from rural Bolivia.¹⁰

¹⁰ I am not seeking to undermine Mennonites. The news is filled with Catholic scandals, the recent SBC scandals, and be assured these stories will emerge in our Pentecostal circles. Concerning my affinity toward Mennonites, see my *Mennocostals* co-edited with Brian K. Pipkin (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Press, 2019).

Leadership and Community Responses

When Bishop Peters, like any leader, first hears of horrific news, he must lead. In this case, as in so many cases concerning violence against women, Peters fails. “It was Satan who was responsible for the attack, that it was punishment from God, that God was punishing the women for their sins” or perhaps these stories are the product of “wild female imagination” (57-58). These outlandish and unsympathetic responses (on display in the Manitoba Colony and the fictive Molotschna colony) demonstrate striking resemblance to stories not uncommon in our churches. Sadly, similar stories may be heard among Pentecostals. After a young man “takes advantage” of a young woman in a local church, the two of them receive counsel to get married. In a manner not unlike the “wild female imagination,” such a young woman may be chastised for failing to assume responsibility for consensual sexual activity. These stories are compounded with pregnancy.

Though *Women Talking* hits shelves in the spring of 2018, Toews's manuscript is in the hands of editors by early 2017. As fate would have it, her story parallels the rise of the #MeToo movement in October 2017 in the days following allegations against Harvey Weinstein. Toews's creation of a fictive response anticipates the importance of solidarity and elicits a prophetic call for accountability and justice. As a #MeToo prophet, Toews enables boldness through her female characters and interrogates unacceptable male leaders. Any attempt to deflect the plausibility of sexual and violent abuse, to spin the events, or engage in a coverup, only compounds dehumanization.

Community Membership

At the core of her story, Toews scrutinizes Mennonites for their appropriation of an inequitable membership. While there is much to be admired through communal living, the women of Molotschna decide to leave not as resentful members of a community but to gain their humanity. Once again, Toews's Salome offers an explosive response:

We're not *members* of Molotschna... We are the *women* of Molotschna. The entire colony of Molotschna is built on the foundation of patriarchy... [We live our days] as mute,

submissive and obedient servants. Animals. Fourteen-year-old boys are expected to give us orders, to determine our fates, to vote on our excommunications, to speak at the burials of our own babies while we remain silent, to interpret the Bible for us, to lead us in worship, to punish us! We are not *members*, Mariche, we are commodities.¹¹ When our men have used us up so that we look sixty when we're thirty and our wombs have literally dropped out of our bodies onto our spotless kitchen floors, finished, they turn to our daughters. And if they could sell us all at auction afterwards they would (120-121).

Since the dynamics of community life are diverse, this situation defies an easy universal response. Patriarchal life in a Mennonite colony proves difficult to translate for North American audiences. However, Toews's imagined gathering of women on the margins must prompt conversations about authority and power and the importance of mutuality in life-giving communities.

Oppressive Patriarchy and the Biblical Interpretation

As a follow-up to the question of authentic membership, I turn to interpretation of Scripture. During the women's deliberations, you will recall Mariche's comments on Ephesians 5, namely the nature of submission and obedience (described above). On a later occasion, Mejal cuts to the issue. Should the women decide to leave, Mejal expresses one more time her struggle: "It has to do with the Biblical exhortation that women obey and submit to their husbands. How, if we are to remain good wives... can we leave our men? Is it not disobedient to do so?" (156). However, in the spirit of communal responsibility, Salome proclaims forcefully the need for interpretative skills: "We can't read... so how are we to know what it is in the Bible... And what is the common denominator linking Peters and the elders and our sons and husbands?... They are all men?" (156) "The issue... is the male interpretation of the Bible, and how that is 'handed down' to us" (158). Ona concurs: "Our inability to read or write puts us at a great disadvantage in any negotiation over the interpretation of the Bible." Ironically, only moments later, the women ponder God's response to their leaving, and

¹¹ Epp offers a translator's note. The words, patriarchy and commodities, are his attempt to summarize Salome's words (120).

Epp notes (but does not speak) that their musing may serve as the first time these women have interpreted the word of God for themselves (159). These women may not be formally educated, but they are not ignorant. They see through inconsistencies.

I need not rehearse the countless occasions I have encountered pastors and congregants who continue to teach blind and one-way submission of the wife to the husband. I am astonished that many so-called exegetes can recite Ephesians 5:22 without awareness of 5:21, a plain call to locate the submission of wives to their husbands within the context of mutual submission. The word “submission” does not appear in v. 22 but is assumed based upon v. 21.¹² Consider another controversial passage. I recall a conversation among ministers concerning a woman in an abusive relationship where she would not leave her husband based solely upon 1 Corinthians 7:10. She wrestled with conflicting voices by leaders over Paul’s injunction that “a wife must not separate from her husband.” Since her husband had remained faithful, that is, he had not violated Jesus’ *only* escape clause (Matthew 5:32; 19:9), she must remain with her husband. Thankfully, she eventually left her husband!

I and several colleagues at Evangel University teach a required course that includes an assignment where students write their personal story. These students, most of them in their early twenties, craft a narrative that includes elements of family, education, and religious history (such as conversion and Spirit baptism), in order to encourage ownership of their emerging faith. In an amazing number of stories, I am beyond astonished at the number of women (and a few men) who reveal stories of sexual trauma. For those raised in the church, these abusers are often family members or boyfriends (often from a youth group or college group). Sadly, too many of these young students arrive at our university with little biblical literacy, not least concerning passages on marriage, women, intimacy, respect, and mutuality.

¹² See Melissa and Kenneth J. Archer, “Complementarianism and Egalitarianism – Whose Side Are You Leaning On? A Pentecostal Reading of Ephesians 5:21-33,” *Pneuma* 41 (2019), 66-90; See also Craig Keener’s older but still valuable resource, *Paul, Women, and Wives: Marriage and Women’s Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992).

Toews challenges the church not simply to “teach” the Bible but to communicate “how to read the scriptures.” Failure to ensure the latter masks only as indoctrination, and often manifests itself with renderings bent on control and manipulation. Through her storytelling, Toews gives notice that perhaps multiple interpretations of Scripture ought to be explored and the teachings of the church by way of men alone must be challenged.

A Mennonite Novel for Pentecostals

At this point, I think it is reasonable to entertain the question, “What might Toews say to (Canadian) Pentecostals?” As I state above, Toews contributes to the awareness of violence against women, but she is neither the first nor the last voice on this matter. Her originality is perhaps best on display by way of her imagined response through a Mennonite lens, a worldview relatively unknown to the larger Canadian public, Christian or not. I, however, want to highlight Toews’s importance as an artist. Artists, whether writers, poets, filmmakers, or musicians, employ their craft to speak against injustice. Many use their work not primarily for fame and fortune, but to interrogate the culture. They are prophets, and Pentecostals believe in the Spirit of the prophets. One of our own, Roger Stronstad, coined the axiom, “the prophethood of all believers.” Amos Yong has focused his prolific career upon Acts 2 as a metaphor for “the many tongues of Pentecost.”¹³ Both envision a prophetic imagination that breaks barriers (i.e. justice) and emphasizes the universal availability of the Spirit. In order to do so, they imply that this must be accomplished across the vast array of vocations. Though Toews would be surprised at my label, she is a prophetic voice against injustice through her literature. She’s a prophet of Pentecost. She gives voice to “many tongues.” And in the Spirit of the Hebrew prophets, Jesus, the Twelve, and beyond, she speaks for those who are marginalized due to the failure of community life, oppressive leadership, and/or corrupt biblical interpretation.

Second, though Toews speaks to failure on the part of the church, not least among its leaders, her prophethood gives us hope.

¹³ Roger Stronstad, *The Prophethood of All Believers: A Study of Luke’s Charismatic Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) and Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).

Prophets work, write, speak, produce, and sing from the fringe. Where the church stumbles, prophets stand. When the church no longer listens to cries of injustice, the prophets turn to other venues. If I am right, Toews speaks in the tradition of Pentecostals, perhaps a Mennocostal.¹⁴ I dare not suggest that prophetic speech is the domain only of Pentecostals and Mennonites, but this has been our livelihood and forte. We are at our best and most effective when we employ a countercultural voice to our communities and our churches!

Finally, I charge Pentecostal scholars and pastors to utilize their vocations as educators and preachers to inspire writers (poets, musicians, filmmakers, and more) like Toews. If she is indeed a prophet, let us remember that such folk live on the fringe; I am optimistic, but I am not naïve. Though I might wish for Toews to gain a better reception among Christians, she like many artists of prophetic ant-testimony must live on the fringe. Prophetic messages generally emerge not in the polished sermons given at “General Assemblies” or conferences, but in the marketplace. Their concerns must be felt by the masses. They cut to their heart. They expose wounds! And these voices come from below. I call upon my fellow Canadian pastors and scholars to breathe life into these prophetic voices. We must affirm their call to speak, and we must recognize that prophetic witness comes through their complexity (think Jeremiah, Hosea, Amos, John the Baptist). Prophets often embody their content and employ dramatic forms of communication. As we alert our congregants to the need for prophets, we must encourage the prophetic imagination! We must encourage a new generation of prophetic artists like Toews, Kathryn Stockett, Mark Haddon, Steven Spielberg, Bono, Tupac Shakur, and Ava Duvernay.¹⁵

May we not run our prophets out of town. Instead, let us nurture their passions and their voices. They will revive our churches.

¹⁴ See Martin W. Mittelstadt, “My Life as a Mennocostal: A Personal and Theological Narrative,” *Theodidaktos: A Journal of EMC Theology and Education* 3:2 (Fall 2008) <http://www.emconf.ca/theodidaktos-03-02.pdf>; and *Brethren in Christ History & Life* 32:1 (Spring 2009), 97-120.

¹⁵ Toews remains intentionally vague concerning her current identity with the Mennonite tradition. Whether she has abandoned the Mennonite faith of her childhood or not, Toews delivers an unapologetic and prophetic voice. I maintain that prophetic voices need not be Christian.

