stakes once again: Swiv, at nine, is well aware that she may yet be vulnerable to the hereditary depression which runs in her family, as might the baby her mother carries.

Early in the novel, Swiv recounts Grandma Elvira's philosophy: "She said that what makes a tragedy bearable *and* unbearable is the same thing—which is that life goes on" (66). Toews's great achievement in *Fight Night* is to show how life does indeed go on, fostering resilience even in the face of tragedy and pain. As Grandma tells Swiv's unborn sibling in a letter, we all must learn to fight, even if we cannot always win.

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Julia Spicher Kasdorf, Christopher Reed, and Joyce Henri Robinson, eds., *Field Language: The Painting and Poetry of Warren and Jane Rohrer*. University Park, PA: Palmer Museum of Art and Pennsylvania State University Press, 2020. Pp. 248. Softcover, $39.95 US.

Jane Rohrer, *Acquiring Land: Late Poems*, ed. Julia Spicher Kasdorf. Telford, PA: DreamSeeker Books, 2020. Pp. 54. Softcover, $12.95 US.

Field Language testifies to the power of a good collaboration. In a project that moves easily between visual art and poetry, religious and cultural histories, biography and history of the land, the organizers of this exhibition and publication do a remarkable job of gathering a transdisciplinary group of authors to reflect the depth of the lives and works of Warren and Jane Rohrer, two artists who move across many boundaries.

Jane and Warren Rohrer both hailed from Mennonite backgrounds, meeting during their studies at Eastern Mennonite College (now University). Jane left school after two years to work as a secretary; Warren completed a degree in Bible at EMC and then went on to earn a second bachelor's degree, in Art Education, from the neighbouring Madison College (now James Madison University). The Rohrers settled in Pennsylvania, raising a family in rural Lancaster County, from where Warren commuted to his high school teaching job, a schedule that allowed him to take painting workshops

in the summers. His successful painting career evolved alongside, and in conversation with, Modernist abstraction in the US. Once their boys became adults, Jane participated in poetry workshops and audited university courses, beginning to publish her poetry in established journals such as *The American Poetry Review*. Jane's first collection of poetry, *Life After Death,* was published in 2002, seven years after Warren's passing. On the surface, the Rohrers' decades-long partnership seems to mirror that of many twentieth-century artist couples, where the husband's career takes priority, and the authors here emphasize Jane's role as a lifelong supporter of Warren's painting.

At the same time, however, in a largely biographical essay, Julia Spicher Kasdorf resists the interpretation that Jane's art suffered at the expense of Warren's career. Rather, Kasdorf argues that Jane's path to poetry "refused to separate art from life and strove to express the truths of her own experience" (43). It's a belated acknowledgement; in her introduction to Jane's newly published collection, *Acquiring Land,* Kasdorf recognizes that, in her early years of knowing Jane, "I regret that I probably regarded her mainly as Warren's wife or as a protégé of Steven Berg, editor of *The American Poetry Review*" (15). In her essay for *Field Language,* Kasdorf comes to situate Jane's personal narrative poems in the context of 1970s feminist writing, giving voice to women's lived experiences. Part of the lived experience for Jane included her dual roles as poet and artist's wife, which she addresses directly in poems like "Artist's Workshop," acknowledging her movement between passive and active roles:

> Time is short.
> We spent so much of it getting here.
> I hear voices, the woods
> and those of the artists;
> some days I listen, some I talk.

Multiple essayists in *Field Language* work to place Warren's paintings securely within an art historical context of mid-century abstraction. Christopher Reed points out Warren's repeated emphasis on the purely visual surface of his paintings—very similar to Frank Stella's proclamation about his own abstract paintings of the time, "What you see is what you see," asserting that all meaning resides purely on the visual surface—but Reed digs into the nuance of language within Warren's abstraction as well. As Reed writes, "Breaking from a religious tradition that venerated the word and was suspicious of imagery, Rohrer used the power of words to push audiences into ways of looking that go beyond recognizing images"

(15). Warren's titular references to the Amish, to fields, to agricultural specifics like corn stubble become a metaphorical invocation of the past as well as an entry point for viewers to better understand his particular mode of abstraction. Nancy Locke and Christopher Campbell's essay further explores the context of Modernist abstraction in the US, offering an interesting painterly perspective on process and materiality. Jonathan Frederick Walz sets out a provocative, if not entirely convincing, pairing in comparing Warren's work to that of the older Alma Thomas, positing numerous parallels between their upbringings and explorations of abstraction, despite their disparate backgrounds.

Most engagingly, Janneken Smucker's excellent essay, "Tracking the Amish Quilt," addresses the formative visit paid by the Rohrers to the 1971 exhibition *Abstract Design in American Quilts* at the Whitney Museum of Art in New York. The jarring experience of unexpectedly finding Amish quilts on display in a high art context proved a turning point for both artists. As Smucker writes, "Seeing the Bars quilt at the Whitney, they were drawn back in [to the community and separatism they had rejected], attracted by the force of an object they imagined to be perfect, a quilt that could stitch together their Mennonite childhoods with the modernism of their painting and poetry" (70). Warren found affinity with the patterns of the quilters, which he believed reflected the land that so informed his own paintings. The Rohrers joined the hot pursuit of collectors for Amish quilts, and the topic found its way into both artists' work, with Warren's series of *Amish*-titled paintings and Jane making poetical reference to "my naïve Rothko quilt," as they sought further connections between their cultural heritage and the contemporary art world. Smucker notes that Warren was one of the only Modernist painters to acknowledge the influence of quilts on his work; she cites the heirs of Color Field painters Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman who adamantly denied any such potential influence, thus reinforcing a long-standing hierarchy of art and craft in which the Rohrers seemed entirely uninterested.

Douglas Witmer details in his contribution that, for the most part, artists like the Rohrers existed uneasily within Mennonite contexts: "The fine arts were very much of the World. With its risqué imagery, glitzy museums and galleries, tragic/heroic artists and their outsize egos—not to mention the fact that none of what happened seemed like true 'work' to a Mennonite—the art world was especially to be avoided by anyone who strayed into the larger world. This attitude still lingers" (178). Warren felt distanced from his family and community due to his pursuit of art. While the Rohrers largely moved away from their Mennonite roots, a number of the essayists point

out the "back and forth" nature of their connections to heritage. As Jane says of Warren, "There was no looking back, and all he did was look back" (16). Warren included many references to the land of Lancaster County within his abstract paintings, and Smucker's essay positions the Rohrers in a "liminal role in the culture of Lancaster County, both deeply embedded within the Anabaptist community and also 'of the world'" (69).

In concert with this hefty publication, Julia Spicher Kasdorf also edited a slim new collection of poems by Jane Rohrer, *Acquiring Land.* Based on their titles, one might expect that the two sections, "Home Movies" and "Visiting the World," would be divided into memories of an insular upbringing and adult forays into the outside, respectively. But of course there is no such clean separation: past and present inform each other, blurring time. Jane's acquired artistic and literary knowledge give new language to her memories of home. She invokes Hieronymus Bosch, she positions herself as Rilke, and she closes the first section with a specific move to the wider world:

> When the *Inquirer* seems quaintly local I'll move on
> to the *New York Times*
> and somewhere in the Arts Section
> I will read about that poet
> who writes messages to the world
> and gets them back unread. (30)

Similarly, the poems of "Visiting the World" contain moments of the past and the importance of place as Jane looks back on a long life. As Kasdorf writes in her *Field Language* essay, *Acquiring Land* "challenges the traditional Mennonite emphasis on land ownership with her late-in-life lesson that travel can be another way to claim one's place in the world" (62). Whereas so many of Warren's paintings called to the specific place of Lancaster County, some of Jane's poems position place, and home, in a much broader context. Following Warren's death, Jane embarked on numerous adventures with her brother, travelling to many parts of the globe. In the written conversation with her granddaughter, Willa Rohrer, that closes the volume, grandmother and granddaughter discuss what Jane terms her "addiction to travel," and Willa posits travel as a form of studio, an offering of the unfamiliar that inspires creative work. And yet not all of the poems look outward, or forward. As with Warren's work, for Jane, too, there exists a back and forth, memories of Sunday mornings and plain church alongside souvenirs of Tunis and Venice. Perhaps the gift of old age makes clear that it is never one or the

other, but always a both/and. As Jane writes at the end of the title poem of *Acquiring Land*:

> I need more and more addresses.
> On a cold day in Paradise I must have some place to go.

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Voices Together. Harrisonburg, VA: MennoMedia, 2020. Pp. 1156. Hardcover, $32.99.

Denominational hymnals tend to be published every quarter century or so. The lineage of *Voices Together* of 2020, the most recent addition to the hymnals used by congregations in Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA, can be traced back to the *Mennonite Hymnary* of 1940, commissioned by what was then known as the General Conference Mennonite Church. It was followed by *The Mennonite Hymnal* of 1969, a joint project of the (Old) Mennonite Church and the General Conference. The development of *Hymnal: A Worship Book* of 1992 was complicated by the inclusion of a committee from the Church of the Brethren, whose hymnal of 1951 urgently needed renewal. By the time the need for a new twenty-first century hymnal had become apparent, the General Conference, joined by the Mennonite Church, had separated into Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA. In a departure from the previous practice of producing hymnals within the denominations themselves, MennoMedia of Harrisonburg, Virginia, was commissioned to undertake the project.

New hymnals straddle the border between past and future. On the one hand they have to preserve the musical heritage of the past, the core group of hymns that have been sung in Christian churches over the centuries, and on the other hand they have to present congregations with musical materials relevant to the present and try to peer into the future to provide musical and theological materials that will last until the next hymnal appears. How they do this will never be without controversy.

The people who have to navigate this tricky and occasionally treacherous terrain belong to the hymnal committees. The evolution of such committees reflects the larger society in some interesting ways. It is not surprising to learn that the 1940 committee consisted only of men, for example, or that the 1969 hymnal committee included just one woman, Mary Oyer of Goshen College. By the time