

# From Personal Anecdote to Scholarly Field of Research: A European's View of Canadian Mennonite Writing<sup>1</sup>

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Over the last few years, writing by Canadian Mennonite authors has become more than moderately successful in Europe, especially in the German-speaking countries. Not only are all of Miriam Toews's novels available in German translation today: the homepage of her publisher, Berlin Verlag (also the German "home" of Margaret Atwood), proudly presents positive reviews from first-rate national dailies such as *Frankfurter Allgemeine* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.<sup>2</sup> Rudy Wiebe's fiction and his autobiographical writing are also finding new readers in Germany by the day. Toews and Wiebe went on a reading tour through Germany in 2008, and Wiebe was back in Germany in the fall of 2009, presenting *Friede wird viele zerstören*, the German translation of his 1962 debut novel *Peace Shall Destroy Many*. It is published by Tweeback Verlag, a small Bonn publishing house run by Heinrich Siemens, a devoted friend of Mennonite language and culture, specializing in publications in *Plautdietsch* as well as translations of Rudy Wiebe's work into High German. Other Mennonite writers such as Di Brandt and Armin Wiebe

have also recently travelled to European cities like Trier and Graz, participating in international conferences and exchanges and spreading the news about Mennonite writing. Canadian Mennonite literature in English has thus developed into a small but steadily growing market in Germany and Austria.

In addition, Canadian Studies specialists and their students at various research centres such as, amongst others, the universities of Graz in Austria<sup>3</sup> and at Trier and Marburg in Germany,<sup>4</sup> have contributed an impressive amount of scholarly work on Mennonite writers and writing through monographs, collections, theses, and dissertations.<sup>5</sup> How has this interest come about?

For many European critics, including myself, the interest in Canadian Mennonite writing started in university classes in Canadian literature taken either at their home universities or as exchange students at Canadian universities. In such contexts, Mennonite writing such as that of Rudy Wiebe or Sandra Birdsell was primarily studied as representative of the (from a European perspective) relatively new and exotic field of Canadian Literature or Canadian Studies. When I came to Winnipeg as a graduate student in the 1980s, the rather narrow spectrum of writers with a Mennonite background known to me widened immensely. About this time, as Al Reimer wrote in 1993, a “fresh, exciting, rapidly growing body of Mennonite writing” came into being whose “focal point is Winnipeg, where an enterprising group of Mennonite writers is adding depth and lustre to Mennonite ethno-culture and to Canadian literature as a whole” (Reimer, *Mennonite Literary Voices* 1). Poets and fiction writers such as Patrick Friesen, Sandra Birdsell and John Weier were active on the Winnipeg writing scene of the mid-80s (as they still are today), and I personally came to meet writers such as Di Brandt, Maurice Mierau, Doug Reimer and E.F. Dyck as fellow graduate students at the University of Manitoba.<sup>6</sup> Al Reimer’s remark, made two years earlier in 1991, to the effect that “compared with the Mennonites of Russia, Canadian Mennonites lacked cultural aspiration and still regarded almost any kind of art as sinful” (Reimer, “Arnold Dyck” 83), thus came as a certain surprise to me, and certainly seems to refer to an earlier stage of the development of Mennonite writing than the one I was so deeply impressed by. But, of course, traditional Mennonites would have been as critical of invented and “literary” stories as the English Puritans had been in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries; and, in Al Reimer’s words, “that would explain why freely invented literary forms have been so consistently branded in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition as at best frivolous, at worst as ‘lies’ inspired by Satan” (Reimer, *Mennonite Literary Voices* 5, see also Gundy, “New Maps” 870).

## The German Connection: Linguistic, Institutional and Scholarly Ties

As indicated above, a fascinating relationship has developed between German readers and Mennonite writers whose ancestors had once emigrated from Europe to North America and who now return to Europe as successful authors or teachers. Their European readership consists of fellow Mennonites, of students of postcolonial and North American literatures, and of a general readership looking for new and “exotic” texts. It thus also includes readers who do not know about or share the history and/or religion of Mennonites. These readers indeed form the more general audience that, according to Reimer, contemporary Mennonite writers have been looking for (see Reimer, *Mennonite Literary Voices* 19).

The first and special attractiveness of Mennonite writers for a German audience may lie in their use of (or at least allusion to) Low (Armin Wiebe would say Flat) German (that is, *Plautdietsch*), in their writing, but this alone would not account for the success of books such as Miriam Toews’s *A Complicated Kindness* in Germany. The latter, I would claim, deals with more generally relevant themes of a young generation’s coming of age rather than problems only Mennonites can relate to. When I asked Heinrich Siemens, the owner of Tweeback Verlag, why he thought German audiences responded so well to writing like that of Toews and Wiebe, he mentioned that the somewhat unexpected existence of a culture based on the German language in more or less exotic places such as Canada (or South America) might very well be responsible for this phenomenon. Furthermore, the voice of Canadian Mennonites seems to speak to German readers even in translation, as the reviews of Mennonite works such as *Von dieser Erde*, the German version of Wiebe’s *Of this Earth*, have indeed been excellent. “‘Von dieser Erde’ ist eine sprachliche Perle, Weltliteratur zum Genießen, Balsam für die Seele” (*Of this Earth* is a linguistic pearl, world literature to be enjoyed, balm for the soul), said the reviewer on a national cultural radio program (Bunk), and the responses to the recent translation of Wiebe’s first novel of 1962, *Peace Shall Destroy Many* (*Friede wird viele zerstören*) have been equally positive.

The fact that Mennonite writers are being taught and studied in Germany is due partly to accidental development,<sup>7</sup> but also to publishers’ well-planned activities and to the media. Additional support through Canadian and German publishers and other institutions such as the media (press, radio, television) should not be underestimated, however.<sup>8</sup> Also, one should not forget the active support of Canadian writing in Germany through the Canadian Embassy in Berlin, on whose website there is an impressive and almost up-to-date list of Canadian writers in German translation, which includes names of Mennonite

authors such as Rudy Wiebe and Miriam Toews (Botschaft von Kanada, "Kanadische Autoren in deutscher Übersetzung").<sup>9</sup>

Another reason for which some Mennonite writers have been studied regularly in the German academic world (rather than, or in addition to, being more or less successful in the book market) is that they can also easily be seen as representatives of more general trends and developments in Canadian fiction, trends that Canadian as well as international students and scholars of "Canlit" have been interested in. In the 1970s, 80s and 90s, the type of narrative that Linda Hutcheon has called "Canadian historiographic metafiction" – literary works thematizing and problematizing the act of writing about (Canadian) history and identity – was among the most innovative types of fiction in Canada; and Rudy Wiebe has always been seen as one of the foremost representatives of this type of writing. His novels – those dealing with Native Canadians (e.g., *The Temptations of Big Bear* or *The Scorched-Wood People*) to a larger extent than those dealing with purely Mennonite themes (e.g., *Peace Shall Destroy Many* or *The Blue Mountains of China*) – have thus been studied in a series of scholarly monographs and articles published in Germany, among them books or essays by Wolfgang Kloß, Maria Frühwald, Wolfgang Hochbruck, and Jutta Zimmermann (see Bibliography).

Sometimes literary and religious interests of Mennonites also go hand in hand in the analysis of Mennonite writing in Germany, for example in the case of Christoph Wiebe, who has written an engaging and insightful article about Toews's *A Complicated Kindness* in the journal *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter*. He was, in fact, so impressed by Toews's main character that he entitled his review of a German Mennonite novel "Nomi Nickels entfernte Cousine in Espelkamp" ("Nomi Nickel's distant cousin in Espelkamp").

While this essay concentrates on Canadian Mennonite writing, work on Mennonites by German scholars, however, goes far beyond mere literary studies. There is a whole range of books on Mennonites and Mennonite themes. Furthermore, Günter Grünsteudel's invaluable *Canadiana-Bibliographie 1900-2000* of publications by German-speaking Canadianists (which can now also be found on the internet), lists at least twenty entries on "Mennoniten." These entries include general work on historic, geographical and economic aspects or topics, such as an essay on "Cemeteries in the Prairies: A Comparative Study of Language Behaviour in Lutheran, Mennonite and Hutterite Cemeteries." But if you look for literary names such as Rudy Wiebe, you will also find numerous entries (at least 15). For Armin Wiebe, there is only one in the 2001 edition of the bibliography, but over the last few years the number of secondary essays and books has increased for both Wiebes. A brief look at Grünsteudel's index, furthermore,

shows entries for Sandra Birdsell and Di Brandt, and the numbers keep growing.

An even more recent source of information than Grünsteudel's bibliography is the volume *Translating Canada: Charting the Institutions and Influences of Cultural Transfer: Canadian Writing in German/y*, edited by Luise von Flotow and Reingard M. Nischik. Although there is no special chapter on Mennonite writing, names such as those of David Waltner-Toews, Sandra Birdsell and Rudy Wiebe can be found in the index.<sup>10</sup>

### Minority Writing in a Postcolonial and Multicultural Context

As my ideas on Mennonite writing have so far been rather personal and anecdotal in addition to pointing to ethnic and institutional ties, I will now try to integrate my interpretation of Canadian Mennonite writing into a more theoretical framework, or, in fact, into several that have become accepted in literary studies today. One might be tempted to see Mennonite writing as part of the study of literature in German or German dialects, but not being a *Germanist* by trade I would prefer to see Mennonite literature in the context of postcolonial and multicultural English-language writing in Canada. After all, the important recent innovations in Mennonite literature and its impressive development have all taken place in English-language publications, and the voices of Mennonite writers have become important in the context of contemporary (and thus postcolonial) writing and, from a European perspective, outside London and New York, the traditional centres of Anglophone writing.

While writers such as Birdsell, Toews and Wiebe have been successful at a national Canadian level and are published by national publishing houses such as McClelland and Stewart (Birdsell) and Knopf Canada (Toews, Wiebe), they often seem to be seen primarily as national figures rather than as representatives of the Mennonite community. Other Mennonites have had a more regional readership and more regional publishers such as, most importantly, Winnipeg's Turnstone Press (with whom Birdsell started out, too). It has always struck me that Mennonite writing is not that well-known as a minority literature in Canada, which may have something to do with its regional limitation to (mostly) Ontario and Manitoba, even though the 2009 Winnipeg conference on "Mennonite/s Writing: Manitoba and Beyond" proved that Mennonite writing in Canada is far more widespread.

Mennonite writing as such does not seem to have received its fair share of interest in scholarly works that are historically oriented and focus on Canadian Literature's multicultural aspects, such as, for

example, E.D. Blodgett's *Five Part Invention*, where Mennonite writing surprisingly is not treated in the "multicultural" chapter dealing with "The Question of Alterity: Histories of their Own," and where "Wiebe's Mennonite background" is mentioned in a footnote only (Blodgett 326, n. 37).<sup>11</sup>

### **Deleuzian "Minor" Literature or Product of "Language Mix"?**

A second theoretical approach, after the attempt at a "postcolonial" or "multicultural" one, might be based on one of the few studies integrating Mennonite writing into a contemporary philosophical context. Douglas Reimer applies the French philosophers Deleuze and Guattari's term "minor literature", which they used to describe literature written by a minority in the language of the majority, such as the works of Franz Kafka written in Prague, to also describe the "deterritorialized" situation of Mennonite writing in English. As Reimer puts it, "'minor' means uncontrolled by the conventions of the major language in which minor literature writes" (Reimer 3). Deleuze and Guattari write about Kafka in Prague that

He will turn syntax into a cry that will embrace the rigid syntax of this dried-up German. He will push it toward a deterritorialization that will no longer be saved by culture or by myth, that will be an absolute deterritorialization, even if it is slow, sticky, coagulated. To bring language slowly and progressively to the desert. To use syntax in order to cry, to give a syntax to a cry. (Deleuze and Guattari 26)

One of the special attractions that I find in much Mennonite writing in English, and which one might construe as a parallel to Kafka's linguistic situation described by Deleuze and Guattari, is that it is often characterized by traces of the multilingual history of the Mennonite community, mixing German, Russian and English vocabulary and often even syntax. This is, of course, mainly due to the "deterritorialization" just mentioned. So what the French philosophers say about the linguistic (not the political) situation in Kafka's Prague may be reminiscent of the linguistic situation of the Mennonites in Canada and of the literary style of some Mennonite writers:

The manner in which Kafka, in a public meeting, presented Yiddish to a rather hostile Jewish bourgeois audience is completely remarkable: Yiddish is a language that frightens more than it invites disdain... It is a language that is grafted

onto Middle-High German and that so reworks the German language from within that one cannot translate it into German without destroying it. (Deleuze and Guattari 25)

I am not sure this approach to Mennonite writing has caught on and been pursued much further, although I have tried to make use of it with regard to language in the writings of Armin Wiebe and Di Brandt, amongst others (Kuester, “Shibboleth” and “Region, Gender and Nation”). A closely connected point is that of the “language mix” just mentioned, the multilingual situation in which Mennonites in Canada, owing to their religious heritage and to their migrations within Europe and between Europe and North America, switch between High German, Low German and English (see Kuester, “Shibboleth”).

In her seminal essay “Mother Tongue as Shibboleth in the Literature of Canadian Mennonites,” Hildi Froese Tiessen shows that Mennonite writers have contributed greatly to the integration of the Mennonite minority into contemporary Canadian cultural life (on this topic, see also Heidenreich). She is, however, also aware of the different reactions that references to the Mennonites’ linguistic heritage (which had, for centuries, served to keep the Mennonites apart from their neighbours) may evoke among those readers who do and those who do not share this heritage: “[By] their use ... of mother tongue (German, and more particularly, Low German) – these writers maintain and perhaps even extend the barriers that separate the Mennonites’ minority culture from the contemporary social order” (Tiessen, “Shibboleth” 175):

Mother tongue as a source of resonance for the insider is used by many contemporary Mennonite writers to restructure ritualistically the ethos, the cultural and spiritual texture of a Mennonite world that no longer exists as an entity separate from the society around it. (...) Now, as the Mennonite world becomes ever more dispersed, its literary artists are evoking a past world in the words and syntax of German and Low German. Whatever these authors hope to accomplish through their use of mother tongue, the result of their technique is to divide their audience into insider and outsider and so, in effect, to re-establish barriers separating the traditional Mennonites’ experience from the world’s. (Tiessen, “Shibboleth” 183)<sup>12</sup>

The multilingual aspect of Mennonite culture can, however, also be (and I think a Mennonite critic and writer like Magdalene Redekop might agree with me) a source of literary inspiration and innovation with its multilingual playfulness, so that a statement, such as the

following by Harry Loewen, does not really do justice to contemporary Mennonite writing and its attitude towards language any longer:

... the question of language has always been a problem among Mennonites. Some have pointed out that one reason for the lack of Mennonite literature is “the fact that Mennonites have never been able to evoke a single linguistic fiction.” (Loewen, “Canadian Mennonite Literature” 77)

Such a statement certainly does not seem to hold any longer after the creation of the Yasch Siemens novels, in which Armin Wiebe has created a vibrant fictional community that critics have compared to such acknowledged literary models as Stephen Leacock’s *Mariposa* (Dunn).

While Mennonite writing as such can always be seen as a “minor” literature from a sociological or linguistic point of view, this is even truer for Mennonite writing by women. For centuries, in a largely patriarchally structured Mennonite community, women seem to have played a minor role, at least outside of home and family. It is not for nothing that Al Reimer entitles one of the four chapters of his excellent introduction to Mennonite writing “Where Was/Is the Woman’s Voice?” (Reimer, *Mennonite Literary Voices* 37-53). Magdalene Redekop identifies two stereotypical views of women in Mennonite writing: their role as the “Great Earth Mother” (as described by the early Mennonite feminist Katie Funk Wiebe) and their role as (according to Hildi Froese Tiessen) “subverter of the arts” (Redekop, “Mennonite Madonna” 103, 104). I have argued that female Mennonite writers such as Di Brandt signal a spiritual feminist rebirth between oppressive family structures, secular feminism and Canadian patriotism, whereas Sandra Birdsell would stand for a kind of double marginalization between the Métis and Mennonite communities. Miriam Toews could then be seen as a writer for whom story telling represents existentialist hope between an oppressive community and disintegrating family structures (see, Kuester, “Region, Gender, Nation”).

### Polysystem Theory

A third possibility of approaching Mennonite writing from a theoretical perspective is to use a version of system theory developed at the University of Alberta and based on Itamar Even-Zohar’s *Polysystem Studies* (1990), a theoretical approach that the Israeli scholar has been working on since the 1970s. Milan Dimic claims that the Polysystem Theory “has become part of the international debate in the humanities, and has found applications especially in Israel and Belgium, and

a more tentative following by individuals or research teams in the Netherlands, Canada, the U.S.A., India and other countries” (151). According to Dimic, “The PST [i.e., Polysystem Theory, MK] understands literature as a dynamic, functional, stratified, open semiotic system which is perceived as having the form of an institution” (151), and it opens up the possibility of accounting for phenomena “such as contact and interference among literary, artistic and other symbolic systems that co-exist within a designated macro system” (152). Important aspects in such a system would be the questions of translation and hierarchy, topics that also apply to Mennonite writing. In his essay “Models and Paradigms for the Study of Canadian Literature,” Dimic subsumes Mennonite writing under what he calls “a peculiar chapter in the history of Canadian letters, the destiny of German-speaking Canadians” (Dimic, “Models” 145).

### Transdifference

A fourth literary theory that might prove interesting in the case of Mennonite writing is a concept which was recently developed in Germany, at the University of Erlangen, in the context of theories of multi-, inter- and transculturalism and with leading Canadian literary and political theorists such as Will Kymlicka and Charles Taylor in mind. I have tried to test the validity of recent literary theories of *transdifference* (an idea which seems to have been introduced into French-Canadian Literature Studies by Iris Gruber in her essay “La littérature québécoise est transculturelle – qu’est-ce que la littérature québécoise?”) with regard to Mennonite and Native Canadian literatures, types of writing which obviously meet in the works of authors such as Rudy (and also Armin) Wiebe. According to Helmbrecht Breinig and Klaus Lösch, this forbidding term *transdifference*

...denotes all that which resists the construction of meaning based on an exclusionary and conclusional binary model. ...Thus the concept of transdifference interrogates the validity of binary constructions of difference without completely deconstructing them. This means that difference is simultaneously bracketed and yet retained as a point of reference. (Breinig and Lösch, Introduction 23)

Can this help us to define Mennonite Canadian writing as being different from – but also part – of Canadian writing? I think so. The empathy of Mennonite writers with the fate of Native Canadians that is evident in their fiction and non-fiction is so impressive that it goes well

beyond what one might call universal or transcultural commonalities (Welsch) that seem to exist between different ethnic groups and literatures just by happenstance. In this context, transdifference is a powerful, if not uncontroversial, tool explaining these commonalities. It is a concept, I would claim, that is able to undermine traditional borderlines and build bridges not only between Mennonites and Native Canadians but between all kinds of “Other Solitudes” within Canadian society. It may even go a certain way towards explaining why Mennonite works such as Miriam Toews’s *A Complicated Kindness* or Rudy Wiebe’s *Of this Earth* have been so successful in German translation.

Whether we should see Mennonite writing from Canada as a Deleuzian “minor literature,” a linguistic playground, a model case of polysystem theory or a playing field of transdifference is a question of academic and theoretical taste, and there are certainly many other ways of going beyond a merely “anecdotal” approach to Mennonite writing that could and should be explored. Before we start analyzing this type of writing, we should, however, first and foremost read and enjoy it. I hope I have been able to show that Mennonite writing from Manitoba and from the Prairies is read, discussed and appreciated way beyond Manitoba, the Prairies and Canada, so that Nomi Nickels’ distant cousins can nowadays be discovered even in faraway places like Espelkamp, Germany.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> I would like to thank the anonymous reader for the *Journal of Mennonite Studies* for important and useful suggestions that this paper has profited from.
- <sup>2</sup> Especially *A Complicated Kindness* received very positive reviews in the German press: The title of one typical review, "In Manitoba rumhängen mit Mennoniten" ("Hanging out in Manitoba with Mennonites," Langer), is quite alliterative, even though the plot summary given in one of Germany's more important daily papers tells us that Miriam Toews left behind the "Mennonitendorf Manitoba" (the Mennonite village of Manitoba) at the age of eighteen. The homepage of Berlin Verlag furthermore claims that Toews lives in the state (rather than province) of Manitoba (Berlin Verlag, "Miriam Toews: Biographie").
- <sup>3</sup> For example, Di Brandt was present at the official opening of the Graz Centre for Canadian Studies and has been back to Graz for conferences and readings. In the volume *Canada 2000*, edited by Klaus-Dieter Ertler and Martin Löschnigg, there is an essay by Di Brandt on Adele Wiseman. In the volume *Canada in the Sign of Migrations and Trans-Culturalism*, also edited by Ertler and Löschnigg, there is not only Di Brandt's important contribution "Je jeliada, je vechiada" but also Martin Löschnigg's "Historical Perspectives" on Rudy Wiebe's *Sweeter Than All the World*. Armin Wiebe attended the Centre's 2008 conference (see Armin Wiebe, "From Yasch Siemens to Tatsea").
- <sup>4</sup> Among the Trier Canadianists who have contributed important work on Mennonite writing and culture, there are Wolfgang Klooss, Herbert Zirker and Lutz Schowalter (see bibliography). Among the Marburg Canadianists with an interest in Mennonite themes, there are Wolfram R. Keller (now Berlin), Martin Kuester

and Fabienne C. Quennet. In addition to the 2004 special issue on Canadian Mennonites (with contributions by Kuester, Quennet, Hildi Froese Tiessen, Lutz Schowalter, and Paul Tiessen), the Marburg journal *Ahornblätter* has regularly included work on and/or by Mennonite writers and scholars such as Alfred Hecht and Rudy Wiebe.

A surprising number of Mennonite-related books is published by a local Marburg publishing house (and some of them even have a close Winnipeg connection, e.g., works by Victor Peters and Jack Thiessen on Mennonite names and stories told in Plautdietsch). Furthermore, the *Deutscher Sprachatlas*, a linguistic enterprise interested in German dialects worldwide is associated with the University of Marburg's German Department, and their library includes an impressive collection of publications on Mennonites and their language.

- 5 In almost every biannual research report on Canadian literature published by the Gesellschaft für Kanada-Studien, there are not only several talks and/or essays on Mennonite authors like Rudy Wiebe to be found, but Mennonite themes regularly appear among the Staatsexamen, doctoral and MA theses written by German-speaking Canadianists.
- 6 My personal experience of Mennonite writing started during a year as a German undergraduate exchange student at the University of British Columbia, before my doctoral studies brought me from Germany to the University of Manitoba for several years in 1984. This personal interest has been kept awake ever since I returned from Manitoba to Germany to teach (at the universities of Augsburg, from 1987 to 1999, and Marburg, from 1999 onwards). I have tried to integrate Canadian Mennonite authors into my teaching and research, and new contacts arose especially since the University of Marburg has had a longstanding partnership with Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, a city where Mennonite connections are of course of vital importance. For this reason, Mennonites and Mennonite writing and the German fascination with this topic were the core theme of a conference hosted at the University of Marburg in 2003 (among the guest speakers were Hildi Froese Tiessen and Paul Tiessen). The Mennonite theme re-surfaced when I discovered that Rosmarin Heidenreich, whom I have had the pleasure of hosting as a visiting professor from Winnipeg at both Augsburg and Marburg, is of Mennonite origin and that her father, Victor Peters, had published or co-published several books on Mennonite history and language with a Marburg publishing house, Elwert Verlag (see below). In 2008, Christoph Wiebe, the pastor of the Krefeld Mennonite parish, asked me to introduce a reading by Rudy Wiebe and Miriam Toews during their German reading tour celebrating the publication of *Von dieser Erde* and *Ein komplizierter Akt der Liebe*, the German translations of *Of This Earth* and *A Complicated Kindness*.
- 7 If German students had not been part of exchange programs such as those between the Universities of Manitoba and Trier, they would not have read and enjoyed Armin Wiebe's Gutenthal novels and would probably not have been motivated to write essays about them (see Strauss, "Salvation," and Kuester, "Shibboleth").
- 8 Heinrich Siemens of Tweeback Verlag has been active arranging reading tours, and he even served original Mennonite tweeback at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2009.
- 9 Especially Astrid Holzamer from the Embassy of Canada in Berlin is to be thanked for her admirable activities in this field.
- 10 Interestingly enough, in his contribution on "Translating the Canadian Short Story into German" in this volume, Klaus Peter Müller mentions George K. Epp and Heinrich Wiebe's *Anthology of German-Mennonite Writing in Canada* (Winnipeg: Mennonite German Society of Canada, 1977), but he does so only in the context of Germanophone ethnic writing, whereas the Mennonite connection becomes visible only in the full title in Müller's list of works cited (Müller 56, 77).

- <sup>11</sup> Jeff Gundy's book *Walker in the Fog: On Mennonite Writing* widens the horizon to include Mennonite authors from both the United States and Canada, but it does not seem to provide a "Teutonically" coherent theoretical approach to Mennonite writing either. As Gundy admits: "Crossing back and forth between the forms of literary criticism, creative nonfiction, and poetry, and transgressing the boundaries of academic disciplines as well, has come to seem second nature to me over the last twenty years of my writing life. This book reflects that eclecticism in both its form and content" (Gundy, *Walker* 21). On Swiss-Mennonite vs. Russian-Mennonite attitudes to writing fiction, see also Gundy, "New Maps" 870.
- <sup>12</sup> This danger of a possible alienation between readers who do and those who do not grasp references to Mennonite linguistic heritage may be judged differently by readers and critics of different linguistic backgrounds. Those who speak both German and English will not so easily be in danger of feeling lost in a "Flat German" world than those who speak English only or English and a non-Germanic language.
- <sup>13</sup> This list mainly concentrates on works by German-speaking Canadianists on Mennonite themes that are not included in Grünsteudel's *Canadiana-Bibliographie*, probably the most exhaustive such list for works before 2000.